

WALSINGHAM-WELLS COMMUNITY, ENGLAND

The *Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham* had its origins in the eleventh century but was effectively obliterated in 1538 at the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1897, by rescript of Pope Leo XIII, the sanctuary of Our Lady of Walsingham was restored and gradually people began to visit again on pilgrimage.



The Marists first moved to Walsingham in 1968 and ran the National Catholic Shrine of our Lady until 2014 when the last Marist Director, Alan Williams was named Bishop of Brentwood and the Marist Fathers were unable to provide a successor. However, the Marist community has continued to look after the parish of Walsingham-Wells. In 2017, Tom

Goonan and I moved to Wells-next-the-Sea, a slightly larger settlement more suited to our aging community with facilities such as shops, medical centre, pharmacy and buses. During the Covid pandemic Kolio Misiloi from Tonga joined us for about two years and about two years ago Desmond Hanrahan joined the community.

The three of us look after a very rural parish which has four churches. The permanent population of this part of England is quite small and the percentage of Catholics much below the national average. The parish covers a considerable area, yet the small Catholic communities are quite enthusiastic. The parish church in Walsingham has a regular daily congregation of about twenty people and this is often augmented by *pilgrims*. The other churches, too, cater for holidaymakers during quite a large part of the year.



As a matter of policy, we try to educate our communities in the ecclesiology of Vatican II and, to achieve this, give a great deal of attention to the current *Synodality movement in our preaching and other activities*. Walsingham is a place which attracts all kinds of people but among them, there is always a core of those who follow strange conspiracy theories to be found on social media outlets. This can be a trial, but we do our best to deal

with them kindly!

There is a small lay Marist group which meets in the village at the Marist Sisters' house and we encourage them as much as we can. We pride ourselves, too, on the hospitality we offer to visitors and those around us. For the time being we are managing quite well but it always must be borne in mind that our average age is 81...

Keith Tulloch, sm

DEAR MARIST FRIENDS

It has now been a couple of weeks since the major superiors from around the world returned home after the annual ARC (Annual Review and Consultation) meeting with the General Administration in Rome.

I'm sure I wasn't alone in having the impression of a Society smaller but more united.

We will predictably continue to decrease in number for some time but there is every reason to believe and hope that we will then start to grow again, and new vistas will open.

Fr Colin would be happy to hear a sentence from the superior of the African District: "Our schools are becoming our parishes".

Kevin Duffy, sm

PRAYER INTENTION:
The mission in Marist schools

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN NOTRE DAME DE FRANCE, LONDON



As a deacon preparing for the priesthood in the Diocese of Paris, I'm delighted to have been welcomed into the Notre Dame de France parish since the beginning of February. Having finished my theology studies at the end of January, I wanted to take advantage of the few months that separated me from ordination to the priesthood to have a slightly different experience after six years of training in Paris.

Luckily, the new superior of the Paris Seminary knew a parishioner of Notre Dame de France who was able to put us in touch with the Marist community in London. She agreed to take me in for a few months, and I thank her warmly! The community life offered to me is a very happy transition between family life at the Seminary in Paris and the life as a vicar that awaits me after ordination!



Having only known the Marists by name, it was also an opportunity for me to discover their spirituality. And I'm particularly struck by the **unconditional welcome they offer within the parish**, managing to make an extremely diverse Christian community live together!

While the aim of this experience was not only to improve my English, learn about the workings of a large chaplaincy and prepare for the various sacraments, I also wanted to leave Paris to delve deeper into a theological constant that had been recurring throughout my theology studies: the **question of ecumenism and unity within the Catholic Church**. It's an aspect of my stay that I still need to develop further before leaving, but I've already had the joy of taking part in the 'ecumenical breakfasts' organised for all the clergy in London's West End and meeting Anglican priests from the different sensitivities of the Church of England to discuss these issues with them.



Louis-Marie Drago

P.S. Louis-Marie Drago will be ordained on the 29th of June in St Sulpice, Paris - 9h30. Please pray for him !

MARIST WEEK IN BURY-ROSAIRE 21-26 APRIL, FRANCE

A team of the Marist Family animated "a Marist Week" in these Marist schools near Paris. Three Fathers: Louis Niyongabo, Jimmy McElroy and I, two SMSM sisters Helene Diouf and Guéma and an SM Sister Tery O'Brien formed the team.



There were sessions with the young people, moments of conviviality with the teachers and catechists, the Mass of Saint Peter Chanel.... I heard some echoes from the youngsters: **the surprise and amazement that there are Marists around the world**. Some were struck by the demanding character of missions with the poor, migrants and refugees, street children, prisoners, young mothers in need. We hope a Marist seed has been sown in the hearts of these young people.

Rafaël Rámila, sm