



European Marist Laity Encounter

The Third European Marist Laity Encounter (EMLE) was held in Los Negrales near Madrid, Spain on August 8-14th and international guests had also been invited. Representatives of Australia, Brasil, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Peru, Philippines and USA joined Marist Laity from 8 different European countries and 7 languages were spoken over the week!

On the first evening, tables were set for each country to introduce themselves with specialty gifts for all. It was a very joyful start! The next day, Marist Laity from each country were given an opportunity to share about their reality, through a short history, their own strengths and challenges. This included a presentation of the communities of Cameroun, Burundi, East Rep. Democratic of Congo and Senegal, who could not be with us physically but were in our thoughts and prayers.

On day two, two presentations were given. "The Mercy of God according to the *Evangelii Gaudium*" by Lourdes Azorin revealed that this Apostolic Exhortation is very close to our mission as Marists. The personal encounter with Jesus Christ and the vivid experience of his Love moves us to a pastoral mission where we are to stand and act so the poor and the sick live with dignity. Corinne Fenet lead us into experiencing with the example of the Virgin Mary that God's unique words spoken to us produce an overflowing joy that we cannot keep for ourselves and this is how we become missionaries. Finally, Fr. Jan Hulshof shared three testimonies by Lay Marists from Italy, Norway and England to demonstrate the "social dimension of Marist mission."

The last two days, we all embarked in buses to the beautiful and historical cities of Avila and Toledo.

The travel time gave us opportunities to mingle, get to know each other more deeply and plant little seeds for future projects and collaboration between countries. On the last evening, a closure Mass was celebrated, followed by a farewell party where the new committee of the EMLE and our wonderful Spanish hosts were given a standing ovation.

The representatives of the World Marist Laity Coordination, accompanied by Fr. Jan Hulshof and Fr. Alejandro Munoz from the General House in Rome, spent the next three days on a pilgrimage. They visited Le Puy and Fourvière, two places related to the intuition of the Society of Mary as well as Belley, L'Hermitage, Le Bugey and Cerdon, the places of mission.

*by Christine Colomban
representing Marist Laity in U.S. Province*



EMLE Participants

