

2015

MARIST BROTHERS

WEST-CENTRAL EUROPE



BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

This edition of the Bulletin appears in the middle of the year. In a few months we will have our Provincial Chapter. As usual, the word “communion” gives meaning to the content of this Editorial. A word that comes from our last Chapter in 2013.

In the text written by the Chapter for the current leadership, “communion” is the key word. It is the word that is the link between Brothers and lay people, it appears several times in the paragraph on mission and, indirectly, when governance and community are discussed. And it is found again when we discuss responsibility and communion in our everyday life. One can even include communion with the whole Congregation. To reflect more deeply on communion in this sense, and probably also to prepare for the upcoming Provincial Chapter, some ideas are put forward in this Editorial, ideas which will come up again in the months ahead.

15 years after the creation of our Province, the idea of communion no longer has the same appearance and substance as it had in 2000. The link between us must have grown in that time. The administrative decision to form a Province made up of five countries meant we had to start from scratch! We had to find ways of living out our communion. Each one of us had to deal in our own way with the changed feeling of communion with fellow Brothers from four other countries.

COMMUNION

Now, 15 years later, it is still all about communion, but under another form. For example, we now no longer talk only about communion between Brothers. It has become normal for us to appoint, invite and listen to people who in some way or other, feel part of us. Brother Brendan begins his letters: “Dear Brothers and Marist Friends...” Now, we would be astonished if he did not do so.

It could be interesting to ask oneself how and where communion will manifest itself in the years ahead. That is a difficult question to answer. The future is unknown. However one can have an idea.

Communion is the visible result of what brings people together. It comes from somewhere and is the fruit of something. People find it wherever they identify with each other, feel for each other and share their pains or their achievements together.

It will be likewise in our Province. In more concrete terms: more and more people will see in themselves the values that inspire the Marists. More and more people will want to support particular local projects. Young people will involve themselves in local activities organised by some Brothers. Their idealism will demand expression and action. The young will look for a way of living community while still being themselves. Experiencing an activity will not be the only reason for taking part. The search for a spiritual life will be at its centre.

It could be that our expression “Attentive Presence” may be the place where new forms of communion are born. A future which is already here? The current edition of the Bulletin will tell you more.

Brother Jacques Scholte



Dear Brothers and Marist friends,

I was in Beirut from 10 – 13th May for the European Marist Conference (CEM) meeting. On Wednesday, 13th May I had the privilege of listening to Brother Georges Sabe share about the work of the Brothers and their lay colleagues in Aleppo. Marists are being called upon to provide humanitarian aid to people whose lives have been affected by the civil war. In this letter I would like to highlight the way the Brothers and their friends are responding. Brother Georges Sabe told us that there is only one protected road from Aleppo to Beirut. The journey formerly took 4 hours: it now takes 9 hours.

ALEPPO

The Marist presence in Syria is comprised of Brothers Bahjat Azrie, Georges Hakim and Georges Sabe, who are all native Syrians. When I spoke to Brother Georges Sabe he reminded me that he had studied in Kessel-Lo for two years, along with Brother Antonio Ramalho, other Brothers and lay people. It was clearly a very happy time in his life. Brother Georges informed the members of the CEM that the Syrian government had nationalized all the schools in 1967. The Brothers took time to decide how to respond to this new situation. They moved to a poor part of Aleppo where there were people from various ethnic groups. Georges added that by 1986 they knew that the Lord had been leading them by the hand to discover this place. They felt called to establish honest relationships. Little by little Marists have discovered the poor as part of their journey.

The civil war began in July 2012. The rebels took over the west of the city. In this area, the rebels took over the city on Good Friday. In this area, the rebels are allowed to display their flags outside of their homes. They are forced to either convert to Islam or to pay the jizya tax. The government is bombing the rebels' fire missiles area. There is no one side to the conflict. The purification plant is in the area. Consequently, there is a severe lack of clean water in the city.



gan in Aleppo on 23rd March. The Brothers' community is in the government-held area in the west of the city. The Islamic State retook the eastern part of the city on Good Friday, March 29th, 2013. Christians are not allowed to display their crosses outside of their homes and they are forced to either convert to Islam or to pay the jizya tax. The government is currently bombing the rebels' fire missiles area and the rebels are fire missiles into the government-held area. There is no one side to the conflict. The purification plant is in the area. Consequently, there is a severe lack of clean water in the city.

The Syrian Brothers of Aleppo

Many people have left the city to go to Sweden, Germany, Spain, France or Norway. There are 2 million refugees in Lebanon, including 300,000 people less than 20 years of age. There are now less than 50,000 Christians in the government-held area. There are six Catholic rites in the city, along with Orthodox Christians and Protestants. Bombs have destroyed six cathedrals. Brother Georges said that neither side can win as things stand at present, and no one knows when the war will end. "We expect nothing from anyone. The government cannot protect us – only God can protect us. The Pope is very important for the Christians as he provides a symbol of hope. The government is interested in protecting Damascus, the capital." He added that Turkey has a lot of interest in Aleppo, and that most of the industry has been stolen and taken there. There are many unemployed people who have no hope, as well as the wounded and injured.

The people are tired and despairing, and cannot take any more. The Marist presence is hugely important. The Brothers divide their activities into two areas: aid and relief, and educational initiatives. All programmes are directed at poor and displaced people and are completely free. I will summarize these projects here:

The activities of aid and relief:

The Marists run three programmes which provide food baskets and / or warm meals to 550 Christian and Muslim families.

War-wounded civilians project:

This project provides care for the civilians affected by war wounds who do not have the means to be cared for in the private hospitals. Since the beginning of this program 26 months ago, Marists have arranged for the treatment of hundreds of patients and saved the life of dozens.

In our context of violence, deprivation, desolation, suffering and despair, we continue, the Marist Blues, through our presence, our strength, our support, our help and solidarity, to be, for the people, this little glimmer of hope in the darkness around us. "Oh! You are still here; you have not have left like the others?" And we are continuing our work with the displaced, the poor, the children and the wounded.

The Fratelli Project:

In the April newsletter I mentioned that the General Council has agreed to work with the De la Salle Chris-

**Educational activities:**

The Marists run a pre-school programme, a school to provide basic skills to children aged 7 – 13, a programme for mothers to improve their English and acquire computer skills, a "skills school" in the afternoons for adolescents, and a centre to provide skills training for people aged 20 – 45, to improve their CVs.

The Marists also run the "Oasis" spiritual formation centre for young Christians. This has been organizing retreats or monthly seminars for young people for several months and is becoming increasingly popular.

Nabil Antaki, a friend of the Brothers, wrote the following words in a description of the various Marist programmes:

tian Brothers on a range of projects. Possible locations for collaborative projects could be the Central African Republic, the Mexican-American border and Lebanon, responding to the needs of young displaced Syrians. At the moment there is a desire to respond to the need to support school inclusion among young Syrian people and possibly to establish a "Youth Hub" to work with street children. The Provincial Council has already agreed to respond positively to the initial request for funding. Hopefully a co-ordination office for possible activities can be established by April 2016.

As you can imagine, it was moving to listen to the Syrian Brothers talk about their experience, and inspiring to hear about the Fratelli Project from Brother Emili Turú. The situation in Syria is often in the news. Hopefully this letter will provide you with more informa-

tion about the situation our Brothers and their Marist friends are living daily, and of ways that the Institute is trying to respond. One of the Brothers asked about ways to send financial support to the Brothers in Syria. We can transfer money to the Marist account in Lebanon. If anyone wants more information about this please contact me directly. I want to end this letter by sharing what Brother Georges said about support from the Marist world:

I want to express our deep thanks for the support and care we receive from the whole Marist world. It is phenomenal. When everything appears to be closed and dark, it is encouraging to receive support and contact from someone.

You can follow the activities and struggles of the Marists in Syria on their Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/MaristesAlep>

Sincerely,

**Brother Brendan Geary,
Provincial.**

EUROPEAN MARIST MISSION ASSEMBLY

Who: Bram Canniere (°1989) is connected to the new “Marist House of Study” in Kessel-Lo, Belgium, chaplain from the university parish at the Catholic University of Leuven, theologian, musician, and sports lover.

What: A reflection on the “European Marist Mission Assembly”, held at Notre-Dame de l’Hermitage in Saint-Chamond, France, from the 13th till the 16th April, 2015.

Let’s go back to Monday, April 13th at 9:30 a.m., at the railway station of Leuven, Belgium. No strikes, only a little delay and a small spring sun trying to lighten up my morning mood. I am taking the high speed train to France together with my good friend Sepp Mondelaers, also resident at the “Marist House of Study”. The goal: to participate in a European assembly on the Marist Mission.

You wonder how a 25-year-old Belgian ends up at such an event? Well, three years ago I got to know the Marist Brothers while taking interviews for my dissertation in theology. Intrigued by their philosophy of “attentive presence” and their international outreach, I saw the chance to learn more about the

Marist world through participation in academic research and through personal contact. During various enriching trips and visits to schools and communities in Australia, Ireland, Germany, France and Spain, I got to know the Marist spirituality and charism – and, of course, a lot of fantastic Marist personalities.

All this led to a request from the Provincial Council in the summer of 2014. With my fellow student Sepp, I was asked to participate in a new international Marist project: the “Marist House of Study” (MHS), which would be located in the old part of the building of the Marist community in Kessel-Lo. The aim is to create a Belgian base which is connected to the Catholic Uni-



versity of Leuven and the international Marist world. It is worth noting that Kessel-Lo is geographically in the centre of the Province. Related to this initiative, we got invited to the “European Marist Mission Assembly” at Notre-Dame de l’Hermitage, the source where it all started for the Marist Brothers back in 1817.

“Mission” was the key word, which is very interesting. Mission comes from the Latin word *missio* where it has the meaning of “to be sent.” Over the years it has developed a bit of a negative connotation in Flanders. But during the assembly the idea was realistically presented as: “How can we give a future to the ideas, the charism and the spirituality of Father Champagnat, in a Europe which is secularised, and with a growing collaboration between lay people and the Brothers?”.

It was not a “holiday” week, but a very intense and interesting time with a lot of encounters between (young) lay Marists and Marist Brothers from the whole of Marist Europe. During the various moments of sharing and exchanging ideas, there was a lot of time for dialogue, future challenges, the international and European Marist project and Marist spirituality and its origins. I will not bore you with a

detailed report, but I briefly want to share the following thoughts: What struck me first and foremost was the energy and hope of the group. It was not a pessimistic event, but on the contrary, a gathering of (self-) critical Marists, who are all involved with the Brothers in different ways: as teachers and headmasters, as Brothers, in pastoral care and youth formation, via international exchange projects and study houses. There were clear differences – Southern European countries tend to have a different approach to spirituality – but nevertheless it was very pleasant to feel positive energy coming from the different participants and the initiatives that will colour the future. Honestly, and personally, it was extremely enjoyable to be able to talk openly about spirituality and faith for a couple of days, something which is not always possible in a Belgian context. It was not forced, but was a natural part of the programme, just like the wine during the meals, the meeting process with people from other nationalities, the moments of celebration, the little *siesta* on the grass, and the night cap at the end of the day.

What do I take from this assembly, in my life and to the Marist House of Study? Besides a lot of energy, I am currently even more convinced

that collaboration between Marist countries and Provinces can work. The shared ideology can form a firm basis to bring different cultures together and to let them enrich each other. This does not need to be formalised, because everybody is capable of doing it in his or her own way. Make a walk together, have a good conversation, taste some Belgian beers, listen to music, work in the garden, undertake an excursion, pray and celebrate together... A lot of possibilities exist at the encounter space that will be created at MHS. I hope and think that the house in Kessel-Lo will become a place where young and also some not so young people will discover traces of their “Maristness” and will be able to deepen it. Enriching exchanges may take place and people will be “attentively present” to each other.

That spirit definitely was present at the European Marist Mission Assembly, for which I would like to thank all those involved in the organisation.

**Bram
Canniere**



JUNE: THE MONTH OF CHAMPAGNAT

Recently, the Marist Fathers in the Netherlands published some articles on the origins of the Marist Movement written by Jan Snijders s.m. under the title – *Children of the Revolution*.

Here are three extracts about Marcellin Champagnat.

1. "Marcellin also felt the effects of a lack of education. When a teacher from the seminary came to Marlhes looking for candidates for the seminary, Marcellin decided to become a priest in order to help educate children from the countryside. By feeding and selling lambs, he managed to build up a small kitty which he took to the seminary. He had acquired some knowledge here and there, just enough to be admitted to the seminary without having completed his primary education. His results were still not good enough. He came close to being sent home. He did not speak correct French. He was fluent only in the local dialect of his village. He had beautiful handwriting, but it was full of mistakes in grammar. As he was a good boy of good character and determined to become a priest, they let him continue with his studies. However, he never managed to make up for lost time."

2. "Marcellin helped a young boy who was dying and who had never heard of the faith. He was very disturbed by this and decided to involve his friend Jean-Marie in his pastoral work. He gave Jean-Marie a little catechism, but the boy admitted that he could not read or write. No matter, said Marcellin, remembering how he had struggled with reading and writing having missed out on schooling. With this boy, he decided to begin the congregation of teaching brothers that he had dreamt about at seminary. He invited Jean-Marie to become a Marist Brother. Against the advice of his Parish Priest, he bought Jean-Marie a small house near the church. Half the money for this came from Father Courveille. A second candidate presented himself a few weeks later. In Lyon Marcellin found some second-hand school manuals which they both used to prepare for the task ahead.

The branch which was grafted last gave the greatest growth! This branch was called the Marist Brothers! Who would have dared found a teaching Congregation with an illiterate? Marcellin was just the type of person to do that! When the story spread around his scattered Marist colleagues, they gave him their full support."

3. "Meanwhile, Marcellin had started a teaching Congregation and applicants flocked to it. The project appealed to the country folk of the area, but many had first of all to learn to read and write. He had to start at the lowest level, but Marcellin had faith in these simple people. With good will and an ideal, one can move mountains. He was often dealing with youngsters who were so loutish that he could not eat with them in the early years. He literally had to teach them everything, which he did so well that they had a blind trust in him and began to believe in themselves."

THE INDIA VILLAGE PROJECT

In 2006 Mrs Moira Leck, Head Teacher of Lawside RC Academy, following consultation with the staff, decided to send Mr Tony McLean and Brother Douglas Welsh to Southern India to initiate links between Lawside Academy and St. Marcellin's High School, Mangamanuthu, which is a small village near the town of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu.

The Brothers started the school beside the little village of Mangamanuthu, held evening pavement classes in the surrounding villages and initiated a project in Trichy which cares for mothers and children with AIDS, the Rainbow Project (now called Operation Rainbow).

The secondary school is exceptionally well run and thriving, the pupils being a mixture of Hindu and Christian, belonging to the lowest caste in India – Dalits (formerly called untouchables). Through education the Dalit communities, especially the women, are able to organise their lives more effectively.

The Brothers had recruited a number of local people who already had teaching qualifications. The Head Teacher was a local layman, whose father still lived in the village.

What we had not expected was the extreme poverty in which the pupils and staff had to live in the villages next to the school. The work being achieved in the school was wonderful but hampered to a certain extent by a lack of even the basic amenities in the area.

It did not take long to realise that the real key to helping the children in Mangamanuthu was to help rebuild their homes and provide sustainable livestock. The people of Mangamanuthu simply needed the means to raise themselves up in a society which did little to help them. Women are still treated poorly in Indian society and they lack empowerment. Since our visit in 2007 a great deal has been done to raise the living standards locally. The provision of livestock made it possible for the villagers to sustain themselves and they formed a cooperative to share out the goats.

Each year groups of adults and young people from St. John's High School, St. Paul's RC Academy (former Lawside RC Academy) and St. Ninian's Primary School visit our friends in Mangamanuthu, St. Marcellin's High School and Operation Rainbow, taking funds and materials for these three areas of our India Village Project. To these three projects we have added Pudayapatti Primary School and Pudayapatti Secondary School. Recently we were able to provide one-off funding for the new Viyalanmedu English Medium School.

The connections with our Brothers and friends in India have been for us a wonderfully enriching experience. We gain so much from their warmth and generosity, their welcoming attitude, their dedication to their pupils. We are privileged to know them.

Please keep our little project in your prayers.

Brother Douglas Welsh



THE INDIA PROJECT OVER THE YEARS

2007 – Phase 1: Tony and Douglas visit Trichy and Mangamanuthu with £5,000 to be spent in the local economy. They return with three suggested remits, school, village, Rainbow Project. Approved by staff of Lawside Academy

2008 – Phase 2: Members of staff, pupils and friends raise funds for the next visit.

2009 – Phase 3: Second visit to Trichy and Mangamanuthu. £10,000 taken over to be used for building houses in the village, livestock (goats), materials for school, money for Rainbow Project. All money spent in Trichy and Mangamanuthu to help the local economy. (E.g. local builders and materials, livestock purchased in the local market, DVDs and televisions bought in Trichy and taken to the school in Mangamanuthu).

2009 – Phase 4: Three members of staff visit Trichy and Mangamanuthu to spend time in village and school, checking on how the money has been used, with discretion to give more money to the village, school and Rainbow Project if they consider earlier money to be well spent. They take out approximately £11,000.

2010 – Phase 5: Members of senior management accompany four senior pupils to Mangamanuthu to spend time in the school, building closer ties with the pupils, finding ways in which the pupils from Dundee can best communicate. The senior management, with the Head Teacher of St. Marcellin's, discuss the way forward regarding curriculum sharing, staff and pupil exchange. The group also takes over £12,500 raised for our three projects.

2011 – Phase 6: Two members of staff are invited to spend time in Dundee to give them the opportunity to form their own particular impressions of our project and to give more information to the pupils, staff and friends.

2012 – Phase 7: Two additional schools become actively involved in The India Village Project – St. John's High School, Dundee and St. Ninian's Primary School, Hamilton. Representatives of both schools join St. Paul's to visit Pudayapatti Primary School and Pudayapatti Secondary School. As well as the money raised over the year, the groups take over a number of gifts and are committed to helping both schools in various areas.

2013 – Phase 8: Two groups leave for India in June. They visit Mangamanuthu village, St. Marcellin's High School, Operation Rainbow in Trichy and the two schools in Pudayapatti. In each case they take money raised to finance projects in these areas.

2014 – Phase 9: Brother Chinna and Brother Raj visit Scotland to meet with the supporters of the India Village Project. In a very busy week they are able to visit the schools, have an audience with Bishop Robson, are guests at a Civic Reception and have the opportunity to meet many of those involved in the project.

2015 – Phase 10: This year is dedicated to raising funds and selecting, interviewing and preparing pupils and staff to visit the project in June 2016.

Pictures and more detailed information can be obtained by accessing our web-site at:
<http://indiavillageproject.org>



HOW THE FUNDS HAVE BEEN USED



Village of Mangamanuthu: Eight new homes, a herd of livestock

Schools:

General: Video/DVD equipment, notebook and printer to help administration in schools, fitted out classrooms with desks and chairs

St. Marcellin's High School: School texts books, jotters and other stationery, complete set of desks and chairs for Exam Hall, football strips and sports equipment, purchase of land to allow the completion of the school building, materials to finish off new extension, fitted out and stocked science labs, a generator for the computer lab, digital still and video cameras, photocopier, audio equipment

Pudayapatti Primary School: Repainting the school building, school bags and equipment for children

Pudayapatti Secondary School: Repainting the school building, football strips and sports equipment, sewing machines for Special Unit, digital still and video cameras, funding for kitchen building and facilities

Viyalanmedu English Medium School: Kitchen, furniture, photocopier

Operation Rainbow: School fees for 35 children each year, video/DVD equipment, digital still and video cameras, sewing machines and material for school uniforms, toilets

General: Networking upgrade in Marist House in Trichy, bringing visitors over from India

EMBRACING OUR REALITY

Some 20 Brothers took up the invitation of Brother Brendan to attend a workshop in the newly-renovated house of Moyle Park, Dublin on the weekend of 28th – 29th March. The subject: “Embracing our Reality” – a topic which is becoming increasingly important for us. Declining numbers of Brothers in the Province – a decline brought about by deaths and the lack of new “recruits” – gave an urgency to the issue of how to plan for the future. The workshop was facilitated by Sister Liz Murphy RSM, a former Provincial of her congregation and a highly experienced facilitator, who works with a number of different religious congregations.

We began on Saturday morning with a prayer in the beautiful community chapel reflecting on why we had come to the workshop and the need to be truly present to all that was about to take place. In the first session we were challenged by Sister Liz to face up to our own hopes and fears for the workshop. She then gave a Powerpoint presentation on the life-cycle of religious congregations, using her own experience as a Provincial and facilitator to illustrate the issues around coping with the aging and decline in numbers of Religious. The question: What are the challenges for the Province of West-Central Europe in this situation?

Before we attempted to answer this question Brother Brendan, also using a short PowerPoint presentation, described the current situation in our Province: the houses, numbers of Brothers, care for elderly Brothers, mission and solidarity, and challenges of local and provincial leadership.

After a period of personal reflection on reactions to the presentations, we came together in three groups to share and summarize our thoughts and prepare for the afternoon sessions.

The afternoon began with a new challenge: to consider the issues for the Province in the coming decade. Once again we worked in small groups and then gathered the results of the discussions in a plenary session. We ended the day with the celebration of the Palm Sunday liturgy and an excellent meal.

On Sunday, we began the session with a reflection on the gospel of the Journey to Emmaus. The challenge here was to consider how this story related to the situation in our Province. Sister Liz then gave us five questions to think about in groups composed of Brothers from the same country:



- What is the work of the Province in light of our conversations yesterday?
- What are the implications of this for my country?
- Who needs to be involved in these conversations?
- What is my commitment to sustaining the work of the Province?
- What next steps need to be taken locally during the mandate of this Provincial Council?

After considering these questions for more than an hour, the different groups came together to present the results to the other Brothers.

The importance of the discussions over the weekend lay, not in the producing of concrete proposals for the Provincial and his Council to enact, but in the virtually unanimous acceptance of the *fact* of diminishment in the Province. There was general agreement that the term *completion* more appropriately expressed the pathway for the Province over the coming years. A number of significant themes emerged over the course of the weekend and these were helpfully summarized by Sister Liz as follows:

1. The importance of looking at the issue of care of the older members of the Province so that too heavy a burden was not being placed on the younger members.

2. A willingness to participate fully in the current examination of the structures of governance being undertaken within the Institute as a whole. There was also agreement that further restructuring of the Province would not be a solution to our problems.

3. The necessity of examining the issue of leadership of communities and the possible need to amalgamate existing communities. There was some support for the idea of a Brother having particular responsibility for leadership in each country.

4. It was noted that there would be a Provincial Chapter in 2016 and a General Chapter in 2017. The issue of how to hold elections for these events would need to be examined, given that there are many Brothers in the Province who do not know Brothers outside their own country.

5. The issues of faith and spirituality for an ageing population of the Province will need to be considered.

6. There were a number of financial issues which will have to be considered.

7. In spite of everything, hope was a prominent feature of the meeting.

The meeting opened up the discussions that the Provincial had been having with individual Brothers over the years. It also gave the younger members of the Province the opportunity to express their hopes (and fears) over their own, personal, future. There was certainly no sense that all questions had been answered and all thorny issues resolved. However, the first steps had been taken on a journey of faith – faith that God would be accompanying us and we need not fear the future.

Brother Colin Chalmers
Brother Alois Engel

A FEW THOUGHTS AFTER A LONG RELIGIOUS LIFE

In recent decades many things have changed and been transformed. Each of us has experienced change in our personal lives as well as in our lives as Religious. In order to embrace the changes in religious life today and in the future it is helpful to highlight what these changes are. Certainly we will always have developments which don't please us and indeed cause us pain; but there are others which are signals of hope even if at first we don't recognise them as such. Change and transition will always be with us; and it is good that it is so.

Some of these changes are now a reality today; others are only beginning to be recognised. Communities have become much smaller but perhaps more family like. This is evident in our houses, our daily life, our forms of apostolate, but also in the whole area of our religious life. The large communities we have been accustomed to in Germany appear to have no future.

Religious formation will be a greater priority in the future. Recognising religious values and seeing religious life as Christ centred has become more difficult and is much more demanding than in earlier times. Unfortunately, in this area conversation in Church and religious circles is rather modest. People hardly ever speak of matters of religion and faith. These are now private concerns. Shouldn't we see public conversation in this important area of religious life as fruitful and enriching? My experience has shown that those Brothers and laity who are in contact with others, for example in spiritual movements, are more open to exchanging ideas. Since the Second Vatican Council these groups have enriched the spiritual life and other developments in Religious Institutes.

A short glance into our apostolate in school and Internat. Certainly, we Marists were determined to give a good education. The same is true of our various trades occupations. But did we always get the balance right? Didn't we wish on occasions to be the best state school and put more energy into buildings and equipment than into the Christian influence of our work and training of our co-workers? We can be thankful that we have been able to hand over respon-

sibility for our major establishments to the Church. This enables us to seek out simpler activities which are more in keeping with the needs of young people. Unfortunately, our advancing years hardly allow us to go ahead in this direction. A slow new thinking process is in operation here. Activities other than those of schools and other simple forms of apostolate are appearing now in much stronger profile, for example advocacy of the rights of children both in the Church and in society. In this respect FMSI in Geneva is on the right track.

A crucial part of our responsibility today is undertaken by our co-workers. We are happy that engaged Marist laity, men, women and young people work with us in the spirit of Champagnat. This partnership is even more demanding of our cooperation and support at Provincial and Institute level. The Movement of Marist Laity is growing and its contribution to our Marist work is becoming more and more significant. So much so, that we Brothers have become the co-workers of the laity. This is a great support and takes a burden from us. It is another sign of hope for the future.

Our understanding of "Mission" is also something that has changed. The development of the "ad gentes" programme in Asia or the opportunities for young people from our schools to experience the needs in other countries, as has happened with CMI in Mindelheim, are a good introduction to modern pastoral concerns. The opportunities to collaborate with lay Marists and other Christian organisations create new ways for the future. Certainly, this will require new legal structures and appropriate incorporation in the Institute. The way we are pursuing things now gives us cause for hope.

For us Brothers today the question arises as to how and where we as religiously formed people can be of service in a pluralist and secular society, bearing in mind our experience of life and the age of the Brothers. What does God want of us, of me? This is a question which perhaps as individuals we all ask, but it is an important question for every Institute and its

self-understanding. To give more space to prayer, to our commitment to religious life, to mutual reflection, are not these invitations which are especially appropriate to us older Brothers? The ecclesiastical words of “mystic” and “prophet” should not just remain as slogans in religious life. They must make demands on us.

Our Institute is inherently embedded in communion and community. These should inform our spiritual life, our community life, our mission and our apostolate. There are many reasons that these are not as significant as they were in the past. Is it not perhaps that the personal wishes and skills of the individual become more important than the general need of the community? Religious life is becoming more communal in living together, eating and praying. A common apostolate might also happen in the future. Or...?

Today, international communities are seen as positive. Is it the case that such groups will be better suited to the spiritual life, the search for new apostolates and the formation of communal life today

than groups of a single nationality, for example a community of German Brothers only? Variety and difference can be enriching in a community. I find the building up and expansion of such mixed communities is good for a world-wide Institute.

The age structure within our communities has certainly led to big changes in our communities and our apostolate. It seems to be a *via dolorosa* that God has in mind for us. But we needn't be sad since in between times we have been relieved of many of our burdens and responsibilities. This creates space and time for our “being” as Marist Brothers in a changing time. We can now give more personal time to prayer and to be with our Brothers. Here, Mary is a model for us in her simplicity, modesty and availability to listen to her son.

There will certainly be more changes in religious life in the future; that religious life does have a future, of that I am convinced. We do not know what routes it will follow. It will be critical however to read the signs of the times as presented to us by God, to value them

and be courageous and daring in following them.

To sum up, I see a future in religious life that will create and nurture forms of common life in smaller communities; that will take new forms and responsibility in our approach to young people; that will deepen our understanding of God in this age of cosmology and dialogue with other religions; which takes seriously our personal relationship to God and allows us to be cheerful Christians in the knowledge that He loved us first and always has done. This relationship to God is for everyone and for all times the very core and benchmark of the spiritual life and of our future. This change is a life work for the individual and the whole Institute. It is this which will influence religious life in the future and, I hope, enrich it.

Brother Heinrich Schamberger

BEING A VOLUNTEER IN THE PACIFIC

A young man from Mindelheim looks back on his time in Samoa

Shortly before I boarded the plane to come all the way from Germany to Apia, Samoa, my mum gave me a letter and told me to read it on the plane. She wrote that it is very hard for her to let me go but she knows that I want to do this. So be friendly, enrich your mind, trust in God and remember your family.

Now three days before I return to Germany I read that letter again. Did I do all of that? Well, to know that I should go over my time here in Samoa and in the end we'll see.

I arrived here in Samoa on the 26th of July after a 30 hour journey. My first impression of the community in Apia was quite surprising. It was like an ordinary family I joined with Brother Bernard (as grandfather) and Brother John (father and community leader) and last but not least Brother Amberoti (brother). The welcoming was so warm and I felt from the very first minute that I will have a good time here. But I didn't come to Samoa only to live with the Brothers. I was here for work.

On the following Monday John presented me to over 600 students and over 20 staff members. I was deeply impressed to see 600 students who all looked the same. Blue shirts, brown shorts, black hair, dark eyes and the



Cmi: team and participants

same skin colour. How shall I tell them apart? But gradually, after making numerous mistakes with names, I started to know the boys and it was the same with the staff members. It is a beautiful mixture of ages here at Marist Brothers Primary School Mulivai. The staff accepted me very quickly and before taking over the Physical Education I was asked to work in the bursar's office, which was quite hard for me as I didn't know the local language but of course you still have to explain to parents what school fee they have to pay. Also selling all kind of stationery to the students like pencils, sharpeners or books. I can say it was hard but I also had much fun during that time especially because of the next big thing coming up: the UN Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference.

After three weeks of running the bursar's office the three-week holiday break came and I was selected with the other young teachers to look after the students who joined a camp which was organized for our boys to exercise as well as practicing their cultural item that was to be used for the opening of the SIDS Conference that was held in Apia. It was a big honour for the boys and for the school that they were selected with students from two other Catholic schools to perform that opening dance together. But to do it in a good way you have to train hard. That's what the camp was for and the boys recognized that from the first day on. Five days I spent nearly all of my time with the boys – cooking for them, giving them advice and in the break entertaining or playing with them. The performance at the opening day was spectacular and the boys did very well. I have to say that the SIDS Conference was not only a highlight for Samoa but it was also a highlight for me. I was allowed to watch the boys' performances during the time of the camp and also on the special day. A performance I will never forget!

During the first break there was another highlight waiting for me to explore: the big island of Samoa-Savaii. I travelled on my own by ferry and it was absolutely beautiful. A real good place to watch the beauties of the Samoan landscape.

Coming back I got a few new tasks in the community life. In the first month I was more a quiet observer and participant in the prayer and of course in the meals. But now I was asked to lead the prayer and also to cook a meal once a week. I always stayed at hotel mama, didn't have a problem with the prayer, that was a task I was looking forward to. I saw the main problem was in cooking. I never cooked before and I am also not very talented. But during that time I always tried my best, no Brother got sick and no Brother ever complained about the food I cooked.

Back to school now my time has come. I was allowed to introduce the game I love – football! I tried to teach all the boys from Year 1 to Year 8 some skills and the rules of football. In the beginning it was very hard to see how the boys play my beloved game. But with

hard weekly training the boys soon developed a quite skilled style of playing football. They trained to perfect their skills like protecting the ball, shooting on the goal or tackling the opponent without hitting him to the ground. And all of that was only for one thing: the big Football Tournament after the exams. I was asked by Brother John to make it big – and in the end it was a great six day tournament with more than 450 participating students. It was simply amazing with what passion and determination the students participated. And of course the most important part – FUN. Looking at the faces of the small boys and seeing their broad smiles after they scored a goal was one of the greatest things I ever saw. And also the weather was nearly perfect the whole time and that's during the rainy season in Samoa which is not a usual thing.

I received a lot of positive feedback from students, teachers, and parents and of course from the many Brothers I met. This is the point where I have to thank you all for making my stay unique and awesome. A special thanks to Brother David for the invitation to visit the Brothers in New Zealand and traveling around with Brother Sefo and Brother Jone. Also a special thanks to the Alafua-community here in Apia for all the nice evenings, conversations and for never getting tired of answering my questions. And last but not least a BIG BIG "Dankeschön" to the community here in Mulivai for giving me accommodation, a place to work and a real family! I will never forget each one of you.

Now back to the question from the beginning. My mum wrote:

- Be friendly: I think I can say that after all the feedback I got I wasn't rude.
- Enrich your mind: Over the last five months I saw so many different things, tasted so many new sorts of food and experienced a completely new culture so I also think here that I did that.
- Trust in God: Without God I wouldn't be writing this. But I have to say I see my faith now a little bit with different eyes. I concentrate more on the presence of Jesus during my day and not only in church or in my prayers.
- Remember my family: Nowadays it's not difficult to stay in contact even if the family is at the other end of the world. I always thought about my family. I never felt homesick as the Brothers here in Samoa were my "new" family.

In the end I can say I am more than happy that I took that step. Out of my comfort zone off to the South Pacific to meet new people, a new culture, and a new language. I saw things many of my friends would like to see but have never had the opportunity. Here is now the next point to say once again a BIG "Fa'afetai tele" to all of you. May the Lord bless you always wherever you go and whatever you do.

Christian Rettenmayr

SETTING OUT AS PILGRIMS

Third Age Renewal Programme

"Don't forget that we are pilgrims!" These words were written to us by Brother Bernard Beaudin, animator of the Renewal Programme for French-speaking Brothers held in Rome this springtime.

*"Life is a journey, a long pilgrimage!"
"To set out, is to die a little!"*

We set out, we left our countries – France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and Greece – to come to Rome, the Eternal City, to our large and beautiful Mother House, and from there to set off on the paths of God.

In those first days, from Sunday 15th March, we learnt to get to know each other and to appreciate each other. A great fraternity was created, little by little among the 22 Brothers on the programme and with the Brothers in the community in the Mother House.

We set out, each in our own way, on the path of our past, our journey, our holy story.

"I am going to tell you of the marvels the Lord has worked in me, rather than what I have done!" René, who took us on the Way of Santiago de Compostela, which he had completed twice, alone, but led by the Lord! We are all pilgrims!

What beautiful and varied tableaux of beautiful fulfilled lives, which are not yet finished! The variety of presentations from the simple summary, the poignant witness such as that of Yvon who escaped death in the earthquake in Haiti, to the colourful images of the PowerPoint presentations on renewal, the parents and family members, the Brothers whom we had met on our life journey, as well as many other messengers from God who *"writes straight lines on our curved timelines"*.

And Maurice, whom God leads where he wills, through diverse paths: *"I went to study at Arlon rather than Carlsbourg to avoid my uncle who was a priest there."* Maurice became a Little Brother of Mary rather than a Christian Schools Brother.

"I am an exile!" is the timeline of Roberto, the son of an Italian miner. All his life, he has gone out – Northern Italy, Charleroi, Southern Italy, Charleroi, Arlon, Malmedy, Couvin, Arlon... and one day, perhaps, Habay-la-Vieille!

The common factor for many of the Brothers is a large family, very Christian, and often from a farming background! The nest for vocations!

Real, one of a family of 12 children: *"From the age of ten, I had plans, and it wasn't to take on farming..."* and then, very emotional, Real added: *"My brother Fernand who was killed by a car aged 16, did not follow in my father's footsteps either!"*

Several Brothers went to the Missions, setting out as pilgrims of the Good News: Haiti, Cameroon, Cambodia, Mexico...

Theo stayed in Belgium educating children for 36 years at Wervik, and visiting the poor in Brussels; this is also Mission! *"The poor evangelise us!"*

...We are pilgrims and we shall soon set out on our way: L'Hermitage, the cradle of our religious family, where Champagnat is still alive, Lourdes, a corner of heaven that has fallen to earth, Assisi in the beautiful Umbria of Saint Francis:

*"Praise be you, Lord, through our Mother Earth..."
(Canticle of the Sun – Saint Francis)*

"Life is a journey, a long pilgrimage!"

...We are moving forwards to Easter! We are being renewed already day by day, with Christ, to a whole new life! Easter..., Passover..., let's go to God's springtime!

*"To set out is to die a little.
To die is to be reborn in God."*

Brother Robert Lemaire



IN MEMORIAM



Brother Franz Eberle

22nd August 1939

20th April 2015

Franz Eberle was born on 22nd August 1939 in Walenstadt, Switzerland to his parents, Franz and Emma Eberle, neé Lendi, who had a sizeable farm in Riet von Walenstadt. Franz had three siblings, Marianne, Martha and Albert.

After primary schooling Franz went to secondary school at St. Gingolph on Lake Geneva, a language school conducted by the Marist Brothers where he learned fluent French. It was the congenial atmosphere of the Internat there which led Franz to become a Marist. He came to Furth where he began his Noviciate in August 1957 receiving the name Brother Urban. He made his first vows a year later and proceeded from there to the Scholasticate at Mindelheim where he successfully completed his leaving certificate (*Abitur*) in 1961.

In the years following Brother Franz worked as educator in St. Gingolph and Fribourg where he trained as a sports master. Over many years he organised ski courses and holiday camps for his pupils in the Swiss mountains. For Brother Franz the Alps were home and he was to be found there often with friends on hiking and skiing tours.

In 1968 Brother Franz took over the running of the Internat at Walterswil in central Switzerland. His work at this time was characterised by qualities of patience and perseverance. In 1997, 29 years later, the school was closed. So what now? In the course of a sabbatical Franz came into touch with the Carthusians of La Valsainte and lived with the monks as an aspirant from 1997 to 2002. Before official entrance into the monastery Franz had to undergo a full medical. It was discovered that he had early signs of Parkinson's disease making transfer to the Carthusians impossible. So, he spent several weeks with Brother Aloys Kessler at the pilgrimage site of Maria Bildstein. This emotional rollercoaster Franz was able to take with great equanimity. He was a very religious person for whom prayer was extremely important. He quotes in one of his notes: *"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even when he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*

In 2002 Franz came to Furth. His illness developed but no one ever heard him complain; he was a patient, sensitive and introverted Brother but always grateful for every good turn. In the final years he was confined to bed or a wheelchair. And finally Franz had to spend his last two years in a care home in Pattendorf, then Pfeffenhausen near Furth.

Brother Franz died on Monday 20th April. For him it was a release, a journey home to his Lord and God.

Brother Winfried Schreieck

IN MEMORIAM



Brother Gérald Dumont

3rd April 1921

28th May 2015

Léandre Dumont was born on 3rd April 1921 in Witry near Fauvillers in the Belgian province of Luxembourg, and was baptised on 5th April 1921. Brother Gérald wanted the date of his baptism to be mentioned when he died. It demonstrates the importance that he attached to it.

Brother Gérald entered the noviciate of Mont-Saint-Guibert in 1935 and professed his first vows on 23rd August 1937. The first community of his active life was Herseaux Ballon where he was the cook. He professed his perpetual vows at Pittem on 23rd August 1942.

A graduate from the Teaching Institute at Arlon, Brother Gérald taught in Primary Schools in working class areas until the end of the 1960s. After that he carried out administrative tasks in several schools and communities. He retired to the community of Genval in 2003.

Brother Gérald was a cultured man who was interested in many aspects of society. He had wanted a subscription to a newspaper in the south of the country, so that he could follow events in his native region.

Beyond his attachment to his region and to his family, Brother Gérald demonstrated faithfulness to his vocation as a Marist Brother. He exemplified the religious who shared in community prayer and lived a life of personal prayer. He had a special devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, whose little statue accompanied him on his last journey. This devotion was apparent in a little corner of his bedroom, where several little lamps shone constantly around this little statue.

The end of a long life is sometimes painful and demanding. Brother Gérald had to endure this as his life neared its end.

Brother Gérald passed away very quietly at Genval on 28th May 2015, just after the feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit guided the life of Brother Gérald to its culmination, to its completion.

Brother Maurice Taildeman