

COUNCIL OF THE PROVINCE LA NEYLIERE, 29-30 OCTOBER 2024



This was the first Europe-wide meeting devoted to our ministries in parishes and places of worship. It was encouraging to hear of a huge variety of activities in these ministries and of shared Marist values and approaches. It's as if the Marist spirit is tailor-made for the secular age.

Fr Colin's invitation to found a new church resonated with participants.

There were two keynote presentations: Declan Marmion gave a rich theological presentation of synodality and Jean-Marie Bloqueau a challenging personal account of issues raised in his own ministries in the province. The two presentations were much appreciated and complemented each other perfectly. (*documents available on request*)

Group feedback included the following:

- We want to be an open, welcoming and merciful church.
- We want people at our side, not beneath us.
- Real progress is often slow.
- We should always be asking ourselves, "What does Mary want?"
- We must be careful not to avoid splits and divisions in the church.
- ***"I will make sure I put more effort into working together with my community and with lay people."***
- Europe and Africa working together is a sign of hope.

We were asked what we take away from the event:

- We should have lay people at more of our meetings.
- It is good to see parishes positively.
- We need the courage to welcome something new.
- We need courage to make hard decisions.
- We should see the glass is half full, not half empty.
- ***There are so many overlaps with Pope Francis and Fr. Colin.***

The meeting concluded with a Eucharist and a missionary blessing with the gift of an icon of Mary Star of Evangelization.

Kevin Duffy, sm



DEAR MARIST FRIENDS

On 15 November we celebrate the anniversary of Fr Colin's death. In her piece below about the recent session for Marist lay collaborators in La Neylière, Loretta Kelly from Dublin refers to the particular peace that many find in this unique place where the Founder is buried. It is not easy to reach in its location in the Monts du Lyonnais – but that element of remoteness, real but not extreme, is part of the charm of this special place where Fr Jean-Claude Colin wrote the Constitutions and spent his final days. Perhaps he has been interceding for some of the very successful sessions held there, including the recent Council of the Society?

Kevin Duffy, sm

PRAYER INTENTION

that La Neylière
will be better known

OBITUARY

René Mélinon (FR)
29.10.2024

“MARIST IMAGINATION DAYS” LA NEYLIÈRE, 15-16 OCTOBER 2024



On October 15th and 16th, 2024, I attended the Marist Lay Collaborators session at La Neylière in France. **Known worldwide as the home of the Marist founding fathers, La Neylière was purchased by Fr. Colin in 1850 and is where he now rests.** The tranquil and spiritual atmosphere made it an ideal venue for this training session.

From the moment I arrived, **I felt a profound sense of peace.** I was invited to pray in the oratory, which was a meaningful experience, especially as I offered my prayers in French. I was warmly welcomed and enjoyed wonderful meals and great company throughout my stay. The training

gathered twelve lay collaborators from Marist organizations across Europe. The team consisted of four priests and two lay leaders, creating a warm, friendly, and incredibly dynamic group.

Over the two-day period, we participated in lectures covering Marist Origins, Marist Spirituality, Marist Religious Organization, and the process of change within Europe. These sessions were delivered in an engaging and informative manner, encouraging deep connection, exploration, and discussion through small group activities. Overall, this training was both valuable and insightful. In my role as a Pastoral Minister, I feel inspired and confident in sharing my enriched understanding of Marist spirituality with my parishioners. This experience has motivated me to delve deeper into Marist spirituality, to live it more fully, and to inspire others to do the same.

Loretta Kelly, Pastoral worker in St Brendan's Parish, Coolock, Ireland



INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE EXPANDED EUROPEAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

Last year, the Toulon Forum focused on preserving the Marist charism and characteristic spirit within our schools for future generations. Delegates at the Forum expressed a **strong desire for their schools to remain Marist in their identity** and preserve their direct link with the Society of Mary. Currently, the religious authority over Marist schools is provided by the European Provincial and his council. As we move forward and Marist religious become fewer in number, the plan is that a **European Education Council**, which will include a Delegate of the Superior General, will assure the religious authority for Marist schools in Europe. As a first step in this process of transition, the first meeting of an **expanded European Education Commission** was held in Paris on September 30th.

The Commission welcomed new members, Fr John Harhager from the General Administration in Rome, Brigitte Chaignon, the Moderator of “*Maristes en Éducation*”, and Rupert Forst from the Marist Schools Foundation in Germany. While the Commission currently reports to the European Provincial, it is planned to evolve into a European Education Council directly accountable to the Superior General with the power to provide the religious authority once the European Province is reconfigured.



It is crucial that we as a Province put in place this new framework for education without delay to guarantee continuity for the Marist legacy into the future.

**Frank Dowling
Provincial Delegate for Education**