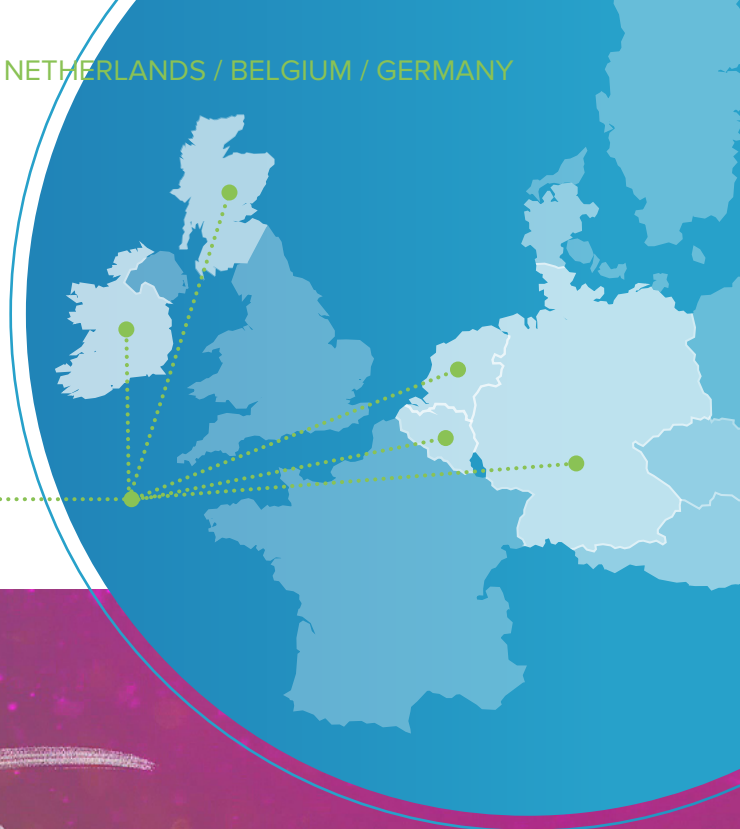


# Being Marist

WEST CENTRAL EUROPE



# Easter 2020

## Dear Marist Friends,

The last few weeks have been an extraordinary time for all of us. It has been a time where we have been forced to re-examine all our priorities as we live lock-downed in our homes. We are living the Easter message in a very real way adjusting to heightened anxiety levels even frightened about ourselves, our loved ones, the fragility of life, watching with a sense of horror the death levels rise in each of our countries and the enormous impact on our own families and communities. All our leaders have at the same time been encouraging us to cultivate a sense of hope that we will get through this traumatic time. It has been a time to rediscover relationships, to become clear about who and what matters in our lives. At the same time there has been a great sense of community of reaching out to others and appreciating all the volunteers from different walks of life who have offered their services. We have been made aware that our individual behaviour with social distancing can have

huge repercussions for those who are vulnerable in our society while social media at the same time can keep us connected.

What has become clear is that our wellbeing as a global family is interconnected. The Climate agenda had begun to make this clear but the corona virus pandemic has fast-tracked our awareness of this reality. I must accept that my wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of those around me.

Dealing with these questions myself I have focussed on Marcellin Champagnat's experience of getting caught in a snowstorm in 1823 with Bro Stanislaus. Both men were young and energetic but hours lost on the slopes of Mount Pilat led eventually to exhaustion. Both men turned to Mary for help and prayed the Memorare. Within a short time they saw a lantern in the distance. A local farmer, Mr Donnet had decided that particular night to check his



stable by taking an outdoor route even though he had access from inside the house. As they warmed themselves at the Donnet fireside Marcellin and Stanislaus were convinced their prayer had been heard and that Mary had saved them. I pray this Easter that each of us turn to Mary and Champagnat to give us the faith to believe that our suffering will end and new life

will spring forth which will make us more connected, more supportive of those who are vulnerable and challenged to develop a society where everybody is safe.

Mary support and protect us all as we journey together at this time of great challenge. Bless all those whose lives have been affected in so many ways and give comfort and healing to those who have lost family and friends because of the virus. May we continue to support each other.

**P.J McGowan**

# Marist projects in Belgium



**In Habay-la-Vieille in our Center «Le Bua», during these last months, we have welcomed many people.**

Among the groups that come back several times during the year, are:

- socially fragile people who are part of «ATD ¼ monde» for a fraternal meal and sharing of experiences, mainly close to the Christmas party.
- young people from the surrounding parishes who are preparing for their Confirmation (photo opposite on the right)
- many groups of 'mindfulness', yoga, Qi Gong, Zen, wellness, etc.
- adults and their children who spend a weekend to get together with family,
- session of psychologists, biblical and theological training
- summer camps for children with disabilities or family disadvantages
- students who take advantage of the calm to prepare for their exams in Universities or Colleges.

- many school retreats organized by secondary schools in the country for young seniors. And we take advantage to offer a time of prayer with the community and a moment of meeting to talk to them about the vocation and mission of the brother and lay Marist. We also share a meal with them from time to time.
- Reception for two and a half months of two twin Palestinian girls and their

mothers, migrants from the Gaza Strip (photo opposite on the left)

- particular groups such as clowns who come to rehearse comic situations to prepare for activities in hospitals in the region or the «Cyclo-Show» group, 12-year-old mother-daughter pairs, with a view to awakening their sexuality.
- at the community table, people passing through: friends, various families, brothers from Belgium or elsewhere...







But in addition to welcoming these groups, we organize various meetings:

- a «lectio divina» evening every month
- a monthly meeting of the Champagnat group in the region.
- Marist formation meetings with very recently the coming of Brother Jean Rozon (F)
- conferences on themes such as burn-out, Christian meditation (photo opposite on the right), the crossing of suffering, the prophets of the Old Testament

or an experience of fasting, a silent walk in nature...

- family meetings to live a time to deepen a biblical text, specific activities for the little ones, the possibility of meeting a priest for the sacrament of reconciliation, a shared meal and a festive Eucharist
- quite recently the preparation for a pilgrimage to the Hermitage during the next Ascension holiday had members of Bua's friends and families.

### In Arlon

- at the start of the school year and during Lent, I will have the joy of hosting around thirty celebrations - each one hour of lessons - for the 450 children in Primary and Special Education. (photos of children opposite left)
- With Christophe Schietse, we had an interview with the Directors of the Primary and Secondary Schools of Isma, our old school, in order to make them aware of the dynamics of the Marist mission. With the question of how to develop this Marist spirit in the school, through a training for teachers and by introducing in September this year the new theme which will have been retained by the provinces of Europe.

### In Malmedy

- Brother Maurice Godenir is very involved in the parish in funeral celebrations. As for Brother Pol, he always remains very faithful to his commitments to people in precariousness.
- Brother Robert Thunus, Provincial, met the Director of the school in Malmedy to see the possibilities existing as regards the Marist mission to be developed
- with Brother Pol and Maurice, monthly meeting of the Champagnat group with on the program a simple but convivial meal then a time of prayer followed by the sharing of a theme linked to the Marist spirituality of Champagnat.

### In Brussels

- a monthly meeting of the Champagnat group 'led by brother Robert Thunus

### In Mouscron

- animations at school (photo opposite on the right) and each year one or two Marist days in a spiritual center with young people from our old Marist school in Mouscron: nearly 60 young elders were present, well supervised by their teachers and David Myle, a permanent deacon well imbued with the Marist spirituality of Champagnat.

### In Genval

- accompaniment of elderly brothers in rest homes.
- and several times during the year, times of formation and deepening for the various Marist groups in Belgium and moments of renewal open to all, organized by Brother Robert di Troia.

A presence for young and old alike very enriching throughout the year.

brother Albert ANDRE

[www.lebua.be](http://www.lebua.be)



## Leadership that takes care of life

In Rome, from March 2 to 7, like last year, I was able to participate with all the Provincials and District Superiors (26 Brothers) - with the exception of two who were unable to come because of illness and travel restrictions for Italy linked to the coronavirus - to a 6-day meeting with the members of the General Council and the heads of the Secretariats of the Institute.

The theme «Leadership that takes care of life» was the common thread throughout the week and allowed us to take stock of the Institute's current priorities. So we were invited to take care of:

- Brothers, especially the youngest;
- Of all the Marists of Champagnat and their formation;
- Of the planet which is our common home;
- Children and young people (protection of minors);
- Mission;
- Our material and economic resources;
- Of ourselves, as responsible.

We also considered the international dimension of our Institute, as a global family, with the possible synergies:

- The creation of a network of Marist schools; those who belong to us and those with whom we are in close contact. One can easily imagine the impact that our 600 Marist schools can have, with 70,000 educators and more than 500,000 students.
- The 6 international Lavalla200 communities> supported by the Marist regions. In Europe, there are two of them: Syracuse (Italy) and Moinesti (Romania).
- 28 mixed communities of brothers and lay people (men and women).
- Collaboration with the Brothers of the Christian Schools: in addition to the «Fratelli» project created in Lebanon a few years ago, a second joint project is now opening in Maicao in Colombia, near the border of Venezuela for the support of refugees.

The last part of the meeting was devoted to the life of the regions, and in our case



to the region of Marist Europe. We are moving forward gradually to pool our strengths.

Generally speaking, I can say that the meeting took place in a great spirit of brotherhood. We experienced the joy of being brothers of each other and of appreciating ourselves with our differences of context, but above all with our common Marist identity. All this was also experienced in a climate of interiority, with moments of very rich prayer, among

other things inspired by our new Rule of Life. I returned to my Province at once refreshed and inspired, encouraged and even a little rested.

May we, each and everyone where she is in our Province, take care of the lives of those around us, in our communities, our families and our places of mission. Marie, our Good Mother and Marcellin Champagnat will help us.

Br Provincial Robert Thunus



# Around the Fireplace

December 19, 2019

**Every year participants in the activities of the Leerhuis Westerhelling meet in the hall of the Fraterhuis in the week before Christmas. Usually on the longest night of the year, from early evening to midnight.**

This year there were 40 people who, in an atmosphere of silence and contemplation, were happy and grateful to be able to make "full" last year and at the same time look forward to the coming festival of Light and Power to start a new year.

The beginning of the evening was sung by a choir that sang a six-part song «Evening Rise».

The song and lyrics took everyone to become quiet, scattered in the hall and

around the fireplace, and warm themselves by the glow of the fire.

In silence a text of Isaiah was read and after that that it was the silence that spoke. A quiet walk in the dark woods around the Westerhelling made the participants even more aware.

Upon returning home, songs were sung in the Taizé hall, we listened to the harp and lit the room slightly (see photo). Everyone had a candle holder made from trees from our own garden. The light and fire were heartwarming.

The evening ended with a glass of mulled wine.

It could be Christmas.

**Rond het Haardvuur**



## We have a new team!

**The Leerhuis Westerhelling is in full swing. New projects are under development, new ideas are being developed to keep answering questions from the youth of our time who are approaching us.**

One of the new ideas is to include a group of young people in the cycle of life for a year; the seasons, the rhythm of Christmas - Easter - Pentecost, going the way.

A second new project is Silent Days for people over 35 years old. It has its own effect that only young people are guests in the Silence House, and now we also have an answer for people who have been coming to the Silence House for years, and who have turned 35 years old.

Both projects will start in 2020, after experience has been gained in 2019 and plans have been worked out. These movements are very beautiful. Movement means living, having energy, not standing still.

The group of supervisors of these projects has also changed, Maaïke Marissink and Corina Frans are now strengthening our team, and we are very happy with that.



*From left to right: Conny, Annelieke, Corina, Thomas, Clara, Elisabeth (bottom) and Maaïke (top). Wij hebben een nieuw team!*





Group photo of the CPV participants in Rome, Nov. 2019.

# Report of the CPV meeting in Rome

## November 25th. - 29.11. 2019



**32 Marist brothers and lay people from all over the world were invited by Superior Bro. Ernesto followed and came to Rome to the General of the Order of the Marists.**

Under the motto «journeying together as global family», the meaningfulness of sending the «Marist» youth to the world was discussed in group work and in a large plenum, and a future-oriented, partnership-based implementation of the «volunteering» was sought. The mutual interest in the origin and culture of the participants was very enriching, as was the respect and «listening» to each other.

In some provinces there is already an active placement of interested parties in social projects for a limited time, often within their own province, but also internationally. Other provinces, however, have not yet had any experience. This gave all participants an insight into the general organizational and technical

structures of the order, into the administration within the General Assembly and the current major projects already underway, such as Lavalla 200, the Fratelli project and the Cmi-volunteering (collaboration of mission international).

In the course of the week, the following «best practices» were worked out and priorities were determined by the participants at the end:

- 1. Training:** Development of a curriculum with key content related to the experience with the Marist voluntary service.
- 2. Accompaniment:** Support of the volunteer in all phases (positive and negative) by a named mentor on site to experience the personal development and strengthening of the Marist mission.
- 3. Communication and promotion:** raising global awareness of the Marist volunteer program.
- 4. Digital linking system:** Provision of a





*Renate Hacker, Mrs. Michael Schmalz, Daniele Goeieman, Kathrin v. Erffa preparing morning prayer or evening mass.*

system (NEXUS) that is secure, compliant and process-oriented and supports the mobilization of volunteers for the «receiving communities». In addition to this work, other provinces were invited every day to prepare the morning prayer or an evening mass. The province of Central Europe West and Africa had jointly addressed children's rights, partly because they were an important part of our meeting and partly because children's rights were being celebrated just 30 years ago.

Wednesday afternoon was at leisure. We drove into the city in groups and visited u. a. the Colosseum and the Basilica of St. Clemente. In the evening, all participants were invited to a wonderful Italian dinner in a restaurant.

The meeting in Rome was a great way to build a network with already known CPV's and deepen relationships and gain «new ones». The future perspective is hope.



*Kathrin v. Erffa, Nyasha Bowora, Daniela Goeieman and Renate Hacker in front of the colosseum*



# Marist your life - just live

That is the motto for our work in the Marist schools and their environment in the coming years. In order to implement this motto, we first had to get to know the different living and learning situations of our schools in Germany. What do the students, colleagues, coordinators need from us? What position do the coordinators have in the individual schools? What potential is there for teachers and students? Does the school management support us Marists or does it only tolerate our work?

How do we achieve better networking between German schools and how do we deepen our values among students and employees?

These questions were discussed, answered or at least considered with the coordinators.

We then launched the first project under the umbrella of «Marist your live - just live» in November and presented it to the coordinators at a meeting in



Recklinghausen. The aim of this project is to bring our students to the Marist virtues of simplicity, modesty and humility in a contemporary way and to encourage them to adopt a Marist lifestyle. It is intended for students from the 8th grade and can be done in a time frame of 5-7 hours. The project forms the basis for further work. This means that the students look for topics that run through the whole school year. Examples of this would be a collection of used clothing or measures to avoid waste.

We also want to deepen our cooperation with the Marist fathers again. A common day of reflection for the German Marist family unfortunately had to be canceled due to the Corona Virus. This day is expected to take place in the fall of this year. Furthermore, a trip to Hermitage with the young people who are particularly committed to their classmates and a free time for employees in one of our houses in Liechtenstein or in the Bavarian Forest

are planned. A youth meeting in Cham is also in preparation.

A film project about St. Marcellin is planned for the coming school year. We would like to bring all schools in our province on board.

It is very important to us to go together with all members of the Marist family. We want to develop an inviting and inquiring structure in which our students, employees, former students, brothers, fathers, former employees and everyone who has contact with us are addressed to participate.

Of course, this will be done in close consultation and cooperation with the Director of Marist Education Aisling Demaison and the Provincial Council. If our focus of work is also in Germany, our common Marist identity within the province and contacts with all Marists in the province of West-Central Europe will continue to be close to our hearts.

**Hans Staudner and**

**Johanna Aschenbrenner - Cham Germany**







**Sarah Kelly**

## Reflections from around the Province about this difficult time we are facing

I open with a question, what is it to be «Marist»? When I think back to September of every year, since I began to teach in Moyle Park this is one question I confront the first years with. They have come to a school where, from the day they walk in, in first year to the day they leave in 6th year they will hear the word «Marist». Many return and many will not, but they will always carry this one word with them, «Marist».



When they learn about Marcellin Champagnat and all his triumphs and battles many start to relate to the person of Marcellin. Many I have met have said «Marcellin was a person who rose to every challenge and did not give up». From building L'Hermitage with his own hands, to setting up better education in France, to meeting children with little or no faith, he did not give up. When Marcellin first set up the Marist Brothers I don't think he realised how many lives he would touch to this day, or how many people in the

21st century would relate to him or relate to being a «Marist».

But again I ask what is it to be «Marist»?

To me after visiting L'Hermitage and being in the place where it all began the word «Marist» came to light. Being Marist is not about being religious or holy. To me it is using our own

qualities, to be the best person you can be and being that person for other people especially in the hardest of times. Right now all across the world we are faced with a challenge we have never faced before, a global crisis felt by all. Restrictions have been put in place but, we have been told by many that this is for the greater good. Many of us are far away from loved ones, cannot go about our normal daily routine, or worse have lost loved ones due to this global disaster.

In this time of need I reflect on what is «Marist», during a challenging time? We must rise to this challenge and remember the qualities we all

have; hope, faith, trust and strength. All of these qualities Marcellin had when he faced many of his challenges. Hope that we will prevail, trust in the many that help us, faith that people will listen and learn and most of all strength to carry those who need to be carried, we must as Marist's not give up. This crisis is our challenge but just like Marcellin we will rise up, we will be stronger, we will be united.

**Moyle Park  
College Dublin**

### A small prayer

*«O Lord, we call upon you in our time of sorrows, that you give us the strength and will to bear our heavy burdens, until we can again feel the warmth and love of your divine compassion. Be Mindful of us and have mercy on us while we struggle to comprehend life's hardships. Keep us in your watchful eye, till we can walk again with light hearts and renewed spirits»  
Amen.*



**Victoria MacRae**

## What a strange time we are living in

**A time when we have been asked to STOP, a time when we have been asked to NOT do, and a time when we have been asked to KEEP AWAY.**

In a world which demands normally more than we can give, now we are living in a way that simply asks us to stay home and be with our loved ones; by doing so we have the power to save lives. I wonder what Marcellin would have thought of this? I wonder what advice he would have given? Once again I think of the similarities of the La Valle countryside to the countryside to that of my own home in Dumfries in the South West of Scotland. Both rural communities and both communities which endure because of the Marist Value of Family Spirit. It is at a time of crisis that agape really comes to present itself in the actions of each and every one of us, and I feel a great sense of duty to play my part and act as a member of the community whether that be school, local or global.

As a Marist we are encouraged to meet people on their journey, and of late what a journey the world has been on in terms of battling the Coronavirus. Some have retreated for protection, others in solidarity, some have pushed their fears aside and worked on the frontline through health care provision and others have supported the continued education of children who for now cannot come together in their schools, hobbies, and communities. I feel very close to my fellow Marist schools across the Province and indeed the world because where there is Marists sadly there is also this virus. We are all equals in this crisis we are all united!

Yes united I think is the best term I can think of; united against an invisible illness which has already taken the lives of so many. United by faith that God will see us through, that God will sustain us when we are afraid and united through this shared experience of isolation.

Isolation is a term normally tinged with a



negative tone and yet just now I would say I have been heartened by its power of unification and down take out when have had a break from criticism, a break from negativity, a break from politics, a break from segregation and separation. Instead I have seen community, love, solidarity, innovation, and faith. Perhaps being asked to STOP! Has not only saved lives but renewed our spirits, our communities and our compassion. Perhaps being asked to STOP! Has reminded us of the humanity of our global community and instead of seeing difference we will see similarity. As Marcellin had a heart that knew no bounds perhaps during this crisis we can be inspired to love as Marcellin loved - with an open heart and despite the need for the world to stay separate though the need for social distancing we are more united than before.

**St Josephs  
College Dumfries Scotland**



**Ulrike Weber**

## Being Marist in times of Corona

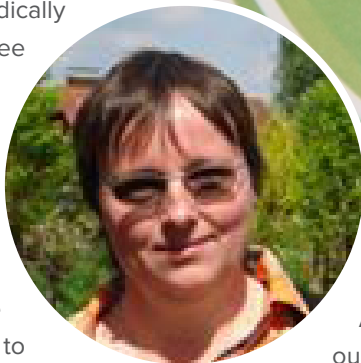
When I was still a teenager, I loved to spend Saturday evenings with my family in front of the TV. First we all watched a family quiz show and after that we kids were allowed to watch a movie. I still love those movies: The world is struck with a severe crisis and all of a sudden James Bond, Superman or the nice guy from next door turn up and save the day by doing heroic deeds or by presenting a secret potion that heals any illness at a blink and makes the world a happy place again.

Never did I expect that some day I would truly find myself in this kind of scenario. My world is changing radically and nobody can guarantee that all will be good again.

German government has advised all people to reduce their social contacts to an absolute minimum, schools and shops are closed, people stay at home. I live next to a hospital and every day I hear the sirens of the in-coming ambulances. And I must say it clearly: I am scared of what might come. My mum has her 90th birthday in August. Every visit of mine puts her in danger. My brother is living with her and he has to go to work. Any day he might bring the virus home to her. I live next door to one of my students. He lives in one house with his grandparents whom he holds really dear and near. I do not know if he and his younger sister see all those pictures from Italy or Spain. Fear and uncertainty define our lives at the moment.

How can I at the moment speak about being Marist? Or how can I be Marist at the moment?

Somebody once said: «Marists are always



of service and never off service.» How can I act like this in all my fears and my worries?

At the moment we «teach» our students by sending them tasks to do via Internet. I have never written so many e-mails to my students. I talk to them about private things. In Religion I asked the students to write some kind of diary, writing down the good things that have happened to them. Class 8 students had the task to tell me about their daily routine. I give the students something to do and so they get some structure in their days. One class 5 student cannot be looked after by his mum, who is working in social cares. So he has to come to school every day from 8 to half past three to be looked after. I did this together with a colleague last Wednesday and I will again next Wednesday. I phone my fellow teachers. We like to hear the other's voice and just to chat.

One of my fellow teachers is very much into Social Media and he inspired me to start an Instagram Account for the school chaplaincy. Every school day at 8 o'clock, which is the regular start of our day, I record a short video. This might be a short thought, a morning impulse, a prayer. And this I upload for people to watch on Instagram. I started last week and by now I have 120 followers. Pupils, former pupils, parents, friends of mine. Many of them watch the video. I speak about hope. I speak about the trust that all will be good again.

So many things are different at the moment. But I am here. I am still present. I try not to show the fear that is inside me. I try to spread hope. Do I really achieve this? I do not know. There are so many things I do not know at the moment. Maybe the only thing I can do at the moment is to do the best I can in the place where I am. And trust. In Marcellin. In Mary. In God.

**Recklinghausen  
Germany**

## Marist Leadership

Being a Marist leader during these strange times is not something any of us have experienced ever before. However, I am finding that in these strange and unusual times the skills I have learned from the leadership programme have really helped me to adapt and make the most of my time. Whether it be at home with my family or online with my friends, keeping a cool head and helping to calm situations is something that I have learned during my time as a Marist leader.

Now more than ever our Marist values are relevant. This global crisis is calling for people around the world to engage with each other, to look after one another, to help our neighbours, the vulnerable. Everything we are being asked to do, by our government, by our teachers and parents encompasses our Marist values on some level, even if we do not initially recognise it. Marist values such as Presence and Family

Spirit are seen around every corner of society now. Even though we must remain physically apart we are being asked to show

that ultimately, we are together. We are all experiencing this as one. One global world community, a family. We are being asked to let the vulnerable know that we are there for them. They have not been forgotten; we are there to help when they need it. We want to let them know that we are present.

It is Simplicity and Love of Work that are most admirable at this time. Keeping life simple is key today. Staying in our houses is saving lives, listening to advice, washing hands, covering coughs, all very simple things that we are all capable of. The reach of these simple gestures goes far beyond



what we might imagine. Our paramedics, carers, doctors, nurses, fire men and women, Garda, shopkeepers, chemists, delivery drivers, all our frontline staff display a love of work each day that they get up and put on their uniform.

However, we must also remember all the students and teachers, the office staff, everyone who is working from their homes. Love of Work, we must be strong and determined to stay on top of work that we are to complete and not give in to other things that may distract us.

**Rhys Ennis Marian College Dublin Ireland**

## Marist Leaders Experience

**When I was in second year, I didn't really know who the Marist Leaders group was and what they done within St John's, but then I remember being asked if I wanted to join the group by a few of the older pupils and by Mrs Robbins.**

Joining the group made a massive impact on me, and I brought a few qualities to the group like leadership, organisation and commitment. This group means a lot to me, as we treat each other like one big happy family and once you become part of the Marist Leaders group, you will always be a Marist. As a group, we have completed many activities to help others in our community or even across the globe. These things include – Our schools Christmas fayre, bake sales, coffee mornings, sponsored walks,

visiting primary schools, the list goes on and on. Each term we have been given a Marist value to focus on, we are currently focusing on Simplicity. Some of the group's ideas are amazing, they've suggested; Car washes, more bake sales, collecting clothes, football boots for India and small care packages for those who can't afford everyday essentials. Being part of the Marist Leaders is something everyone would enjoy, as it's not all about God, its not about going to church every day its about making new friends, develop our qualities, helping those around us and along the way we learn about St Marcellin, which we can do in many fun and exciting ways. As the chairperson of my group, I hold great responsibility's to make sure everyone is attending meetings, that we're all on

task and everyone is feeling challenged towards the activities and tasks that are being given by either myself or a member of staff. We were presently looking for our new Marist Leaders, we were delighted as quite a number came to a meeting and when our seniors went around RE classes, they were all intrigued by what the group does and who we are. St Johns has been part of the Marist family for years, and we love meeting up with other Marist schools, like when we get to visit L'Hermitage in France. Everyone in the group all follows the five Marist values, whether that be in school or when outside school, we all have different characteristics which makes our group unique.

**Megan Reilly**

**St Johns RC HS Dundee Scotland**





# Being a Marist Leader during these uncertain times

Now, more than ever, I am thinking about the five Marist Values - Simplicity / Presence / Love of Work / In the Way of Mary / Family Spirit.

## PRESENCE

**Presence** - Now, more than ever, I am present for my mam, dad, and little sister. We find our bond getting stronger as the days go on and are taking each day as it comes.

## LOVE OF WORK

**Love of Work** - All four of us have work to keep us going throughout the day. Both my mam and dad are working from home and my sister and I are constantly being sent work from our school teachers to keep us busy.

## FAMILY SPIRIT

**Family Spirit** - Now that my family is stuck at home for a few weeks, there is a real sense of Family Spirit in the house. As I mentioned previously, our bond is getting stronger and stronger as the days go on. We are finding things to keep ourselves entertained, for example, board games, card games and arts & crafts.

## SIMPLICITY

**Simplicity** - I am very grateful for everything I have right now to keep me going - a warm house, a sufficient food supply and a family who love and care for me.

I am so grateful to have everything I need during this difficult, uncertain time.



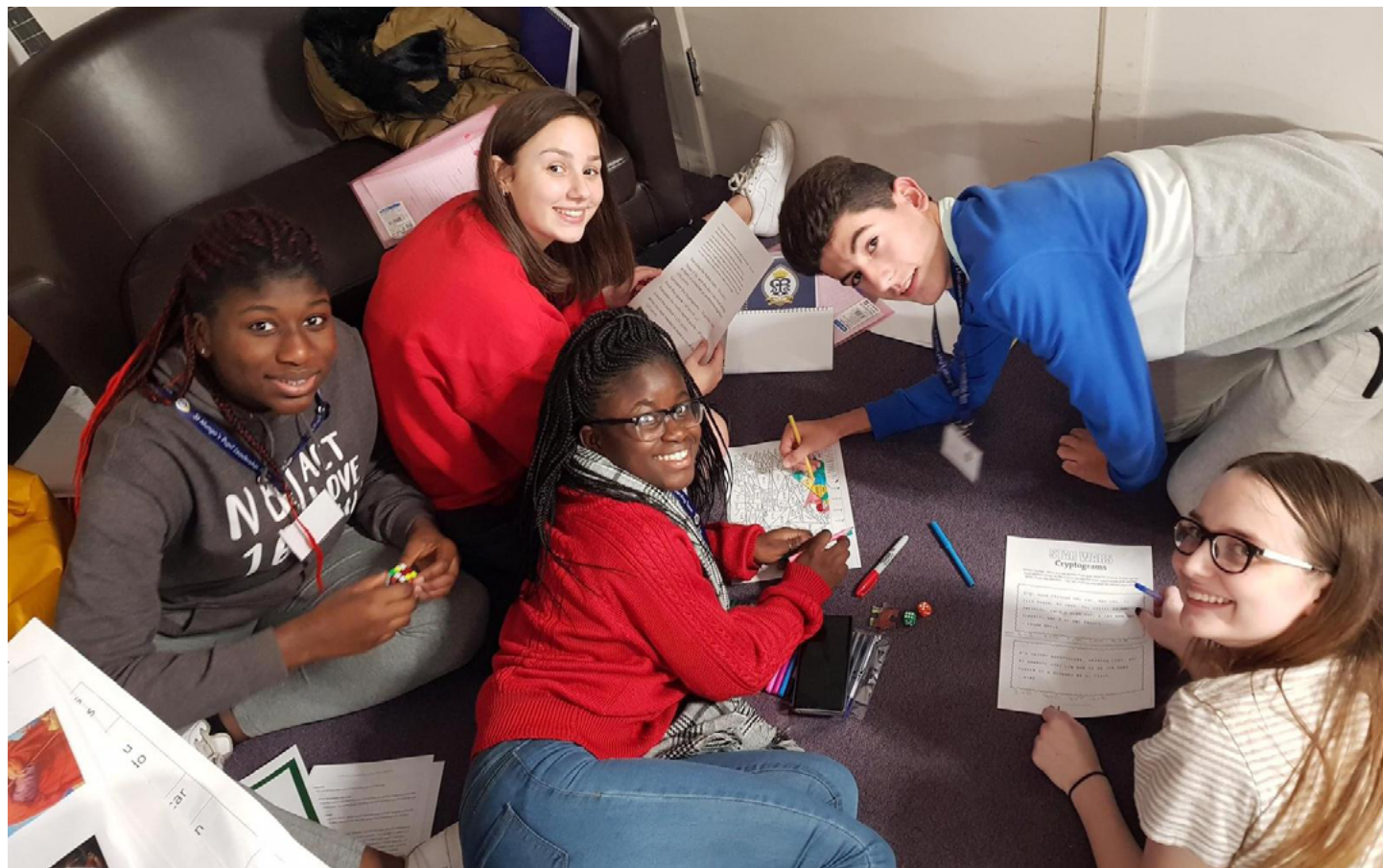
## IN THE WAY OF MARY

**In the Way of Mary** - Even though I can't see both my nannies in person because of the Coronavirus, I am still looking after them by ringing them everyday to check up on them to make sure they are ok and keeping safe and well. They love having their grandkids ring them and we end up talking for about a half an hour everyday. I can't wait to give them a big hug when all of this is over.

By: Eamon O'Callaghan -  
Moyle Park College, Ireland

# What the Marist Leaders of St Mungo's Academy been up to

## and being a Marist leader during these tough times



**We, the Marist leaders of St Mungo's Academy in Scotland have been working away on many different ideas and projects over the last few months.**

We took the value of Presence and applied it to working on mental health in our school and making our presence known in our school community. Our group chose this as, being the first Marist group in our school, we had to make our presence known and pave the way for further Marist Leaders in the years ahead. The aim of our projects were to raise awareness about positive mental health and promote looking after your mental health. Our group has been meeting regularly each week in the

school term to brainstorm and discuss our ideas. One of our Marist Leaders has created a prayer for our group that we say at every meeting.

Another ways to mark our presence has been to create our own Marist Cross in school like the Marist Cross we saw in France. We would collate all the countries that the people in our school community are from and put their country on the cross to show the diversity and family spirit of our school community. We have completed our research into the countries and are now working on creating the cross with the help of our technology department to be displayed in our school.

As part of Catholic Education Week in

Scotland, we attended various masses across our community including a mass celebrated in Polish St Anne's Parish. We even learnt how to say «thank you» and «goodbye» in Polish from our Polish Marist Leaders!

Another project we've been working on is creating our own school mental health badge to show that we all in the school community support the mental health of the people at our school. In order to create the badges, we raised funds by bag packing at our local Morrisons on a rainy day leading up to Christmas. We also got help from the talented artists in our school to help design the badge so it correctly represents our school community and looks nice!





Additionally, we have been closely working with other groups in our school such as the Mungo mental health group and the St Andrews House team to collaboratively work on our whole school mental health strategy. As a bigger group we have been able to work on themes surrounding mental health such as self-esteem and creating leaflets, playlists and posters to raise awareness in our school community.

In addition to this, we have also been busy writing a Religious Education unit of work for the first-year pupils on the Marist Leaders, Marcellin Champagnat and our roots as a Marist School. Overall, we have had a busy few months and hopefully will be back to business as normal once it is safe and well for everyone to return to school.

A couple months ago, we were all going about our days as usual completely not expecting a global pandemic to come knocking on our doors; But here we are today.

Due to the recent and unexpected outbreak of the Coronavirus we are all forced to step aside from our normal lives and adapt a so called «new normal» for nobody knows how long. This is

tough and really difficult for all of us worldwide. Therefore, it is key that we all stick together and help each other as much as possible as that's what being a Marist Leader is all about.

It is our responsibility that we take into account the Marist Values in our everyday lives however, specifically during these strange times.

«In the way of Mary» and «Presence», are values that particularly stand out to us during this time of crisis. There are thousands of individuals in the world who are infected with this vicious virus and hospitals cannot keep up with everything that's occurring. In addition, some nursing homes are closing meaning that the elderly cannot see their loved ones. The same goes for us, young people; not having the opportunity to attend school or meet up with friends can lead to many of us feeling a little bit lonely and this could possibly result in a downward spiral of negative emotions. This is where the values of «In the way of Mary» and «Presence» play the lead role as they stand for being there for each other and supporting the ones who need our help the most. We can do this by spreading awareness of the importance of staying

indoors via social media or calling a close friend or elderly relative asking them if they're okay and having a conversation in order to brighten up their mood. Small acts like these create a massive impact on our lives and build a stronger community amongst us. We believe that by following the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus and by being selfless, thinking about the greater need of the world, will help to keep everyone safe.

Another, value that we cannot fail to mention is Family Spirit. As we've said in the previous points it is so incredibly important that we all stick together and spread positivity to everyone whilst all of this Coronavirus business is going on, and Family Spirit represents just that. For example, before the schools were closed, we donated lots of canned goods and other groceries to one of our local food banks as their stocks were low. We believe that this act of kindness perfectly displays the value of Family Spirit and highlights the clear importance of just simply being there for one another during such odd times.

**Written by Liliana Piotrowska  
and Aakash Singh –  
St Mungos Academy Glasgow Scotland**

# Putting Presence Into Action



*Lovely coffee morning organised by our Parents Council*



*First years and Marist Leaders heading off for adventure!*

**As Marist Leaders our year is marked by our projects and events which are identified by our Values.**

We begin the year with the Value of Presence. Leaders were very involved in the First Year Induction Day, which was held at the end of August. Our new first years were brought on guided tours of the campus, we had games, fun activities and of course the distribution of the lockers. The mothers organised a coffee morning for the parents of the new students to get to know each other too. The following day the Leaders brought the first years to a local adventure centre for a day of activities and sports. It was a fantastic opportunity for the students to get to know each other and the leaders.





*Marist Leader Kirill Egan chatting to First Years at their Induction*



*New students love to check out the old photos of past pupils*



*The First Years are assigned lockers by Mr Kelly, assisted by the Marist Leaders*



*Mr Dermody and Mr Kelly explain the Marist Values to new students*





L-R Ms. Orla McGrath, Michael White, Fr Liam Kelly, Edward Clarke (Senior Marist Leader), Paul Garvey, Fionn McDonnell

In September Marist Leaders visited L'Hermitage in France. It was a fantastic experience for all involved. After Mid-Term our Value of Family Spirit came into action. In the month of November, we remembered our dearly departed family and friends. With this in mind the Marist Leaders attended a remembrance service at the AIT campus. The leaders each brought forward a candle to the altar



Marist Leaders and Student Council members pictured with Mr Frankie Keena, Mayor of Athlone, Ms Catherine Byrne TD and Ms Orla McGrath

to represent deceased staff and students from our school. The service was celebrated by our Bishop and local priests.

In December, continuing our Value of Family Spirit, we launched our Christmas Food Appeal. We encouraged each student and staff member to bring in a non-perishable food item, which was used for our Christmas food hampers. Fr Liam collected the supplies which were distributed locally. Pictured here is Tj Mumia, TY, helping out the Marist Leaders Family Spirit appeal.

On Wednesday 4th of December, Marist Leaders were invited to the launch of the Midlands Drug Litter Initiative, hosted by Catherine Byrne TD. This event further aided us with our Green Schools Flag initiative.

To finish off our first term, we put Presence into action by decorating

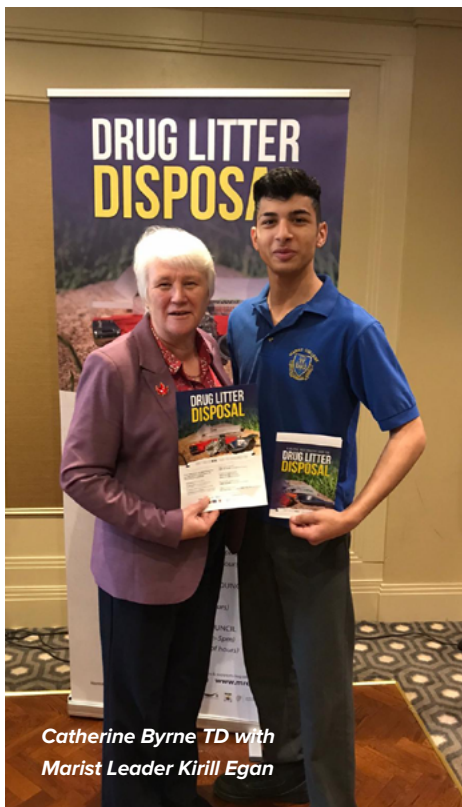
areas of the school for Christmas, and encouraged all staff and students to wear their Christmas jumpers on Friday 13th of December. Our term finished up on Tuesday 17th December with ice-skating and shopping in Dublin.

After Christmas our Value of Simplicity came into being. Leaders decided to take on a 'Spring Clean Challenge'. This involved clearing out the Lost Property room and returning misplaced items to students. We had great feedback from many first year parents. Later in the term the Leaders organised a table quiz for all first years to mark World Book Day on 5th March.

In the final term we will look to the Value 'Love of Work'. We also plan to mark our Value 'In The Way of Mary' throughout the month of May.

**Orla McGrath, Marist Leaders - Marist College Athlone Ireland**





Catherine Byrne TD with  
Marist Leader Kirill Egan

# Kindness, in a Time of Pandemic



**It is now more than a month into the Corona Virus (Covid 19) pandemic. In the past month the lives of tens of millions of people on the planet have changed incredibly, leaving us all in very unfamiliar territory. Disruption to accustomed ways of living, limits on freedom to travel, the lack of social interaction, the disappearance of sports fixtures, anxieties about exams, loss of employment and the dread of infection have impacted on us all. Some are coping better than others, but all of us are living through this extraordinary crisis, suddenly aware of how vulnerable we are as individuals and societies.**

The pandemic has been described as 'historic', 'epic' and 'unprecedented'. Everything about this pandemic seems to be on an incredible scale, as medics speak of the dreaded 'surge' and a 'tsunami' of infections. Our individual lives, our world of relationships, family and interests seem so tiny and insignificant in the face of a worldwide pandemic. But it is worth remembering that throughout our long human history of wars and pandemics, of natural disasters, revolutions, persecutions and plagues, the ordinary little acts of kindness were essential in getting people through.

In the novel *Middlemarch* George Eliot makes a striking comment on Dorothea Brook: 'But the effect of her being on those

around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistorical acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.' This has always struck me as true: the good things we enjoy, the simple pleasures and decencies of life owe as much to ordinary people living their hidden lives well, as to the heroes of history. We all benefit from the 'unhistorical acts' of kindness, the small (almost) heroic acts and the thoughtful, gracious acts which never reach the history books, but which are 'incalculably diffusive'. They go out like ripples, bringing hope to others and helping people through the hardest times of life.

The small, kind gesture, can echo across time and into eternity, in a way that harsh and selfish actions cannot. St. Theresa of Calcutta said 'peace begins with a smile'. In the face of an epic and very troubling moment in world history, each of us still has a powerful agency, a free will which can be directed, even in small ways out into the world, so that the ordinary, everyday lives of everyone can still be better, or as *Middlemarch* puts it, 'so that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been'.

Fr Liam Kelly –  
Marist College Athlone Ireland

# Our world - changing?

In the past few months, a movement has become more and more active, which is called «Fridays for Future» and which focuses on better ecological work regarding global warming. Now, with Covid-19, another forced movement arose, which «Fridays for Future» really implements: much fewer planes in the sky, very few cars on the streets - so a lot of clean air to breathe. Couldn't this continue?

Of course, the economy is feeling this decline. Many regulations have been issued. Everyone should probably stay at home. The schools and universities are closed not only in Germany. But children, teenagers and students need training! How we are dealing with this at the Marist brothers and at the Marist high school in Furth near Landshut is described here.

For the community of the Marist Brothers, which consists almost entirely of older brothers, the changeover enacted by the government is not so tragic. You come together to pray in the large chapel almost as usual. The priest, who came from outside, only had to cancel the celebration of the Eucharist in order not to endanger the brothers by the virus. Many brothers take advantage of the pastoral offerings on television and are always advised to be careful outside, to clean their hands and to keep a sufficient distance from their confreres. If all goes on like this, the brothers will weather the Corona crisis well.

And at the Marist high school?`



## Life as an «online teacher»

In order to curb the spread of the Corona virus, since March 16, 20 in Bavaria, at the instruction of Prime Minister Markus Söder, no more classes have been held in schools. In addition, exit restrictions have been imposed in Bavaria since 21.3.20: You can only leave your own four walls for good reason. This includes the way to work, shopping or visiting a doctor. Sports or a walk are still allowed, but only on your own or with members of your own household.

At around 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 13th, when news came that schools would be closed, many at Maristen gymnasium Furth (MGF) were not surprised. Some teachers followed the announcement of the measures in the press conference of Bavaria's Prime Minister Söder together with their classes. The pupils had been prepared for it all week long: passwords for the learning platform mebis had been distributed, the procedure was discussed and practiced with the pupils.

Classes would run somehow...

From Monday, March 16, all Bavarian schools tried to supply their students via the same platform (mebis) - this was only partially upheld. On the first day of school closure, MGF teachers switched to other channels - e-mail, student portal, parent portal, etc. The distribution of teaching material via many different channels was not always smooth, so we are happy that two dedicated colleagues already have it five days later had set up their own learning platform for the MGF: The MGF moodle is in place - everything is again focused on a common path. Teaching materials (worksheets, work instructions, videos, interactive elements) are now sent via this portal and the collection of completed tasks is accomplished - e.g. B. as photos of the solutions that the students upload. In addition, video conferences are held with schoolchildren and colleagues, so lessons are taught live.

It has now been three weeks since school closed. How is this «teaching» perceived? Some experiences...

- The material transfer works, tasks are processed.





- Rewind is possible, solutions are corrected, students receive feedback on their performance.
- A wide range will continue to be maintained. B. MGF cooking with recipes for re-cooking or Maristen sports club with exercises for at home
- The classroom discussion is missing!
- Pedagogical influence is very difficult!
- Weaker and calmer students are even less accessible than in contact classes (where the teacher can see a lot through posture or the like).
- The personal condition of the pupil is not recognizable - only if the pupil communicates this himself - short, quick questions are hardly possible.
- Contact options for school counseling, school pastoral care and school psychology services were created for students with special private challenges.
- We did not want to do without the closing service on the last day of school before Easter: an ecumenical service was held by video conference - the learning portal was deliberately blocked during the service.

## Life as an «online student»

Students of the Marist team describe their experiences so far:

### Johannes Popp (14 y.)

I am fine...

I am healthy and I often enjoy the weather in the garden. I already baked with my brother but otherwise I'm fine.

My day-to-day schooling currently looks like that in the morning I try to do all the tasks for the next day and also prepare one or two tasks for the next few days. The switch was not easy at the beginning, especially since at the beginning relatively many tasks came from the individual teachers, but now it is actually a bit like normal school.

Meeting friends is also a thing, you can chat video via Whatsapp etc. but it works really well, especially with bad internet. At least that's the experience for me: a call works better than a video chat. So it is not so easy to see the friends. best regards

### Tom Habermann (13 y.)

I'm currently feeling like this ...

The fact that we have not had to get up so late and sleep late lately makes me much more motivated and much more attentive to learning → I enjoy learning so much more. Because of the Bavaria-wide exit restriction, we are unfortunately no longer allowed to meet with friends, which is why I often and often play table tennis with my sister, jump on the trampoline or go inline skating with my uncle. In addition, because of the lack of training in the club, I still do sports alone in my room.

I think the time is pretty strange, but somehow not boring, because you can hear a lot more about what's been happening lately via the Internet and the news on TV. I hope the school will start again after the Easter holidays, although unfortunately it doesn't look like it at the moment because we can only expect the Corona crisis to peak in about a week.

→ I'm fine so far and I wish you all nice, sunny days. Stay healthy. Bye for now!

### Sarah Gunkel (11 yrs)

I am fine, the switch from normal school to «online school» was a little difficult at the beginning, because I was not very familiar with the computer and I missed my friends. But my parents support me wherever possible, and things are now a lot easier.

«My school» at home usually runs so that after breakfast I see what the teachers have given us. Then I print out the necessary things and work on them one after the other. I agreed with my parents that I always work concentrated for 1 1/2 hours, after that I take a 15-30 minute break and I do this about three times in a row, then it's done. What I can't do during the week, I make up on the weekend.

I am now looking forward to the Easter holidays and hope that the school will continue to run «normally» afterwards.

We still don't know when the pandemic will end and what lessons will be learned. Will it change us humans? And how?

Someone described the situation like this:

*«You virus, little beast,  
have paralyzed us.  
Now we have to stop  
if we want to or not.  
Now there is nothing left to grow.  
All engines are stopped.  
Nothing more with gross national product.  
Now it's working  
For help, for compassion, for humanity,  
for consideration, for solidarity, for  
renunciation,  
for imagination, for creativity, for new  
ways,  
to keep boundaries  
and yet think of others.  
Maybe even - for LOVE?»*

KH / EA / JR / AE

Katharina Huber,  
Eva Alfranseder, Johannes  
Maristen Gymnasium Furth Germany

# A day in the life of...

Well, that is a fortnight since I went into self-isolation in the flat where I have been living for six months or so. I have finally returned to Glasgow after thirty years. The provincial plan was to form one community here but due to various circumstances, we Brothers are scattered around Glasgow. We had intended meeting as a group perhaps once a week. Obviously, the coronavirus has put paid to that for the time being. Hopefully, not for too long.

I find myself in the interesting category of over seventies with underlying health issues. Which means I have to spend my days physically alone, but digitally inundated by hundreds of phone calls, e-mails, texts and letters. Wonderful.

The first thing I decided was to make out a day-to-day programme which would keep me occupied. Oddly enough, this has been useful but not always possible to put into practice. For example, I thought I would shorten the day by having a sleep-in each morning. As they say in the vernacular 'fat chance'.

Even with the curtains closed the sun manages to creep in to deprive me of that pleasure.

Meditation and prayers after a coffee, followed by another coffee. In the absence of Mass in the local church, I follow different dioceses on their websites. This can be really uplifting and encouraging.

I have an egg-timer which I set for every half hour. This is to remind me to get out of my chair and exercise for ten minutes.

I then switch off my mobile and tackle the translations sent to me by Luiz da Rosa



who is doing an absolutely wonderful job of keeping the Champagnat.org not only functioning but keeping up the highest standard. And all that from his home in Rome.

It's now time to check my mobile and laptop for all the wonderful support I receive from relatives and friends.

This normally takes about an hour to work through.

Then lunch. Having always gobbled my food, I now take a more leisurely attitude to meals.

Following lunch I turn on the television to check on the latest news from the government. It is not always happy viewing, but has to be watched.

This brings me to mid-afternoon when I read and consider an extract from the Old Testament. This was something

I had promised myself when I retired from teaching fourteen years ago and it stands me in good stead.

In the evening I again turn on the television to watch a DVD. I have loads of these, which I collected over the years and they should keep me going till I am roughly 120 old. At the moment I have in the machine one from my Charles Dickens Collection - Martin Chuzzlewit. Dickens can make you laugh or cry without warning.

The egg-timer tings again and I have a light meal followed by evening prayer. At nine o'clock I go to my bedroom and read for an hour. As Samuel Pepys said many a time «and so to bed».

I had meant to illustrate with this short article the more positive side of self-isolation. I can only say that I remain very positive and content. I have always prayed to our Good Mother for help and guidance. She is certainly heeding my prayer.

Br Douglas Welsh Scotland







## Message of Hope

As we put together this edition of Being Marist we were very mindful of the reality for all of you who are reading it. We wanted to ensure the newsletter gave you all a message of hope, whilst also sharing with you what the position is for fellow Marists across the province. I hope we have managed in some small way to do that.

At a time like this we are most mindful of our families and each of you reading this newsletter are our Marist family. As Br PJ wrote in his opening reflections, I'm sure many of us think often of Marcellin's experience lost in the snow right now. Both Marcellin and Br Stanislaus were fearful of what was happening to them and questioned the future and their wellbeing. They prayed to Mary for protection and a light shone to show them the way to safety. The prayer they said was the Memorare and as many Marists around the world are now doing we ask you to pray the memorare for the protection of each one of us and that we may find our way out of these troubled times.



**CLICK HERE** to read A message from the Brother Superior General to the Institute in times of crisis by COVID-19.

Take care of yourselves,  
Aisling Demaison



Remember, *O most gracious Virgin Mary,*  
that never was it known that  
anyone who fled to thy protection,  
implored thy help,  
or sought thine intercession  
was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,  
I fly unto thee,  
*O Virgin of virgins,* my mother;  
to thee do I come,  
before thee I stand,  
sinful and sorrowful.

*O Mother of the Word Incarnate,*  
despise not my petitions,  
but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

*Amen.*

*@QuintoCreations*