

Being Marist

WEST CENTRAL EUROPE



Special Edition

BECOMING A DISTRICT OF L'HERMITAGE

Dear Friends!

Change always involves a myriad of emotions. A sense of loss for what is going, and nervousness and excitement for what is about to come. Each emotion had its place the weekend of 13-15 of October in Furth, as we celebrated the process of change from Province of West Central Europe to District of L'Hermitage.

We gathered as one family of Marists, from all around West Central Europe, L'Hermitage province, and Marist Rome. With a large Marist timeline visible on the walls of the conference room to remind us of all that has

happened, we began a process of appreciation and gratefulness, for the rich history of the province since it began in April 2000.

Taking time to sit with our emotions and process them, was such a key part of the weekend. This was done beautifully in the reflective meditations, led by Conny Stuart from The Netherlands. Videos from past provincials, stories from lay Marists, conversations, visual images, and reflections, allowed us to move through the process of change to focusing on the future.

'Embracing the future with hope' was the theme of our final days. Br Robert gave thanks to all the

outgoing members of leadership and welcomed the new District Council Members. The transition was then complete and celebrated alongside our new province of l'Hermitage.

Looking back allowed us to appreciate all we have learned from the past, and become excited about how we can take it all into the future with us with hope.

I hope you enjoy this special edition of 'Being Marist' which gives you an opportunity to hear some reflections of those present on this important weekend for the District of West Central Europe.

Aisling Demaison
Director of Marist Education

Embracing the future with hope

In these few lines, I would like to recall the context that gave rise to the Provincial Assembly in which a good number of Brothers and lay Marists participated from 13 to 15 October last.

In view of viability and vitality

At the beginning of my mandate as Provincial in April 2019, the General Council asked us to begin a process of reflection on the future of our Province with a view to ensuring the viability and vitality of our Marist life and mission in the countries of Central and Western Europe. The question was how to preserve and even develop our works in the service of children and young people, at a time when we were experiencing a significant decrease in the number of Brothers and their advancing age, the absence of new vocations to Marist religious life, as well as our limited capacity for government and animation at the local and Provincial levels.

A wider reflection

Quite quickly, the Provincial Council wanted to involve a certain number of Brothers and lay Marists from the Province in this reflection, to look together at what needed to be put in place as a new structure of government and animation. On this journey, marked by the limits imposed by the Covid pandemic, three important meetings took place: Dublin (November 2021), Furth (November 2022) and Freising (April 2023).

On the basis of these exchanges, the Provincial Council wrote to the General Council in May 2022 to share its reflections and the option it considered most appropriate for our future: to

associate ourselves as a District with the Province of L'Hermitage. After the necessary consultations, the General Council confirmed our proposal and Brother Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General, communicated it to the Provinces of L'Hermitage and Europe Centre-Ouest on 15 August 2022. The Central West Europe District will begin in October 2023. For this reason, the General Council has extended my mandate until that date in order to facilitate the transition period.

Building bridges

From that point onwards, the two Provincial Councils have been exchanging more and more, especially through two meetings, one in Dublin in September 2022 and the other in Paris in May 2023. In addition, a team of four Brothers was set up to draw up the Statutes for the new District: Brothers Gabriel Villa Real and Xavier Giné, respectively Provincial and Vicar Provincial of the Province of L'Hermitage, and on our side, Brother Michael Schmalzl, Vice-Provincial, and myself, as Provincial of Centra l-West Europe. These Statutes were approved by the General Council in June 2023.

In the meantime, a survey was carried out among the Brothers of the Province with a view to appointing a District Superior, and I was chosen to carry out this service for a three-year term starting in October 2023.

Celebrating the transition

Following the Provincial Assembly held in Freising in April 2023, we shared our reflections with the Provincial Council of



L'Hermitage and set up a working team to prepare for the Provincial Assembly at which our Province will come to an end and the new District of Central-West Europe will take its place.

During this Assembly, we wanted to involve, in different ways, as many people from the Province as possible, and to invite a delegation from the Province of L'Hermitage and the General Council. We wanted to remember the rich history of the 23 years of existence of our Province and on this basis look to the future with hope, with the foundation of our District which we wanted to entrust to God, Mary and Champagnat during the final Eucharist.

I would like to thank the members of the team who have supported me in this preparation: Aisling Demaison, Renate Hacker, Brother Andreas Krupp as well as Rob Walsh who has accompanied us over the last few months. Thank you also to all those who have contributed.

Brother Robert Thunus,
District Superior



Province Assembly West Central Europe

13 – 15th October 2023

Marists from Ireland, The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany gathered together for the last time as the Province of West Central Europe in Furth, Germany, from 13th until 15th October – the place there the Province began in April 2000. It was a bitter-sweet event, as it was a time to celebrate significant moments in the 23-year history of the Province, to bring to mind the 168 Brothers who had died since the beginning of the Province – including Brother Jean Koob who died on the first day of the Assembly - to recall initiatives, especially in the area of mission, as well as moments of sadness and loss.

Brother Ernesto Sanchez, S.G., was not

able to be present as Pope Francis has appointed him as a member of the Synod on Synodality in Rome. Brother Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, V.G. who was asked to represent Brother Ernesto, sadly could not be present as his father died in Spain the day before the Assembly began. Brother Ben Consigli, C.G. one of the Councillors for Europe, represented the General Council, and spoke on behalf of Brother Luis Carlos. Br. Joe McKee, former Provincial (2006 – 2009) and Vicar General (2009 – 2017), was also not able to be present due to a previous commitment in Rome. Some Brothers from Scotland and Belgium, as well as some lay people from Scotland and The Netherlands, were not able to be present due to travel difficulties or for personal

reasons.

The absence of these participants, who had all played an important part in the life of the Province, was keenly felt when the Assembly began on the evening of Friday 13th October. Fortunately, Brothers and lay Marists from all five countries of the Province managed to find their way to Furth in order to participate in the Assembly. Brother Gabriel Villa-Real, and Brother Xavier Giné, Provincial and Vicar Provincial of the Province of L'Hermitage, were present along with Brothers and lay Marists from France and Catalunya. Brother Robert Thunus, the outgoing Provincial, opened the Assembly and handed over to Mr Rob Walsh, who had been the facilitator of the Province discernment process since April 2022.

During the first evening Rob invited us to participate in paired conversations with other people. This helped to create a relaxed atmosphere while enabling participants to introduce themselves to each other and to create a good foundation for the working sessions that were planned for Saturday, 14th October, especially as many people were meeting each other for the first time.

During Saturday, 14th October there were video recordings from the former Provincials who spoke personally about their time as Provincial; the joys, challenges and difficulties, and positive developments. There were also video presentations from each of the five countries, with reflections on how each country had responded to participation in the Province of West Central Europe, with an emphasis on positive and significant experiences during these past twenty-three years.

There were also "Vox Pop" video clips from lay Marists of the Province who each spoke about how their Marist life began, the most important chapter in their Marist life, things they were grateful for, and how they imagined their future Marist

This helped to create a relaxed atmosphere while enabling participants to introduce themselves to each other and to create a good foundation for the working sessions...

involvement as we become members of the new District attached to the Province of the Hermitage. These videos added a personal dimension to the history of the past twenty-three years as seen through the eyes of the Province leaders and the experiences and contributions of lay Marists. It was



moving to hear these experiences and they each demonstrated the extraordinary achievements of the Province of West Central Europe and the significant personal investment of so many Marists.

Rob Walsh asked each of the participants to share a photo in a small group that evoked a personal story of the Province journey for them. These photos were then posted below the large Marist (and West Central Europe) Time-Line which covered

one of the walls of the Conference Hall, reminding everyone of our rich Marist history and the developments of the five countries of our Province since the beginning of the Province of West Central Europe in 2000.

Brother Ernesto, in his letter of 1st September 2023, encouraged us to look to the future. However, some people reflected that we also needed to grieve the loss of the Province of West Central Europe. We were able to look back on the

forging of new relationships, struggling with the challenges of language and different national and Marist cultures, learning how to make decisions together, the energy which led to new projects and initiatives, and the way that the new Province was able to take difficult decisions that may have been impossible for the former Provinces. The new Province also saw the development of the Mission gatherings in Guardamar and the Hermitage, new initiatives in mission in all of our countries and the establishment of the Province Mission Council in 2019.

The last session on Saturday, 14th October, was devoted to a video presentation where we remembered all of the Brothers who had died since the beginning of the Province. Brother Andreas Krupp, community leader in Furth, accompanied this 15- minute power point presentation on the guitar. It was moving to watch this presentation of “marvellous companions,” to use Brother Sean Sammon’s phrase, as we called to mind Brothers who had worked in the five countries of our Province and often beyond, in Africa and Asia, supporting Marist mission at home and abroad. Seeing the faces of these Brothers brought back many memories and reminded us of Brothers who had touched our lives.

The last session ended with a ritual where Brother Robert Thunus thanked the members of the outgoing Provincial Council (Brothers Ronnie McEwan, Roberto di Troia, Michael Schmalzl and Nicholas Smith), as well as Mr Gerry Devlin, outgoing Assistant Bursar, and Brother Alois Engel, Province Secretary, and introduced the new leadership group (Brothers Brendan Geary and Michael Schmalzl), as well as Mr Robert Vastmans, who will take up the role as Assistant Provincial Bursar. When Brother Jacques Scholte became the first Provincial of West Central Europe in 2000, the Brothers in Ireland gave him a replica of an ancient Celtic Cross which has since become the symbol of Province leadership which was



passed on to new Provincials when they assumed office. Brother Nicholas Smith handed this Celtic Cross to Brother Robert Thunus as he begins his mandate as the first Leader of the District of West Central Europe. At that point the transition from Province to District was complete.

Later that evening the participants gathered in the restaurant in the new distillery building in Furth for a celebratory meal where Brother Robert Thunus gave gifts to the Committee that organised the Assembly, as well as to those who had supported the Assembly in a range of ways. All participants were given a bookmark to commemorate the event. The Furth Brass Band offered musical accompaniment during the evening. Brother Andreas is a member of the band, as well as Mr Andreas Horsche, the Mayor of Furth, who joined the participants for the occasion.

Conny Stuart from the Netherlands led two reflective meditations during the assembly and Fr David Formella from Recklinghausen, a good friend of the Brothers, presided over the well-prepared liturgy on Sunday, 15th October.

The Province Assembly in Furth brought to an end a process that had its beginnings

in a meeting of the Provincial Council of West Central Europe with Brother Emili’s General Council in February 2017, when we were asked to make a presentation on the future of the Province. This work was taken up by the current General Council which initiated a discernment process that involved a range of meetings (via Zoom or in person) with Brothers and lay people, the Provincial Council and members of the General Council, larger meetings in Dublin (November 2021), Furth (November 2022), and Freising (April 2023), as well as meetings between the Provincial Councils of West Central Europe and L’Hermitage. The outcome of this process was the transition to becoming a District of the Province of L’Hermitage. When the participants were asked about what they were looking forward to, the key ideas were about opportunity, more lay involvement, engagement with the larger world of Marist Europe, and ways of continuing contact and support for Marist schools and projects. The twenty-three-year history of the Province of West Central Europe provides confidence that these hopes can be realised.

Br Brendan Geary – Scotland

Munich Trip Oct 2023 - Joining L'Hermitage & West Central Europe Provinces

In October, a group of enthusiastic Irish visitors, Orla Ryan (Moyle Park College), Br PJ, Br Nick, Ciaran McDermott (Marist, Athlone) and myself, embarked on an unforgettable journey to Munich, Germany. This wasn't just any ordinary trip; it was a momentous occasion aimed at commemorating the union of two Marist provinces – L'Hermitage and West Central Europe. The purpose of the journey was to celebrate the rich history and traditions of the Marist community, while forging new connections and strengthening existing friendships.

It was a privilege to be asked if I would like to attend such a significant event for our Province with our Marist Brothers. It was of special importance to me as I wanted to be informed about what is going on and that I can inform our Moyle Park College Marist Leaders and students at home. Meeting both old and new faces the night we arrived was memorable and we were welcomed with open arms. We shared a laugh and a meal together and chairs were pulled around the table. This only helps to reiterate the Marist idea that there is 'always room at the table'. This mentality has always resonated with me as I grew up in a family where sitting at a table and sharing a meal or the 'load of the day' was an honoured custom.

One of the highlights of the trip was a series of captivating videos showcasing the diverse experiences of laypeople living the Marist way of life. These videos offered a glimpse into the profound impact that Marist values have on individuals and communities. They were a testament to the enduring relevance of Marist principles in the modern world, inspiring everyone present.



Celebrating our first mass together on the Sunday was a moment of reflection, unity, and spirituality, as Marists from different backgrounds came together to celebrate their shared values. The mass served as a reminder of the deep spiritual connections that bind Marists worldwide, transcending borders and cultures.

The trip also provided an opportunity for participants to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Marists from Ireland were warmly received by their counterparts in Munich, further strengthening the international network of Marist schools and communities. Bonds were formed and memories created that will undoubtedly last a lifetime.

During our celebrations, everyone was invited to explore an engaging timeline exhibition that narrated the rich history of the Marist community. This interactive display allowed participants to trace the remarkable journey of the Marists, from their inception to the present day. What made this exhibit truly special was the opportunity for everyone to contribute to the narrative by adding their own photographs to the timeline.

It was a moving experience, as old and new friends shared their personal snapshots, connecting their own Marist experiences with the broader history of the Marist community.

This act of collective storytelling



emphasised the living, evolving nature of the Marist spirit, a spirit that continues to inspire and unite Marists around the world.

Another opportunity we had was to go to visit the Marist gymnasium for a tour from Katarina. It is a beautiful school and there is so much on offer for their students. Their meditation space was stunning and the incredible displays of artwork around the building celebrated their students' talents and history of the Marists.

This trip enabled me to connect with old and new Marist friends and I am looking forward to learning more about the L'hermitage province. I am especially looking forward to working with my Marist Leader students and Core team in Moyle Park on establishing these new connections and fostering friendships with our L'Hermitage partners.

As the Irish visitors bid farewell to Munich, they carried with them not only cherished memories but also a deeper understanding of the Marist spirit. This journey to Munich in October served as a testament to the enduring strength and unity of the Marist community, reminding us all of the power of shared values, faith, and friendship.

Leigh Ellis
Moyle Park College Ireland



The European Province becomes a Marist Europe Central-West District

«Embracing the future with hope» is the motto of this meeting.

On 13, 14 and 15 October 2023, the Marists of Central-West Europe met at Furth, Landshut in the Klosterstrasse.

The Belgian delegation of nine people, made up of brothers and laypeople, left in the morning at 8:30 from the south of Belgium to go to Bavaria. We expected to arrive around 4pm. Arriving in Klosterstrasse, the brothers in the van seemed doubtful, as the place did not correspond to their memories. But in fact my fellow travellers and I were in Fürth, not Furth. Ironically, there's a Klosterstrasse in both places. And so we realised that we still had 170 km to go before arriving at our destination. One of the brothers with a big smile says to us: «Fürth then!»

Which put a smile on everyone's face. We arrived just after 6pm, our Marist family waiting for us, albeit a little anxious, with open arms. We were offered something to eat and drink, we were shown to our rooms in this magnificent place, the pleasure of meeting our loved ones again and of having arrived safely.

I can't yet see how the district itself will change my Marist mission. It is well understood that this new organisational structure will probably bring the countries of the new Province of the Hermitage closer together.

During this weekend we reminisced about the past, what has been done in 23 years, the successes as well as the failures.

It's good to remember the past so that we can build a better future. The main quality that I feel from this weekend spent together is the meeting of Marists from the five countries. I find that the exchange between countries to talk about missions and ideas for the future is fundamental.



Moreover, there have been proposals to participate in joint missions. During the weekend, I appreciated the richness of the discussions and the fraternal and community love that emerged between the participants. The same desire to move forward. It was a pleasure to meet up again with Marists I had met previously, but I also greatly appreciated meeting Marists I didn't know yet.

Embracing the future with hope, joy and sharing. To see a future for the Marist mission in Europe. The situation in Belgium worries me from time to time, because we no longer have a Marist school in Belgium. This is a big hindrance to the mission, which exists or could be reinvented. So I look to the future with mixed feelings and I hope and pray that our missions and our communities will bear fruit.

The atmosphere in Furth was warm and friendly, full of enthusiasm and the joy of meeting each other again. It is this spirit that we must preserve and cultivate. I

brought back from Furth a Bible made by the schools in 2017 for the bicentenary. Like the first monks, the children copied the Gospels and decorated the pages with drawings and their best handwriting. I took the time back home to leaf through this Bible and I'm impressed by the quality of the drawings, not just technically but emotionally and spiritually. These children have put all their love into their drawings to represent the Gospels - drawings that are repeatedly very beautiful, and filled with the Holy Spirit. This Bible represents well the Marist spirit, what the Marist charism and the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat brings to the youngest, to make them understand that God loves them.

So all that remains is for us to fill in the blank pages of the new district, as has been so well suggested to us.

I hope that this attachment to the Hermitage Province will bring us a breath of fresh air...

Christine Dispa – Belgium

We were delighted to receive Brother Robert's invitation to the Provincial Assembly in Furth. We arrived in Munich to beautiful weather and a warm Marist welcome from Wolfgang, who was at the airport waiting patiently for us to arrive.

Wolfgang transported me and my colleagues, Sean Hagney, Kenneth Black and Laura Robbins to Furth, where we met Aisling, reacquainted with old friends and met new friends.

Throughout the weekend, there were many opportunities to share experiences with the Marist Brothers and lay Marists. We did this through discussion, videos, presentations, photographs and simply presence. The language barriers did not impede communication, the interpreters did a wonderful job of ensuring that the weekend was inclusive for everyone.

The presentation of the Marist Brothers who had died over the last 23 years was moving for everyone for different reasons. We all had connections with some of the saintly men in the presentation, for us, it was Brother Bede and Brother Douglas. It was lovely to see them remembered. This presentation and the presentations by the Provincials, highlighted the importance of the work of lay Marists as the numbers of our Marist Brothers diminish. We as lay Marists have a responsibility to support the work of our Brothers.

Provincial Assembly Furth

Germany 13 – 15 October 2023



Left to right - Sean Hagney, Brother PJ, Laura Robbins, Kenneth Black and Wendy Sinclair

Connections and the Marist Leadership Programme

We are blessed to be part of the Marist Family in West Central Europe. I would like to see us continue to grow in strength as we become a District of L'Hermitage. Connection with our Marist Brothers and lay Marists is vital, and I would like to see this continue through online connection, but most importantly face to face connections in places where we can have spiritual experiences, for example, L'Hermitage and Guardamare.

The Marist Leadership programme is very important to us. This year, two

of our original Marist Leaders who now attend university, Ruth Black and Catherine Colvin travelled to Portugal to celebrate World Youth Day with Marists from West Central Europe. It is very important that we continue to provide these experiences and support these young Marists beyond school.

It was an honour for me, Sean, Kenneth and Laura to be part of the historical event of the Province of West Central Europe becoming a District of L'Hermitage. Thank you to everyone who made this experience memorable for us.

Tour of the Distillery

On Saturday evening, after a busy day of workshops, presentations and reflection, the Mayor of Furth organised a tour of the distillery. It was interesting to hear about the history of the Marist Brothers in Furth and the production of Arquebuse, and how it is used for medicinal purposes. We were honoured to have access to some of the archives, which included photographs of the Marist Brothers, dating back to the early 20th century.



Tour of the School

During the lunch break on Saturday, Katerina and Johannes organised a tour of their beautiful school. This was very interesting and allowed us to share the different practices which exist in our schools. Katerina and Johannes are passionate about their school and young people, St Marcellin's vision is evident in Maristen-Gymnasium Furth.

Holy Mass

Before we all travelled back to our home countries, we celebrated Holy Mass together. This was a lovely way to end the weekend and it allowed us to give thanks for all the experiences our staff and young people have had being part of the Marist Family in West Central Europe.

Wendy Sinclair - St Johns RC HS Dundee, Scotland

Experience of the weekend in Furth

It was beautiful and valuable to reflect on the good things that have happened in the WCE Province from 2000 to 2023. The stories, the faces, the meaningful events that have taken place and relationships across national borders that have been created.

During the weekend in Furth we tasted that a lot is expected of lay people. Partly simply because of the numbers: the ratio of brothers and lay people will increasingly shift towards a greater role for lay people. And certainly also in taking more responsibility for our mission.

The trend in the transition that is happening now is to allow projects to continue, that is our understanding. We see this as an encouragement to continue the chosen path. For us in the Netherlands, and for us in the District of West Central Europe.

In the Netherlands we have taken steps by appointing two delegates, transferring responsibility in leadership to lay people. This gives us the opportunity to continue and strengthen the mission of the Marist Brothers in the Netherlands.

We notice among the young people who come to us that there is an undiminished need for a place where they can slow down, be quiet, and where they can be without judgement, with everything they bring. Where there is room for important questions in their lives, real attention and accompaniment in their search for who they deeply are. Attentive Living are words that express this.

We look to the future with hope and confidence.

Conny Stuart – Westerhelling, The Netherlands



Going new ways

In my hometown, there is a cycle path called „Alleyway of change“. Some years ago this path was a railway path where trains transported the coal. The Ruhr-area has changed, the mines are gone, but new ideas were born.

I felt something similar at our last meeting in Furth. The change from being a province to being a district initially made me feel wistful. I can understand that this change was necessary. The number of brothers is decreasing and, looking at my school, the students and the teachers as well, there are fewer and fewer who want to have anything to do with faith in general and the Marists in particular. But there are still those who think differently, those who look into the future with hope. Who still believe that there are opportunities and possibilities.

Thus the weekend in Furth became a strange mix of saying farewell, looking back, thankfulness on the one hand and worries, hope,

confidence on the other hand. And it was only when we listened to the speeches as a community, I realised that I have had the honour of helping to shape and contribute to the history of the Europe Central West Province. What haven't I learned and experienced during this time! I have met wonderful people. I made spiritual experience, which shaped my work, my thinking, my acting. And though the end of the province makes me sad I want to contribute to making our district being alive and active.

Thank you to all the people who made this weekend an experience. Thanks to everybody who organised and helped (Brother Andreas, you are marvellous! Keep on drumming!). Thanks to the translators who did not capitulate to David's sermon. Thanks to all the people I had the pleasure to meet: Thank you, Danke, Merci, hartelijk dank, Obrigado, Gracias!

**Ulrike Weber –
Maristen Realschule
Recklinghausen, Germany**



The path is made by walking

As the poet said: «Walker, there is no path, you make the path as you walk». And we do not walk alone, we walk with others. Experiences and relationships build us up and shape our shared path.

In Furth I have lived an experience of Marist fraternity, an experience of family. The weekend of 13-15 October gave me a deep sense of hope.

In the moments of sharing in the groups and also through the testimonies, one could perceive deep emotions, the fruit of the experiences lived as a Province of West Central Europe. A long road travelled seeking to give current responses based on the Marist charism in the ecclesial and social context of the different countries.

The complementarity of lifestyles, of mentalities, the richness of the projects, the commitment of the people, the concern to raise up Marist life, have been and are a great richness.

In the contact with the participants in the assembly, one could feel the generosity and the availability of the people, the

openness to new opportunities to enrich one's own experience and to share one's own experiences.

The testimonies brought life experiences, experiences of discovery and cultivation of Marist life, a desire to share and to celebrate, expectations of new opportunities.

The symbol of the heart condensed the depth of the experience which is not limited to the weekend at Furth but expressed the links and connections created over the years as well as the will to continue, to move forward, to build.

The timeline showed that structures are at the service of Marist life and mission and that they evolve throughout history. The step taken at Furth, the beginning of the District of West Central Europe, opens a new stage in this history.

A new stage that we are beginning to travel together, West Central Europe and L'Hermitage. We are beginning to trace a path that has not been mapped out. The path is made by walking. And like the pilgrim looking even higher than the mountains, beyond the obstacles. The

pilgrim does not look down to feel sorry for himself, nor inwards to encourage himself. He looks upwards to the One who guides him.

Since last year, we have been walking, with our eyes fixed on the vitality and viability of Marist life and mission in the different realities of West Central Europe and the Hermitage. We have embarked on a new stage which up to now has been marked by mutual knowledge and shared reflection.

In the image of the Synod, it is a question of walking together, «syn - odos». It is the Spirit who traces the path.

Pope Francis said in his greeting at the opening of the Synod on 4 October: «The one who takes all this into his hands, who guides, is the Holy Spirit. If it is not there, it is not going to give a good result.» «Let us listen to the voices of the Spirit».

Let us entrust this new stage to Mary, our Buna Madre. With her, let us thank the Lord for all his blessings, for all that he does among us.

**Br Gabriel Villa-Real Tapias -
Provincial l'Hermitage**



WEST CENTRAL EUROPE IS NOW A DISTRICT TO THE PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE

On Saturday 14th October, during the Marist Assembly of West-Central Europe held in Furth, Germany, our District was linked to the Province of L'Hermitage and officially inaugurated after time had been taken to celebrate the rich history of our Province over its 23 years of existence.



Participants in the Provincial Assembly -
Furth, 13 - 15 October 2023

District Leader



Brother Robert Thunus

New address

district.leader.wce@maristes.org

Br Robert Thunus' old email address provincial@maristen.org will soon disappear.

■ District Council

The role of the District Council is to assist the District Leader in his role of animating the life and mission of the Brothers.



You can now view the recording of the Eucharist of Sunday 15 October

[CLICK TO WATCH](#)

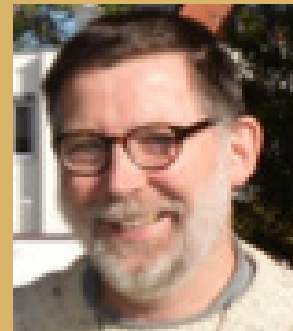


Video summary of the meeting made by Aisling Demaison

[CLICK TO WATCH](#)



Meet the new District and Provincial Leadership Team



Br. Michael Schmalz



Br. Brendan Geary



Assistant of the Provincial Bursar

**Robert Vastmans
(Belgium)**

Meet the District Mission Council

In the new District, our Mission Council will continue to work across the five countries with the added connection to the L'Hermitage province. We are delighted to welcome Eric Reynier secretary general of Mission in the Province of L'Hermitage as a member of the district Mission Council.

The vision of the Mission Council is to discern, decide and to act together to live our Marist values in Marist schools and initiatives in the District.

The Mission Council seeks to inspire the Marist community in the District through facilitating the exchange of ideas, experiences and resources for mission in the way of Mary.



**Br. PJ McGowan,
Chairperson of
Mission Council**



**Secretary & Director
of Education
Ms. Aisling Demaison**



**Scotland
Representative
Mr. Paul Cummings**



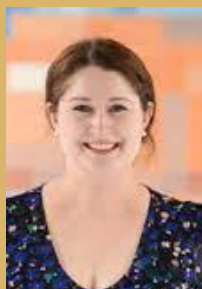
**German
Representative
Br. Michael Schmalz**



**Belgium
Representative
Br. Albert Andre**



**The Netherlands
Representative
Ms. Conny Stuart**



**The Netherlands
Representative
Ms. Judith Rotink**



**Delegate of
L'Hermitage
Province
Mr. Eric Reynier**

October Gathering in Furth. Mission Council

One of the most pleasant things about our gathering in Furth was the opportunity to catch up with so many Marists involved in Marist Mission at some many different levels in the five countries. We also had an opportunity for the Mission Council to meet Brothers Robert, Gabrielle and Xavier to discuss the implications of the new administrative district structure on the work of the Mission Council. There was an acknowledgement that a lot has been achieved since the Mission Council was established in 2017 and central to that was the contribution of Aisling Demaison as Director of Marist Education.

We also thank each member of the mission council and all who have contributed to building Marist mission in the past twenty three years since the province was founded. Many initiatives were taken to promote Marist Characteristic spirit in our schools and projects and we were happy to hear that the work of the Mission Council will continue to be supported into the future. It is very enriching to see so many fellow Marists living and promoting Marist values and spirituality in their daily lives and work. We are happy to welcome Eric Reynier secretary general of Mission in the Province as a member of the district Mission Council.

We also made a presentation to Renate Hacker who is retiring from the Mission Council. We want to thank her for her great contribution to the work of mission in the district and particularly commend her work with the volunteer programme in Germany. We look forward in hope for the future and to continue building the Marist community in our five countries and developing links with the rest of the province of L'Hermitage.

**P.J McGowan Chairperson
of Mission Council.**

A Cultural Exchange:

French Students Immerse themselves in Irish School Life and celebrate the Halloween Midterm Moyle Park Style!



In a delightful two-day visit, our secondary school had the pleasure of hosting a group of 15 French students along with four of their teachers, including the principal of Saint Laurent La Paix Notre-Dame Paris, Eric Gohier.

The purpose of their visit was to explore the rich tapestry of Irish culture, participate in art workshops, attend various subject classes, visit the Marist Brothers home on site and experience the unique Irish sport of hurling. The highlight of their visit, however, was immersing themselves in the warm and welcoming atmosphere of our Marist Family at Moyle Park College. The French students arrived with excitement and curiosity, ready to embark on an adventure that would not only expand their knowledge but also create lasting memories. The first day kicked off with a comprehensive tour of the school, guided by Irish students who proudly showcased their projects and Moyle Park College grounds. These ambassadors of our school also shared insights into Irish culture, history, and traditions, offering the French students a unique glimpse into the rich heritage of the Emerald Isle. The cultural exchange continued with engaging art workshops, where students from both nations collaborated, fostering creativity and friendship. Language





barriers were effortlessly overcome through the universal language of art, as students expressed their thoughts and emotions on canvas. Students even enjoyed playing games on the Nintendo Switch during lunch time together. There was no need for Google translate there! The Irish students who are part of the student council had the opportunity to present their projects and charity work to their French counterparts. This exchange of ideas and initiatives demonstrated the power of youth leadership and global collaboration.

The highlight of the visit was undoubtedly the introduction to hurling and camogie. Under the guidance of experienced coach, Ms Grainne Ryan, the French students gave it their all, learning the basic rules and techniques. The experience left everyone breathless and exhilarated, forging an even stronger bond between the two groups.

On the second day, the French students were welcomed to our annual Halloween Hangout party. This event, traditionally held to celebrate the First Year students' successful completion of their first term, took on an international flair this year. The Moyle Park Student Council and Marist Leaders along with their coordinator Ms Leigh Ellis have hosted this event for

the past four years and it has become a highlight in the school calendar that everyone looks forward to. The theme was Pirates of the Caribbean and featured quizzes, bingo and games for all to get involved in. The party was also a charity fundraiser, with students and staff dressing up in spooky costumes, raising over 900 euros for Temple Street Children's Hospital.

The visit of our French friends was an enriching cultural exchange, showcasing the strength of international connections and the warmth of the Marist Family. It was a reminder that, no matter our backgrounds or languages, we can all come together to learn, grow, and make a positive impact on the world. This experience will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on both our school and our French guests, fostering a bond that transcends borders and will be cherished for years to come.

We would like to thank everyone who helped host the French students, taught classes, made presentations, bought birthday cakes, coordinated games and fundraising and to those who donated to our Temple Street Children's Hospital fundraiser!

**Ms Leigh Ellis- Moyle Park College,
Dublin**



Around the Bell, «Marcellinus is my name»

On November 1, the stormy evening before All Souls' Day, fifteen people gathered on the Westerhelling for a celebration with singing, rituals and stories.

Our own name and the names of dearly departed people were heard on this evening. Outside, around the bell that bears the name Marcellinus as you see in the photo, we lit candles for everyone we commemorated, and our beautiful bell sounded with each candle. We sang meditative songs, and Zhaleh, our guest from Iran, played the Santur.

In this way we celebrated Life in a quiet and attentive atmosphere.

Hilda, one of those present, experienced this evening as follows:

Warm, safe and moving, that is how I experienced the meeting.

There was a warm welcome, the atmosphere was subdued. I was touched by the rituals. It really hit me and it moved me. I felt connected to the others by singing together and saying the names of the deceased. The mention of your own name and the warm shower of hearing everyone present saying, shouting, whispering my name. So special to experience. The 'inquiry' was also nice to do. I experienced Zhaleh's music as soothing and meditative. Very appropriate for the subdued atmosphere.

There is so much more to say: it now occurs to me that by speaking out about my deceased loved ones, they were suddenly with me. That also gave me a warm feeling. While it was quite cold at the bell outside The sound of that gong/bell went all the way through me and made it very powerful!

Thank you very much for this special evening.

Hilda – Westerherlling, The Netherlands

ALL SOULS DAY
IN THE NETHERLANDS



In November, we remember in a special way those who have gone before us. This year with the process of transition from Province to District, we have taken time to remember all the brothers who have died in West Central Europe since we became a province.

We invite you to watch our montage and remember them too. In doing so, we also remember all the other Marists, family members and friends who have passed in recent years.

In November we remember

Prayer

**Eternal rest grant onto them O Lord,
And may perpetual light
shine upon them.**

**May the souls of all the
faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God,
Rest in peace, Amen**



**You can watch
the video here:**

CLICK TO WATCH

