

THE COUNCIL OF THE PROVINCE SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



This is the first time I attended the European Council of the Province. I was asked to attend because of my work in the Marist schools in Toulon. The Council, which took place from the 7th to the 8th November, was an important time for meeting and sharing with the confreres representing the eight countries where the Marist Fathers work.

It had three main parts: a *review of the Forum on Education* which took place in Toulon from 8 to 11 October led by Martin McAnaney and Frank Dowling; reflections on the *care of the elderly and sick* in the province; and an *exchange of news from the countries*.

It was a good opportunity to listen attentively to the confreres and to have open-hearted discussions in small groups with feedback from the larger group. An overview of the current situation shows that the Marists of Europe are aware of the challenges presented by the reduction in numbers. But they are far from being discouraged!



On the contrary, they continue to discern ways and means of keeping the lamp burning. This is why the question of vocational animation was highlighted. Another avenue insisted on by the provincial and other participants is the partnership between the Marists of Europe, Africa and Canada. This partnership is already operational with some European confreres in

Africa and five confreres from Africa who have come to reinforce the Marist missions in Europe and Canada.

At a time when the number of Marists in the world is decreasing, Mary invites us to collaborate as much as possible to continue the work of evangelisation. In this respect, the "*Maristes en Education*" network in France has chosen as its theme for the year: "*Being one*". Working together is an imperative for all the members of the "*Maristes en Education*" network, and indeed for all of us who work for a more Marian and synodal Church.

Louis Niyongabo, sm

DEAR MARIST FRIENDS

I think it was the theologian Yves Congar who said that when he was writing he felt like a rower in a boat. In a boat race, the rowers face backwards to propel the boat forwards. A lot of his writing, he said, was about the past but its aim was to propel the church forward into the future. The same spirit informs contributions to this month's EuroInfo. We look back at the past, its successes and achievements but also its failures. All with a view to the future. I think many of us view Christmas decorations appearing earlier and earlier each year with very mixed feelings. However, they should prompt us to view the beginning of a new church year in Advent as an opportunity for a fresh start. Let's hope that this brief and joyful season will be a prelude to what we wish for all our readers – a Happy Christmas!

Kevin Duffy, sm

PRAYER INTENTION:

Healing for victims of abuse by members of the Society of Mary.



GERMANY: 100 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

On 5 December 1923, the Congregation for Religious in Rome, with permission from Pope Pius XI, granted Fr. Ernest Rieu, superior general of the Society of Mary, the request by the superior general and the general chapter, to erect a German Province. This centenary is honoured in the present - day unit of the Province of Europe with a booklet offering articles around the origins.

Alois Greiler, sm



Editor's Note:

What Fr Alois modestly describes as a booklet is in fact a substantial, carefully prepared work entitled: *1923 - 2023 Hundert Jahre Deutsche Provinz der Gesellschaft Mariens: Beiträge zu einer Provinzgeschichte.*

LA NEYLIÈRE – ASSEMBLY OF MARIST FATHERS IN FRANCE

An assembly of the Marist Fathers in France took place from 2 to 4 November in La Neylière (Pomeys -Lyon). *It was an opportunity to get together again.* The last assembly was at the end of February 2020 just before the first lockdown. We were also able to exchange news among ourselves and with the provincial.

The centerpiece of these days was a session on the question of abuse, in particular that committed by Marists in France. Marie-Françoise de Billy facilitated the day's activities. In the morning, Bernard Thomasset presented situations experienced by victims and the congregation's response. In the afternoon, we listened to Jacques P. He was a victim of a Marist who is now deceased.

We learned about the abuse he suffered, the way he had been manipulated by the perpetrator, the after-effects of these criminal acts on him and his family, but also how he had come to terms with these horrific realities. By putting the victims at the heart of our reflections, we can better understand the seriousness of these acts and the importance of preventing them.

Pascal Boidin, sm

40-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE "FORUM104"

For 3 days, from 6 to 8 October, the *Forum104* celebrated its 40th anniversary. In 2014, the Assumptionists took over from the Marists as the congregation responsible for the *Forum104* and the Notre Dame des Anges Chapel. A number of artists and witnesses were invited to a festive evening, including Father Hubert Bonnet-Eymard, who directed the Forum from 1989 to 1996. **(Full text FR: bit.ly/Forum4oans; EN: bit.ly/Forum4oyearsEN)** Since it was founded in 1983 by the Marist Fathers, the *Forum104* has welcomed nearly 300 associations each year, representing a wide variety of fields and trends: religious and spiritual paths, methods of personal growth, health and well-being, psychological, physical and artistic practices, social action, societal perspectives, etc.

A brief history:

1863 Acquisition of **104 rue de Vaugirard** by the Society of Mary.

104 became famous for the "*Réunion des Etudiants*", a hostel founded in 1895 and run by Marist Fathers who gave it a very friendly atmosphere.

A few of the future celebrities, who stayed there, were: novelist François Mauriac (1885-1970), philosopher Jean Guilton (1901-1999), François Mitterrand (President of the French Republic from 1981 to 1995, Edouard Balladur (French Prime Minister from 1993 to 1995).

