

LIFE AWAY FROM HOME



Filipinos at a Buddhist temple

The Marist presence in Japan began with a visionary promise made by Fr. Lionel Marsden in the Changi Concentration Camp—a commitment to return to his former captors not with enmity, but with the Good News of reconciliation. For me, this grew into a journey of intercultural communion and quiet service, sharing in God's compassionate presence.

Starting from the initial two years of language study and orientation, I belonged to a community of diverse nationalities, all Marists but not all sharing the same missionary theology. I learned through many a "blessed mistake" what it means to be **"one in heart and mind"** and began to realize how this ideal was so close to the Japanese concept of **"Wa" (harmony) - the essential spirit of peace that permeates all our relationships with God, people and creation and which helped us to grow, as confreres and as missionaries.** Our mission was less about numbers, but rather about sharing, listening and learning, serving in parishes and walking with growing migrant communities, we sought to be a simple, welcoming presence. I witnessed the beautiful openness of the Japanese people: initially hesitant to even shake hands during the Sign of Peace, they soon warmly adapted to the "Latino hug" of our migrant brothers and sisters.

Friendships with Buddhist priests and their families further deepened my faith. Often, I sat in the silence of temple gardens to prepare Sunday sermons, realizing how **we all shared a common "thirst for God" that transcends religions and cultures.** After nearly half a century there, 1968 to 2013, I remain deeply thankful for the **"gracious choice"** of Mary that allowed me to serve as an instrument of divine mercy in that beautiful land.

Paddy O'Hare, sm



Preparing for a (farewell) Tea Ceremony in 2013!

DEAR MARIST FRIENDS,

At the last provincial council meeting, we received a new draft prayer for vocations from the provincial vocations committee. When I read it, I said to myself, "This is what we need." What I liked about it was its focus on praying for Marist vocations among young adult males, the recruitment group for our congregation.

The members of the provincial council also welcomed this new prayer. We tweaked it slightly and are happy to recommend it for personal and community use. Why the world and the church needs Marist vocations? This is evident in the contributions of Paddy O'Hare and Frank Dowling. Damien Diouf provides an example of the growing number of vocations initiatives in the province. Attached you will find the Marist Prayer for Vocations:

<https://maristeurope.eu/marist-vocation-prayer>

Kevin Duffy, sm

PRAYER INTENTION

that the Holy Spirit will guide the various initiatives for vocations in the province

PROMOTING VOCATIONS

Last April, Fr. Kevin Duffy, our Provincial, asked me to get involved in the area of vocations in England. In August, I joined a youth festival in Ampleforth, in northern England, and met the coordinator of the National Vocations Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in England and Wales.

This enabled me to participate, in November 2025, in a national meeting of **vocation promoters** that he organised, with an interesting presentation given by a Spanish Claretian. At this meeting, I joined the northern network, which regularly reflects on the vocation ministry of religious members accompanying young people in university chaplaincies.

I later joined our Marist team in London and we are preparing **an exciting vocation weekend for young men** to be held in early September 2026 at Notre Dame de France.



Damien Diouf, sm

THE FUTURE OF MARIST EDUCATION IN EUROPE

***"We live in a complex, fragmented, digitised educational environment,"
(Pope Leo XIV in Drawing New Maps of Hope, October 2025, 1.2, 4.3).***

In such a world, he reminds us, Catholic education has a vital mission to rebuild trust in a world marked by conflict and fear. At the Toulon Education Forum (October 2023), Marist educators faced honestly the diminishment of Marist religious and affirmed their enduring commitment to Marist education mission. The schools unambiguously desire to remain under Marist patronage. The educators challenged the Society to strengthen its collaboration with them so that together this mission can be preserved for future generations.



The Statements of the General Chapter 2025 strongly echo the vision of Pope Leo and the Toulon forum. The Chapter declared that the Society's mission today in a fractured and digitalised world is to be a source of unity, mercy, and healing. In his address to the annual gathering of Marist European Heads of Establishment in Rome in January, Fr Declan Marmion drew parallels with Pope Leo's vision and underlined the immense opportunities which lie before us.

Catholic Marist education has a distinctive contribution to make to the Church's mission of evangelisation. With faith, creativity and partnership, the future of Marist education is indeed bright.

***Frank Dowling
Education Deputy Province of Europe***

EVENTS AND FUTURE DATES IN THE PROVINCE

Provincial Council 10-11 March in Paris

◆
"Maristes en Education" 19-21 March in La Neyliere and the visitation of the La Neyliere – Lyon community

◆
Education Commission 14 April followed by the
Communications Commission 15-16 April in Paris

◆
Council of the Province 28-29 April followed by the
Provincial Council 29-30 April in La Neylière.

