

# Being Marist

WEST CENTRAL EUROPE

## SPECIAL EDITION

### Province Gathering Guardamar 2019



...andle from the calm  
...at fears to God and allow the  
...Divine Light upon them.

## Message from the Chair of Mission Council

Dear fellow Marists, we welcome you to another edition of Being Marist. I hope you all had some time to relax and recharge the batteries over the summer. Great to see Aisling back after her maternity leave and I express my deep gratitude to her for putting together this newsletter. I wish also to express our deep appreciation to everyone who contributed articles and photographs. Sharing your experience of Being Marist is the key to building up the Marist community in our Province. Enjoy all the contributions.

**P.J McGowan**



# Our Province Mission Council



**We had an excellent meeting in Mindelheim Germany 11-12 September.**

The main focus of the meeting was to review the past two years and to begin planning for the next three years. It was very interesting to see all the initiatives that have developed in the past two years including the student leadership programme and many formation events for all in mission in the province. Our experience in Guardamar since 2014 has been pivotal in the many programmes we have begun to put in place. However further supports and planning are required into the future. Our next meeting in November will hopefully develop further strategies to encourage a culture of exchange. Most of all we are building a strong Marist community in the Province.

**P.J McGowan Chairperson.**

## MEC - Mission Council Europe

**Meeting took place in Mindelheim Germany 9-11 September.**

We were brought up to date on the Global consultation questionnaire of Marist schools. The objective is to establish a network of Marist schools and see how we can strengthen our effectiveness in our contemporary world.

The theme for Marist Europe this year in 'NOW' The theme is very much in keeping with mindfulness and helping all of us to focus on the present and also to be imaginative in our approach to sharing the Marist Way in today's world. As scripture says 'we must put new wine in new bottles, nobody puts new wine in old bottles.'

Other areas we are working at include



providing formation opportunities at European level, sharing good practice in our schools and projects and addressing the whole ecology agenda.

We are also building relationships at European level and supporting the three European teams working on child safeguarding, pastoral programmes and solidarity initiatives.

**P.J McGowan.**





## Guardamar Reflection from Belgium

**It was with great joy that I was able to participate in the Guardamar meeting. The place was already familiar to me since I often had the opportunity to live there during Marist meetings in recent years.**

This time I was especially touched by the family spirit that reigned among all the participants. In a very short time we realized that we lived the same spirit even if we were different realities and languages.

I enjoyed working in a small table group on our particular missions, which allowed for an in-depth exchange and attentive listening. Throughout this meeting we have been continuously referred to our own personal

approach but also to the decision making for the missions of our respective countries. The animation team was excellent and the dynamics offered allowed us to go quickly to the point.

Personally, I experienced good moments of interiority thanks to diversified prayers rich in symbols. And the Eucharist, in my opinion, really found its place by being celebrated on the very spot of our experience.

I can only thank everyone who participated in this wonderful meeting and those who have prepared it carefully for many weeks. An experience to renew in order to feel more and more of Marcellin Champagnat's family.

**Br Albert Andre, Belgium**

## Guardamar 2019

As I reflect on our third gathering in Guardamar as a province my overwhelming feeling is just how much the province community has grown since our first meeting there in 2014. This time there was no need for badges and everyone mixed with an ease as if it was a family reunion. We have also come to appreciate the richness of the diversity of the province.

The objective of this gathering was to empower all participants to take greater ownership and responsibility for Marist spirituality and Marist Mission in the province. I was impressed with the growing understanding of spirituality as essentiality a way of being in the Marist way. The challenge is to move away from a narrow view of spirituality we may have had in the past and provide opportunities and support to gain greater confidence to articulate this important dimension of our lives.

In the area of mission many good initiatives are happening in schools and projects. Maybe we just need to reflect and integrate Marist values into all our



activities. The success of the student leadership programme and CMI volunteer programme are examples of what we can achieve with new initiatives.

I had a sense at the end of our get together that we realised the importance of further developing and supporting the core teams at local level. This is the bedrock for growth and development, however they need support at country and provincial level. All of us have competing commitments and

time is a major constraint for most people. The Mission Council must continue to provide training and formation for all involved in promoting Marist Mission and spirituality.

At the end of the meeting I felt all of us were re-energised to go forward with renewed enthusiasm, to play our part to further grow as Marists and improve the lives of all we serve.

**P.J McGowan.**



## Trip to Guardamar 2019

Heading off to this year's gathering I was excited about what was in store for us. I was lucky enough to be involved with the last gathering in 2016 and was thinking would this be as successful.

Arriving in Guardamar and looking around the room at all the people involved I could see so much diversity from so many different places. We all had so many different qualities, traits and were on different parts of our Marist journey but we all shared one thing, our Marist connection. As the weekend unfolded this Marist connection became more evident and I was very aware of the Marist spirit within the group.

This spirit continued to emanate from everyone from within the conference room to the dinner table to the veranda in the evening where the connections across the province became deeper. After many

workshops and looking around the work on the walls of the conference room it was undeniable that we all had the same vision for the future. This didn't shock me it made me grateful to belong to such a wonderful family.

On Sunday we were asked to state one word that describes how we felt about the gathering. The word I chose was "inspired" this word captured for me how the weekend had inspired hope within me for our Marist family to progress into the future. It showed me that not only through our schools and projects but many other ways we as lay people and the brothers are actively keeping the Marist Spirit alive and thriving in our Marist communities.

One sentence that was spoken in my group by a very special member of the Marist community resonated with me.... it was "Marist Mission is Marist spirit in

action", for me as a Marist I couldn't have said it better. I feel that through these gatherings we can solidify the meaning of being Marist through conversations and shared experiences. The 2019 gathering reinvigorated a new enthusiasm for the future of my Marist Family and how I can personally be involved in putting Marist Spirit into action through mission within my community and my province.

So when I want to feel belonging I just remember.....I'm one Marist in a country of 3 schools in a province made up of 5 countries, in a continent made up of 9 countries in a world made up of 79 countries over 5 continents. That's over 3500 brothers and approx 40,000 lay people, that's some family to belong to.

**Tracy Doyle –  
Moyle Park College Dublin**

## Guardamar Reflection from The Netherlands

This Marist Gathering in Guardamar was the first time for me to be part of the bigger Marist family. It was wonderful to experience that there is such a wide community of people who live and want to pass on the Marist spirituality. And it is nice to see that the brothers of the province are so committed to letting this spirituality live on, even if in time there are no longer any brothers in the province. Because that is the reality. How beautiful it is that this is seen and may be discussed and the fact we don't thread with fear but entering is seen as an opportunity.

Large groups with new people are exciting for me and that's how I felt in Guardamar. But at the same time you feel the connectedness and an atmosphere of

respect and openness. When I walked in the beautiful building and garden and met someone, there was always that friendly, open smile that was given to me. And that, in my opinion, touches the core of the Marist spirituality. To really see and meet each other in openness and really live this spirituality. When I speak for myself, everyday delusions can just disappear. Meetings like this, by being together, conversations and laughing and celebrating together, I am spirituality fed. It helps me to discover for myself how I



can live the Marist spirituality even more in my life. Not only during activities here at the De Westerhelling, but certainly also in my daily life. Let us continue to feed each other. I carry this experience in my heart: I am grateful!

**Ciska Berk- Netherlands**

## Guardamar June 2019 - Reflection

My name is Kathrin v. Erffa, I have been working for Cmi Germany for 2 ½ years and I am mainly responsible for the incoming volunteers. Since we started with that second part of Cmi-volunteering in 2018, we have welcomed with great pleasure seven young people from Marist countries to Mindelheim and have been able to accompany them during their Federal Voluntary Service in Mindelheim. As a team with our main tasks in outgoing and incoming volunteers, we often discuss together how we can convey the Marist values and how we can educate young people to work in the spirit of Marcellin. In June 2019, I was allowed to travel together with the Cmi Team to the Marist Mission Meeting in Guardamar. It was my first meeting with representatives of the province outside Mindelheim for a few days. My expectations of the meeting were certainly on the one hand to establish and deepen personal contacts with other lay Marists and their commitment to the Marists.



And, of course, I had hoped to receive suggestions, ideas and experiences from others for my engagement with the Marists. My expectations were exceeded in several respects. The meeting was very professionally prepared and took place in an absolute feel-good atmosphere. By the repeated mixing of the groups with different tasks an intensive exchange succeeded, and a large input at ideas. At the end of the meeting an action plan with measures and projects was formulated and fixed, how we together but also as individuals can actively shape the Marist network and spread it

further. I believe that all participants have returned to their home countries very satisfied and highly motivated.

Everyday life has long since returned, and I can see how difficult it is to implement the many good ideas!

It is my wish that the group of Marists sees Europe Central West as a unit and can find a way to communicate with each other. That together we try to interest the youth of the countries in each other and to bring them together so that Marcellin's vision can spread further.

**Kathrin v. Erffa – cmi Germany**

# Guardamar Reflection from Scotland

This summer (2019), I had the absolute pleasure of being invited to the Marist Gathering at Guardamar. Having had limited involvement in the Marist Way, I was very curious as to how this charism would fit with my life and work. I wanted to know if there would be a connection to the ethos of the Marist way and how this could influence me as a lay person and my way of being in the world. In growing up, I experienced a traditional, old school, catholic upbringing. Being in Guardamar was a very different experience from what I might have expected, and I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of engagement I experienced with all Marists who attended.



I was struck by the friendly welcome I received from the start of the weekend. Only knowing the team from Kinharvie, who were mainly facilitating the weekend, meant that I had to put myself out there and mingle with others. Kinharvie has played a very important role in my own personal and professional life. In working as CEO for a National Parenting Organisation in Scotland, Kinharvie has helped develop and support the national work we carry out through the training of our facilitators. Their expertise has developed our facilitators to be more open and thoughtful in their interactions with families. In Guardamar, I also noticed that all of those I engaged with during the group sessions and in one-to-one conversations were so warm and welcoming and had a particular “way” about them. This only stoked my curiosity further.

I really enjoyed finding out about the founders of the Marists and how much courage and conviction the early pioneers had. How accepting of everyone and how simple life could be, living the Marist Way. I felt that courage and conviction throughout the weekend. I also felt passion for the work many are delivering in their own

communities and schools and how they wanted to do more. The weekend was very busy, and the schedule was well planned with time for prayer and reflection, which was very much appreciated. There was also social time which is very important, and this is when I made many friends who I will be keeping in touch with.

I was really interested in the challenges that emerged during the weekend. It seemed there was interest around language used when talking about Marist life and how this is being perceived in today's world. The idea of spirituality, it seems, is often confused with religion which is causing some – not all, to turn away from any form of religious beliefs. I found myself, at times confused, but was slowly unpicking my thoughts and realising the Marist Way was, for me, about spirit. I know that spirit is the essence of a person and whatever moves that person be it; prayer, art, nature or music, or whatever. It maybe makes them feel better about themselves and the world they live in.

This brought me to my work. As CEO, I live in the east end of Glasgow where there are many challenges and many opportunities. In fact, it is where the Youth Leadership Programme will be delivered

in St Mungo's secondary school this year for the first time. I was thinking about this Youth Leadership Programme and how much this changes young people's lives, but what if they are going home to the same difficult circumstances with limited support? It got me wondering about how we might change this. Is there a way to engage parents and get them on board? Not only will this impact the young people, but also their community and wider society. Most people who have children, want the absolute best for them, but many don't have the tools or resources to realise this ambition. In my experience, through no fault of their own, many lack the support to “stick with it”. I am myself, an example of such a childhood, where there was love, food and shelter but limited encouragement. What was it that made me stick with it, become resilient, keep challenging myself? To be honest, I found it outside the home in people I met, in groups I attended and in training I attended. Being accepted as a person of value and worth is the greatest gift we can give anyone and I certainly received that in bucket loads at the weekend in Guardamar along with many questions.

**Jackie Tolland - Scotland**



## Champagnat Day Celebrations in Nijmegen

**On June 6, the day of Marcellin Champagnat, we celebrated over two days this year. On 6 June with a Eucharistic celebration, and on Saturday 8 June with a celebration and reflection day organized by Leerhuis Westerhelling.**

Fr. Emili Turú, former Superior General of the Marist Brothers, was invited on Saturday to reflect on the theme "Less thinking – More loving". These are words from Theresia van Avila, who quoted Emili in a letter leading up to the 200th anniversary of the Marist Brothers in 2017.

On Saturday 8 June there was a particularly mixed group. There were young guests, even babies, about thirty participants in the activities of the Leerhuis, and elderly. They all contributed to a pleasant atmosphere. Marists of all shapes and sizes, family and friends. Around 50 guests in total.

It was nice to see that some participants of Westerhelling activities also experienced this day as a reunion and had agreed to meet again here and to walk together.

The day consisted of a tranquil and in-

depth program. One of the highlights was singing a song that Annelieke (hostess of the Stiltehuis) has written and composed, about Champagnat. The text says: "He started somewhere and we are still here".

The introduction by Emili and the meeting with the group was very inspiring. Yes, thinking less and loving more sounds nice, but then why? Thinking is not wrong at all? It resulted in a nice conversation about not NOT thinking, but LESS thinking; and about where your thinking comes from. If love is your basis, it influences your thinking. And about the balance in life; sometimes the left hemisphere has to be back in its cage, and give space to the right hemisphere, so that creativity, inspiration and artistry can also emerge.

In the responses it was heard that it is ultimately about the invitation to really live: not just to be real, but to really live your life, not that of another, or to survive. For this it is certainly necessary to live from "love more". Our society would look beautiful if we were to organize our lives more with love.

Emili told about Elijah, about Job, and about



Isaiah. In a way that was very appealing and understandable. One of the young people said afterwards: "Well, if things like that are in the Bible, then I want to read it sometimes."

It was the day before Pentecost, and around the Pentecostal fire we have celebrated the Spirit of Love. We once again sang the song about us and Champagnat, and with a nice fire ritual we fed our fire.

**Conny Stuart - Netherlands**



## Provincial Chapter

The Provincial Chapter was held from the 23rd to 26th April 2019 in the House of the Pallottine Fathers in Freising, in Germany. There were 34 people present, 15 Brother delegates, along with Bros Luis Carlos Gutierrez (Vicar General), João Carlos Do Prado and Ben Consigli (General Counsellors), as well as 11 lay people who were invited to share their reflections with us. We also had the services of Danny Curtin, the facilitator for the duration of the chapter. We were also ably assisted with translations and technical matters by 4 other people.

The theme of the Chapter was “Beacon of Hope” which reflected the call of the General Chapter. It was also significant that this was the theme, given that the chapter was taking place in the days following Easter where we are invited to reflect the message of the risen Christ.

Following the opening ceremony, we had the symbolic handing over the baton, a Celtic Cross from the out-going provincial, Bro. Brendan Geary to Bro. Robert Thunus in in-coming provincial. Bro. Robert thanked Brendan on behalf of the province for his nine years of service as Provincial

for the way he guided and led the province during that time. He also thanked the members of the out-going Provincial Council for their contribution over the previous three years.

Our facilitator, Danny, using the “The Three Horizons” methodology guided us through a process of reflection and discernment over the next two and a half days. We looked at the paths we had come and the most significant events of the previous three years. We then shared our aspirations for the future and what we needed to put in place to achieve our these. The members identified five priorities which can be summarised as follows:

- The sustainability of the Marist mission through partnership (Mission)
- Attending to the Spirit in our lives (Spirituality/Interiority)
- Ecological challenges (Integral Ecology)
- Vocation and Formation of Marist of Champagnat (Marists of Champagnat)



### New Provincial Council West Central Europe

Br Ronnie McEwan (Scotland), Br Michael Schmalzi (Germany), Br Robert Thunus (Provincial), Br Roberto Di Troia (Belgium), Br Nicolas Smith (Ireland)

- Interconnectedness and exchange of Marist youth throughout the Province (Marist Youth)

The brothers elected the following brothers to be the Provincial Council for the next three years. Bros Ronnie McEwan; Nicholas Smith; Michael Schmalzi and Roberto Di Troia.

The Chapter was concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist by Father Peter Nussbaum, chaplain to the brother in Furth.

**Br Nicholas Smith - Ireland**

# A short impression of the VII Provincial Chapter in Freising

**It was a pleasure for me to be invited as a lay Marist to the VII Provincial Chapter.**

**In advance, I felt very well informed about the texts and reflections of the Chapter and I was invited to give some personal reflections on the last three years of Marist Mission.**

The motto of the Provincial Chapter, "Beacon of Hope", referred to the call of the last General Chapter and we all were motivated from this inspiration for our provincial work.

The Chapter began with the farewell of the outgoing Provincial Brother Brendan Geary and the welcoming of the new Provincial Brother Robert Thunus. This moment I experienced as a very moving and significant moment.

The work in the Chapter gave us the opportunity to look together at the "here and now", not to dwell in the past, but to be attentive towards the many projects and ideas that are emerging and growing in our Province.

Our focus was drawn first to the

development of the Province over the last three years and under the guidance of facilitator Dany Curtin, the group (initially a little bumpy but then increasingly better) was able to deal concretely and purposefully with issues of the future and to develop essential requests as recommendations for the future Provincial Council.

It was a big issue of the whole group that the conversations and discussions should not get stuck in already reviewed and general considerations, but should be filled with concrete and current contents and ideas for the future. That succeeded well and constructively by the cooperation in the large group but also in discussions in small groups.

It is a great honor for me, as a layperson and co-worker, to be able to exchange ideas with the Brothers in a joint and equal conversation.

The five recommends, we finally worked out have a very concrete influence on our daily work and on our reflections for the near future of our mission. The success



of this common work has been strongly influenced and supported by a vital Marist spirituality.

Once again, I would like to express my pleasure to be involved in this common, future-oriented Marist work and many thanks for the beautiful, constructive and spiritually enriching days in the Province Chapter.

**Renate Hacker – cmi Mindelheim**



# Some reflections on my years as Provincial

I have often told the story of a significant moment that took place in my first month as Provincial (March 2010), when I was driving from Mindelheim back to Nijmegen. At a certain moment I asked myself, "What is my job?" That may sound like a silly question. After all, we had just concluded the fourth Provincial Chapter which established priorities for the next three years, and we had recently received the documents published by the 2009 General Chapter. However, despite these two significant events, I experienced a frisson up my spine, in case I did not know the answer to my important question. Within a few moments two thoughts came to me:

- Manage diminishment.
- Support mission.

I then did some reflecting. As a Provincial Council, we did not have a choice about diminishment, except how we managed it. Hopefully we would deal with closures of communities, withdrawal from ministries, care of the elderly brothers and management of financial resources and properties, in a way that was respectful of the brothers, which was prudent, and consistent with our Marist values. We were founded for mission, and without a mission we lose our reason to exist. As long as possible, we should encourage and support mission in our Province.

The second significant and formative event in my understanding of my role as Provincial took place over the next six months. The General Chapter of 2009 highlighted the importance of partnership with lay people. In previous

years we had had a Province Laity Commission, which took some important initiatives in this area, including the wonderful Province Pilgrimage to the Hermitage which took place in August 2010. I decided, however, that if there was another Province Laity Commission that it would be easy for me to leave this area of Province life to them. If this was, indeed, the path of our future, then I concluded that I had to get involved in this myself. I decided that the best way to do this was to meet with all of the lay groups in the Province. I succeeded in doing this in most parts of the Province, and the result was an overwhelming realization of the enormous good will that existed among the lay people who are in contact with us, and of the need to find ways to continue to develop this relationship to find a way forward for mission in the Province. It was not something that needed to be initiated, as it was already developing in different places. It seemed to me that it was my job to encourage what was happening, invest resources to support people, to offer training, and, in time, to allow appropriate structures to develop.

I will not give a summary of everything that happened in the past nine years. During my time as Provincial 60 brothers died and three brothers left Marist religious life. We closed communities in each of our countries and sold or disposed of properties in a range of ways. I sense that this was done in a way that was respectful of the



brothers, with appropriate consultation and participation, but without avoiding difficult decisions where they had to be made. The elder brothers are well looked after and there has been a gradual shift to make use of care facilities for our brothers where this is necessary.

The decision to have a Province Mission Assembly in Guardamar in June 2013 led to a series of initiatives and developments that have brought us to the point where we now have a Province Mission Council, comprised of brothers and lay people, which has been given responsibility for mission in our Province, along with a budget to enable them to make decisions based on the priorities that they identify. There have also been significant developments in different parts of our Province with the

employment of lay people to develop and support Marist mission. There is more contact between the Marist and former Marist schools, and the people who work in Marist projects. I think I can also say that there is a heightened awareness of our Marist values and a sense of connection with the wider Marist world. This has happened as a result of participation in Marist events in different countries, and at the level of the Institute and Marist Europe, and through inviting speakers from other countries to participate in formation events in different countries and at Province level. I am coming to the end of my allotted word span, so let me say a few words about other aspects of my work as Provincial. Understandably, safeguarding took up a lot of

the time of the Provincial Council and I feel a lot of satisfaction with what we achieved in this area, agreeing policies for each of the countries of our Province, dealing with allegations of abuse from the past, creating a Safeguarding tab on our web site, and supporting brothers and lay people who respond to safeguarding concerns. Personal contact with the brothers was a priority for me and I have no regrets about the travel I did to ensure regular personal contact with all of the brothers in the Province. I ended my time as Provincial with a deep sense of gratitude to the brothers and laypeople who are part of

our Province. Serving them as Provincial was a privilege, which offered me opportunities to exercise leadership, to reflect on my own values, and to grow as a Marist brother and as a human being. I sense that the spirit of the brothers and lay people in our Province is positive, and that the various mission activities and points of contact that exist continue to bring life to a Province which is comprised of (mostly) elderly brothers, but which continues, through collaboration with our lay partners, to be inspired by the Charism of St. Marcellin.

**Brother Brendan Geary**

*Thank you Br Brendan for all your hardwork in the province as Provincial and the kindness you have shown to everyone you met.*





## The Accompaniment Programme 2019

**The Accompaniment Programme 2019 was from the 12th-19th of July 2019 in the city of Rome, Italy. I woke up the morning of the 12th and headed off to the airport where I flew from Dublin to Rome. I felt very anxious as I was the only person from the West Central Province to attend this programme. I had no idea what lay ahead of me as this was a new experience.**

I arrived in Rome at half ten and was met by Angela and Maryvonne together we shared a taxi to our accommodation which was the Marist general house of Rome. That evening began with a dinner for everyone to get to know one another followed by an incredible gelato to finish the evening.

### DAY 1:

The first morning we had inductions, we sat at specific tables based on language, so for me it was the English table but I was the only one with English as a first language. Our inductions included our name, where we live, the province

we belong and any other detail we felt like including. For me this was a very enjoyable experience to hear where everyone had come from but specifically the little extra detail people wanted to include about themselves. People had gathered from many different regions and had many different backgrounds that had led them to have a Marist connection, many working within a Marist school. The group included people from Lebanon, Greece, Italy, Spain, France and of course myself from Ireland.

That afternoon we were introduced to the Accompaniment Programme. You are probably wondering what this is? It is the ability to support someone or be supported by someone using specific experiences and techniques, and this is what the week was about. We were going to learn how to use our experiences and learn techniques that would be of use in order to accompany someone. This particular evening, we had to reflect on how we got here in Rome, not by bus, train or air but rather why we had picked our specific vocation, for me teaching,

what was our journey that had led us here? We then drew our timeline of how we got to this specific place in Rome and in smaller groups of three we had to explain our timeline or drawing. For some this was difficult as language at times can be a barrier.

### DAY 2:

This particular day was about the evolution of life, stages of life and how God has intervened within our evolution as a person but also our development as a person. This part of the programme I felt extremely heavy and reflecting on this element and how we can relate this back to teaching in Ireland and accompanying a student here in Ireland, God would be an element that might not even come into discussion. A student in Ireland rarely would stop and think ok, why is this happening and how has God intervened in this stage of my life.

Later in the day we broke into our small groups of three people to practice accompanying someone, to me this was a real learning experience as I had never



done this before. In order to accompany someone, you really have to listen to them and check in with how they feel about the particular situation they are discussing. But rather than focusing on the problem which tends to happen a lot when someone comes to you with a problem you must focus on the person. I had a lot of questions after doing this session, as to where this programme would fit into Irish schools, where do I fit in, in relation to this programme in Irish schools. I contacted Aisling and my questions were answered. For me this programme, experiences and techniques would enable me to strengthen our Marist core teams, leadership programmes, province gatherings but also aid students within Irish schools without having a title as 'counsellor' I would be able to use these techniques especially with students in my form class.

This evening we left the Marist house

and headed off into the city where we were shown around, for me this was the third time to be in Rome and when we walked up the steps and out onto the street at the Colosseum I was in awe. I still had the same feeling I had when I first saw it. This evening walking around seeing the marvellous sites Rome had to offer I really reflected on how lucky I was to experience this programme and what I could bring back to Ireland with me. This evening for me brought people closer as we were able to connect on other levels not just having a Marist connection.

### DAY 3:

This day was the best day for me. We began this day with interiority and techniques around interiority. Similar to mindfulness but interiority is the ability to go within oneself and find your centre. We practiced using these techniques

on ourselves and on others. For me I found it beneficial because well-being is becoming a huge element within society specifically within schools and within certain subjects well-being is dominant. These techniques will be of a huge benefit to my teaching when I go back. I will be able to teach other elements of mindfulness but rather teach students how to connect with themselves on a deeper level.

Day three finished up early we had our lunch and then had free time to ourselves. Majority of people went into Rome city to wonder and have a look. We had already previously done this but we hadn't gone near the Vatican so this is what we done. Like I had mentioned it was my 3rd time to Rome but each time I visited the Vatican the tombs of the Popes were closed. However, today they were open. We went down into the tombs and I was astonished how quiet it was. Above us



in the Vatican there were thousands of people but below it was peaceful. A place of rest in which thousands of people who visited, respected. Xavi and Nacho, two brothers brought us then to see the statue of Marcellin which was behind guarded gates, guarded by the Pontifical Swiss Guard, but with their kindness we were able to see the statue of Marcellin. This evening finished with a lovely dinner in Rome city.

#### DAY 4:

This was a day of discernment, what is discernment? It is knowing right and wrong within our journey. This day heavily reflected on how God has come into our lives and is helping us on our journey of discernment. We were given a few questions to reflect on for the day and worked on them within our language groups, what is discernment? what are Marist lay people? and what are Marist Champagnat's? Are we any of them? Do we take part in discernment if God isn't in our lives? These were heavy questions to answer but at the end we all had the same ideas.

Later in the day we had to reflect on our particular school community and our journey of being Marist. For everyone this is different, depending on how early or late you came to the Marist family. But



looking around and hearing everyone talk about their journey so far I got an over-whelming feeling and a sense of belonging, belonging to a huge family that I wasn't aware of myself when I began in Moyle Park in 2016.

Day 5: Today was my last day, there was one more day after today but due to family circumstance I had to leave early. It was a very interesting day, we examined friendships, our connections to God and images of God. This relates heavily to a topic I teach in Religion and at my amazement the same ideas surrounding God were coming up. Is God a man or woman, is God someone who rules heaven, does God punish or reward people, where is God; where can we find God. There were many discussions this particular day surrounding these questions

Later that day we had to get into our language groups and we had to do an activity. We had to show what we had learnt about the Accompaniment Programme and if we were to come home and explain it to people in our province what would we say or do. In this activity it was great to see people's creativity. In the evening we then got to observe an experienced accompaniment take place.

This was incredible to experience and after I could see that with many years of experience you can really provide a means of support to someone who just needs to talk about a situation that is troubling them. It is important to note that you are not a counsellor in this process but rather an ear to lend that person so they have someone they can turn to at a given time. After dinner we all headed out to have one more gelato together as a group.

Overall this process was daunting to begin with, I didn't speak any other language but English, I didn't know anyone going, I was unaware of exactly where in Rome I was staying and I didn't know what the programme entailed either. You could basically say I was going in blind folded. But in the end I felt like they were family, I was made feel so welcome and even though I only had English as a language they all tried to speak English as well. I left feeling like I belonged to not just a small Irish Marist community but that I had a global Marist family in which we are all trying to achieve the same goal and that goal being towards the next generation of students.

**Sarah Kelly –  
Moyle Park College Dublin**

# «Being a Marist»

## Interview with our new Provincial Br Robert Thunus

### 1. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I lived my childhood in Robertville, a small country village, located in the east of Belgium. My parents come from a working class environment and one of my brothers has now passed away. I still have a sister and two brothers whom I am always happy to see again.

### 2. What made you decide to become a Marist brother?

During my technical studies at the Notre-Dame Institute, in Malmedy, I worked with the Marist Brothers every day, at school and at boarding school, for 7 years. Little by little, I became attracted by their way of life and their closeness to young people. I felt at home with them and wanted to know them better. At the same time, I was able to experience some important moments in the service of the sick in Lourdes and met the Focolare Movement. These helped me to live the gospel in a practical way. At the age of 18, a Brother asked me if I would like to be a Marist Brother. I felt deep inside that this call was what I was looking for and I was able to answer it. 36 years after my first engagement, despite the difficulties, I can say that I am happy to be a Brother.

### 3. For those who do not know Marist Belgium can you tell us a little bit about it?

The Brothers of Belgium, as everywhere, have worked in the teaching and accompaniment of young people, in their human and Christian formation. They had a practical sense by also founding technical schools and joining the working class. They are also at the origin of the Marist presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Today, all our schools have been taken up by lay committee, while retaining their Christian and sometimes Marist characteristics. We still manage and run our Le Bua Welcome and Retirement Center in Habay ([www.lebua.be](http://www.lebua.be)) and we try to support

our old schools. The Brothers who are still active have been serving our elderly and sick Brothers, or even parishes and more social works.

### 4. What is an interesting fact that most people can not know about you?

I have a twin brother named Ghislain. He is a father of four grown boys and girls. He has been teaching cabinetmaking and sculpture for more than 30 years in the Marist School of Malmedy and is now in charge of the school's wood department. It is not uncommon, when I come to visit my home area, that people take me for him because we have kept a good physical resemblance. It's pretty funny.

### 5. Who is a person you admire and why?

I could name a number of people and even Brothers, but that will not come as a surprise, if I choose Marcellin Champagnat, our Founder. I admire him for his courage, his perseverance, his trust in God and Mary and especially for the love of Brothers and young people.

### 6. What are you most proud of in your life?

I do not have the feeling of having realized important things, but of having answered "yes" to this call, in spite of my limits and especially with the help of God and the others. I am always pleasantly surprised when someone tells me that he was happy to meet me and that it helped him.

### 7. What is the best part about being a Marist brother for you?

It is to bear the name of Mary and to see how trying to live according to your spirit meets the needs of young people and the world. It is also the family spirit that unites all Marists in a large international family.

### 8. If you were not a Brother Marist what would your dream job be?

Although technical training, which gives me some practical sense, I think I would have oriented myself in a job that puts me more at the service of people, leading a fairly simple



life and building a better world for all.

### 9. How would your family and friends describe you?

Welcoming, simple, available, faithful, discreet, generous, confident, friendly, thoughtful, tolerant ... without taking me too seriously.

### 10. What is a significant event in your life?

I could name a few, but the most recent is to have received the trust of my Brothers to live the service of provincial leader.

### 11. When is your birthday?

I was born on November 4, 1960.

### 12. When you're having free time, what do you like to do?

I enjoy walking in nature, cycling, swimming, watching a movie, reading, listening to music, having a drink or having a meal with friends or family.

### 13. Now that you are Provincial, what is your vision for West Central Europe?

Difficult question! On the one hand, I see the Brothers growing old and dwindling in number, with the challenge that this represents for the future. On the other hand, I remain amazed at the rich hearts of those who gave their lives for others. I also see the passion of all our Marist friends who dedicate themselves to youth in schools and projects in the province. And I see all these children and young people who, alongside the Marists, can build their lives on solid foundations and become, in turn, artisans of the "civilization of love". Thus, together, we can be "beacons of hope" in this world in search of light.

## Animators Programme 2019 - Llinars del Vallés

My train arrived in Barcelona Sants station on Monday the 5th of August, and as I ordered some fast food from the local McDonalds restaurant my mind began to wander. I began attempting to predict what the Marist meet could entail. I thought back to a video that I received a few days earlier from the CPA team which contained glitchy text and a somewhat significant emphasis on a video game convention. We were soon joined by two Germans, and began discussing what we thought might be in store.

As we finished our food, through the door walked Sarah, the CPA responsible for the province of West Central Europe. She was dressed in a white t-shirt which read "Up Your Game" and. The t-shirt bared uncanny resemblance to the video. Our minds were confused even further, could there be a deeper meaning behind the "Up Your Game" statement?

After being united with people from every Marist province in Europe we boarded the train to Llinars del Vallés, where the meeting would be held. The journey concluded with a 15-minute walk to a beautiful house situated on top of a hill; this would be the location for the week-long event.

The schedule of events was kept relatively secret throughout the week, but each day revealed another clue as to what the theme of the event actually meant. The day began at 8:30 when the house was awoken to the sound of music being played at full volume throughout the house, and breakfast, along with the other meals, usually consisted of a mixture of typical European foods from across the five provinces. We were all separated into smaller groups in which we would complete various activities throughout the week. Each morning when breakfast was finished each group would clean



a particular area of the house; dining room, bedrooms, toilets/showers, and stairs before all gathering in the cloisters to witness the daily sketch which was performed by the CPA's.

After that the activities varied quite a bit. We explored our creative side to try to learn more about ourselves through art, song, and drama, learned about the work of Marists through talking and interacting with the Marist brothers, and shared ideas between provinces of possible ways to spread the Marist values throughout the entirety of Europe.

During one of the activities, we experienced the difficulties of being disabled and of helping people with disabilities. It was fascinating to learn how important one person can be to someone less fortunate, and the impact that one can make on someone else's life. During another we explored our own personal past by remembering significant moments in various aspects of life in order to gain a deeper understanding of how we as individuals operate. The day usually ended with a series of extremely fun group games, each game proposed by a different province, before heading to the chapel to reflect on the activities and learnings of the day.

Although each and every activity was different, the manner in which they were

completed was the same; the Marist ethos was the basis for everything that happened over the course of the event. While the Marist values weren't explicitly mentioned, every action was done with the values in mind. Initially none of us knew any of the other participants, but by the end of the week everyone operated as one family of Marists. Great friendships were made, and upon departure a few tears were shed from some of the participants.

It was amazing to see how prominent the Marist way is in the other provinces of Europe. During one of the days in Llinars del Vallés we were given the opportunity to discuss and debate very deep topics relating to the church as an institution, and the Marist. It came as a surprise to me to learn that although a lot of the participants from other provinces were not very happy with the institutional Church, they could feel a deep connection to the Marist; it just made so much more sense to them. The reason for that soon became clear also. The Marist provides everyone with a voice, and an opportunity to give opinions on matters that they feel are important. Group discussions are a great deal more prominent within the Marist community than outside of it. Not only that, but the Marist operates as one big happy family. There was a great sense of comradery during the event, especially after our

trip to Girona and Sant Feliu de Guíxols where we played in the sea and jumped off cliffs together into water, all while subconsciously putting into practice the Marist value of “Family Spirit”.

At the end of each day the “Up Your Game” message became clearer and it revealed the sub theme of the day. The letters from the word “Game” were central to the theme of each day’s events, and a new word was made beginning with these letters. The first day revealed the word “Gene” which tied all of the activities of the first day together. We are born with genes in us, which are set in stone and cannot be changed. The first day was about learning about these traits inside us and how to use them to their fullest extent. The second day revealed the word “Action”. Now that we had discovered ourselves, we could start planning for the future and begin to take action to make a future worth living. The third day was “Marist” which is the reason the event took place in the first place, and the spirit in which we will complete our future ambitions. We explored what it means to be Marist, and what that means for the students, children and colleagues that we work with. The fourth and final letter was “Era”. This took into account the time in which we are working in at the moment, and the importance of adapting to the time.

On the final day the words were rearranged to give a new meaning. “Gen”, “Accion”, “Marist”, and “Era” made “Marist Generaccion” which is a play on words, combining generation and action. The new meaning implies that we, the participants, are the new generation of Marists who will spread the Marist values throughout our provinces and throughout Europe in our future provinces. Many new ideas were shared at the gathering, some of which may be implemented within our province. The future is bright for the province of West Central Europe and I am really looking forward to seeing what we can achieve in the next few years.

**Ciaran McDermott – Athlone Ireland**

## Barcelona

**Who would have thought one could learn so much from a few days in Barcelona? I travelled from Dublin not knowing what to expect from the week that stretched in front of me, but I can honestly say that the experience was truly moving, in more ways than one.**

From the start, everyone was made to feel at home, even if there were language differences. I did learn, however, that language is no barrier. With animators from seven different countries present, there was great diversity on show, and yet, communication was never an issue. Life-long friendships have been formed between people who speak different languages and who are from totally contrasting backgrounds. This is one of the many things which is special about being Marist.

It would be unjust of me not to comment on the effect the people at this gathering had on me. Everyone in attendance had something to offer. It was said that “if even one person at this gathering wasn’t here, it wouldn’t be the same”. I agreed more and more with this statement as the days passed. There were people there who were like

no one I had ever met, and they truly inspired and taught me so much about the person I hope to become.

Before the trip to Barcelona, my involvement as a Marist leader in the past year had been quite minimal, due to college and work commitments. However, I saw how motivated and passionate my Marist peers are in wanting to make a difference to people’s lives, and this really made me reflect on my priorities in life. I came to the conclusion that I need to give more time to my role as a Marist leader. I would love to be able to help in expanding the Marist Leadership programme in Ireland, because I really do believe in the cause. Creating a lay movement of Marists is a vital step which must be executed, as we must preserve and embrace the Marist ethos and values.

All in all, my week in Barcelona is an event I will never forget. I was touched by many people, people I hope to stay in contact with well into the future, and I feel more involved in the Marist community than ever. I just hope I can now act on this experience and make a difference!

**Shane Rafter – Dublin Ireland**



## Report Llinars del Valles

**From August 5th to August 11th the MarCha Marist Gathering, a Marist meeting for young group leaders, took place in Llinars del Valles, near Barcelona. Until last year only the provinces of Ibérica, Compostela, Mediterránea and Hermitage, the "Spanish" provinces, met. This year the meeting was extended by young people and brothers from the Province of central-west-europe, the Province where Germany is also located, Greece and Lebanon. Two young people from Mindelheim, one from Furth, three from Cham and two young people as well as a brother from Ireland came from our province. Our group met for the first time in Barcelona, on the first day of the meeting. Sarah from Mindelheim was part of the CPA, the organizing team, and had already travelled twice to Madrid for a preparatory weekend.**

We didn't really have a lot of expectations for the Marist Animator Conference because we had never attended such an event before and didn't really know what to expect. However, we hoped to meet many new people who we believe like we do. We also wanted to know how Marcellin's spirit is spread in the other provinces. We also did not know exactly in which language the program would be held and which countries and provinces would participate. One question that came up on the bus trip to Spain was this: Can we from our province contribute anything at all to the meeting? And what will we learn from that? We had no idea what we were going to do during the week and if we would be able to implement that in our province. We also hoped to have a good time in Spain and make new friends.

Every day during the meeting was full of new experiences, from perspectives to

challenges. A special experience of the meeting was the trust and communication within the group. Soon we weren't just any strangers from half of Europe, we were a team. Different focuses were set every day. The first day was about ME, that day we had a lot of time to reflect about ourselves, our personal point of view in life and about what is important to us. The next day followed the day of "ANIMATOR", youth group leader. This day offered a lot of space for exchange about the projects and activities in the different provinces and one got a rough insight into the other provinces, about who they are and what they do and at the same time we were allowed to present ourselves as central-west-europe and report about the activities in Ireland, Cham and Mindelheim. It was very interesting to learn about the projects of the other provinces and to get to know parallels and differences.

The presentations were very creative and not only colourful in content, but also in the way they were presented. On the third day we made a trip to the sea and had the opportunity to get to know other participants. On this day the trust and the group dynamics grew a lot again. It was time for longer conversations with different people and so we got to know some people better who we might have met only superficially. The fourth day was dedicated to the MARISTS, and on this day we were able to listen to some of the brothers, most of whom were present at the meeting as companions, about their connection to being a Marist. The stories could not have been more different and above all the focus that each brother has set for himself and yet they have in common the most central of the whole, their Covenant with Mary and with the Marist Community.

On the last day we had arrived at the topic WORLD, I as a person, youth leader and



Marist in the world, on this day we were given the opportunity to speak with a lay Marist who told us about his experience. We could again understand how the Marists are networked worldwide and how small the world is sometimes. In the afternoon, so to speak as the last big event before the closing Mass, our individual dreams were realized in a playful way. Almost every dream you have can somehow be realized, was the final message. The meeting was like growing from small to big, growing from individual to individual every day and arriving at the world on the last day.

Everything was networked and connected and showed us how we can also connect our own projects. The experience motivated us to start new projects or to continue and expand on the previous ones based on the impressions we gathered. In addition, the intensive experience during the week helped us to



deal with all the different activities on an inner-provincial level and to have a very profound dialogue about them.

It has become clear to us that we do not yet have the same structure in youth work in our province as, for example, the MarCha programme in Spain, but nevertheless we can also take some suggestions from the week with us for our province.

On the one hand we have heard in talks, lectures and discussions what can be done, on the other hand we, young people and brothers from the province, have started to think about how we can establish our own youth work in Germany and Ireland. For this, the new youth centre in Mindelheim offers enough space and opportunities for young people. There you can do handicrafts together, cook or just meet for a chat. We have not yet agreed on concrete contents or a unique selling point of the Marist Group lessons, but the general consensus in both

Germany and Ireland is clear: There must be a good Marist offer for young people in the individual Marist locations that is both fun and a place where Christian faith and Marist values also play a role.

In Mindelheim there is an idea that people who have been abroad with CMI could lead these groups. The advantage is that it is easier to reach young students when the group leaders are also young and may already have experience with Marist youth group work. Also for the ex-volunteers group lessons are a possibility to stay in contact with the Marists and to actively participate in being a Marist in Germany.

Also in Cham the meeting shows first successes: The participants of the meeting want to be more active in the marist youth work and focus more on the marist community, in order to inspire the young people. The focus is set thereby particularly on the youngest pupils,

thus in the 5th class, in order to arouse there already the interest for the Marists. Furthermore, the congregation in Cham invited other communities throughout Germany to the Pentecost 2020.

All in all, the meeting may not have set the ball rolling, but it certainly gave it another push and strength to continue to strengthen and consolidate the contact between lay Marists, alumni, youth and young adults and to show more commitment for more communication and exchange within the different communities in the province - so there is still a lot to do. We enjoyed the meeting in Llinars very much and had a wonderful week, but the real success can only be seen in what of it is applied and implemented in the different provinces. We would be happy if next year a group of young Marists would go to the meeting again and take the same positive impulses with them.

**Simon Ferber – Mindelheim Germany**



## Marist Animators Programme 2019 - Llinars del Vallés

**My name is Sarah Färber, I am 20 years old, a social science student and I am from Mindelheim, Germany. In Mindelheim there is a Marist school and I am a former student of this school. I graduated with A level in 2017. After my graduation I went to Colombia for a volunteering year with Cmi-Germany, a Marist volunteering service. It was a nine month experience, full of work and living with the Marist community in Villavicencio, Colombia, which was my place of assignment.**

I went to the Marist Animators Programme in Llinars as a participant of the organization team. The first organization gathering I joined, was more or less a spontaneous decision, I didn't have much information or expectations and I mainly let myself be surprised, but the information I did receive made it sound like a really interesting project – an Animators Gathering in Spain with young

people from all over Europe and having the opportunity to get to know their animator's work, Marist connection and experience. Finally in August I went to the gathering with the expectation to have a great time getting to know new people, exchanging ideas, experiences and aims, and last but not least having time for reflection on a personal and group level. During the week we developed many different aspects. As a guideline we had the slogan "Up your game". Each letter of GAME has a signification: Gen – Action – Marist – Era. Following this certain slogan we developed from small (the personal level) to big (the worldwide level) in different spaces of work, that means small groups, the big group or personal time. We were talking about ourselves as a human being on the first day, the second day we exchanged as provinces and animators, the third day we strengthened the group dynamic on an excursion to the seaside

in Girona, then the fourth day we spoke about the Marist community, and Marist brothers' told us about their experience of bring Marist and finally on the last day it was about a worldwide context, about dreams and possibilities in the personal and also the Marist world.

For me the moments I enjoyed most were to observe the fast increasing trust between the group, to exchange in different languages and to get to know such new, great and unique personalities. The meeting was a great experience and I hope that in the future it might be possible for me to support the Marist community and the dynamics of the young Marist animator and laypersons. For now it seems to be difficult as my study town is far away from the next Marist community, but I am really motivated and looking forward to the next opportunity to work in a Marist project.

**Mainz, 9.9.2019**

## European Solidarity Group

In order to work closer together as Marist Europe, the European Solidarity Team was created. All of the Marist Provinces located in Europe have sent one delegate to the EES Team.

The main goal of the team is to develop a Solidarity Framework for Marist Europe. Hereby, the team seeks to encourage Marist Solidarity projects in Europe by carrying out a strategic plan. Within the marist structures, the EES-Team is located in the Secretary of Solidarity and FMSI.

The Team has met three times so far. The first meeting was held on December 12th 2018 in Madrid. Every face to face meeting is followed by an online meeting through Skype. For the fourth meeting, the group will gather in Mindelheim from October 16th to October 18th. In every Meeting, one of the solidarity projects will present themselves, so will CMI Germany will be presented in October.

**Jamin Nimar – cmi Germany**



### The Delegates of the provinces are as follows:

**Mediterranea:** Fernando Domínguez

**West Central Europe:** Brother PJ (IRL) and Jasmin Nimar (GER)

**L'Hermitage:** Anna Badia Burgués

**Compostela:** Belén Salas

**Iberica:** Immaculada Maillo

**CEM:** Ángel Prieto Hernández

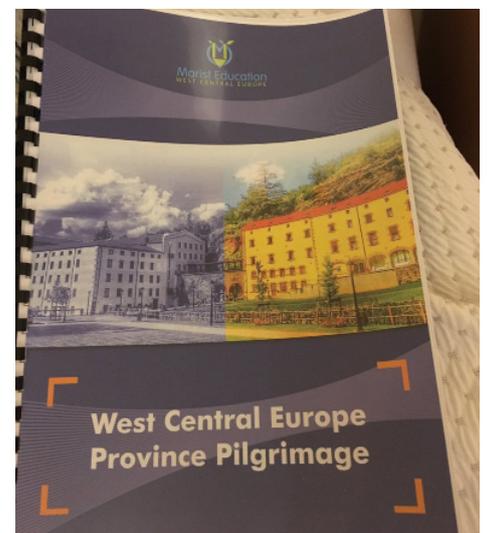
**Secretary:** Angela Sestriani

## Province Pilgrimage 2019

Having returned home from my trip to L'Hermitage I cannot express how calm I feel. L'Hermitage has a presence which brings you back to the simplicity of Marcellin and his very special vision of bringing God to all children. I think when you work in a school there is a definite buzz about your every day, bells ringing, phones ringing, people with questions and concerns, your day is defined by noise and the needs of others. This can become a burden; but to have looked out on the landscape that Marcellin Champagnat walked as a child struggling through his own school days and then through his vocation inspiring others to bring education and faith, I have felt a renewal in the burden of everyday school life and how connected our vocation to teaching can be with the young men who once built at La Valla.

The Lenten period is a time for reflection and a refocus on how me might strive to walk

alongside Christ, to have taken this journey of faith to see Christ in the life of man of such great faith has been a privilege which I am most grateful for. My life can be too busy and I like so many can feel defined by what I have managed to fit into my day and my week. My visit to Le Rosey really has helped my heart to slow down, looking at the home of Marcellin and sharing lunch with my fellow Marist teachers and the brothers was a special time – I felt a great connection with the past and the thousands of children who have had their life changed by one man a long time ago who had true faith. I went to a Marist school and now feel a sense of great gratitude to Marcellin and his vision, as we had lunch that day in the sun, there was a stillness in the air with the only change being a slight breeze from time to time, as I have reflected on this I think it was very pertinent - faith is like the wind you can't see it but you can feel it and as one



who has been both student and now teacher in a Marist school I think it is the intangible faith and inspiration of Marcellin that makes my school so special and it is our links to that beautiful village in Le Rosey where a young man put his faith in God and set so many on a journey of exploration all over the world.

**Victoria MacRae – St Joseph's College  
Dumfries Scotland**

# Presence

I thought My Marist journey was due to start 18 months ago in March 2018, but unfortunately due to a weather front named The Beast From The East the pilgrimage to l'hermitage was postponed. My wife, Victoria, a Teacher at St Joseph's College in Dumfries, former pupil and like myself a child whose parents worked within the school is a strong follower of Marist values and the Catholic faith. We were both very honoured to be invited to attend the 2019 pilgrimage. In that year I had been working as part of the school community with some of the more vulnerable students at St Joseph's, and with transition for pupils who would be joining the school community.

We travelled L' Hermitage armed with Winter clothing but wished we had worn shorts as we were blessed with beautiful spring sunshine, we couldn't have wished for any better weather to walk in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat. Whilst there I started to feel a warm feeling, listening to his stories, efforts and miracles. I realised that this man was an idol, a superhero, someone that I would like to follow and spread his values. I began to reflect a lot more and discovering that my Marist journey hadn't started recently but it was growing inside from a young age. I was baptised into the Church of Scotland and fell in love with a local Catholic girl, 15 years after we had met as teens. At L'Hermitage, sitting in the wonderful chapel with my wife I made the decision to be confirmed into the catholic church, sitting with Marcellin and looking forward to my journey continuing. On the 22nd of September I was Confirmed into the Catholic Church it was a perfect Autumn day surrounded by my family many of whom have dedicated much of their life to Marist schools.

**Simon MacRae – Dumfries Scotland**



# From Clondalkin to Athlone

Last May 15th-19th, together with the Brother Robert Thunus, Provincial, I made a visit to the schools and communities of Ireland. For me, it was the first time, so I discovered both the country and the Marist community. Nicholas was waiting for us at the airport and brought us to the community at Moyle Park College, Clondalkin. The encounter with the Brothers is always a pleasant and fraternity-filled experience. In fact, in all the communities we visited, we felt at home. Looking at the life of the Brothers, especially our older Brothers, I perceived the strength of personal giving and the meaning of a life given to God and at the service of children and young people. This is a beautiful treasure and a courageous witness.



We had the opportunity to visit the three Marist communities and the three schools: Marist College Athlone (established in 1884), Marian College (1954) and Moyle Park (1957). They are in very different contexts and have different profiles which enrich our mission. As a whole, one can appreciate their educational richness, their spirit of innovation, their connection with their local communities and their effort to preserve Marist identity. Diversity and integration are two elements that stand out in each school. All this was evident in the dialogues with the Marist Core Team, the directors and Marist Leaders (senior students). They told us what it means to live Marist philosophy and spirituality in Ireland, the challenges they experience, and the commitment to an education that puts faith, culture and life into dialogue in a society that changes and evolves. In every conversation, I could feel the passion to live our values and bequeath them to the new generations. What is written in books and what decorates



the walls of the school becomes an experience of life, a Marist heartbeat that undoubtedly remains alive and vital. I found the dialogue with the directors very enriching. They have a great sense of service to the Marist community

and to local realities. They believe in family spirit and teamwork. They are people with an innovative sense of education and a desire to offer the best service to the children and young people of Ireland. With the "Marist Core Teams", we spoke of the richness of Marist values, their validity for the new generations of students, the proactive attitude to involve all the members of the educational community and their desire to offer attractive proposals for living Marist spirituality and identity. They are an extraordinary group of people who project passion and joy. With the students of the Marist Leaders group, I discovered how young people live their Marist experience, the values of our identity, the challenges they experience in the face of their present and future, and the pride of being members of a committed community. In all three groups, the experiences at the Hermitage and sharing with other Marists from Europe and around the world have resulted in an extraordinary experience of Marist

exchange and of feeling like members of a global family. This experience has enriched them.

The walls speak from the heart. Walking through the corridors, classrooms and classes, it is evident that the three schools reflect the value of an educational tradition handed down from generation to generation. Pictures of students and alumni, sports, arts, academic results are mixed with images of Champagnat, Mary and Jesus. All this flows naturally. For this reason, I am very grateful to feel the atmosphere of family and of respectful and communal relationships in all senses. Every member of the educational community knows each other. It is very beautiful to perceive that there is an authentic school spirit that tries to give the new generations the best educational tools to be people, believers and proactive citizens.

It seemed to me that dedication has been and continues to be the key to forming Marist leadership and the Marist identity of the personnel and the directors. This has allowed the development and



growth of a new generation of Marist leaders, from the laity, who are now promoting our mission in the present and for the future.

Finally, I want to thank Brother PJ McGowan and Nicholas Smith and all the other Brothers for their hospitality. Thanks to Ms. Oonagh McCaul, Mr. Michael Dermody and Ms. Niamh

Cahalane, all their staff and students for helping us to have a deep sense of Irish Marist life. They made all our time fraternal and productive. I am sure that the future will bring new challenges but also new, courageous and determined Marist responses. Many blessings to all

**Br Luis Carlos Gutiérrez**  
Vicar General



# Around the Province – West Central Europe

## Germany

Maristen Realschule Cham Germany get a guided tour around the General House in Rome by Br Tony Leon

Follow all the wonderful Solidarity work in Germany here <https://www.maristen-solidaritaet.de>



## Belgium

On Saturday 19th October 2019, the Marist Brothers in Belgium welcome teachers, brothers and lay people to «A day with Br Jean Rozon – Saint-Genis-Laval». The day will look at how Champagnat can inspire us today, especially in our mission. It will take place in Habay-la-Vielle, Belgium from 10h-16h.

### Samedi 19 octobre 2019

Journée animée par le frère Jean Rozon.  
Imprégné des lieux où ont été fondés les Frères Maristes et Directeur de la revue « Présence Mariste », le frère Jean donnera des pistes pour (re)découvrir et vivre les valeurs qui animaient Marcellin Champagnat et ses successeurs...  
*Bienvenue aux Frères, parents, enseignants, éducateurs, laïcs maristes et amis !*



For more information go to <https://lebua.be>

## Scotland

Delighted to announce that St Mungos Academy Scotland have now joined the Marist Leadership Programme

The school community at St Johns Dundee Scotland celebrates Mass for the Feast of St Marcellin Champagnat.



Students at St Johns Dundee present a cheque for £1500 to Br Douglas for the India Village Project.

Read more about the project here <http://indiavillageproject.org/>

# WEST CENTRAL EUROPE CALENDAR DATES

2019

## SEPTEMBER

6-8	Mindelheim	Provincial Council Meeting
11-12	Mindelheim	Mission Council Meeting

## OCTOBER

7-11	Ireland	Marist Week
12-14	Dublin	Provincial Council Meeting
14-17	Nijmegen	Visit of projects in The Netherlands
16	Belgium	Habay-la-Vielle. A day with Br Jean Ronzon

## NOVEMBER

4-7	Valladolid	5 Provincial Councils of Europe
16	Dublin	Marist Youth Group Meeting
19-20	Dublin	Mission Council Meeting
TBD	Glasgow	Marist Leadership Coordinators Training

## DECEMBER

5-7	Kessel-Lo	Provincial Council Meeting
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## JANUARY / 2020

13-15	Madrid	Mission Council Europe (MEC) meeting
26	Dublin	Provincial Council Meeting

## FEBRUARY / 2020

29	Dublin	Marist Core Team Gathering Ireland
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## MARCH / 2020

19-22	France	Province Pilgrimage Hermitage
TBD	Dublin	Province Core Team Chairpersons Gathering

## FUTURE DATES / 2020-2022

October 1-4	2020	Marist Leaders Gathering Hermitage
March 11-14	2021	Province Pilgrimage
September 23-26	2021	Marist Leaders Gathering Hermitage
March 10-13	2022	Pilgrimage

