

## PROVINCIAL RETREAT 2026: JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN AS SPIRITUAL MASTER

On 13 October 1836, Father Colin wrote a letter addressed to the members of the first group setting out for the missions in Oceania. This was not a letter providing organisational or logistical guidance, but a text of profoundly spiritual and educational content. It is a text that teaches us a great deal about Father Colin's spiritual thinking and which, at the same time, reveals his concern and sensitivity towards his fellow priests. Before being the Superior General speaking to his superiors, *Colin is the spiritual director who shows himself to be attentive and concerned for the well-being (spiritual, psychological and material) of the people he is sending on mission 'to the ends of the earth'.*

This letter served as a starting point for exploring the theme 'Jean-Claude Colin as Spiritual Master'. This theme was developed during the provincial retreat held at La Neylière from 19 to 25 July. It is a text that offers the opportunity to rediscover themes dear to Father Colin and which, at the same time, embody the spirit of the Society of Mary.

In addition to a detailed presentation of the letter's actual content, the following themes were addressed: surrender to God, prayer (with particular attention paid to 'tasting God'), the four cornerstones of the Society of Mary, and obedience (based on the figure of 'Mary as the first superior'). The letter, however, offered scope for further exploration: the spirituality of the hidden life, the theme of memory ('Let them always bear in mind that through a choice of grace...'). Colin's three 'no's' (to pride, greed and power) and the very tone of the letter are further elements which ultimately highlight the extent to which Colinian spirituality can be regarded as a non-violent spirituality.

The letter – like other texts of his that have come down to us – thus reveals Colin to us as a master of profound spiritual insight. ([Find attached the letter](#))

*Faustino Ferrari, SM*



## DEAR MARIST FRIENDS,

As the weather cools and things relaunch after an unusual summer, a small team at Notre Dame de France is hosting a group of young men for a Come and See weekend in London centring on vocational discernment and vocation. Some weeks ago, there was such a weekend in Sahagún, and in a couple of months there will be another in Lyon. Let us pray that these and other initiatives will bear fruit in a new wave of young men who will "say yes" to a vocation in the Society of Mary.

*Kevin Duffy, sm*

## PRAYER INTENTION

vocations to the  
Society of Mary

## OBITUARY

John Harrington  
1.08

# A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP IN EUROPEAN MARIST EDUCATION

Eight years can seem like a long time, yet they have passed in a flash. When I first took on the role of Education Deputy in 2018, I expected it to be for three years. Then Covid disrupted everything, and I stayed on to help our education world navigate a series of significant events. During this period, St. Mary's Blackburn, San Giovanni Rome, and the Youth Project in Brescia all left the Marist network for different, unconnected, and unavoidable reasons. One shared consequence of these closures was that they brought the future of Marist Heritage in Education in Europe into sharp focus. While our religious communities are becoming smaller, our schools continue to thrive, with around 20,000 students in Marist establishments across France, Germany, and Ireland. For me, the Toulon Forum in October 2023 was a defining moment for education in Europe. After a year of preparation, a solid structure for the future was mapped out and put in place. The Superior General at the time, Fr John Larsen, gave the full support of the general administration. As a result, an assistant general now sits on the education commission, alongside a representative from Germany and the moderator of "Maristes en éducation".

It was from Toulon that the first Marists set out on their mission to Oceania and, as John Larsen said at the time, the Forum was another 'Toulon moment' in Marist mission. As I retire from the role, *a stronger network is in place with deeply committed Heads of Establishment across the Marist education community. Marist Heritage, charism, and characteristic spirit are now firmly at the heart of our schools: clearly articulated, lived day by day, and woven into the fabric of school life.* I am deeply grateful to all the wonderful people with whom I have worked. I know that my successor will continue to safeguard the sacred mission of Marist education and help ensure its lasting legacy. Bonne continuation!

*Frank Dowling, European Delegate for Education*



## RETURNING TO OUR ROOTS TO REMEMBER WHY WE SAID YES

There are places we simply visit, and places that become part of us. La Neylière is one of them. This August, the five of us from Casa di Maria in Rome - Hansford, Manuele, David, Joseph, and I - have been preparing for our perpetual vows in the Society of Mary, and returning to our roots in France has meant asking again who we are, and why we once said yes to God. As we visited Saint-Bonnet-le-Troncy and La Barberty, we found that our history lives not only in books but in the people who still keep Fr Colin's memory alive. Sharing coffee with the community after Mass reminded me that memory itself is a form of hospitality. In Coutouvre and Jarnosse, connected to Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, we understood that Nazareth was about everyday life and growing together in community. Fourvière was among the most moving experiences. In the small chapel where the Fourvière Pledge took place, we celebrated the Eucharist and placed our names on the altar beside those of the missionaries who came before us, repeating their Pledge. What began with twelve young men nearly two centuries ago found a place in our own lives. In Le Puy, we reflected on what it means to bear Mary's name - to see the world with her eyes, her simplicity, her trust. Each evening, we returned to La Neylière, imagining Fr Colin's own hopes, and wondering what he would make of today's international Society of Mary. We were welcomed by our confreres: Faustino, Jean-Marie, Raymond and George, whose warmth taught us that the Society's story lives as much in people as in places.

We haven't come simply to look back. *Roots don't exist to keep a tree in the past — they exist so it can keep growing. We came to discover where our story began; now we carry it forward as our own, preparing to give our lives to God in the Society of Mary.*

*Eduardo Limón SM*

[You can read the full reflection: <https://maristeurope.eu/Casa-di-Maria-La-Neyliere-by-Eduardo-EN>]