

Being Marist

WEST CENTRAL EUROPE



Dear Friends!

This time of the year always brings a feeling of gratefulness and appreciation for the gift of what we've lived in the year gone by. There is something about leaves drifting to the ground that tells a story and encourages us to take a deep breath and refresh. This autumn is our gift in West Central Europe.

In this edition of Being Marist I hope you enjoy some glimpses of the vibrancy and growth in Marist mission amongst our five countries. Just like the trees, growth requires release.

So, for the last time in this edition, we prepare to change from the Province, to the District West Central Europe, and give thanks for all it has given us.

Aisling Demaison
Director of Marist Education
West Central Europe



The Greek philosopher Heraclitus was not wrong when saying his famous «panta rhei» which means that everything flows, everything is in motion and nothing stands still. We refer precisely to this saying to describe the reality of life in Cham, where everything is undergoing transformation, something that has happened since the Marist school was closed and the brothers who lived in the house left. Those changes had to happen for Brother Michael to have an idea that would turn the situation around.

Brother Michael came up with the idea of re-letting the house of the former brothers of the diocese of Regensburg. So together with the local Marist team, consisting of Johanna Aschenbrenner and Hans Staudner, he developed a new concept for this house and in turn for the Marist foundation in Cham as well.

Once the Provincial and his council approved this project, the diocese was able to rent the house again. Thus beginning a complete renovation that is the responsibility of the province.

The trajectory of Marist life in Cham has always been very active, where the brothers, through their work and their example, have been laying the foundations for an independent and lively

Marist Cham

lay community, which, of course, supports this new project that now houses the Casa Marista. With the new changes, the majority of the brothers will accompany and support the project of this new «Marist House» from outside.

The renovation of this new home has resulted in eight rental apartments of different sizes, as well as a small guest apartment. Likewise, the new FMG association moves to an office, where it maintains the management of the Marist archive. The living room and kitchen will be used for the different events that arise.

The two «star» rooms of the house consist of a new house chapel in the attic and a new living room with a winter garden. There will also be a community kitchen that will provide guests with well-being.

On the other hand, there are already many planned actions and spiritual offerings aimed at the inhabitants of the house, former students and the school community of the Marien Realschule, as well as projects designed to suit students and teachers.

The following plans and events that are planned for the school are: Devotions at

special times such as Lent/Advent; with breakfast for students or meditation in the private chapel; as well as informative events about the Marist Brothers and the Marist Family. Likewise, «fireside chats» on ecclesiastical, spiritual, and/or theological topics are planned for teachers and other parties who may be interested; as well as relaxed moments of regular exchange of information. This new home will also have celebrations of the word of God, meditations and Eucharistic celebrations on special occasions that will be an integral part of our spiritual offer.

Another of the new projects included in this calendar is a monthly meeting to exchange impressions and ideas. In addition, attention continues to be paid to the holiday home «Marzellinklaus» located in the Bavarian Forest, where guests are always welcome, just as they are in the Maristenhaus.

The Marist Cham Family once again has a place to live, celebrate and pray, thanks to the generous support of the Province. Therefore, at this point, a heartfelt «God bless you» to Brother Robert and his advice.

30.08
04.09

Hermitage trip 2023

Still a bit sleepy, the trip to France started at half past seven in Mindelheim on August 31. Along with Renate and Frater Michael were the 6 volunteers from Mindelheim and Furth, who will be leaving for their posts around the world in the course of the next few weeks, and the two volunteers from Uganda, who are currently doing their voluntary service in Mindelheim.

With enough breaks, driver changes, and naps, the 700 kilometers quickly dwindled so that we arrived at the small French village of Marthes around 5:30, which was explored during an evening walk.

On day 2, the brothers in Le Rozet gave us a warm welcome. Through a film, we learned about Marcellin Champagnat's childhood and family, which was further illustrated by a visit to the old bakery of his birthplace. Unfortunately, the language barrier was present throughout the visit, but nevertheless, some successful conversations were held over lunch.

The 1st of September was marked by sweat and many steps. The goal (which we have not quite reached) was to hike from Marthes to L'Hermitage. However, we were very satisfied with ourselves after the 18 km to Le Bessat, where first of all an extensive break with food was taken, so that we could take the car to La Valla with a clear conscience. There we visited the house of the first brothers and of course a photo with the well-known table could not be missing. Afterwards, everyone was free to arrive at the Hermitage, either by car or on foot, depending on their mood and power. I have to say that the last part of the route along the reservoir was by far the most beautiful. Regardless of how one arrived, in the end we were all warmly welcomed at dinner by the brothers and staff.



Saturday morning we had free time. We used it to rest or explore the beautiful grounds of the Hermitage. Around noon, we made our way to Lyon. The first stop on our city tour was the Basilique Notre Dame of the Fourvière overlooking the city. Unfortunately, all the tours were already booked, but Michael was able to tell us quite a bit about the history. Back in the old town we went off in small groups, ate ice cream, strolled through the streets and got stuck in one or two stores. But before we headed back, we went out to eat together in the area around Gare'de Oullins, which was good and much cheaper than downtown.

Sunday began with Brother Paul showing us the exhibitions in the Hermitage after breakfast, before we met for Mass in the chapel at 11 am.

Since the day was relatively hot and it was not allowed to swim in the reservoir, a few

of us used the free afternoon to cool off more or less long in the ice-cold brook Gier. Around half past four the whole group left by car for the small house of the Marists in Maisonnettes. After a short tour through the house, everyone found a quiet place to write a letter with our thoughts about the upcoming time to our future selves, which we will get back after our volunteer service. Finally, on the last evening together, the volunteers' sending-off party took place in a beautiful atmosphere in the chapel.

On the morning of September 4, it was time to say goodbye to the brothers and the Hermitage. So we stocked up on supplies for the trip in Saint-Chamond and headed back. Keeping the two cars together did not go quite as smoothly as on the outward journey, but we arrived together and in one piece in Mindelheim despite all the complications. There it was time for us to say goodbye, which was not so easy, since this trip was the last meeting before the volunteer services.

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that we enjoyed our time together in France very much and that one or the other even has the desire to visit the Hermitage again one day.

Ida - cmi alumni

Marist Youth House Mindelheim

Since the beginning of February, we, natives of southern Brazil, from the Marist Province of Brasil Sul-Amazônia, have shared with great joy the Marist mission in Germany.

I, Neimir Mentges, until the end of last year, worked as Pastoral Coordinator at Colégio Marista Santa Maria, in Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul (RS), and my wife, Fabieli Storch, worked as an Online Clinical Psychologist and as Organizational Psychologist, in a College of Religious Sisters, also in Santa Maria.

Due to my Marist formation, my professional activity as a lay Marist, and also due to the fact that we are descendants of German immigrants, and to this day we preserve the German language in the family and in the region where I was born, at the beginning of last year, Brother Valdicer Fachi, at the invitation of Brother Michael Schmalzl, from Mindelheim, Germany, contacted us to talk to us about the possibility of starting work aimed at the formation of the Marist charism, together with lay people and Marist teachers from Germany, and to collaborate with the address of the House of Youth.

Through video calls we met to, first of all, get to know each other, learn about the work of the brothers and lay people in Germany, share experiences and think together about possibilities for action together with the new mission that was increasingly becoming a reality. In July 2022 we had the opportunity to get to know the new mission, the work and the people to better discern this new step that we would take in our lives.

The welcome, the hospitality of the brothers, the co-responsibility in the mission on the part of the lay Marists,



the challenge and, why not, the dream of living in another country, motivated us to dare and «leave our land», moving like this at the beginning of 2023 to Mindelheim (Germany). Well, well, here we are, closing our first quarter in a new house, in a new job, in a new country.

Until now, the main role has been the management of the Youth House (Jugendhaus), a house that was inaugurated in 2020 and has great potential for evangelization with young people looking for a home, especially students from the Marist College of Mindelhiem, which is next to the Youth Center. Another job to develop, as the language is perfected, is to work together with the formation of the Marist charism of the educators, who work in the 4 Marist schools in Germany, located in the cities of Mindelheim, Furth, Cham and Recklinghausen, schools that are administered by the dioceses of the areas where they are located.

As for my wife, as she perfects the language, it is possible that she will get a Mini Job, in order to work with

the Casa de la Juventud, based on her professional and academic experience. As the workload will be reduced, my wife is looking for alternatives related to psychology, in addition to taking the opportunity to qualify her academic studies.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that we are very happy with this new challenge/opportunity. The culture, the customs, the food, the coexistence with the community of the brothers, and even the snow, something that we had never seen before, are being fantastic experiences. To the brothers and lay people, our new friends, we thank you for all the support you have already given us and continue to give us in our adaptation, be it at work, in language or in culture. Language continues to be a great challenge, so we continue to take courses to improve our communication and mission. For the rest, we remain very excited about this new opportunity to contribute to Champagnat's dream in Germany, based on our experience as Marists in Brazil.

By Neimir Mentges – Mindelheim



Volunteering with Cmi Germany



(www.cmi-maristen.org)

Cmi means Collaboration for mission international and is a voluntary service of young people with a Marist background. Due to the pandemic, this service was interrupted quite suddenly and after the Covid conditions were relaxed, we are starting again with the voluntary service from and to Cmi Germany.

There are currently 3 new volunteers in Mindelheim. One young woman comes from South Africa and has been working in a kindergarten since April 2022, a young woman from Uganda has been working in the youth centre since October and recently another young woman from Uganda has joined us who will be doing her voluntary service in the senior citizens' home. All three live in the Cmi House, where the cmi office is also located.

We are now happy to have three new volunteers from Furth and three from Mindelheim to support the Marists. Now these six new volunteers are being prepared by our cmi team for their voluntary service abroad. A welcoming ceremony was held last weekend. Our incoming volunteers reported on their experiences and expectations so far. Possible volunteer working places were presented and the registration in «Nexus» was started. Currently we can also welcome a couple from South Brazil in our community, who now want to stay permanently in Mindelheim. He will develop the pastoral work in the youth house and together they complement the life in the Marist community in Mindelheim.

Our new residents come from countries where it is currently hot and summery. Now they are very happy to see and feel the first snow of their lives.

Cmi-Office Germany 2/2023

By Brigitte Reidmaier-cmi Mindeheim

Reflections- Marist Leadership Gathering Hermitage 2023

Feidhlim Byrne

Hello, my name is Feidhlim Byrne, and I was recently lucky enough to be given the opportunity to attend a weekend in Notre Dame de L'Hermitage in France along with some of my fellow Marist leaders from Marist schools across Ireland and Scotland.

Our trip started with an early morning as we departed from Marist College Athlone at 2 am on Thursday morning. We arrived in Notre Dame de L'Hermitage at around 1 pm along with the other Irish schools and were kindly welcomed with a buffet lunch.

We were given a break and a tour around the building while the Scottish group arrived. After this, we had a meeting where we were introduced to the coordinators and assigned to our leadership groups, which were mixed groups of Marist leaders from each school. After this we had dinner and spent the rest of the evening in the social room.

The next morning, we departed to le Rosey, Marcellin Champagnat's hometown to learn more about his life and teachings. We then went to the town of La Valla where Marcellin set up his first house. We continued to walk in his footsteps by taking a walk down route Champagnat from La Valla to Notre Dame de L'Hermitage guided by Brother Paul.



We participated in our first leadership activity before being treated to a dinner out in a restaurant in the nearby town of St Etienne.

We spent most of Saturday participating in leadership activities and taking turns to lead our leadership groups through them. These activities were fun while showing us what being a Marist Leader means. We closed the evening by giving presentations on what our different Marist Leader groups were doing within our schools. The Irish group had to leave at 5 am the next morning and the Scottish group showing true family spirit got up to send us off and say farewell.

I would like to end this off by saying huge thank you to Brother Paul, Aisling, Alastair, Ciarán, Maria and everyone else who made the trip possible.



Gathering Video

[CLICK TO WATCH](#)



Darragh

My name is Darragh, and I am one of the 2023 Marist leaders from Marist College Athlone who had the brilliant opportunity to visit Notre Dame de L'Hermitage in France with the other Irish and Scottish Marist Schools.

I would like to explain how this trip has increased my understanding of what it means to be a Marist Leader and a member of the Marist family. The first day we had an introduction session where I stepped out of my comfort zone and socialised with students from the other Marist schools. By doing this I was able to learn about my groups personally by getting to know each individual, their names and hobbies through social activities.

The next day we went on a bus to La Rosey where we were able to see Marcellin's house, where he grew up. Beside the house there was a cross which had every country the Marist Community had visited. It was great to see that the Marist family have not just contained themselves within Europe



but have spread their presence through the globe. We then went on the walk 'Route Champagnat' from La Valla to Notre Dame de L'Hermitage. This walk helped me embrace the values of perseverance as we were walking down the mountain and simply taking in the beautiful scenery and absorbing the fact, we were all Marist Leaders walking together.

On the final day we participated

in Leadership activities where one person was chosen to lead each group throughout 6 activities. I really enjoyed the system challenge as it required you to trust your team and gave a better understanding of the Marist family spirit. It was also a wonderful experience for me to develop social skills and made me a better Marist leader. It was a fantastic opportunity to travel and benefited me in learning to become a leader.



Saint Mungo's
Academy, Glasgow



Zofia
Najta

I had the amazing opportunity to go to L'Hermitage again this year and meet all the new first year leaders. It was truly lovely to watch them go through all the group activities together and seeing their confidence and leadership skills grow as our weekend together went on.

I also learned a lot about myself as a leader as this year I was a mentor and had the opportunity to see the other side of things. I was the one who made sure everyone was being safe and understood their task and I had so much fun making memories to last me a lifetime!
Thank you!



Marian College Dublin

Marist Leadership Trip to L'Hermitage



The Marist Leadership Trip was an educational program offered by Marist Education that aims to develop leadership skills and provide students with an immersive learning experience. The trip typically involves a group of students traveling to L'Hermitage which is just outside Lyon to engage in leadership workshops, team-building activities, and cultural immersion. The specific itinerary and activities may vary from year to year.

We met at the airport at 4.am to get the plane to Geneva. Once we landed, we boarded a coach for the two-and-a-half-hour journey from Geneva to L'Hermitage. Shortly after our arrival we met the other schools. There were three Irish schools and three Scottish schools. Over the trip, we did several tours. These tours included a tour of the brother's house and a tour of the birthplace of Marcellin Champagne.

These tours were important to give us a real sense of who Marcellin Champagnat was and what led him to founding our school.

The highlight of the trip for us was the many leadership activities we took part in. Engaging in these activities really helped us to improve our leadership skills, which we hope we will put to effective use over the course of this year to achieve our Marist goals. It also provided us with the opportunity to mix with the other schools and allowed us to make strong friendships that we hope will continue.

The final highlight of the trip for us was presenting our goals to the other schools. This was something we were apprehensive about, but thanks to the hard work and practice we put in, we felt that our presentation went well, and we did our school proud. It was a wonderful way to end a very enjoyable and memorable trip.



Moyle Park College

Hi there! I'm Timmy Keyede and I went to the l'Hermitage trip in France. I'd like to share my experience and tell you about what happened. We got up really early in the morning to catch our flight to Switzerland, and after that we took a coach all the way to the outskirts of Lyon where L'hermitage was. The scenery was beautiful, it was my first time seeing really rural areas and I loved every single second of it.

We got to L'hermitage at around 11:30 and met everyone else later. There were 3 Scottish schools and 3 Irish schools. I had a great time socialising although I was a little shy for some of the first meeting. One person I got super close to was this super cool guy named Barra. He came from a school in Athlone. We both shared a love of music and he was greatly talented. He was able to improvise amazingly well on the piano and guitar, after that we just bonded. We'd play random chords and notes and try to make songs just by listening to the other. We got a few videos of our favourites also. At night we'd talk and go walking together by the stonewalls which were really calm. I also made a friend named Julia. She was from the Scottish school called St. Mungos. Me and her didn't talk too much

but we had a great appreciation for books and each other's company. We sat by the river together and I played music for us. It was really peaceful.

Something I learned about myself is that I really am a social butterfly but I let my thoughts take over and L'hermitage helped me open up to people and be more confident. It also helped me learn I am a natural leader, very adaptive and a good listener, but I'm too used to working and being alone so I get very hands on and don't let my team join in even if I know I need them. Doing the first leadership activity made me realise that I should step back sometimes and I don't always have to be so forward.

Something I was super proud of was the growth I had after the trip. It was like my eyes opened and could see the world for what it really was. I also grew a connection with my old friends, a stronger understanding from before.

What I would definitely explore would be the outskirts of Lyon as the scenery is absolutely wonderful. The wildlife and farms are something I adore, it's all so peaceful and there's no rush to do anything. I loved every second of it for the simplicity to be honest. The fields and flowers, everything seemed so tranquil which I believe is the best way to live, not

to have the most but to need the least.

My favourite memory of the trip has got to be playing guitar under the stars with my friends. We'd do it every night. It'd probably be the highlight of the trip other than the activities.

Ah see in my opinion, The Undeciders were the best team to ever exist in the leadership activities. We got the name as we couldn't decide what name we wanted to choose. To be honest I didn't know if we'd come too far but we ended up coming second. Should've been first if the other team didn't copy our plank tactics. We had an amazing team and we had great fun. My favourite task was the Plank. Basically we had to use two planks to walk across a long area of grass with everyone using their legs to move it. We couldn't fall off either or we would have to start again, but the planks barely fit everyone on the team so we'd have to squeeze together. Tadhg was our leader for this and he helped coordinate our friend Oisín's great idea to use the planks as bridges. So we'd be on one plank at a time which was so much easier.

The most important Marist Value that stayed with me after this trip is presence as without no one would be able to properly experience the trip. This experience really helped me appreciate just being there.

I'Hermitage – Marist Leadership Trip



I'Hermitage was an incredible experience that we are all so grateful to have gone through. We were given the opportunity to build relationships with other Marist schools, take part in leadership activities and make new friends, all while having a good time.

Although our first day was mainly travelling, we arrived at the beautiful I'Hermitage in good spirits and were ready to meet everyone. We had a quick lunch before having some time to settle into our rooms. We then got an opportunity to talk to everyone, including the Irish schools we hadn't yet met. Each school gave a short presentation about their schools and their Marist history, and we were asked to have discussions with new people which pushed us out of our

comfort zone and allowed us to make new friends. We then had dinner where we were made to feel very welcome by the Marist Brothers before heading to the social room where we played games (and watched the Ireland football game, of course) and began to build upon our new friendships.

The second day was personally my favourite. We were taken to the original home of St Marcellin and experienced his life in a way by looking at his childhood, family and life. We were then taken to the Marist school in La Valla where we witnessed the Marist mission in action working in their community. We had the chance to look around the museum and witness St Marcellin's plan working in front of our own eyes. We then walked from La Valla back to I'Hermitage, walking



in Marcellin's footsteps. Many of us took this opportunity to meet new people and walk with others. Once we were back, we reflected on our day before getting ready to go out to the restaurant (many of us took advantage of this much appreciated opportunity to shower as well). We all got a little dressed up and enjoyed an amazing meal and bonded over karaoke in the back of the bus, closely followed by more singing in the social room before bed.

On the third day, we took part in many leadership challenges all while in our leadership groups. We had to step up and become the leader of our group in order to drive them to task victory. There were many exercises, such as walking planks, the tower of power and the cobwebs. We found that not only did we need to use proper communication to lead, but we also used the Marist values without even realising. This showed just how easy it is to live out the values in our daily lives. We also found that we had built strong bonds of trust in a group of people who were strangers only a matter of days before, so much so that we let them carry us over their heads through the cobweb activity. We finished up our final tasks as a leadership group and received the final

scores (we didn't win but still very proud of 'da homiez'). We then presented our schools in further detail and shared ideas and our plans for the year so that we can help each other to further promote and encourage the Marist spirit in our schools using each other's ideas. The night consisted of us having dinner and our last hours together in the social room.

On the last day, we got up at 04:30 so we could wave off all the friends we made from the Irish schools as they left before us. We hugged and said our heartfelt goodbyes before getting ready to leave. I am so grateful and surprised that I met such amazing people and had the chance to build strong friendships with them in such little time. We then had a short service before leaving.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved in making the weekend such an amazing one, especially all the coordinators, teachers and the wonderful Marist brothers and community that welcomed us into and shared their home with us. If I could, I would do it all again.

**Marie-Thérèse Black –
St Johns RC HS Dundee Scotland**



Kevin Vuong

L'Hermitage Reflection Article 2023

Introduction

My recent school trip was a profoundly transformative journey packed with thrills, self discovery, and, most importantly, unforgettable memories. As I reflect on this fantastic journey, I can't help but share some of the highlights and insights that made it so memorable. In this article, I'll walk you through my unforgettable school trip and delve into many topics that left a lasting impression on me.

Lifelong Friendships

One of the most memorable elements of the trip was the opportunity to meet new people. Friendships developed during trips like these, I believe, are lifelong.

On the first evening of our arrival on Thursday, the 7th, me and my friends, Timmy and Oskars, were playing piano, guitar, and singing together, and there we made many friends, some of whom even played, sang, laughed, and eventually cried with us when we had to leave for our flight.

On the second day, when we had our walk from La Valla-en-Gier back to L'Hermitage, we bonded with many people from all different schools. We made so many good friends that eventually we all forgot we were from different schools and even different countries.

Later that day, we all went to a restaurant. By now, we have all formed new friendships and integrated ourselves with different people.

Self Discovery

In L'Hermitage, many of us learnt more about ourselves and grew as people. Even though it was only for few days, it was clear that we all matured greatly from this experience through the leadership activities and also just spending time with one another. My personal favourite



was the activity where we all had to work as a team, carrying a golf ball from one end of a field to the other with 4 gutter pipes. Something I learnt about myself is that sometimes it's okay to be immature and inexperienced, after all, we're still children.

Core Memories

There were many lifelong friends and memories made during this trip, such as traveling together, sharing rooms, playing music together, playing huge games of uno, taking pictures, singing on the bus trips, working together in activities, and having late night deep talks about life.

One of the most important memories was the Scottish schools waking up at 4am in the morning for us, the Irish schools to see us off even though they didn't have to.



This really shows what kind of friends and bonds we've created amongst each other in France. Hopefully, we'll be visiting them in Scotland sometime soon...

Marist Values

Out of the 5 Marist Values of Family spirit, Presence, In the way of Mary, Love of work, and Simplicity, the key Marist Value of this trip was Family Spirit, for obvious reasons. In the end we all felt like family.



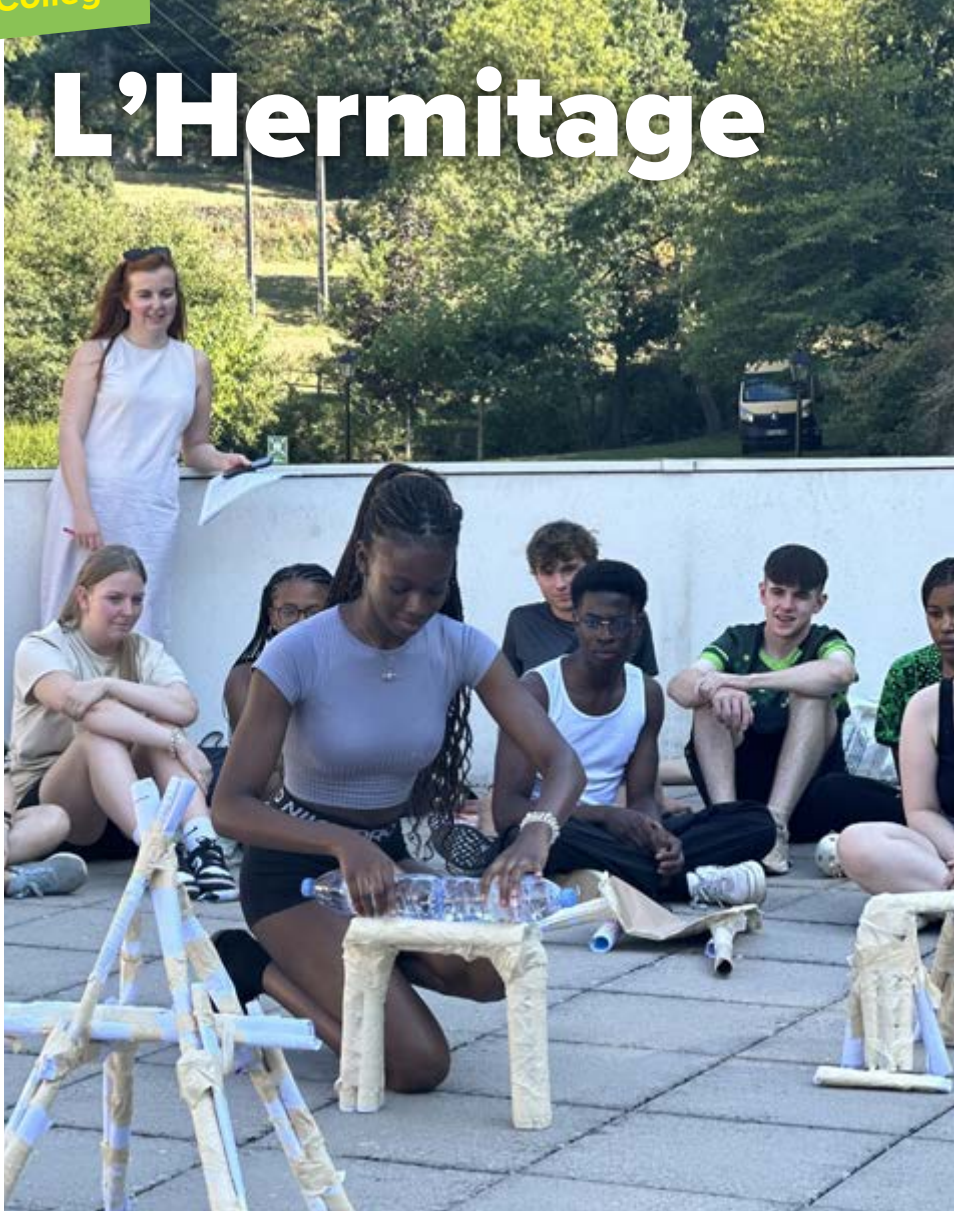
Moyle Park College



This year I was lucky enough to be one of the few year 2 marist leaders chosen to go to L'hermitage. This trip was so surreal, it was so different from last year obviously with different people and playing a different role but even with the amount of differences it was still an incredible trip.

This year's trip had such a different vibe than last years, where last year was hectic and full of energy. This year was much more chill. Last year I made so many new friends and met so many people but this year although I did make some new connections I mostly tried to strengthen the bonds already in place with a few of the other returning marist leaders from other schools, most notable people from Sst Jjosephs in Ddumfries which li've visited twice now and plan to again. I even connected with the leaders from my own school, as the trip was much earlier this year we haven't had much time to connect or talk so the trip to L'hermitage was sort of our first real time to chat and hang out. This year the rooms were shared with people from the same schools rather than someone from a different school like last year, it was nice to be able to wind down and just chat with my good friend Murilo whom I shared a room with for the weekend. When we first arrived and got off the bus it felt strange but natural to be back and as soon as I walked in the

L'Hermitage



doors all the memories of last year came flooding back to me and the entire trip was just all so surreal, especially since the trip last year was during a very stressful and rough time in my life it was nice to be able to experience L'hermitage again without any stress or worries. This time around as I was a 2nd year leader li played the role of a kind of assistant organiser, instead of taking part in the group leadership activities as a participant li was placed in charge of one, The gutters, watching each group go through and work together to get the ball into the bucket was amazing seeing all the different ideas and their teamwork from an outside perspective was an uncanny experience

and li'm so glad li was chosen to lead an activity. I went through the weekend with a confidence I didn't have last year and then left l'hermitage again with renewed confidence in myself and my leadership abilities. All in all this trip was an incredible experience again, l'hermitage has blown me away for a second time and leaving this year was bittersweet as this year was my last chance to visit again. I'm so glad I was able to go again and experience it all again in a different light, make new bonds, strengthen old ones and deepen my own sense of self. This year, same as last, was an unforgettable experience for me and the connections I made will last a lifetime.

Oskars Ravejs

Hello my name is Oskars and I was on the trip to L'Hermitage. On the first day when we arrived we had to do a presentation in front of the other schools by firstly introducing ourselves and then we talked about fun facts about our school. My favourite memory of the trip was on that Thursday night (on the day we arrived).

When Kevin and I found a piano at a stairwell and we started playing a beautiful selection of songs. The songs echoed throughout the hotel. People started to go towards the music and they wanted to hear us play songs on the piano. Some people wanted to sing with the music and we then had more and more people going to see what was happening, because the music got louder with the singing. Which led to people showing off their talents, playing songs they knew on the piano, some were singing, some were dancing and even tap dancing. Then we ended talking with each other, getting to know one another which is how we all met and how we all became friends.

This trip has had a huge impact on me as a person. It has helped me develop and understand how to be a leader. It has also helped me become less shy and more confident in myself which is something I'm proud of myself for. When they unlocked the piano in the social room I wasn't afraid to play songs in front of everyone and the teachers. We sang songs together and formed our own little band with our new friends. I also grew by doing different team activities that we did on the trip. Everyone on the trip was split into teams and there were people from different schools and I didn't really know them at first. By doing these activities we had to trust each other and be there for one another to complete the activities which is how we



grew as a team and friends. Our team was called «The Marist Masters» and our marist value was «Family Spirit» because we trusted each other and helped each other throughout the activities. On Saturday when we were doing activities all day our favourite activity was «Spider Web», where the team had to get their teammates through the holes made out of string without touching the string and nobody could use the same hole that has already been used to get to the other side. This was the best activity as everyone had to trust each other when being lifted in the air to work together in order to get them through the holes and that's how we really grew as a team and friends. We were able to get 11 people across, where we ended up winning that activity and our team won 1st place from all of the activities that we had on Saturday, because our team trusted one another, we supported each other, we had great contact and worked incredibly

well together and we all became good friends with one another.

From this trip I have learned to trust the people around me and I have learned to be more confident in myself. I think I have become a more social person on this trip, talking to everyone, singing songs with everyone, making many new friends with who I am still keeping in contact with to this day. The marist value that resonates with me after this trip is «Family Spirit» because all of us were never afraid to step out of our comfort zone by playing a song, sing, or even tap dance in front of everyone because we grew so close to each other and we all trusted each other and we always had a laugh together. The saddest part of the trip I would say was when we had to leave. Our bus was going to leave at 5am and the scottish schools were only leaving at 11am, but they all woke up and came down before 5am to say their final goodbyes where we ended up only leaving at 5:30am because we were hugging and saying our goodbyes to all of our scottish friends. All of us were at the edge of tears. But we have agreed we will all visit each other in Ireland or in Scotland and these new friendships and new skills I've learned would've never happened if it wasn't for L'hermitage.

**Thank you,
Oskars Ravejs**



St Joseph's College Dumfries

I had the privilege of returning to L'Hermitage for the second time as a year 2 Marist Leader and it was just as enjoyable as I managed to learn new aspects of what it means to be a respected leader.

As second years, we acted as facilitators of the leadership activities, and it was a delightful experience to lead the activities that I had once taken part in. My role involved guiding and explaining activities to the year 1 Marist Leaders. The activity that I led emphasised the fact that there are other forms of communication other than verbal and it was

interesting to see the way that each group overcame the challenge of communicating in silence. After each session, I would discuss with the group what they had observed and encouraged them to evaluate the vital qualities that make a leader and how that relates back to our Marist values. There is something beautiful in witnessing a group of very different individuals bonding within a relatively short period of time, and it is an experience that I have learned a lot about myself, reflection, and team building.

**Alana Nosratzadeh -
St Josephs College Dumfries,
Scotland**



Kevin Rayen

One thing I really enjoyed about the trip was the fact I got to meet many different people with different personalities which really motivated me and made the experience so much more interesting.

I found all the activities we did enjoyable and had fun working with the other members in the different challenges we had to complete. The trip to L'Hermitage has given me the opportunity to meet great new friends and strengthen existing friendships. It has also allowed me to assimilate the meaning of Marist and the reasons for the values behind it, furthermore it has showed me how the other schools attending implemented the key values in their school's ethos which I am hoping our Marist leaders can implement in our school as well. Overall, I found the trip to be amazing and am eager to come back again next year.

**Kevin Rayen –
St Josephs College Dumfries, Scotland.**

Marist International Youth Gathering Lisbon

In July/August, I had the amazing opportunity to visit Portugal to not only attend an International Marist Youth gathering ("Into The Deep"), but also my first ever World Youth Day.

The «Into the Deep» gathering happened throughout the first week at a Marist school in Carcavelos. During this time, I got to connect with over 200 other Marists and hear more about the other three Marist family branches which was a great learning experience as I got to know how they operated and the struggles they faced in certain parts of the world. One of the highlights of this gathering for me was the carousel activity that we did near the end of the week. We were all split into new groups and each one had their own starting station. Every 15 minutes or so we would go to another station and learn about the origins and work of a different Marist province. I think that this activity was very beneficial for me in deepening my understanding of who the Marists are as a whole as it showed me their importance, especially in schools, all around the world. We ended the week with a beautiful final mass and a «Marist Got Talent» show which everyone loved as many participants chose to perform dances and songs from their countries that had us all joining in!

During the second week, we relocated to another Marist school closer to the city centre of Lisbon for WYD. We had more freedom in the sense that there was no specific itinerary that we had to stick to. Catherine, Ruth and I used this opportunity to tour Lisbon and take part in some of the many WYD events that were available all over the city. We made



sure to attend the main events, such as the Pope's Welcoming Ceremony and we also camped at Parque Tejo for the Vigil before celebrating the end of WYD with the Final Mass. Being able to attend this year's WYD has truly opened my eyes to the amazing worldwide community that I am a part of and I couldn't feel more blessed to have been

able to experience this connection with so many others.

I can say with absolute certainty that «Into the Deep» and World Youth Day 2023 are both experiences that I'm extremely grateful for and will never forget!

**Angelika Konieczko -
St Mungos Academy
Past Pupil - Scotland**



Four Marist branches living together

After coming back from the Into the Deep Gathering this summer I have been left with an overwhelming sense of Marist community.

A focus of the Gathering was '4 branches living together' and in the week I spent amongst young Marists in Lisbon from different provinces and different branches I can see how we all live and work under the Marist Charism. Each day was led by a different branch, the Marist Brothers introduced the theme of the week and led discussions around community and treated us to a Portuguese party, the Marist Sisters led us through discussions of the Magnificat with the theme for World Youth Day, 'Our Lady got up and went with haste'. In a personal highlight for me the Marist Father's took us to Fatima where we walked in the Children's footsteps and went to Mass in the Sanctuary, and

the Marist missionary sisters taught us about Marist mission's throughout the world. There were so many little moments of love and community that will stick with me. Enjoying a drink in the evening with Marists from America, Australia, Greece, Portugal and Quebec at one table. Hearing people in my small group being so open about their lives in their own language and being able to understand them through someone else's gift of translation. Bonding with the Marists I came with from West Central Europe through rehearsals for our performance in Marists Got Talent. I was fortunate enough to get to stay on with the Marists for World Youth Day and the 2 weeks I spent in Lisbon over the summer was the experience of a life time filled with so much love and kindness.

**Ruth Black - St Johns RC HS Past Pupil
Dundee Scotland**





After the Covid-19 pandemic thwarted any plans for an international gathering of Marist youth over the last few years, the event could finally take place this year in Lisbon under the name 'Into the Deep', much to the delight of about two hundred Marists from all around the world. Young people converged on the school at Carcavelos on the 26th of July from far and wide, including places such as Tonga, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brazil, and many others.

This year I was the co-ordinator of the group from West Central Europe; a group consisting of past pupils from Marist schools in Germany, Scotland, and Ireland. From three nations we represented one province, from many provinces we represented one branch, and from four branches we were one Marist.

The first day was mainly focused on interiority. Participants were placed into groups of about 10 people and given a chance to discuss some major changes of the last few years. As can be imagined, most of the conversations revolved around the pandemic. The pandemic was something that the world faced as an entire singular entity, but the different stories from around the world were fascinating to hear.

The following day was one filled with song and music. Thoughts were stirred during the creation of a personal Magnificat, and a great sense of tranquillity and presence was experienced during Taizé adoration.

The day concluded with stargazing on the beach, accompanied by a blissful chant of 'Lua', the Portuguese word for 'moon'.

Saturday brought an early start, and a pilgrimage to Fatima. The morning was fresh, and spirits were high. In our groups, we began the 5-kilometre journey through the woods, appreciating nature, and sharing stories with friends new and old. At certain points along the journey we stopped to reflect on certain aspects of life with the group, learning and sharing many very different lives.

After a fascinating panel discussion with the four Superiors General on Sunday, 'Into the Deep' was concluded with a talent show. The aim of the show was to showcase the culture of the country you came from. As West Central Europe is a multinational province, we decided to perform a medley of 3 songs; one from each of our respective countries. The performance was a hit. Our inclusion of balloons and sparklers got the crowd to their feet, singing and dancing like there was no tomorrow.

The event was undoubtedly a major success. During 'Marist Fest' the following day, I took a step back and sat with Br. Pepé from Mexico who pointed out to me that there was not a single mobile phone to be seen. Every single person in attendance was very much present. We were surrounded by smiling faces, sounds of laughter and song, and friends – a perfect culmination of an immense week.

Ciarán McDermott - Ireland

Feeling blessed

I couldn't have been more honoured to have been chosen to attend this year's Marist Youth Conference «Into the Deep.» It took place in Lisbon prior to World Youth Day. It was a meeting of the four Marist branches: the Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers, Marist Sisters, and Marist Missionary Sisters. We stayed in a Marist school in Carcavelos, and I can't begin to convey how mind expanding an experience it was. I got to meet the most interesting from all around the globe. People who's lives are entirely different to my own. One particular story that stood out to me was that of a Missionary Sister from Senegal who spoke of the dangers of carrying out her work in Oceania. Throughout the week we focused on going «deeper.» Deeper into our identity as Marist, as Christians, as people. We were split into groups. I still fondly look back at my own. They were all so accommodating for me as I was one of the only members who could only speak English. I made so many great friends in that group. All of them were so lovely, caring, and embodied the spirit of Mary. As a group we went to Fatima, and I was touched by the strength of faith around me. Organisations, not just that of Marist, but globally, attended the Mass. It was truly something to behold. There was much song and dance in the evenings in Carcavelos, and I have to thank the USA Marists for teaching me how to line dance to Cotton Eye Joe. Forever grateful.

Thank you to Aisling Demaison and all of Marist WCE for giving me the blessed opportunity of attending this.

Michael White -Athlone Ireland



The Marist Accompaniment Programme

Prior to our meeting in person at Westerhelling, Nijmegen we were prepared with 5 online Zoom meetings. This spiritual awareness training gave me the basic understanding of some theory behind accompaniment. One phrase stuck with me...we were spiritual beings having a human experience.

This feeling of eternity, connectedness beyond the present, was very important for me. Once in Nijmegen, the peace was almost overwhelming. It was palpable. The immersion in The Present was constant. Taking time to just BE, to experience the now and to feel what was happening within me was such a surprising experience. I thought I was fairly self-aware. As a teacher, I'm a 'reflective practitioner', constantly evaluating what just happened, what worked well, what didn't, what needs to be changed, but this was different. This was my story, my spirituality, my connection with who I am...and apparently I had a lot to learn. Spending time in silence, just being and seeing what came, sometimes with a prompt for a theme, sometimes just nothing, led to some surprising revelations from things I thought I'd dealt with a long time ago. The experience was intense (a word used A LOT This weekend), it was

emotional, it was cathartic, but it was liberating. I learned a lot about who I am and WHY I am that way. What has shaped me, what's important and how I can achieve that again. I know what it feels like to be at peace with myself. I experienced being centred in myself. I feel confident in my own presence and that I am here, with a purpose and nothing to prove. I have a power within me that is not of me but that can achieve great things. I hope I can share some of this with my students back home. I hope I can assure them of their own power, their presence, their belonging and connectedness with each other and beyond. I hope my own practice changes and the students see a different side to me. I hope I can use the skills of accompaniment to help the students grow and develop into reflective young adults who can see their own role

in a bigger picture and adapt as they need to, grow in confidence and assuredness about who they are and why they are here, finding their mission and stepping out with the skills they need for life. I know there will be many challenges and some resistance to a new way of being in class and relating to me, but if I can help them to find space for silence, time to reflect and meditate and be open to God moving in their lives...and maintain that in my life... then I will have succeeded in ways I never before imagined. The accompaniment programme gave me the skills I need to be able to even contemplate this. The connection with the others this weekend was profound. The trust and compassion was unprecedented for me in this kind of situation. Thank you to everyone involved for this opportunity to grow.

**Jennifer Gorman – St Mungos Academy
Scotland**

After some online meetings about attentive living, accompaniment, and the power of silence, we came together in June in the Netherlands. At the Westerhelling all those subjects came together and we deepened them. The weekend was really experience driven. This was done by a lot of practice with accompaniment ourselves. For me it was an intense weekend, intense in a very positive way. I felt connected with myself and the others. I hope I can hold on to the disposition and deepen it further in the next stage of this program.

Judith Rotink - The Netherlands



Brenda McLaughlin:

Reflection on Nijmegen

Reflecting on my experiences in Nijmegen, brings back some very poignant and special memories.

As a participant in the Accompaniment Programme, I had thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to attend the on-line sessions facilitated by Brother Darren and welcomed the chance to get to know the other participants and begin our Accompaniment journey together. (I was in the fortunate position of having an «upper hand» in this regard, as Jennifer – another member of the group – is a very good friend and colleague!)

The on-line sessions were engaging and thought-provoking and laid the foundations for our sharing in Nijmegen. A particular note of thanks has to be extended to Brother Darren for getting up in the very early hours to lead the sessions from Australia!

It was surprising I think, that when we were

in discussions and during opportunities for reflections, the IT aspect of the experience somehow «faded away» and the discourse and environment were truly intimate and spiritual.

Naturally, following on from this, the prospect of meeting in person was both exciting and I suppose in some ways, a little unnerving. A multitude of questions floated around in my thoughts, some of which were:

How would the relationships formed over the on-line sessions translate into the «real world»?

What level of sharing would there be?

Would my «comfort zone» be challenged and was I ready for this?

In reality though and when the time came, my questions were lost in an environment

of trust, empathy and openness. Nijmegen is simply an incredible place which cocoons you with the gift of its hospitality, nature and stillness. Integral as these were, nothing could compare with the ultimate gift of the beautiful group of people I met there. It was a privilege to listen, to share and when needed, be comforted by other travellers on this spiritual journey and I will never forget them.

Their «presence» taught me much about myself and my Accompaniment journey and this experience will always play a key part in my aspiration to be a spiritual being who is human, as opposed to a human being who is spiritual.

Finally, I would like to extend a personal note of thanks to both Aisling and Darren for facilitating this profound experience for everyone in the group.

**THANK YOU
AND GOD BLESS**

News from Nijmegen

Collaboration with Radboud University Nijmegen

Conflicts spacing (are inherent in human interactions) and can often take a challenging and emotional toll. They can quickly escalate and create an undesirable situation, with potentially far-reaching consequences for both those involved and those around them. But what if there is another way of looking at conflict?

A way that focuses not on polarisation, but on understanding, growth and solutions. The Radboud Honourslab 'Another Look at Conflict' provided a unique opportunity to explore and research this idea. In collaboration with students from Radboud University, this lab brought forward different perspectives on conflicts. Inspired lectures by guest lecturers from both inside and outside the university served as building

blocks for exploring an innovative approach.

This lab was the initiative of Barbara van Riel (associate professor and member of Moria's Supervisory Board). Her vision and passion for conflict as an opportunity for growth were the driving force behind this special project. The Westerhelling as a location and Ineke Tacq as a person brought peace and beautiful insights during the months the lab was operating.

A different perspective on conflict is not just a theoretical concept; it is an attitude to life that invites us to face conflicts with courage, understanding and compassion. If we collectively embrace this approach, we can create a world where conflicts are no longer feared, but seen as valuable opportunities for growth and connection.



From the newsletter prepared by Ineke Tacq



Seclusion

The Western Slope, a place surrounded by greenery and tranquillity, has welcomed many a soul to temporarily withdraw from the hectic world and embrace inner silence. Tamerza, a student at the University of Humanistics, desired this place as a refuge for her thesis research on philosophical seclusion.

For two months, she immersed herself in the contemplative atmosphere of the Western Slope. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau and Simone Weil acted as her companions on this philosophical exploration. She delved into their writings, exploring each philosopher's unique perspectives on seclusion. Rousseau, known for his ideas on returning to nature, Thoreau, who recorded his experiences in seclusion in the famous work 'Walden', and Simone Weil, whose contemplative life was a source of profound insight - all offered valuable insights into the concept of seclusion.

Tamerza's stay at Westerhelling was not only an academic adventure, but also a personal journey of self-discovery. By turning her interest in the theme of seclusion into a concrete experience, she experienced the power and value of seclusion first-hand. Her time on the Western Slope not only enabled her to write an inspiring thesis, but also enriched her as an individual through a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her.

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

CHAMPAGNAT GLOBAL WEEK

16 - 20 de october 2023

PROGRAMME



WHAT IS CHAMPAGNAT GLOBAL WEEK?



Champagnat Global Week is intended to **be a space for communication, encounter and interaction of the international Marist school community** that takes place **at a specific time of the year.**

One of the objectives of this week is to take advantage of the richness generated in the Agora groups to reach all those who are interested in one of the themes but are not able to form part of a group on a permanent basis, but who can **join sporadically around a theme or activity of interest.**

Champagnat Global Week also aims to **launch initiatives in which it will be possible to participate throughout the year**, at a time that is convenient for those who are interested. Champagnat Global Week is planned to be held annually. It starts in 2023 with a very simple programme and the experience will show the way forward for successive editions.

OCTOBER



MONDAY

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP MOOC LAUNCH

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

9:00 A.M. AND 4:00 P.M. (ROME TIME)

AIMED AT:

Pioneer group of the Marist educational community, (principals, teachers and collaborators of Marist schools), **interested** in learning and interacting around what it means to **form global citizens** in our educational reality.

ORGANIZERS:

Champagnat Global Team, with the collaboration of Br. Carlos Alberto Rojas.

LANGUAGE:

Spanish -
Portuguese - English
- French

IT IS ABOUT:

The launch of a course on **how to live and promote the experience of global citizenship** in the Marist school.



PARTICIPATION:

In its first edition, the **participants of the course will be selected** by the coordination of mission and education of each of the administrative units of the Marist Institute.

PROGRAMMING:

- Inauguration of Champagnat Global Week (representatives of Rome and Champagnat Global)
- Introduction to Global Citizenship.
- MOOC content proposal.
- Group dynamics of the members.
- Course planning and methodology.
- Closing of the event.



OCTOBER



TUESDAY

WEBINAR

INTERNATIONALISATION OF MARIST SCHOOLS

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

9:00 A.M. AND 4:00 P.M. (ROME TIME)

AIMED AT:

Principals, heads of internationalisation, teachers, and those **interested in promoting exchange in Marist schools.**

IT IS ABOUT:

To **share** the dynamics that are being followed in the internationalisation group in Agorà to carry out **exchanges between the different Marist schools.**

PROGRAMMING:

- Welcome. Official greeting.
- Introduction to the activity.
- Presentation of current experiences of exchange between Marist schools.
- Questions, suggestions and contributions.
- Closure.

ORGANIZERS:

Champagnat Global Team and AGORÁ's internationalisation group.



LANGUAGE:

Spanish - English - Portuguese (French option according to the registration of participants).

REGISTRATION:

Free participation. To receive the ZOOM link, you must register in the **following form** before 30th September 2023.



OCTOBER



WEDNESDAY

CONFERENCE

ON **EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION**

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

9:00 A.M. AND 4:00 P.M. (ROME TIME)

AIMED AT:

Principals, coordinators, teachers, and those **interested** in promoting **educational innovation** in Marist schools.

IT IS ABOUT:

A conference on How to approach **school transformation today?**

PROGRAMMING:

- Welcome. Official greeting.
- Introduction to the activity.
- Lecture by **Xavier Aragay**, author of the book 'Reimagining education. 21 keys to transforming schools'.
- Discussion and questions.
- Closure.

ORGANIZERS:

Champagnat Global Team and the AGORÁ Educational Innovation Group.



LANGUAGE:

Spanish - English
- Portuguese
(French option according to the registration of participants).

REGISTRATION:

Free participation.
To receive the ZOOM link you are required to register in the **following form** before 30th September 2023.



OCTOBER



THURSDAY

WEBINAR ON INTERIORITY

9:00 A.M. AND 4:00 P.M. (ROME TIME)

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

AIMED AT:

Marist educational community, especially **those responsible for pastoral ministry and religion teachers.**

IT IS ABOUT:

To get to know some experiences of how the theme of interiority is being developed in the Marist school environment.

PROGRAMMING:

- Welcome. Official greeting.
- Introduction to the activity.
- Presentation of experiences that are being developed on the theme of interiority in various Marist centres.
- Questions, suggestions and contributions.
- Closure.

ORGANIZERS:

Champagnat Global Team and the AGORÁ Interiority Group.



LANGUAGE:

Spanish - English - Portuguese (French option according to the registration of participants).

REGISTRATION:

Free participation. To receive the ZOOM link you are required to register in the **following form** before 30th September 2023.



OCTOBER



FRIDAY

CHAMPAGNAT GLOBAL RUN LAUNCH

CHAMPAGNAT
GLOBAL
WEEK 2023

9:00 A.M. AND 4:00 P.M. (ROME TIME)

AIMED AT:

The school community: pupils, teachers, management team, former pupils, pupils' families, etc.

IT IS ABOUT:

Promote **awareness of Marist Schools** through the development of a **sporting activity** involving the school community.

PROGRAMMING:

- Welcome. Official greeting.
- Introduction to the activity.
- Presentation of the steps to follow to participate in the Champagnat Global Run.
- Referents.
- Questions and suggestions.
- Closure.

ORGANIZERS:

Champagnat Global Team, with the collaboration of Aisling Demaison (Province of West Central Europe) and Guillermo Rodríguez. (Province of México Occidental).



LANGUAGE:

Spanish - English - Portuguese (French option according to the registration of participants).

REGISTRATION:

Free participation. To receive the ZOOM link you are required to register in the **following form** before 30th September 2023.



WHAT DOES IT CONSIST OF?

The activity **consists of visiting a Marist School in a virtual way, accumulating the kilometres** that the participants of the school community, who make up the Champagnat Global Run group, accumulate. Once the kilometres have been completed, the school selected as a destination is recommended to have some kind of initiative of contact and thanks to those who chose them as a destination. The visited school can thank the participants by means of a video, an online meeting, a twinning proposal...

The launch of Champagnat Global Run will take place during Champagnat Global Week in October 2023. **Schools will be able to organise, register and run the activity from October 2023 to October 2024.** As many school visits can be organised as each group plans.

The Champagnat Global Run **provides an opportunity for many of the Marist Schools** to be seen in our media, to **make themselves known and thus to generate interest in establishing contact with them in order to develop exchange initiatives.**

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

1.- To form a team of participants (students, teachers, management team, former students, students' families, etc.) united by sport and the Marist spirit.

2.- Taking into account the Marist global map, they should **select the school they wish to visit virtually and establish the kilometres** separating the two schools. We recommend choosing a first destination that is close and realistic in order to motivate participants to reach later, more distant goals.

3.- Send the registration form to Champagnat Global. From Champagnat Global we will accompany you and we will be attentive to any support required.

4.- Keeping track of the kilometres achieved, in the way and with the *tool that best suits the circumstances of each school.

5.- Share information with Champagnat Global about the process being followed and especially the arrival at the destination, in order to spread the knowledge of the schools among the school community.

The **activity does not have a monetary cost, however**, each school is free to invest in any initiative they deem appropriate, such as the creation of T-shirts, logos or other resources.

The development of the activity by the different schools will be **disseminated through the media and social networks of Champagnat Global in order** to promote awareness among Marist schools globally.

***Strava** is a free app, which can be very useful to measure your progress. In case of using this tool, you have to register as a group (club) in the Strava application, where each participant will also have to register personally and get their own user. A person in charge of the group must collect and add up the total done by the participants of their school on a weekly basis (as the application deletes these records and thus loses the accounting of the overall training). If there are children under the age of 13 in the group, we recommend being creative in order to integrate them and accumulate their achievements. Strava has **privacy protection** for both adults and children, providing additional privacy protection for children under 18.

LEARN HOW TO USE THE APP

TOOLS

Secondary and Pre-Secondary

"Our plans include all the dioceses in the world". (Marcellin Champagnat, 05/1837, Lettre 112)



Champagnat Global is a collaborative network that connects and encourages the Marist school community to "journey together as a Global Family"

This map was published by Champagnat Global on 31.10.2021

Please send updates to mission@msm.it

Marist Interview

Christine Dispa, Marist of Champagnat, Belgium

- Tell us a little about yourself?

- My name is Christine Dispa, I was born in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. I'm 53 years old, I've been married for 25 years and I have two grown-up daughters, one aged 19 and the other 17. I trained as an emergency nurse and worked in an operating theatre. I've also trained as a first aid instructor. For a long time I gave first aid courses and trained young ambulance drivers. I didn't grow up in a religious family, but I did have connections with the Protestant world.

- How did you get involved in the Marist world?

- When my eldest daughter was old enough to make her first communion, I volunteered to be a mother catechist. At that time, there was hardly anyone to teach catechism to the children. It was by giving it to my children that I developed my faith. As part of the catechism classes, I met the Marist Brothers for the first time. The house of the Marist community called "Le Bua" is a good place to welcome children and talk to them about God, to tell them how much he loves them.

It was during this mission that I really got to know the Marist brothers and their spirituality, which has since become my own. Over the years, a fruitful and cordial collaboration developed between us. I then became a member of the Champagnat group, one of the brothers taught me solfeggio for several years and I had the chance and the advantage of taking part in the many family activities of the community as a leader or participant. Over a period of a decade the Marist community of Habay La Vieille became my community.



- What is an interesting fact that most people may not know about you?

- In 2001 I had a near-death experience. It changed my life completely. During that experience, I glimpsed the presence of God among us. Since then, a large part of my life has been about developing and growing in my relationship with God. I also chose to do my confirmation as an adult at the same time as my children. This has been an absolutely fantastic experience of journeying with them in deepening their faith and maturing as Christian adults.

- Who is the person you admire and why?

- Her name was Sister Marie-Joseph and she was my primary four teacher. She was a gentle, committed woman who listened to the children. She quickly realised that I came from a broken home and that I had dyslexia. She spoke to me about God and his wonders, about love and courage. It was thanks to her that I was

baptised and made my First Communion during the school year when she was my teacher. 40 years later, I still carry in my heart a tenderness and admiration for this woman, who healed more than one wound in my childhood.

Sister Marie Joseph could have been a Marist; I like to think that she would be happy to see me now in my Marist life.

- What are you most proud of in your life?

- There are many things for which I could feel pride, but I prefer to see these accomplishments as gifts from God and so I feel more gratitude than pride per se. Having been a nurse and a first aid instructor has always filled me with the joy of being of service to others and of being able to train young people in the beautiful profession of ambulance service. I'm a happy mum, my daughters are magnificent women in the making. Four years ago, I started training to become a catechumen companion. This

training in itself has strengthened my faith and my mission. I feel that accompanying a young adult in search of meaning is a personal joy, and it's a mission that gives me great satisfaction.

- For you, what is the best aspect of being Marist?

- The best aspect of Marist life is the fact of being part of a worldwide family united in the charism of Marcellin Champagnat and his spirituality. I often repeat, a Christian alone is a Christian in mortal danger. But when you are Marist, you are never alone. There is a Marist presence throughout the world, and I am certain that in any community where I might go, I would feel at home. The English expression "It feels like home" takes on its full meaning when we are together as Marists.

- How would your family and friends describe you?

- A bit crazy but with a big heart (laughing out loud).

- What is an important event in your life and how has it influenced the person you are today?

- The international forum on the vocation of lay Marists is the most exciting mission I have ever experienced. I was lucky enough to be selected to represent my province at the face-to-face forum in Rome. Then I was selected as a delegate to bring this mission to fruition. I have the immense good fortune to work with lay people and Marist brothers who put their whole heart into this work. It is this dream of seeing the Marist Institute flourish in 10 or 15 years' time and that the laypeople and brothers can continue their mission in co-responsibility with the help of Mary and Saint Marcellin, that drives us. We are not at the end of the task, for it is great and important, and it is with pleasure that I am preparing all the next stages of this forum. We didn't speak the same language, we didn't all have the same mission, we didn't know each other, but our hearts beat in unison from the moment we met. I've tried several times to explain what we experienced



during that week, but I can never find the words that would do justice to the love we felt in Rome, as long as I'm convinced that Marcellin was present with us.

- What do you like to do in your spare time?

- I like to crochet and cook. I love spending time with my daughters. I like to meet my friends and my Marist family. On Thursday afternoons, I have my meetings with my spiritual guide, with whom I share a time of prayer that is fundamental to my relationship with God.

I have a French bulldog, who is my companion in my quiet moments. I also love animals.

- What has been the highlight of your Marist life so far?

- On 20 September this year, I made my commitment to the Marist charism. In May 2022, I made a pilgrimage to the Hermitage. During those four days at the Hermitage, I think I had the opportunity to "meet" Marcellin Champagnat through the stories told by the brother who welcomed us. He had the talent to show us the face of the holy man. I had the opportunity to sit in the father's room. It was a beautiful day, the window was open and for 20 minutes I listened to the sound of the water of the Gier, sitting in front of the prie-Dieu of our founder. I felt in communion with him and God. It was at that moment that I knew with certainty that I wanted to be a lay Marist, that I wanted to bring the message of Saint Marcellin to the world and to children. I had the privilege of

being accompanied by two brothers during my discernment process. It was with the utmost clarity that I made this commitment, a little over a week ago now.

"To go and evangelise the world...".

- What is your vision for Marist Europe?

- I don't know if I have a vision for Marist Europe, but I certainly have dreams for my Marist community in Belgium. The dream of arousing vocations, of enlarging the Marist family, and of rekindling the desire for mission.

I would dream of welcoming young people to Bua for academic help, for spiritual help, so that the community can be for them a place of meeting and exchange.

I very much hope to be able to continue welcoming catechumens. I'll try to keep in touch with my catechist friends and lend a hand where I can. My work as part of the forum team takes up a lot of my time, which I want to devote as much as possible to this task. It also seems important to me to live with my community and to build with them our mission and our Marist family life.

I was able to follow the formation course in Marist spiritual accompaniment, and it's a challenge to be able to put this mission in place. For the moment I don't know how I could offer this help to young people, I trust our good Mother to show me the way. But I am convinced that our world and the young people of today need spiritual exchange and listening.

Autumn Blessings

I welcome all the energy of Autumn into my life. Autumn is a time of transformation and reflection. Like the leaves falling away from their branches, my life flows and changes peacefully, and all at the perfect time.

I take time in Autumn to reflect on my life and where I am going in it. I have a clear vision of the changes that I need to make so that I may continue to grow in my highest good.

I enjoy the cooler weather and all the changing colors that are unfolding throughout Nature. This is the season of warmth and gentleness; a reflection of my inner self.

With grace I let go of anything that is not serving me positively and I make way for many new blessings.