

National Administrators, Bursars and Assistants meeting 28th February - 1st March, Paris



If I'm not mistaken this was our 11th such gathering. The trend is that we are moving from a loose federation to working more closely together – the word I would use is *interdependently*, which is easy to say but much more difficult to put into practice!



This sense of interdependence has been growing over the years. Finance or money is naturally a touchy subject and I am amazed by the spirit of cooperation at these meetings. One of the fruits of our meetings was the production of the document '*Stepping Stones*'. This was part of a process that led to last year's Chapter document on Finance.



Working together is more urgent in these times of severe diminishment. It's harder to manage an army in retreat than in advance. But such management is vital; otherwise, financial chaos will

ensure. Concretely speaking the principal changes, we will see are our finances being administered for us more and more by our competent lay colleagues. This work will naturally be done under the authority of canonical Marists. ***We have a duty to share with them the 'Marist Mind', namely, our tradition and values.***

The way communion was expressed at these meetings by our 8 Units in the Province has often greatly moved and inspired me. Genuinely it was about the '*We*', not the '*I*', and for this I am grateful.

***Jimmy McElroy, s.m.
Provincial Bursar***



GREETINGS FROM DUBLIN!

Confreres, at this time, Kevin, our provincial, is very much in our thoughts and prayers. While his operation on 26 February last went well, he now faces into a long period of recovery.

Meanwhile, the work of the Province continues, and I will try to serve you as well as possible in the interim.

On 28 February and 1 March last we had the annual

Administrators and Bursars meeting in Paris. It was the first physical meeting since Covid and I would like to thank all those who took part and especially Jimmy McElroy, Odile de Villenaut and François Chauvet for hosting and assisting us.

Declan Marmion, s.m.

PRAYER INTENTION: *for victims of abuse*

In line with the intentions of Pope Francis, we pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering .

Marist Mission in Norway

In 1924, the bishop of Oslo asked the Dutch Marists, whose seminary bore the name of the Norwegian Patron "Saint Olav", for missionaries for his diocese. Fr. Jacques Mangers from Luxembourg was the first one to travel there in 1925. Just a few years later, in 1932 he became the bishop and stayed in office for 32 years. He was followed by 7 Dutch and 4 Irish confreres, who worked in various parishes around the country.



From 1932, the parish of Stabekk, west of Oslo, was the centre of the Marist activities. In 1960 the Marists built a new church there,

and remained responsible for the parish until 2013. They were also involved in the chaplaincy for English speakers and youth ministry. In the 1980s the community moved to Stavanger, the centre of the oil industry in the west. Since 2001, the community is based in Strømmen, east of Oslo.



Today, we are involved in youth- and parish ministry and retreat work, in collaboration with the St. Joseph Sisters. The Catholic Church in Norway has been growing rapidly due to immigration in the last decades. It is a young and international community with all the blessings and challenges that such a constellation brings. We are privileged to serve here as Marists.

Andreas Rupprecht, s.m.

An Irish Missionary in Norway

Rory Mulligan writes: Since 1969 I have worked in Norway alongside priests from Holland, Germany, France, Vietnam, Poland and Congo. Norway is secularised, but about 2/3 of the population still identify as Lutheran Christian. Suspicion still hangs in the air as regards to Rome and the Jesuits, and the recent church scandals. There are less than 200,000 Catholics, under 4% of the population but youth ministry has been all-important in keeping the children of converts, immigrants and refugees in contact with the church. This has contributed to a high number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

My own vocation had crystallised in my teens during stays at the Marist retreat house, north of Dublin. Retreat work was the ministry I dreamt of, apart from a growing curiosity about Norway and what the Marists were doing there. Norwegian friends along the way nurtured an immature guess that the church could benefit greatly with more of the Norwegian values of simple lifestyle, equality and honesty in public life, while Norway could benefit with some of the 'joie de vivre' so evident in Catholic cultures and, as I later discovered, the richness, warmth and inclusiveness of religious symbols.

Although Marists have been in Norway since 1925, until recently we've been cautious about speaking of Mary. However, now that the mood has changed, we can point out how Marist spirituality is utterly evangelical. Indeed, some Lutheran minister friends have been enthusiastic about Craig Larkin's 'A Certain Way'. The Norwegian edition serves as a handbook for lay Marists. This little group had 12 participants on the annual retreat, up from 5 in previous years.

At 83 I'm grateful to be able to take one or two Sunday Masses each month, to help lead 6-8 retreats a year and be available for spiritual direction. I'm equally grateful to my two confrères who take on all of the snow shoveling, grass clippings and heavy shopping. They even put up with my cooking!

Street Conversations in Hull

About 10 years ago, in Sheffield, I found myself sitting down on the pavement outside McDonald's talking to a guy who was begging there. It wasn't planned but we ended up sharing a meal. New horizons opened for me and now, in Hull I have five or six such conversations a month. Pope Francis has emphasised: *people can't be left anonymous, feeling as if they were invisible.*

I learnt how much people, who are so often ignored, value simply being spoken to as a human being. With time, I had the courage to put into practice the maxim of the Alpha course: "try praying". If I offer to say a prayer for them, I ask them if they would also pray for me. Typically, they are surprised but also delighted and ask me why - I sometimes say that I am a priest.

If I can develop some relationship with the person or learn their names, I feel able to give them more than just a few coins. One young man sleeps in the park opposite our house since his girlfriend had kicked him out and he had nowhere else to go. When I asked another young man to pray for me, to my astonishment he promptly stood up, raised up his arms and prayed with a practised voice. Clearly, he is an evangelical Christian. Although it is not a formal ministry, I like to think of my modest efforts as a Marist apostolate.



Gerard Burns, s.m.