

MEETING OF EUROPEAN MARIST PROVINCIALS 9-11 JANUARY

Brother Gabriel Villa-Real FMS and his Vicar Xavier Arnella FMS welcomed us to Barcelona – Marie Therese Terra SM, Kevin Duffy SM, Sister Athanasie SMSM and myself.

We shared news from our congregations, the realities we are experiencing, and our different projects. Brothers Gabriel and Xavier showed us their mission in Catalonia, which includes ten schools. We viewed the different departments in their educational pastoral centre. *They look for ways to evangelize the young in a very secular society where consumerism prevails and where people seek to obtain everything quickly.* Several initiatives are in place with a dynamic, competent team.

On Saturday evening we visited a day centre for children and young people. The laywoman director told us how people, qualified and volunteers, work together for the future of the young people. The families themselves are involved in building a future for their children based on solid values. Brother Toni FMS, who was interpreting from Catalan, presented books about the humble and discreet lives of a selection of Marist Brothers, including the Venerable Henri Vergès FMS who was martyred in Algeria.

We also strolled round the beautiful city of Barcelona, enjoying different Catalan delicacies.



Our last visit was to La Sagrada Familia cathedral whose construction began in 1882. It is an unfinished work by Antoni Gaudi. It is exclusively financed by donations. I was amazed, and I think the others were too, by this man's gifts and how he was able to create this wonder of religious architecture.

Many thanks to Brothers Gabriel and Xavier for this wonderful initiative.

Sister Hélène Diouf, smsm

DEAR MARIST FRIENDS

A confrere recently submitted an article for publication. The reply said how happy they were to receive a submission from a religious brother. When people hear the word Marist, usually they think immediately of the Marist

Brothers, by far the largest of the congregations that form part of the Marist family.

As Sister Hélène Diouf recounts below, recently some of us experienced the wonderful hospitality of the Catalan Marist Brothers topped off with a view of the work of genius and holiness that is the cathedral of La Sagrada Familia.

Kevin Duffy, sm

PRAYER INTENTION:

The work of the Marist Brothers in Catalonia



ANNIVERSARIES OF ORDINATION IN EUROPE

Ordination: 60 years

Georges Richard 20.02 (FR), Jo Neve 13.03 (NL)

EDUCATION - HEADS OF ESTABLISHMENTS MEETING JANUARY 15-17 IN LA NEYLIÈRE

The annual meeting of the European school principals took place this year in La Neylière. It was wonderful to be back in this heritage house with all its history and importance for the mission of Marist Education. Along with the principals from France, Ireland and Germany, there were the Marist Fathers involved in education as chaplains to Marist schools. The members of the newly enlarged Marist Education Commission also attended. All the delegates were warmly welcomed by the Provincial Kevin Duffy and the Superior of La Neylière Jean-Marie Bloqueau. The hospitality of the La Neylière was very much appreciated.

Dr. Stephen McKinney, professor in the University of Glasgow, was our keynote speaker. He has worked in Catholic Education for over 30 years. His theme was *Synodality in the Mission of Education*. We were brought bang up to date on a theme that resonates in Marist establishments. In the afternoon Dara Gill from Chanel College Dublin spoke on *Artificial Intelligence in education*. It was fascinating. Exciting opportunities ahead tempered with the issue of academic integrity. Marc Bouchacourt from Ste Marie Lyon gave an intervention on refugees arriving in school particularly unaccompanied minors. Laurence Beraud-Schmitt from Cours Fénelon Toulon and Roland Feucht from the *Maristengymnasium Fürstzell* added their perspectives on a live issue. Alan Craven from St. Mary's Dundalk spoke on *Transgender issues in schools*. A case study from St Mary's was illuminating. How the staff, students and parents reacted to a student changing gender identification and how the school authorities handled the situation so that everyone is happy. Fr. Kevin presided over a celebration of the Eucharist in the La Neylière Chapel.

The last morning included a report from Vincent Langlois, provincial delegate for the Tutelle in France, a network report from the Education Deputy and a report from Kevin Duffy on Marist events in Europe. There was a presentation on the new arrangements for the expanded Education Commission and how it will operate in the future. The morning ended with a discussion on how we can improve communication throughout the Marist Network of European Schools.

Frank Dowling
Education Delegate Province of Europe



"GUIDED BY MARY": A PASTORAL ASSISTANT'S STORY OF FAITH AND SERVICE

After working with young offenders and degrees in theology, psychology and pastoral studies, I became Pastoral Assistant in the parish of Donore Avenue, Ireland in 2015. I wasn't familiar with the Marist charism, but I discovered that it is *characterized by humility, simplicity, and a commitment to serving others with love and compassion*. What stands out most about the Marists for me is their quiet but impactful way of being present in the world, much like Mary herself.

I accompany children and families for the sacraments. I also train and co-ordinate the different Ministry teams, such as Eucharistic Ministers, Funeral teams, as well as our new Lay Ministry team which leads us in prayer when a priest is not available for Mass.

In all this, I have found myself guided and inspired by Mary. Her unwavering faith, courage, and gentleness offer a model for navigating life's challenges with grace. She is not a distant figure but a nurturing presence. Through prayer and reflection, I find strength in her example and feel called to emulate her openness to God's will in my own life. *The Marist way invites all to live with a Marian heart - humble, loving, and steadfast in faith.*

Sam Byrne, Pastoral Assistant

