



Marist Brothers
Province of West-Central Europe

BULLETIN

December 2016

Dear readers,

Two special days of joy, of birth, of commemoration, are almost here – Christmas and the 200th anniversary of the Marist Institute on the 2nd January 2017. Both feasts are celebrated all over the world, both feasts bring people together, people nearby and far away.

Editorial

The General Council has expressed the hope that the beginning of the third Marist century will be “a new beginning”, and to that end has got several new initiatives going. One of these is the project “Lavalla200>”, which has led to the birth of a number of communities in various parts of the world, whose members are lay people and Brothers from different countries and cultures. The community which is being established in Europe is in Sicily. Its composition is a good example of bringing people from nearby and far away together: two lay men from South America, a Brother from Australia and a Brother from Italy. And their current voluntary work also brings them together with people from nearby and far away: immigrants and boat refugees who have risked their lives to come to Europe. The five European Provinces encourage the Brothers and lay people in their countries to feel connected with the new community and to communicate this to its members. In this spirit you will find an article on the new community on page 11 of this Bulletin.

Internationality and bringing people together – it is what the General Council promotes in the Institute and what the Council members wish to highlight themselves by being in various places all over the world on the 2nd January. In our Province we also hope to promote a sense of togetherness with the other European Provinces, e.g. by means of a series of articles in which they introduce themselves; this time it is the Province of Compostela (page 13). The Province of L’Hermitage, which introduced itself in the previous edition of the Bulletin, also has a proposal for connecting Marists worldwide on the 2nd January: they ask all Marists to get up at dawn, choose a comfortable place, pray, and read a letter which follows a tradition of Father Champagnat, who often sent circular letters to his Little Brothers, including a greeting for the New Year. The letter can be found on www.champagnat.org (news item of 13th December).

Finally, I should like to bring to your attention that Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, will be connected with all Marists in the world on the 2nd January by means of a video which has been published on www.champagnat.org (20th December), with greetings from all the Marist countries in the world. A link to the video will be available on the Province web site (www.marists.eu) soon.

I wish all of you a Happy Christmas, and my congratulations to all Marists in the Province and the world on the 200th anniversary of the Institute which has brought them all together.

Daphne van Dongen



Content

Sister Death	3
Taking steps towards our new beginning	5
Co-creators of a common future	6
A piece of heaven for 65 Kenyan orphans	7
From the history of the Institute – Part 3	10
New European community in Sicily	11
The European Provinces – Part 2: Compostela	13
Brother Ludwig Spitzer 1925-2016	16

Translators

Philippe Charrier
Charles Gay FMS
Augustin Hendlmeier FMS
Carlos Lacante FMS
Michael Murphy
Albert Thomé FMS

Sister Death

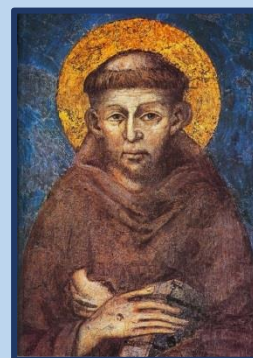
Dear Brothers and Marist friends,

The month of November is the time of the year when we traditionally think of those who have died. This is a valuable tradition, as it invites us to call to mind those who had an important place in our lives, and whom we want to remember with gratitude and affection. Thoughts of death have not been far away for me in recent months, with the deaths of Brothers John Hyland and Ludwig Spitzer, as well as the death of my uncle during the month of June.

As well as calling to mind those who have died, our Christian tradition puts before us thoughts of our own death. I remember singing the hymn to St. Joseph as a child on the feast of St. Joseph. I was slightly amused when we sang the chorus inviting St. Joseph to “Teach us how to die.” As a child under twelve years of age, thoughts of learning how to die were rather far from my mind! As we get older, of course, the reality of death impinges on us in a different way.

St. Francis of Assisi spoke about “Sister Death,”

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.



For St. Francis, death was a natural part of life. A few years ago I asked Brother Alan Hargan to prepare a graph with the average age at which Brothers had died in the Province of Britain and Ireland. During the first years (1851 – 1870) the average age of death was 35. In our Province it is currently around 82 years of age. As a society, we have significantly extended life expectancy, with all of the advantages and benefits that come with an increase in length of years. However, this increase does not take away the inevitability of death. As we know, death can sometimes be a gift and a blessing. That was certainly true for my own parents. Their deaths were graced moments for me and the members of my family, partly as it brought the suffering associated with their illnesses to an end, and partly as their last days and weeks were significant moments for the family, despite the inevitable sense of sadness at losing people who were dear to us.

With these thoughts playing around in my mind, I recently read a short article by a man who had a terminal illness, and who wrote about how fortunate he was that he had time to prepare for the end of his life. He wrote about having time to come to terms with his condition, to become reconciled to his life, to avoid anger and regrets, and to enjoy the life he had left with a spirit of gratitude.*

By another coincidence I am currently reading a book of spiritual reflections by Robert Wicks. The day after reading the article I mentioned above, I turned to the next reflection in the book which is entitled, “Understanding the important role of death... while you’re still alive.” Wicks begins by mentioning how we are culturally conditioned to avoid talking about death, but how our spiritual lives can benefit from a healthy awareness of our own mortality.

Wicks suggests that holding an awareness of death in our spiritual lives can give us a sense of perspective: “When we realize that we are dying and so is everyone else, we tend to be less demeaning, demanding, or hard to please.”** He continues by suggesting that this awareness may also make us

more tolerant of those with whom we live or work, and whose behaviour we may find difficult: “We will realize that those who use unpalatable defences have to live with themselves and this is the best they can do at the moment.”

It will not surprise you that, for me, these thoughts about mortality and endings also relate to what is happening to us as a Province. We know the statistics about our age profile, and the number of houses that have been closed in recent years. I have spoken to Brothers about these as part of recent conversations. I find that the majority of Brothers are realistic about this situation. However, there are two ways of responding; we can accept this situation and look for ways that our Marist mission can continue with the participation and leadership of lay Marists, or we can give up in a spirit of resignation, as there is nothing we believe we can do.

In the book I mentioned above Wicks quotes Richard Bode, who writes:

The day will come when I will die. So, the only matter of consequence before me is what I will do with my allotted time. I can remain on shore, paralyzed with fear, or I can raise my sails and soar in the breeze.



The same can be said of us as a Province. We can decide to “remain on the shore,” paralyzed with fear and despondency, or we can raise our Marist sails and soar with the breeze of the Spirit. As I look back on the developments in our Province over the past 16 years, I can see many ways that the Spirit has led us to new shores. I would like to think that this attitude can offer us new perspectives and hope, with confidence that the work we have done in our lives can continue – but in different ways.

We cannot avoid death, and we need to plan for the gradual completion of the work of the Brothers in our Province. Following the advice of the writers whom I have quoted in this article, we can plan for this reality and embrace it with honesty, and have confidence in the Spirit who inspired St. Marcellin and who can continue to work in us and our lay friends. Keeping death before us, which is appropriate at this stage in the liturgical year, can provide healthy perspectives that can enhance our spiritual and Marist lives.

Sincerely,

Brendan Geary FMS
Provincial



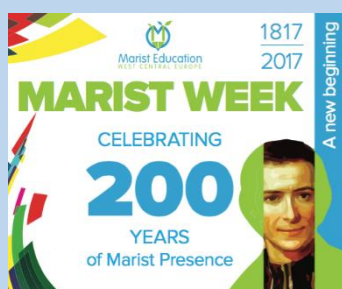
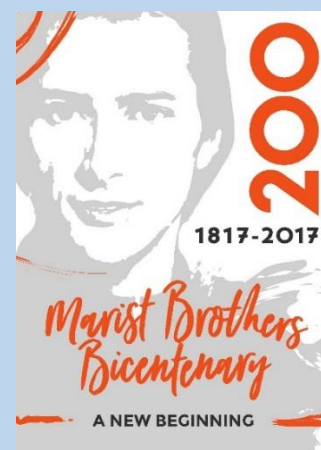
* Riley-Smith, Jonathan (24th September, 2016, *The Tablet*). At the hour of our death, p. 6.

** Wicks, Robert (2014). *No problem, Turning the next corner in your spiritual life*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books. pp. 48 – 49.

Taking steps towards our new beginning

In recent months we have begun our bicentenary plans and celebrations in West-Central Europe. It's a time of great excitement, hope and wonderment for all that is possible in this wonderful Marist family.

The planning for celebrations has enabled us to create strong structures in our schools across the Province. Structures such as Marist Core Teams, which now have a concrete place for Brothers and teachers together; and structures for our young people, led by our young people, in the form of Marist Student Leadership. It has also inspired conversations about what we would like our new beginning to look like and empowered us all to take ownership of this vision.



Recently Ireland began the academic year with a series of events leading to a Marist Week. Leading up to Marist Week a myriad of events took place. Students studied the Marist Curriculum in their Religious Education classes, new Marist value posters were introduced into classrooms, Marist Week packs with project ideas were distributed to subject departments, Marist timelines were displayed on school corridors and all this work culminated in a Marist celebratory mass and meal together as one community. A truly holistic event.

A highlight of the week was Brother Tony Leon speaking to students about Marist presence around the world. He opened their eyes to the Marist world and also created a real awareness for many of their Marist identity.

The next step for Irish Marist schools is to hold a joint national event on March 11th with the focus on planning our Marist future together.

Following on from Ireland, schools in Scotland and in Germany are beginning to plan their Marist celebrations, with a key focus on the bicentenary and the new beginning. Brother John Klein will speak to students across Germany at a Marist Symposium next March 2017. Marists from across the Province will be invited to attend, strengthening once more our Province family.



These schools will also take the steps of introducing the Marist Curriculum and Marist Student Leadership Programme in the next academic year, creating a unified Marist programme across our diverse cultures.

These events and plans are only a few of so many that are ongoing in our Province. Our projects across the Province are inspiring and transforming young people's lives each day.

Looking around our schools and projects in the Province West-Central Europe today, I see a real energy for Marist work, a confidence for a Marist future, and a dedication and commitment to our Marist family.

The perfect ingredients for our new beginning.



Aisling Demaison
Director of Marist Education

www.maristeu.com

Links to photos of events in the Province:

- Marist Week Ireland, October: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duHE-epMExM>
- Marist Student Leadership Training, September: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3cCnRSJtg4&-feature=youtu.be>
- Province Youth at "Dare to Dream" International Marist Youth Event, Lyon, July: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On0ELLe0Aa8>
- Marist Gathering, Guardamar, June: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeMjpinuyuE>
- Province Pilgrimage to the Hermitage, March: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VDqgb4bUTw>
- Marist West-Central Europa – Our Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlZG9kfp8-8>

"CO-CREATORS OF A COMMON FUTURE"

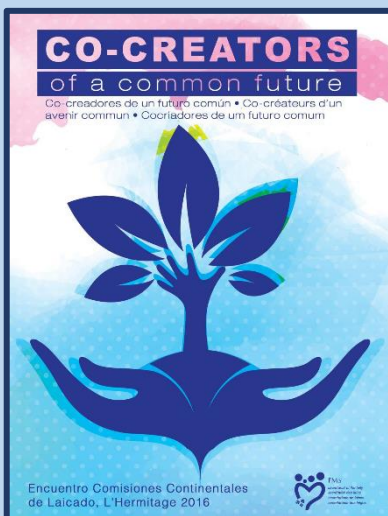
The "Brothers and Laity" Commission met in the Hermitage from 3-8 October. A total of fifty participants, male and female, from various parts of the world took part. It was as a member of this commission representing the Province of West-Central Europe that I was able to be present. My colleague, Christian Diepold accompanied me; we are both teachers at the Maristenkolleg Mindelheim.

The importance of this meeting was clear from the presence among us, at the opening, of Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, while Brother Antonio Ramahlo from the General Council accompanied us throughout the meeting. During the week Pep Buetas, Tony Clarke and Brother Javier Espinosa organised the work groups and coordinated their findings. The purpose of the meeting was to put forward suggestions for the General Chapter of 2017 in Columbia. These are the suggestions

- The vocation of the "Lay Marist"
- The Marist spirit of unity
- Joint formation with the Brothers
- Lay articulation
- Communion between Brothers and Lay People
- Effecting the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

The daily meetings began with a morning prayer in some particularly chosen place within the Hermitage. The members of the various working groups were interchanged in the course of the week so that members from the different continents could get to know one another better and get a better understanding of their particular circumstances. In the middle of the week, to relieve the intensity of the work, we visited several places associated with the life of Champagnat, such as Fourvière, Le Rosey, Marlhes, La Valla. The conclusion of the gathering was a celebration of the Eucharist followed by a pleasant social gathering.

The presence of lay Marists who in their daily work over many years encouraged the following of the Marist way, as well as the presence of several Marist Brothers who worked on and promoted change within the Marist Family, created from the very beginning an invisible thread of unity which had everyone pull together. Very quickly the details of the work were discussed and constructive proposals put forward.



In the course of the week the discussions got bogged down due to different understandings of words and concepts as seen in the different translations into Spanish and English and these could not be satisfactorily discussed and clarified in the short time available.

As a result of this, although at the end of the meeting no commonly accepted proposals could be adopted, nevertheless, the various discussions on the central themes as well as the results of the open sessions were so powerful, that Brother Javier Espinosa and Pep Buetas from the Secretariat of the Laity have put together a concluding paper which they have forwarded to the various commission members.

To conclude I wish to thank sincerely the Hermitage community for their whole-hearted welcome and excellent care. This intensive week's work has been good for my colleague, Christian Diepold, and myself. So, likewise I also wish to thank him for his competent help in translation and the depth of knowledge which he always brought to the various discussions.

Wolfgang Hacker



A piece of heaven for 65 Kenyan orphans



Summer camp at the Marist Primary School Our Lady of Oore

The primary school of "Our Lady of Oore" was founded under the stewardship of the German Province of the Marist Brothers in 1996 in the village of that name situated on Lake Victoria on the most South Westerly part of Kenya. It is now Brothers from Kenya and Rwanda who work there since the school is now part of the Province of Africa, Central East (PACE). The school is attended by

around 350 boys and girls from Classes 1 to 6, so between the ages of 8 and 16 years. Since the school results are well above the national average, even parents from Nairobi send their children to the school. Some two thirds of the pupils stay at the boarding school while the rest walk to school every day, which for many of them is quite far.

The idea of a summer camp derived from my visit to Orote at the end of a year's Sabbath in August 2015. The Director of the school, Brother Bernard, told me at that time that all children were obliged to go home three times a year for four weeks during the holidays. The orphans also had to travel for these holiday periods and were assigned by the village elders to unknown families. In that situation, a number of the children had bad experiences. In response to my question how it would be if those children were able to remain at the school during the holidays, Brother Bernard declared, "This would be heaven for our kids, but we can't afford it."

As a result of this conversation the idea arose to organise a four-week summer camp for the orphans, with financial help from Germany and which would be staffed for a minimum of two weeks by German volunteers. So at least, these regularly neglected children could experience a piece of heaven for four weeks.

I was able to travel to Kenya from 12th August to 5th September with nine former students of the Maristenkolleg Mindelheim and a sports teacher and with the help of Kenyans establish a summer school for 65 orphans. Under various different themes I invited the German participants to share their strongest impressions and so gather a broad picture of this exciting time. There now follow two of these experiences.

Michael Schmalzl FMS



Simple presence



Morning prayer

Family backgrounds of the children

At first we were quite surprised at how withdrawn the children were with us. We had a wonderful reception and at the airport had met a group of very open children without any shyness. So our expectations were really high on the second day when we had our first real contact with the children and wanted to hand out Summer-Camp-T-shirts. But instead of happy, cheerful laughing we were met by silent thanks and suspicion. It was clear that we were not dealing with unburdened, free and spoiled children. All of them were carrying a lot of baggage – what to do? Helplessness was all around. The conversation in the group affirmed the impression of each of us. But there was nothing else we could do but get the planned activities underway and see what happened. Attempts at approaching them seemed more likely to be met with resistance.

To our astonishment it was the simplest common activities which worked best viz. presence (one of our Marist virtues!); the simple fact that we are there; the fact that we take the long way round and do not cut corners but take time for the children. When we sit there and exude contentment the

children come of their own accord. The knot is unravelled – they speak, they come alive, they laugh... at last! With their increasing trust we discover more about the background of the children. Here we encounter the depths of fate: what these children in their young innocent lives have had to endure is impossible to describe. The pleading in the eyes of an 11-year-old who is begging for a Euro for the journey home to her mother otherwise she will have to live on the street or worse still, with dubious relatives. Children who recognise and have experienced the lowest level of human life which they are condemned to live. And yet we have been allowed to experience them as children with optimism, self-assurance, hope and faith. These were their gift to us. Yes, these children have been gifts to us. With us it is very often other things which are important and obvious. We seem to lose social interaction and focus on money, prosperity and power. Those are the things that make us happy! But how well off are we really?

Corinna Weigle

Morning prayer

As a pupil in a Christian school I was quite familiar with the concept of “Morning Prayer” and I was pretty certain of what awaited me. But the reality taught me otherwise and better. Instead of the short silent pause and an Our Father and some petition, the experience of a Kenyan morning prayer in Orote was truly a song of praise for the new day in the truest sense of the words.

The children assembled early for prayer and, without any teacher or other external prodding, they began the prayer themselves with both conviction and enthusiasm. During the prayer various wonderful hymns were sung accompanied by enthusiastic clapping and laughter. In this way the 12-year-old children conducted a simple straightforward 45 minute prayer service. Each morning a different person, with minimum preparation, would say a few words on the chosen reading. In the course of time we also conducted a couple of the morning prayers and soon understood how demanding that can be... for us grown-ups! It is amazing how piously and disciplined these children live their faith. Theologians and sociologists discuss how this comes about and what it means. I as a lay person could see with my own eyes what the faith does and means in a land like Kenya, for the children from the bleakest of backgrounds. It gives a certainty, direction and hope and takes on a highly important role which is contagious among all those present.

This was a stunning experience every morning and I am grateful to have been part of it.

Oli Klein



From the history of the Institute ~ 3

This is the third part of the series of events and particular incidents in the history of the Institute in the years following Champagnat as recorded in the annals of Brother Avit. The narration includes certain noteworthy incidents as well as important events in the development of the Institute which give us an insight into the life of the Brothers and the problems of the time.

Life in the Hermitage

In a letter of Brother François to the missionaries in Oceania cited by Brother Avit we learn something about daily life in the Hermitage and particularly aspects of the lives of certain Brothers. The laconic and somewhat ironic style of the writing which shows up Brother François as a gifted writer is noteworthy: “Brother Louis is so taken up with the spirit of Mercantilism that were the journey to Oceania no more difficult than that to Lyon, he would have brought you writing paper and books every month. Brother Stanislaus dreams regularly of beautiful Madonnas and beautiful ceremonies. Brother Jean-Joseph keeps the spindle moving as if he were 30 years of age. Soutanes and trousers continue to be provided by Brother Hippolyte and Brother Jacques is constantly among his cows and poultry. And Brothers Honoré and Pierre never give up working on the building bricks. Brother Jerome is always good at leading the horse. You will be pleased to learn that Brother Spiridion is happily occupied with making shoes.” (II, 113)

Plans to leave the Hermitage

It is not well known that in 1852 serious thought was given to leaving the Hermitage and to build another Motherhouse nearby. According to Avit the reason for this plan was the house was too small to accommodate all the Brothers at the annual retreat. But the superiors put forward strong reasons of health

for the decision. Avit writes, “The doctors pointed that the house was unhealthy and that the considerable falling night temperatures were bad for the health of the Brothers particularly so for the sick Brothers.” And so there was soon a plan for a house in Le Creux, therefore near to Isieux in the direction of St. Chamond for which the majority the Council opted. Avit alone was not in agreement and demanded further investigation into the matter and himself brought forward arguments which led to the abandonment of the project. Above all, he pointed out that the new site they had in mind was too open to the wind, too far from the railway station and above all, it was too near to the factories. This final argument seemed to tip the balance since it would have meant giving up the peace and quiet of the Hermitage.

The poorest schools

The really poor schools were certainly those in Breteuil. According to Avit they were always in “a critical condition”. The very damp classrooms which could barely accommodate 100 pupils had to accept 200 pupils. The financial situation of the Brothers was so poor that they were always in debt “to avoid dying of hunger”. Although the Superior General, Brother François, asked the bishop in those circumstances to be allowed to close the school which the bishop opposed, one could only hope an appeal could be made to the local authority; but there is no record of such an appeal.

Brothers wanting to be priests

The essential apostolate of the Brothers was the teaching in the primary schools in the countryside. Only this was recognised by the authorities. Had they taught Latin, the schools would have been closed. Had they been able to teach Latin it would have been as Avit expressed, “impossible to hold on to the Brothers.” “The more pious ones would want to be

priests and others would enter the lay teaching service." Every year some were lost to the "illness of Latin" (*"la maladie du latin"*).

The use of tobacco

The use of tobacco had to be reviewed constantly. Needless to say it concerned the use of snuff since at that time it was used for medicinal purposes. Records from the Hermitage show that with the increasing number of Brothers, the use of tobacco was ever increasing. Already in 1841 Brother François wrote in one of his first circulars, "To use tobacco or spectacles one requires the explicit permission of the Brother Superior General which he will only grant after consultation with the doctor. Anyone who has such permission to use tobacco may not offer it to another." An interesting note on this topic is the fact that Father Colin was notorious for his use of snuff.

The correction of novices

The regulation regarding the clothing of the novices introduced by Father Champagnat was upheld. They were clothed in the soutane but were not allowed to wear the rabat. When this was later allowed then in the event of a novice having to be punished for some matter or oth-

er, he would in the first instance have to stop wearing the rabat for some time and in a more serious case the soutane. In this way he was seen as a public offender. At the ceremony of the receiving of the habit the parents of the candidates were not allowed to have a meal in the house.

Train journey at half-price

In the course of time many Brothers were making journeys be it because of regular transfers to other communities or due to new foundations or to go the retreat. Also visitors, like Brother Avit himself, were often on the road. The accounts in the Hermitage show how the cost of travel rose from year to year. In this situation it was beneficial to come to an agreement with the rail transport company for Paris-Lyon and the one for the South that the Brothers pay only half the standard fare when their journey was on Institute business. To enjoy the benefit from this all that was needed was a copy of the obedience or a permission with the appropriate stamp.

Augustin Hendlmeier FMS



New European community in Sicily



On the 2nd January 2017 the Marist Institute will celebrate the bicentenary of its foundation. In the letters which have been written by Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, during the past three years of preparation for the bicentenary, he wrote about a new project to be called "International Communities for a New Beginning" and extended the following invitation to all Marists of Champagnat: "to discern, before God, whether you feel called to leave your home country to form part of an international community in another region of the world."

His invitation elicited a significant number of responses. Today, the project "International Communities for a New Beginning" or "Lavalla200>", as the organizing team has decided to call it, has been underway for some time. In December, 2015, a first selection of candidates for the project was undertaken, and in May, 2016, a group of more than twenty Brothers and lay people entered a two-month formation programme, at the end of which they were sent on mission by the Superior General. For 2017 Brother Emili has renewed his invitation to actively promote people to participate in this programme.

The new international communities which are now in various stages of being established are in the following places: Tabatinga (Amazonia, Brazil), East Harlem (New York, United States), Mount Druitt (Sydney, Australia) and Siracusa (Sicily, Italy). The latter is the new community for the European Region. It has been a topic for much reflection and discussion among the five Marist Provinces in Europe, e.g. during the recent meeting of the CEM (European Marist Conference). The chairman of the CEM writes: "bearing in mind that this is a new community that is linked to all the Provinces of Europe, we encourage the Provinces, the Communities and the Brothers to show their closeness to them through communication and support." To comply with this, we gladly publish the following report from Brother Michael Callinan, one of the members of the new community in Siracusa.

Following a lengthy period of investigation the first Lavalla200> community in the European Region has begun to take shape. Things began in earnest a little under two months ago in Europe's newest Marist community in Siracusa, a small yet famous city on Sicily's south-eastern coast. The people of Europe are well aware of the demands being placed on various countries because of the arrival of people seeking asylum, and perhaps this is most pressingly felt in Italy, especially in the south. The Italian island of Lampedusa, quite close to Libya, is the point for which many overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels head, with mixed success. To date, more than 150,000 people have arrived on the shores of Italy during 2016 alone. A significant number of these people are unaccompanied minors, the majority male. The educational and formational needs of these boys and young men is the intended focus of the Lavalla200> community in Siracusa.

This new community, intercultural and international, has been chosen from among those who participated in the Lavalla200> formation program earlier this year. The members of the community are Mario Araya Olguín, 31, a lay Marist from Chile, Michael Callinan, 49, a Brother from Australia, Gabriel Bernardo Da Silva, 27, a lay Marist from Brazil and Onorino Rota, 69, a Brother from Italy. Onorino has been working on the establishment phase (along with others in the Province of Mediterránea) for many months, and arrived first among the group in Siracusa. Once he had finalised arrangements with the diocese regarding accommodation and other practical matters, Michael, Mario and Gabriel arrived a couple of weeks after each other as visas were granted.



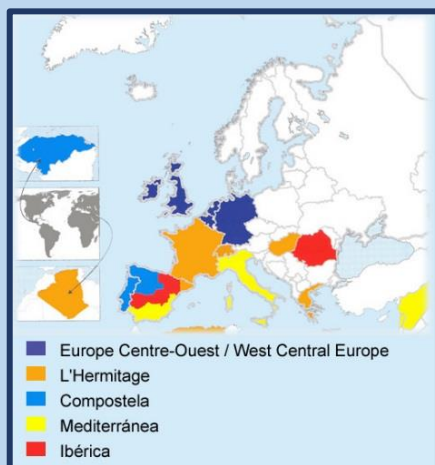
The three non-Europeans are immersed in daily Italian language study, and the whole community has begun volunteering at a "first welcome" residential centre for unaccompanied minors about fifteen minutes north of Siracusa. The majority of the boys / young men in this centre are West African. This ministry is one of the investigation steps members of the community are undertaking; other lines of enquiry are also underway with the diocesan arm of Caritas Italia, the Italian Red Cross and several other local not-for-profit organisations.

There is clearly a need for education, formation and accompaniment of the young people seeking asylum, especially in this part of Europe. They have risked their lives to escape situations including violence, poverty, persecution and armed conflict. The members of the Lavalla200> Community are looking forward: their growing ability in Italian language serving them as bearers of hope and practical support to these young people reaching out for assistance. Already the initial involvement of the community members is being welcomed by the local church and the various not-for-profit agencies and associations, although it is very early in the community life and mission journey of the Lavalla200> Community.

Please pray for them and those they accompany,
as our European Region steps into new territory.

Michael Callinan FMS

The European Provinces



Part 2: Compostela

Over the past several years cooperation between the five European Marist Provinces has increased, and efforts have been made to promote relations between Brothers and lay people in their countries. Therefore, let us become (more) acquainted with the other four Provinces; in the Bulletin of September, the Province of L'Hermitage introduced itself and now Compostela will do the same. Many thanks for this article to Brother Óscar Martín Vicario, who was Provincial from 2009 till 2015 and who has been succeeded by Brother Tomás Briongos Rica.

Ser marista – Being Marist



Information

The Marist Province of Compostela came into being on 2nd January 2004 with the amalgamation of the old Provinces of Castilla, León and Portugal. Geographically, Compostela is made up of Portugal, the Spanish regions of Castilla and León, Asturias and Galicia, and Honduras.

Today, more than twelve years later, Compostela has almost 200 Brothers, some 1600 educators (teachers, support staff and catechists) and, most importantly, 16,000 children and young people, the focal point of our work.

The Brothers live in 25 communities (one of which, Salamanca, is made up of Brothers and lay people). And our educational projects are 18 schools (15 in Spain, 2 in Portugal and 1 in Honduras), 2 University Residences (Santiago and Salamanca), 4 social work projects (Ermesinde, Tires, Ponferrada and Comayagua) and 8 Retreat Centres or Youth Hostels.

Our name “Compostela” calls to mind *los Caminos* (The Ways of Santiago). And our slogan for the triennium 2016 – 2019, “*Ser Marista*” (Being Marist), invites us to follow this path in a concrete manner, and expresses and reinforces our identity and our mission. Compostela means *campus stellae* (Field of Stars): this is what we want to be, little stars that, through sharing our life and mission in different constellations, bring light and hope to our children and young people... in the footsteps of Mary and Champagnat.

Stars showing the way

Faithful to its name, Compostela is a dynamic Province. In recent years, there have been many advances in our growth and renewal, not only in the area of community but also in our mission, spirituality and, as was necessary, in our organization.

To sum up the main signs of life, the stars that show the way, we could mention:

- + The process of community renewal, with the discernment that has taken place over the years, and which is now taking place. We are in a time of restructuring, regrouping and looking for new forms of community that best serve our Marist life and mission.

Vouzela: Marist house Salamanca > and São Macario youth hostel



vida en Compostela

< Marist university residence León: San José Marist College



- + The vitality of our projects, with improved management of our work in education, our strategic plans, and our quality assurance programme.
- + Our “Gier” framework of spirituality, which embraces all aspects of the Province, and which presupposes a “revolution of the heart” in our communitarian and apostolic journey. We have made great efforts to publicise it, to train educators, to put it into practice... and to move forward towards a live and renewing spirituality.
- + The innovation in education, a grand project which we are rolling out, with many opportunities for reflection and training, and a desire to update ourselves of and respond to the needs of children and young people.
- + The renewed Provincial structure. We emphasise the paper drawn up by the Mission Council, made up of Brothers and lay people, which coordinates and supports the mission of the whole Province. The Animation Teams at both Provincial and local level have also played a great part in this work. And the Mission Assemblies (we have just celebrated our third one) act as a support structure in which Brothers and lay people share and plan our Marist Mission.
- + The great opportunity for training at all levels: for Brothers in age groups, for Superiors, for Head Teachers and Directors, for Educators, and also formation in shared spirituality and mission, such as that offered by our IDEM group (Journeys in Marist Spirituality), which has been running for ten years. They have worked with more than 650 educators.
- + Our good economic management which is updated, transparent, and in a healthy position, and is always at the service of and supportive of the mission.
- + The good feeling of solidarity in our education work with support teams in each school, volunteers, areas of mission work in our own land and in the South, and the great developments in SED, our non-government organisation.
- + The opportunity for shared mission. Over and above the courses run by IDEM, we have published “Bonnaire”, a reference document for this project. We have also created Marist Spirituality Groups (there are eight of them) where Brothers and lay people share life.
- + The renewal of our Youth Processes. Our MarCha Groups and the Federation of Youth Associations are a hopeful reality. And we specially mention the many University Groups which have grown in recent years, and the Champagnat Leisure School.
- + The determined efforts in Vocations work, with more people involved. God has blessed us with some vocations to the Brothers in recent years, few but good and continuing, including two scholastics and two novices.
- + The shared journey with our Brother Provinces in CEM and in the European Marist Conference (CEM). In these structures we share, we contribute, we enrich each other, and we build a Marist future together.
- + And, finally, we must point out our missionary reality, in particular our “Community and Work” in Honduras, an example of delivery and hope. And the 15 Brothers from Compostela working in various continents.



A pilgrim's horizon

And alongside this journey and its lights, there are also difficulties... and challenges. We have much travel ahead of us and, thanks be to God, a horizon of hope.

Some of these challenges and projects, which we are initiating or consolidating, are expressed well in the priorities of our 5th Provincial Chapter:

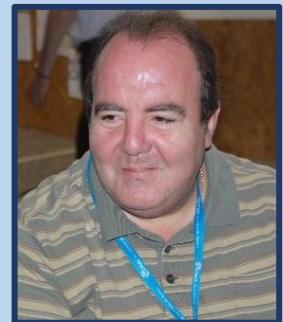
- Introduce into our projects a model of personnel management, based on support and evaluation, which is suited to healthy education communities that have shared responsibility and are Marist in outlook.
- Lay out clearly the Provincial policy on social projects in a way that consolidates what already exists, and set up at least one new presence in the spirit of the Bicentenary.
- Draw up and deliver a Provincial formation programme in spirituality for support staff so that they can lead and support the delivery of our Gier programme.
- Encourage the personal and community life of the Brothers, looking after it, facing up to the difficulties, and offering, at all levels, experiences that will enhance it.
- Design and progress a formative and experiential journey in Marist identity for both Brothers and lay people.

And, equally, our strategic plan (2016-2019) which, linked with these priorities, expresses clearly our future horizon as a Province, particularly in the paragraph entitled "Vision":

To advance the construction of a meaningful and dynamic Province, made up of educational communities that have a shared responsibility and are committed to the mission, that care for their members, their relationships, and its Marist identity, and are nourished by the shared experience and renewed spirituality.

We have a stake in making the child and young person responsible for his own formation and growth through the provision of innovative education, the opportunities for community projects, and an excellent management structure that prepares them them to be part of a society that is more human and evangelical.

And so we move forwards step by step. Compostela, land of the pilgrims, is a lively Marist Province that is also full of horizons. With the light of our little stars, together we create a path of life. And with the desire to live out today with intensity, with strength and vitality, the charism of our land and our people, we face with great hope the "New Beginning" that 2017 brings us.



Óscar Martín Vicario FMS

From the video for the 2nd January, 2017

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General:

Today the Marist Institute celebrates 200 years of existence. And from within me, three words surface:

GRATITUDE

FORGIVENESS

COMMITMENT





Ludwig Spitzer FMS

29th December 1925 – 16th October 2016

Florian Spitzer was born on 29th December 1925 in Treitersberg near Falkenstein in the Bavarian Forest, the sixth child of Johann Spitzer and his wife Theres. The parents had a sizeable farm where Florian was clearly happy, since later in old age he referred to himself as a “simple country boy”. In 1936 his parents sent him at the age of 10 to the Marists at Cham to “get an education”. From 1937 Florian was in the “Old Gymnasium” (Grammar School) in Regensburg until he was called up for national service in 1942. From 1944 until the end of the war he was a soldier in Italy and in October 1945 was released from the American military prison.

Florian came to the Marists in Furth in 1946 and entered the Novitiate on 19th March 1947, where he took the Religious name of Brother Ludwig Maria and where he made his first vows one year later. From 1947 he was a student at Mindelheim where he did his *Abitur* (leaving certificate). Till 1954 he was a teacher in the Boarding House at Mindelheim and finally he did his university studies at Munich gaining his qualification in Geography and Commerce. From 1962 he was a teacher at Mindelheim where the pupils regarded him as strict but fair. From 1970 to 1973 he was director of the juniorate and then took charge of the whole College with its Gymnasium and six-year Realschule. He held this position till 1993.

Brother Ludwig was a tireless worker. He gave everything for “his” Marist College. In many aspects the schools was expanded, particularly the sports facilities, accommodation for the day students and the school chapel. So the school grew in numbers to 1500 students and more than 110 teachers. His work was recognised by the secular authorities with the award the “Gold Ring” and on top of that he was awarded the “Federal Cross of Merit” and the Papal award “Pro ecclesia et pontifice”. Amidst all this recognition Brother Ludwig remained modest and straightforward. All his life he was a true Marist. In his free time he would take a brush and shovel to remove leaves, dirt, snow and ice from around the school. While doing this he enjoyed chatting with the pupils whom he bumped into in the course of this work.

From 2006 Brother Ludwig passed his final days at Furth where almost daily he took his brush and shovel and barrow to “go into the jungle” as he would say. In his final months dementia set in very strongly so that in September 2016 he was admitted to the Old People’s Home of St. Martin in Pfeffenhausen. He died on 16th October – his journey to God. The words of the Lord clearly fit, “True and faithful servant enter the House of the Lord.”

Alois Engel FMS