

Marist Brothers
Province of West-Central Europe

BULLETIN

June 2016

Editorial

Dear readers,

Greetings from Nijmegen! Please allow me to introduce myself to those among you who may not know me: My name is Daphne van Dongen and I am married with two children. I received training to become a translator in Brussels, and then obtained a degree in Applied Linguistics at the university of Nijmegen. I have worked at the Provincial House of the Brothers since October, 2000, when I began as a translator; as the years progressed my responsibilities increased, and I have recently become responsible for all the publications of the Province. My contacts reach far beyond the borders of West-Central Europe, which allows me to keep abreast of current events and developments in the Marist world.

Since the launch of the Province in the year 2000 I am the fourth person to take on the responsibility of publishing the Provincial Bulletin; my predecessors were Brothers John Phillips († 2014), Douglas Welsh and Jacques Scholte. They established many contacts and encouraged people to write articles, each adding their own style to the Bulletin. I have always enjoyed helping them wherever I could, and it is an honour now to continue the work.

This first Bulletin of this new Provincial mandate is largely devoted to the Provincial Chapter which took place in March. We have asked eleven participants to look back on it and describe how they have experienced it. Furthermore, in the month of June we traditionally celebrate the anniversary of Saint Marcellin Champagnat's death; to this end you will find some pictures of gatherings in various countries of the Province. Then there are some articles each addressing a different Marist theme, and at the very end you will find a collage with some photos of the Province Gathering which took place from 3rd till 6th June in Guardamar, Spain.

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage you to visit the website of our Province, www.marists.eu, every now and then. News of recent events, meetings, publications etc. is published there on a regular basis. I'd like to ask all of you to keep me informed of events in your community, fraternity, school, project or country: articles for the website and/or the Bulletin are always welcome. Many thanks in advance.



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Fourvière: Icon and Triptych

On 23rd July, 1816 the newly ordained Marcellin Champagnat climbed the 800 steps to the Marial Shrine at Fourvière in Lyon, along with Jean-Claude Colin, Jean-Claude Courveille and nine other young men who were either seminarians or newly ordained priests. As we know, they made this pilgrimage in order to commit themselves to the foundation of a new religious order in the Church which they proposed to call, “Mary-ists.” They signed a pledge which outlined their plans. Father Donal Kerr, a Marist historian, commented on the Fourvière pledge as follows:

It is a generous and courageous statement by twelve young clerics. This pledge in its exalted piety, heroic commitment and romantic language bears the trace of the fervour of young neophytes emerging from the hothouse of the seminary which at that time St. Irénée certainly was.

Kerr, Donal (2000). Jean-Claude Colin, Marist. A founder in an age of revolution and restoration: the early years 1790-1836. Dublin: Columba Press, p. 141.

I am not an artist, but I found myself wondering what I would expect to see if someone were to paint an icon of Fourvière. Would I look for a group of young men climbing a hill, or would I want to focus on the mass in the newly restored church, which had been inaugurated by Pope Pius VII in 1805? Or would I want to put the emphasis on their expansive sense of mission, as they left the church to go to their new parish appointments, with the pride and excitement of the newly ordained priests?

As I reflected on this question I realized that no one image could capture the essence of Fourvière for me. I wondered if a triptych might better express the meaning of Fourvière, and its significance for today.

Climbing the hill of Fourvière

The image of twelve young men climbing the steps to Fourvière works effectively as a metaphor for the individual stories and shared experience of the men who made their way to the top of the hill that morning. They had all been touched by the profound changes ushered in by the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, establishment of the Empire, and the consequences in every part of France of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. They also lived through unprecedented changes in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the French state.

They all had their own individual journeys. Marcellin Champagnat had to overcome a lack of formal education, limitations in his academic ability, and the death of his father in 1804 and his mother in 1810. Jean-Claude Colin lost both of his parents before he was five years old, and was brought up by his uncle, and a housekeeper who was pious but rather dominating. We know that our adult lives are marked – for good and ill – by experiences in childhood.

The young seminarians were inspired by the vision of Jean-Claude Courveille to found a Marist Society, and had many meetings to discuss and clarify their ideas prior to their ordination. We also know that the establishment of the Society of Mary, Fathers and Brothers, Sisters and Missionary Sisters, and the Marist Brothers, had many uphill moments in the years after the pledge that was made at Fourvière. In that sense, the image of the young men climbing the hill in the early morning is a good image that captures part of the Fourvière experience.



Mass and placing the pledge on the altar

The mass which was celebrated by Courveille was a solemn moment. It was the culmination of their personal journeys and shared discussions in the seminary. Such moments are important in life. They help us to articulate what is important for us, and are part of the process of maturity as we make a public statement of our hopes and life plans, involving a commitment to others and to ourselves. We pledge to use our efforts and energies in pursuit of a dream and a common purpose. Like treasured wedding, profession, ordination or graduation photos, they capture a moment in time which contains a marvellous and inspiring human story.

Ite missa est...

After the mass was over the twelve young men left to return to the seminary or to begin their new parish missions. The mass was ended: the mission had begun. As we know, only four of the twelve signatories continued to be part of the Marist project. For the others this commitment was seen, perhaps, as part of their youthful enthusiasm. No doubt it remained as a cherished memory of idealism and brotherhood, as they went about their ministry as diocesan priests.

Fourvière today: the unfolding story

My triptych begins with a group climbing a hill and ends with dispersal to the world. The Marist story involves all three movements: the personal stories and shared moments that bring us to this point in time, key moments of celebration and commitment, and moving outward in mission.

We know that the early Marist founders had a vision of a tree with many branches. The branches that were obvious to them were branches of priests, coadjutor brothers, and sisters. We know that Father Champagnat wanted something different – brothers who would be professional teachers, who would also break new ground in their ministry by learning how to teach deaf children, for example. Father Colin, who never fully understood Champagnat's vision for his brothers, did have a sense of a lay branch, which was never developed in a satisfactory way in his life time.

If we return to my imaginary triptych, perhaps the unfolding Fourvière story is asking us to revisit the initial vision to find a way for the lay dimension of the Marist project to be more fully developed. One of the foundational insights of the Second Vatican Council was the universal call to holiness, reminding us that the Church is the whole People of God – and not only bishops, priests, and professed brothers and sisters. The decline in vocations to consecrated Marist life, and the expanding interest of teachers, administrators, fellow workers, carers, friends and others who have a relationship with us, who express a desire to participate more fully in the life, leadership and management of the Marist Institute, offer us a new hill to climb, leading us to a second Fourvière, where the original vision can be fulfilled in a way we could not have dreamt of, even fifty years ago.

There will be a celebration in the basilica at Fourvière on 23rd July, with representatives from the Marist branches and young Marists from all over the world who will gather for a Marist Youth event as part of World Youth Day. Brothers Colin Chalmers, Alois Engel, Gerard de Haan, John Hyland and Maurice Taildeman will be there from our Province. I am sure that it will be a memorable and uplifting event. I suspect that most people will arrive at the top of the hill by car, bus or the funicular railway. No matter which way people arrive at the top of the hill, this gathering provides a new opening panel for my imaged triptych, or, possibly, an icon of Marist life in the future.

**Brendan Geary FMS,
Provincial**





Malmedy



Nijmegen



Maristenschule Recklinghausen



Champag- nat Day

2016



Genval



Provincial Chapter, 2016

The Provincial Chapter took place from 28th till 31st March at Kardinal-Döpfner-Haus in Freising, an excellent conference centre near to Munich which had been the Bishop's residence for centuries: in the early 19th century the Bishop moved to Munich and from then till 1968 it was the seminary for the Diocese of Munich-Freising. It was here that Josef Ratzinger undertook his early priestly formation, earned his first degree and was ordained. He later visited the place as Pope Benedict XVI. As is common now throughout the Institute, lay members of the Institute are invited to participate in many of its meetings. The recent gathering in Freising was no exception. Together with the Brother Provincial as ex officio and 14 elected delegates from among the Brothers of the Province, there were also 14 appointed lay delegates from around the Province. Also present as participating guests were Brothers Emili Turú, Superior General, Ernesto Sánchez from the General Council, João Carlos do Prado from the Mission Secretariat in Rome and Gabriel Villa-Real from the Mission Team/CEM. Roswitha Vesper from Germany ably facilitated the proceedings assisted by Martin Pearson from Kinharvie Institute as Assistant Facilitator/Secretary. The meeting was made intelligible through the presence and excellent work of our translators, Nancy Camilléri from Germany and Georges Médinger from Belgium known to us from previous meetings; and now a new face among translators, Tim Hacker, a former pupil of Mindelheim and presently a student in Munich whose excellent linguistic skills were appreciated by all. His parents were present as lay delegates. The meeting, of course, could not have run smoothly without the technical support of Michael Beham, and the practical assistance of Wolfgang Laug who had been responsible for the contacts with the centre and the transportation of the participants. To everyone, many thanks.

Charles Gay FMS



Eddy Van Passel



Brendan has asked me to write a brief reflection of the days spent in Freising. Had he asked me to describe the experience in one word, I would have said that it has been a “discovery” for me. Beforehand I thought I knew quite a bit about the “Marist Brothers” but now I realise that my horizons have expanded significantly.

At this beautiful location in Freising we had “space” to work, space to live and, mostly, space simply “To Be”. Isn't that what we can offer to young people – a space “TO BE”. And let's make sure also to remember to give

them an opportunity to help us give colour to the house. I trust that the Marist Brothers will have “the courage” to offer this opportunity, and let us go on this journey together.

Thanks to everyone, it was a beautiful time. When I came home my brother asked, “Eddy, where did you get all that energy?” I said: “Part of it I got from the Irish, the Scots and English, the Germans, the Dutch – from all nationalities who were there... and a little bit came from a bottle of the true Marist spirit – Alpestre – which we were offered at the party.”



Winfried Schrieck FMS

“We’ll make it!”

Each morning and afternoon session began with a prayer made up and led by one of the Brothers. This start to a session made quite an impression on me, creating a sense of the presence of God and Mary among us. In particular I recall the opening prayer of the Chapter by Brother Michael Schmalzl. All the participants were actively engaged in this pray-

er as each one placed in front of the Easter candle and the statue of Mary in the centre of the room something which expressed their own Marist being or that of the Province. These remained there and accompanied us throughout the sessions. Also, for me, the celebration of Mass on the Wednesday evening with Marist Father Georg Galke was a “small Easter feast”.

On the first evening Brother Brendan opened the Chapter and put before us in his own visionary way what awaited us. The first part of our meeting began with our Marist future. This section in which we did intensive work in small groups was well moderated by Roswitha Vesper and Martin Pearson. For me it was and still is clear that, yes, we have a future when as Marists we remain in solidarity and our “Marist leadership” is down to earth in the present. While looking back together on the time spent in Freising one confrère quoted the current German Chancellor with the famous sentence, “We’ll make it!”

The evening get-togethers in the Korbinian Bar are particularly memorable for me. After our day’s work we were able to let our hair down with Bavarian beer or a glass of wine, talk about things, pass on our views of things which are as important to us as the decisions of the Chapter. Brother Emili gave a short talk to the participants in which he addressed the four “Cs”, Community, Care, Commitment and Courage, important aspects of our future.

Our sixth Provincial Chapter which was held during Easter week in Freising highlighted once again the close and developing bonds between the Brothers of the Province and lay colleagues. Our conversations reflected a shared ownership of and responsibility for the charism of Champagnat. We spoke of Marist spirituality as our way of being and acting in the world. We sought ways of accompanying Marist life in all its manifestations. Reflecting in this way filled us with hope and enthusiasm to develop and enrich many projects already under way as well as contemplating some new possibilities. This process led us to set down some preliminary suggestions for a plan of action over the coming three years. The challenge will be to build mutual trust to a level where power and resources will be shared in making decisions which will support the development of our Marist charism for the enrichment of people in the Church and the World.

John Hyland FMS



Thomas Volman

For me it was the first time that I had attended a Chapter. What struck me most was the family spirit which prevailed. I have been involved with the Marist Brothers at Westerhelling for eight years now but had never really had a real sense of what it means to be a member of this family. Of course, I knew that it was an international community with shared ideals but now it became apparent to me that this community also has a certain culture, with a shared past. As I participated in the reflection on all the developments which are taking place within the community, and met many new people, I began to look at things through the eyes of the Brothers, as it were. Rather than focusing on the developments at Westerhelling alone I now have a better idea of where this community comes from and where it is rooted.

My presence at the Chapter as a lay person was characteristic of where the Marist community stands today: one of the main issues at the Chapter was promoting the involvement of lay people in the community. The fact that the Brothers have enabled me to start the training to become a spiritual accompanier can also be seen in this light. And it is no coincidence that a group of us in Nijmegen are taking part in reflections on the possibility of creating a “Westerhelling Community”. I have become fully aware of the fact that these developments are not just a result of the situation in Nijmegen but that the topic of formation and involvement of lay people is being addressed in the whole Province. We are really going through a transition, and I am under the impression that we, in Nijmegen, are on the right track and have made some good progress. At the same time I have realised that we still have a long way to go before we will find ourselves in a period of more stability.



To participate in the Provincial Chapter of Central-Western Europe was a great honour for me and a very positive experience. From this experience I highlight the participation of Brothers and Laity, a methodology that favoured reflection, dialogue, knowledge of reality and to be able to dream about the future. It was an experience that permitted us to see the Province as one Body and as part of a greater Body that is the Marist Institute. It was an opportunity to strengthen international identity and to face together the challenges and the construction of the future. I feel that everyone will feel committed by this experience and the perspectives of future of the Province.

Another strong element was the connection. This was manifest in the living out of the Chapter and in the desire to extend the relationships and networks taking into account the local level, the country, the Province, the Region of Europe, the Institute and other institutions. This was a great opportunity to become aware that the Marist Charism and the Marist Mission have a place in the different realities of the Province and can contribute in the development of many persons, especially of children and of young people.

João Carlos do Prado FMS



Shay Quinn



I was delighted as always to attend any meeting of the Marist Brothers. I felt the location was perfect so close to the airport and excellent transport links. It made the journey to and from our country very prompt. The food and the accommodation were excellent. The proximity to the town of Freising also meant we could go for walks and shop as required.

I think the main message of the Chapter was the greater role which may be required and more significant involvement of the laity. I believe it is universally accepted that this would be a good idea. I believe that this idea needs

to be put into some action immediately. I would distinguish between the lay people who are directly involved with the Brothers and those who can advise from a more objective side. Those who earn their income from the Brothers may not be in the best position to provide advice.

It is important that those lay people who were involved are kept up to date with developments in this process on a regular basis.

For us to have a more significant role in the process and discussion we would need to know the situation in each community. I have met members of all communities, but am not really sure what is the exact situation in the Province.

The average age of the Brothers in the Province is a very sobering piece of information. This statistic should never be far from any discussion.

Jacques Scholte FMS

Towards the future

- Or rather, the future was already present at the Provincial Chapter. Reflections on the future of our Province were the thread of these Chapter days. The presence of lay people for most of the time was a strong aspect of this thread. The phrase "all Marists" was used quite naturally during the Chapter, which expressed what was actually happening; Brothers and lay people found common ground in their concern for, and involvement in, our mission.

Mission was the main theme of this Chapter, much like Communion between Brothers and Lay People was the theme of the 2013 Chapter. Mission can be considered a continuation of the previous Chapter. In the past three years much energy has been devoted to the connection between Brothers and lay people. This has created a solid foundation for taking the next step now, so to speak, by referring to the various activities in the five countries as "our mission" and emphasizing how they relate to each other. This is what happened and what was laid down in clear recommendations about shared leadership, formation of lay people in leadership, and the development of new structures.

These are fine challenges for the next three years. They require that, again, everyone involved is willing to devote much energy to our Marist life and our mission, both of which will begin to take new forms. As a result of the relaxed atmosphere in which we worked the challenges were



not experienced as being heavy demands. On the contrary, there was a sense of optimism and a readiness to “put our shoulder to the wheel”.

Although the focus was mostly on mission during the Chapter it must also be said that the care and attention for the ageing and infirm Brothers was not left undiscussed. We were able to see that in all countries significant investments have been made in quality care and that this care will continue into the future.

Allow me to mention one other point that merits attention as well. In the recommendations the contemplative aspect of our mission and our lives is hardly present. It is an aspect which should certainly be considered – contemplation in our action and the action which nourishes our contemplation.

Paul Cummings

As we closed the Chapter, each participant was invited to express something of what the Chapter experience meant to them. Arranged in a large circle, we spent 3 minutes in quiet contemplation, recalling our time together. In the peaceful stillness that surrounded us, I realised how special an experience the Chapter had been



and how appreciative I was of the welcoming and fulfilling community we had created together. I appreciated the spirit between and amongst us. There was a sincere sense of connectedness that we enjoyed as Marist family. In that moment of quiet contemplation, I realised that others too, had appreciated me.

Being invited to take part in the Chapter by the Provincial, Brendan, told me that I, along with others, had a voice. When I spoke, I found others listened attentively and respectfully. People were genuinely interested in hearing the ideas and opinions of each other. There was a powerful sense of equality; all working together for the benefit of the mission.

This Chapter had as many others as there were Brothers in attendance. This is a powerful message that demonstrates a strong desire to work and be together. Whilst diminishment of the Brothers is a reality, there is no absolute requirement to advance the involvement of others associated with the Brothers in such a way. I firmly believe the gift of possibility begins with a seat at the table and I sense this Chapter represents a shift that opens up tremendous possibilities for future collaboration. In my work with Kinharvie Institute, I encounter many religious congregations. Too often, there's ambivalence towards “lay people”, resulting in much tokenism. It's evident to me the Marist Brothers are way ahead in their appreciation and genuine engagement with other Marists and our seat at the Chapter table brings to mind Champagnat's table at La Valla. Having a seat at the Chapter table reminded me of the incredible and unexpected welcome I experienced when I first encountered the Brothers. For me, this is what it means to be Marist.



Albert André FMS



For me, the gathering was very enriching. The venue was very suitable for the planned activities: The large circle created a unity among us from the first evening.

The symbolism of the centre of the circle allowed each of us to express ourselves freely, and the objects that were placed in the centre were an image of the communion that united us.

For my part, I really felt that we were one large family, as if we had known each other for such a long time. And the final Eucharist round the same table linked us to Father Champagnat and the first Brothers at La Valla.

The presence of lay people, as numerous as Brothers, created a dynamic that we had not known in previous Chapters. In fact, they were part of the discernment process from beginning to end.

I also learned throughout the week about the lived experiences in the different countries of our Province; the care of elderly Brothers, the spirituality and solid leadership given by many lay people, our mission towards the pupils in our school, the different projects in Nijmegen... And great hope for the future.

Renate Hacker



I would like to share my thoughts on three areas.

First, I would like to comment on my experience of the *relationship that existed between Brothers and laity* of the Province throughout the Chapter. Immediately on arrival I experienced a feeling of active hospitality, welcome and openness. This was confirmed throughout our shared working together with a sense of a mutual interest in the other as well as the inclusion of all the participants and their readiness to take each one seriously. A particular aspect of the conference was that, while respecting the superiors and those in authority, each one accepted the other as an equal partner.

In these days of the Chapter we lived a time of shared spirituality and although engaging in controversial discussions in differing groups we were able to laugh and celebrate together. All of this was for me a special and refreshing experience and showed me once again what it means to belong to this group.

Secondly, I would like to go into the specifics of *our future life and work together as Marists in the Province*. The purpose of the gathering was to develop recommendations for the future of the Marists. This work brought for me new stimuli and suggestions. The reflections on the past, the realistic engagement with the present together with a shared development of a future vision brought for me much greater clarity and coherence. Information regarding developments in the Province together with the views and experiences of diverse projects and those involved in them were for me both interesting and stimulating. Opposing expectations were put forward with concrete examples. A future challenge for us is to develop a structure which on the one hand enables the Marist community and on the other leaves room for specific individuality. Of

particular interest here is that the Marist Institute are happy to encourage a change in responsibility residing in the Superiors to a co-responsibility with the laity. In this respect I find very helpful the direct exchange of views and personal contact.

Thirdly, I look at the concrete suggestions which I gather from the Chapter in relation to our *local project Cmi-Germany*. This is my third year working on this project with Brother Michael Schmalzl and my colleague Brigitte Riedmaier. All three of us were participants at the Provincial Chapter in Freising. I have many concrete suggestions which can be adopted in the work with young people in the *Cmi* project. We will endeavour to find further ways of developing projects for the youth. We are planning to build structures through which we can encourage many of our youth in the spirit of Marists to volunteer themselves. So, through *Cmi* locally, nationally and worldwide they can gain experience of voluntary work and learn what it means to work and live as Marists. The basis of our endeavours here must be the handing on or transmission of the values of Marcellin Champagnat. The Provincial Chapter has given me new motivation and encouragement to follow this route with all my heart and strength, because I find myself supported and carried along in my work by the Institute.



From the history of the Institute

Part 1: The celebration of Golden Jubilees

Introductory notes

We are on the threshold of the **200th anniversary** celebration of the founding of the Institute in 2017. It seems appropriate that we should now be making steps to bring this to fruition. We will try to do this in a series of contributions for the Bulletin. The basis of these will be the **annals of Brother Avit** (Henri Bilon), who set out in three volumes (total 1207 pages) in a series of reports, narratives and commentaries, the History of Champagnat and of the Institute from its beginning to 1891. The particular character of Avit's work in terms of its presentation has already featured in an earlier edition of the Bulletin (2013, 4) and so need not be repeated here. Be that as it may, these annals are an interesting and important source for the History of the Institute in the 19th century regarding the development, administration, mission, spirituality, regular activities and lifestyle of the Brothers in the time of Champagnat and later. His motto still applies to us today, namely, "The experience of the past should be our guide to the present and instruction for the future." In this first article we see how the Brothers celebrated a Golden Jubilee. This is a very enlightening extract about the culture of celebration which gradually developed among the Brothers and continues to this day.

In his third volume Brother Avit deals with the period from 1893 when Brother Théophile became Superior General to 1891, a year before his death. He was 73 years old.

1881: The first celebration

Brother Avit tells us that no one had celebrated a Golden Jubilee before 1881. He writes:

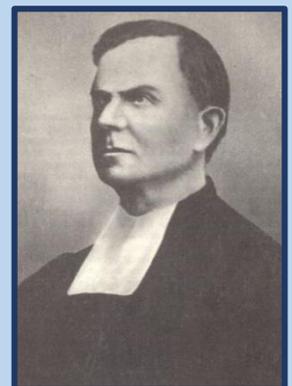
"Brother François out-lived the jubilee by ten years. Neither he nor anyone else had dreamt of such a thing as celebrating the 50th anniversary; not even that of the beloved Brother Xavier who lived more than 50 years in the Institute. Brother Jean-Baptiste (Furet) died a few weeks before his jubilee."

Brother François entered the Novitiate in 1819, so could have celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 1869. Since he died in 1881 he had out-lived the jubilee year by twelve years. Brother Jean-Baptiste entered the Novitiate in 1822 and died in 1872, so in his 50th year in Religion. Nor was his jubilee celebrated.

According to Avit it was in 1881 that a Golden Jubilee was first properly celebrated. It was the jubilee of one of the best known Brothers, one to whom Champagnat stood close by because of the "incident" in the early days, namely Brother Sylvester. He entered the Novitiate in 1831 which was understood as the beginning of a religious life. But the celebration was indeed modest. There was something a little "extra" at the midday meal and "that was all" narrated Avit curtly.

1888: The Golden Jubilee celebration of Brother Avit

Avit lived through 1885, the year in which were celebrated the jubilees of Brothers Euthymes, Jean-Claude and Gérard. On this occasion there was something "extra" at the midday meal as well as several speeches.



But now to the celebration of the chronicler himself: actually, it should have been celebrated on 9th March since it was on that day in 1838 that the 19-year-old Avit entered the Novitiate in L'Hermitage. But as he tells us, on the evening before he left on a journey south for several months. So the Superior General postponed the Feast of the Consecration of Our Lady in the Temple and scheduled the jubilee to take place with five other Brothers.

Avit described what took place that day: *"A grand solemn Mass. The jubilarians took their places at the top table, i.e. the Superiors' table and everyone had a share of the 'extra'. After the greetings in the hall the six Brothers were accompanied into the study hall where one of the juniors gave a speech."*

Because of its original character, we quote a short extract from this speech. He first turned towards the Superior General, Brother Théophile, and said. *"We are the youngest of the children of the Blessed Virgin and we are certain that we are the most favoured children in your heart."* Then he turned back to the jubilarians and said among other things, *"Every day our teachers remind us of the virtues of our venerable founder. But you (jubilarians) who have received his teachings and his care, tell us yourselves much more eloquently than we are able to do, what the virtues are of a true child of Mary and Champagnat. Your jubilee teaches us that we are far distant from the death of our pious founder. But you, dear*

Brothers, are the worthy signposts with whose help we will not go astray."

Further celebrations in future years

At this time the celebration of Golden Jubilees became common in the Motherhouse and in the other communities. So in that same year there were jubilee celebrations for two Brothers in Aubenas and five months before that the Jubilee of Brother Albert in Auriol where the parish priest had organised a great feast. And Brother Avit recounts the celebration in Beaucamps as follows, *"The many living in the house in Beaucamps celebrated with great festivity in 1887 the jubilee of Brother Aidant who had been Director there for 32 years."*

In this way a genuine Marist culture of celebration gradually developed. At that time essential elements included; a solemn Mass, speeches from the Superiors and the "extra" at the midday table; but Avit gives no details about these extras. Finally it was recognised as a great honour for the jubilarians to sit at the table of the major Superiors in Saint-Genis or of the local Superior in the other houses. From this we learn that in the forthcoming jubilee celebrations of the Province we are continuing a genuine Marist tradition. We should be glad to carry this on.

Augustin Hendlmeier FMS



The Consecrated Life

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) hosted a meeting in Rome from 28th January to 2nd February 2016. More than 5000 participants from all over the world, including 25 Marist Brothers, responded to the invitation.

International meeting in Rome



The meeting began with a solemn vigil in which passages were read from the Gospel which pointed towards the consecrated life, such as the Beatitudes (Mt.5:1-12). The consecrated persons wish to put their whole life at God's disposal in as much as they live according to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

In the following presentation the contributions of the various participants are dealt with systematically. Their names can be found at the end of the presentation.

The consecrated life is a gift to the world

The consecrated life is a prophetic one: God stands on the side of the poor and desires that consecrated persons shake up the world. The Pope has demanded a simple lifestyle of us. We ought to be experts at building up societies and announcing the Good News with courage. It is in this way that the consecrated life is a gift to the world.¹ Consecrated persons should emanate joy.⁵ Consecrated life should mean to be born anew.³

Living in the present

Consecrated life means to be in the here and now: to live in the present and be a sign of the times.⁴ In our daily lives are we signposts to the Gospel? We must overcome outdated traditions and should not be looking out on the world from some balcony.⁵ But perhaps we are too worldly orientated, too busy doing things and too hectic with it. There must be a balance found between time for action and time for prayer.⁹

Being credible

To where is Jesus calling us? Our lives must be a sign of the living God.¹⁰ We must always be asking ourselves the question: how credible are we? We must not allow ourselves to be fenced in but must be going out to people.⁵

We must ask Jesus for a vision – we must be courageous but also be able to shock.²

Renewal must be our constant tendency in which we keep our roots in the forefront of our minds.⁹

Our response to the challenges of the present day

Secularism is a major challenge for us. How do we respond to it? Pope Benedict XVI asks us to adopt new forms of consecrated life.⁴ New spiritual societies practice a variety of new forms which involve mutual participation of both single and married people.¹¹

Another challenge is the mixture of cultures living side by side with each other. Worldwide belonging is a particular characteristic of consecrated life. In their international set up they recognise each other as brothers and sisters. In the forefront stands the individual person – only after that the culture. Multiculturalism is not a problem but rather an opportunity. Nevertheless it is important that different cultures do not simply live side by side without contact. People of different cultures must speak with each other. That is a pre-condition for any mutual understanding. For ex-

ample: a Sister from Peru is very sparing with water when dealing with plants. A Sister from Brazil on the other hand when cleaning has the floor swimming. Neither understands the other. Once there is conversation this brings understanding.¹²

The consecrated life: an option for young people?

In religious education classes in Europe the young people experience little about the consecrated life. This form of life is not an option for them since who would make a decision for something that they no little or nothing about? As members of institutes of consecrated life we should be informing people more about that life in general and about our own institutes in particular.¹²

As Religious we should be sharing our experiences in the world. One particular Sister told how as a child she first encountered Religious, was invited among them and got to know the consecrated life. So impressed on her consciousness was this form of life that she was able later to adopt it for herself.⁶

The decisiveness of our form of life

On 1st February Brother Emili Turú, Superior General of the Marist Brothers, had this to say among other things,⁷ “We build up the periphery of the Church. This means that we must go out to the neglected and the needy. That is where our place is. In its radicalism, our way is shock therapy for the Church. Our Church suffers particularly from clericalism. In the new forms of consecrated life people live and work in all aspects of society and so are present everywhere.”



Prophecy, nearness and hope

In his audience of 1st February Pope Francis alerted us to these three concepts when he said,⁸ “We are prophets when we walk the road of joy, the road alongside Jesus. He is a charismatic gift. Nearness for us means not to be distant from people but to be close to them in their suffering. Consecrated life is not a status from which we view the world. Mother Theresa is an example of this.”

On hope the Pope says, “When I receive Bishops and ask them, ‘How many new priests do you have?’ Most of them respond, ‘four’ or ‘five’. When I receive Religious superiors and ask them,

‘How many novices do you have?’ most of them respond, ‘two’ or ‘three’. This shows us that we need to found consecrated life anew. Let us pray as Hannah did for a son. God will heed your plea as he did hers when Samuel was sent. We must knock at the door.”

The Pope also declared how he understands obedience: “It is not military. The will of God is mediated through the Superior. But when we only do what we want to do, anarchy reigns; then we are children of the devil and not of God.”



On the final day the participants took part in a pilgrimage to three papal basilicas. Finally CICALSAL is to be thanked for the excellent preparation of the event and for the comprehensive information to participants.

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List of contributors

- ¹ Cardinal João Braz De Aviz, speech on 29.1.2016
- ² Christophe Theobald, SJ, speech on 29.1.2016
- ³ Miguel Marquez Calle, OCD, speech on 29.1.2016
- ⁴ Mgr. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, speech on 29.1.2016
- ⁵ Bruno Secondin, OC, speech on 30.1.2016
- ⁶ Nathalie Becquart, Institut La Xavière, speech on 31.1.2016
- ⁷ Emili Turú, FMS, speech on 1.2.2016
- ⁸ Pope Francis, speech on 1.2.2016
- ⁹ Podium discussion, 29.1.2016
- ¹⁰ Podium discussion, 31.1.2016
- ¹¹ Podium discussion, 1.2.2016
- ¹² Podium discussion, 30.1.2016

Province Gathering at Guardamar

