

Marist Sponsored Schools in Europe Today¹

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The Society of Mary has a long and strong tradition in education since its very beginnings and including its founder, Jean-Claude Colin (1790-1875) being a teacher, principal and founder of schools. This tradition continued into the 1970s with schools staffed heavily by Marist religious.² The process of diminishment and growing involvement of lay people in religious schools hit the Marists in stages in the different provinces.³ From direct involvement and presence, religious move to partial presence and sponsorship of a school. In this talk I give examples to illustrate this process also taking place in the USA.

Marists in education has a long history in the USA.⁴ It began with Jefferson College, Louisiana, in 1864, and included All Hallows in Utah (1889-1914) and Syracuse NY. The US Province sponsors: Marist School Atlanta, Georgia (MS)⁵; Notre Dame Prep and Marist Academy in Pontiac, Michigan (NDPMA);⁶ Notre Dame des Victoires in San Francisco, California (NDV);⁷ and Notre Dame Academy in Duluth, Georgia.

The Conference of Marist Schools in North America includes Québec and Mexico.⁸

A new phase began with the United Province of the Society of Mary in the USA in 2009. Joseph Hindelang reports results from a respective committee:⁹

“Vision: To preserve and renew Jean-Claude Colin’s Vision for Marist education and to advance that unique mission into the future.

Mission:

- To provide a framework that will help to preserve and deepen the fundamental characteristics of our Marist schools;
- To establish guidelines that govern what is to be expected from those involved with these communities of learning and faith;
- To create a common language and set of actions that can be used to measure adherence to the larger mission of the Society of Mary;

¹ Originally a presentation for the Conference of North American Schools in Pontiac MI, June 2020. Cancelled due to the Covid19 Pandemic, this is a reworked version. The theme was inspired by the organizers.

² For the period 1949 to 1969, the *Acta Societatis Mariae SM*, published by the general administration give a good overview. The reports on the individual Marist units include reports about the schools. Marist bibliographies include titles on education and school annuals (examples N. 1 (15 August 1949) 60-62 and N. 5 (2 July 1951) 74). N. 6 (21 November 1951) 70-71 gives statistics on Marist colleges worldwide.

³ Other Marist provinces are also engaged in this process: Provincial Chapter of the Society of Mary in New Zealand, ‘Towards a Marist Philosophy of Education’, December 1971; Mark Walls SM, *A Brief History of Marist Fathers’ Involvement in Education*, in FN 10, 1 (2008) 163-176, here 172-173.

⁴ See the appendix for examples. I thank Jim Strasz sm for his help; E-mail 4 November 2020.

⁵ The school was founded in 1901 as Marist College. The name was changed to Marist School in 1962. Marist was an all boys military school until 1974, when the military program became "optional." The school became coeducational in 1976. The military program was abandoned in 1977. See also Vincent P. Brennan SM, *A Half-Century of Marist Education in Georgia: Marist College, Atlanta*, Washington, D.C., s.d.; and GUIDON, Marist School Atlanta, Georgia. Yearbook.

⁶ Michigan schools: Alois Greiler SM, *A Short History of Marists in Schools in Michigan, USA*, in FN 21, 1 (2019) 5-14; Yearbooks: *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, Notre Dame High School, Harper Woods, Michigan, Yearbook, 1957ff; *The Legend*, Notre Dame Preparatory, 1300 Giddings Road, Pontiac, Michigan, Yearbook, 1995ff; *The Mitre*, Cathedral Central High School, Detroit, Michigan. Yearbook.

⁷ Ernest Pflieger SM - Julian Marquis SM, *The Marists and the French Colony in San Francisco: An Account of Notre Dame des Victoires Parish*, Washington D.C.; Etienne Siffert L. SM, *The Marist Fathers at Notre Dame des Victoires 1885-1985*, San Francisco, 1985; Etienne L. Siffert SM, *Notre Dame des Victoires, San Francisco. 1856-2006*, San Francisco, Marist Fathers, 2006.

⁸ Québec: 75 ans de tradition vivante en éducation. *Le Séminaire des Pères Maristes depuis 1929*, Sillery, 2004; Mexico: Miguel A. Ramirez Gonzales SM, *María de Guadalupe, un modelo pedagógico para nuestro tiempo. El caso del Colegio Franco Inglés en México*, in FN 11 (2009) 133-150. See their websites! For Latin America see the study by Anthony O’Connor SM published as FN 19, 2 (2017) in English and Spanish.

⁹ Joseph Hindelang SM, *Society of Mary School Sponsorship in the USA*, in *Today’s Marists* 5, 1 (Spring 2019) 22; See the document: ‘The Relationship between Sponsored Schools and the Society of Mary’, March 2019; cf. www.societyofmaryusa.org

- To share our common understanding within the Province and wider Society of Mary about the spirit that guides and the principles that animate the programs and progress of schools within our Marist mission and ministry.”

Example Europe

The former seven provinces were restructured to the Province of Europe on 1st of June, 2008. In 2016, regions were abolished and direct leadership from the provincial house introduced. Most former provinces had a strong tradition in education. This was honoured by installing respective structures.

Education is much supported. There is an education deputy of the Provincial for the Province of Europe, at present Frank Dowling (Ireland).¹⁰ The Provincial Council receives regularly a report from the provincial education delegate, on the current situation in this ministry. Mutual support in the education network continues via the use of social media in this time of the corona virus.¹¹ There is a Provincial Education Committee. Since 2016, they run a yearly meeting of the heads of educational institutes. These bodies are in contact with the national leaders, the directors of *Tutelle* in France and MEA in Ireland.¹² Since 2011, a Marist Education Network with its own logo functions.¹³ Different times big conferences were held: Bury (France), Dublin (Ireland), Fürstzell/Passau (Germany), and Toulon (France). At present, cooperation is mainly discussed at the yearly meeting of the principals of Marist educational institutions with the provincial leadership. The principals find this most helpful and these meetings bear good fruit of formal and informal cooperation.

The province exercises international solidarity in education. Examples are the fundraising for Collegio Pedro Chanel, Guadalajara, Mexico, by CUS Dublin and Maristengymnasium Fürstzell,¹⁴ and the support from France for a new school with Marist involvement in Senegal. In March 2020, further consultation took place between the African District and the Province about a site in Burundi for an education or pastoral project.¹⁵

Legal, financial, administrative, and other factors are so different in each school and each country that they are not included here. However, they play obviously a huge role.

The Network includes 11 educational institutions, mainly schools. Some countries have their own Marist trust for schools.

In English-speaking Europe schools were founded from the second half of the 19th to the first half of the 20th century.¹⁶ There are links with the USA. In 1875, England, Ireland and America formed a vice-province. America became an independent province in 1889, England and Ireland in 1952. The American Province split into Boston, Washington, and San Francisco and then was re-united again in 2009. Another link of English-speaking schools in Europe is with the Marist schools in New Zealand.¹⁷

Let me try a short survey of the different former provinces and their schools today. My focus will be on Ireland as I live there at present and so have better access to sources.

¹⁰ Provincial Delegates until today: Dominique Villebrun, Donal Lillistone, Frank Dowling; Provincial Education Committee in 2020: Martin McAnaney (Provincial), Jean-Marie Bloqueau (Vicar Provincial), Frank Dowling, Mary Forde (MEA), Vincent Lanlois (Mariste Tutelles), Diarmaid O'Murchu (MEA).

¹¹ The 'Dispatches Provincial Council, 20th – 21st March 2020, zoom meeting'.

¹² Frank Dowling, Donal Lillistone, Martin McAnaney sm, *Marist Education in France and in England: Marist to Lay Management*, private paper, February 2020, 'Province'. At present, the education delegate for France is Vincent Langlois and the delegate for Ireland Mary Forde.

¹³ For a brief review: *EuroInfo* 138 (March), yearly meeting of the heads of educational institutes, Paris, 30 January-1 February 2020. The logo was created in France in 2013.

¹⁴ *EuroInfo* No. 137 (February 2020).

¹⁵ The 'Dispatches Provincial Council, 20th – 21st March 2020, zoom meeting'.

¹⁶ Patrick Corcoran SM, *The Irish Province of the Marists: An Early History, 1850 - 1870*, Maynooth, The Cardinal Press Ltd., 1987, 173-176 Appendix 1 Chronicle.

¹⁷ Graystone, *Short History*, p. 69: The General Chapter in Differt/Belgium in 1914 decided among other things that New Zealand and America who profited from the Marist schools in Europe could re-fund those provinces in view of the sacrifices they had made. The Province of New Zealand sent 1000 Pounds and the Province of America 400 Pounds to the Anglo-Irish Province over the next couple of years.

Spain

In 1959, when Spain was still a vice-province, it had two schools: in Malgrat (1908/1953) and in Vera de Bidasoa (Navarra) (October 1944). Malgrat was also the scholasticate. Vera de Bidasoa was an apostolic school.

Collegio San Pedro Chanel, Malgrat, was handed over to the network of the Marist Brothers Schools in 2016. This way, the Marist spirit could continue in a broad sense. The deadly accident of the last headmaster, a Marist priest, was the final straw.¹⁸

Italy

The Index for 1959 lists two schools: Istituto Santa Maria, Brescia (1934) and Istituto San Giovanni Evangelista, Rome (7 October 1949). The one school left was the Istituto San Giovanni, Via Livorno, Rome. It faced various difficulties over the last years. The Marymount International School became interested and so a total closure was avoided.¹⁹ This international private Catholic school group runs schools all over the world. In June 2021 the Marists will formally hand over the school to this group. One confrere runs an open centre for youth in northern Italy.²⁰

France

As country of origin France had two provinces until the 1970s.²¹ From the 1840s onwards, the fathers staffed a number of schools, some taken on by the founder. As an example we give the entries in the SM Index 1959:²²

Province of Paris: Institution Saint Joseph Montlucon (Allier) (October 1853), Institution Saint-Vincent, Senlis (Oise) (6 August 1869); Collège Sainte-Marie, Sierck-les-Bains (Moselle) (6 October 1930); Collège Notre Dame de Bury, Margency par Andilly (Seine-et-Oise) (4 November 1939); Cours Notre Dame, Enghien-les-Bains (Seine-et-Oise) (1 August 1944); Collège St-Pierre Chanel, Thionville (Moselle) (linked to Sierck).

Province of Lyon: Institution Sainte-Marie, Saint-Chamond (Loire) (1845); Institution Sainte-Marie, La Seyne-sur-Mer (Var) (March 1849); Institution Sainte-Marie, Riom (Puy-de-Dôme) (September 1856); Externat Saint-Joseph, Toulon-sur-Mer (Var) (1856); Externat Sainte-Marie, Lyon (1893); Institution Saint-Jean, Besancon (Doubs) (1838; administered by Marists since July 1953).

The Marist educational history and presence is strongest in France: Toulon, Cours Fénelon; La Seyne-sur-Mer, Sainte Marie; Ollioules, Externat Saint Joseph; Lyon, Sainte Marie; Riom, Sainte Marie; Senlis, Saint Vincent; Margency, Bury-Rosaire (2020). Today, Marist schools have the official status as 'privét sous contrat'.²³ They have to follow the national education program. Teacher salaries are paid by the state, chaplaincy is allowed, and they raise modest school fees. The Marists had thought to give the schools to the respective diocese. There was an outcry on the side of the people against it. The schools gradually moved from Marist to lay management over a period of time, e.g. Sainte-Marie Riom 1976, to Sainte-Marie Lyon 1999. However, there has

¹⁸ The schools in Malgrat and Rome: Helpful information from Frank Dowling, email 26 March 2020.

¹⁹ *Acta SM* (October 1968); *Roma – L'Istituto San Giovanni Evangelista cambia pelle. La lettera che il nuovo direttore didattico della nostra scuola romana, un laico, ha inviato a studenti e relative famiglie (1 Luglio 2011)*, in *Maria. Mensile sulle opera e sulle missioni dei Padri Maristi Italiani* No 7-8 (July-August 2011) 24-25. A letter together with a Marist priest working at the school about cooperation with the new institute changes in the building, including the top floor for the International Marist Theologate.

²⁰ *Il Centro 'Carmen Street' di Brescia*, in *Maria. Bimestrale sulle opera e sulle missioni dei Padri e dei Fratelli Maristi italiani*, no.5-6 (September-December 2019) 14-15; *Istituto San Giovanni Evangelista. Progetto Educativo*, Roma, Roma, s.d.

²¹ Paris and Lyon also staffed schools outside Europe, including the USA, Mexico, in Latin America and New Zealand. A direct presence was in Dakar: *Acta SM* Vol. 1 (1949-1951), p. 27 Dakar The college took the name Cours Ste Marie, foundation stone blessed on 1 May 1947.

²² Antoine Forissier SM, *The School in France* (French – English), in *Acta SM* 4, 21 (February 1957) 200-211; statistics on French Marist schools at the time.

²³ Frank Dowling, Donal Lillistone, Martin McAnaney sm, *Marist Education in France and in England: Marist to Lay Management*, private paper, February 2020, 'France'.

been a continuing Marist presence in all of the schools, i.e. as members of the chaplaincy provision and as board members. In Riom, lay Marists started the ‘jeunes Maristes’ among the students. Two national bodies accompany the schools (besides the Province): *Maristes en education* (founded in 2002) and *Tutelle Mariste* (Trusteeship authority). These animate the Marist ethos and Marist presence in the school structure. Difficulties arise with change of staff for example but the two Marist bodies help in general.

The Netherlands²⁴

Threatened by expulsion the French Marists founded houses on the other side of the borders of France, so in Hulst. The Index of 1959 calls it Schola Apostolica, Juvenaat St. Joseph, founded on 3 May 1911.²⁵ An apostolic school was a religious school with a strong encouragement of vocations. The same index lists another school, the Collegium R.K.H.B.S. Marianum, Groenlo, a secondary school, founded on 8 September 1948. While Hulst was a French foundation, Groenlo was a major operation of the Netherlands, established as a province only a year earlier, on 19 November 1947. The Index for 1963 lists Hulst and Groenlo another apostolic school in Zundert, founded in 1961. The school in the area of Zundert was a Lazarist school. At the time, Hulst, not recognized by the state, had few pupils and the Marists joined the minor seminary of the Lazarists. Some Marist priests and some pupils stayed in a place in Montens, the other side of the near border, but joined the Lazarist school. Others continued on in Hulst. After some other changes, Hulst ceased to be a Marist school by 1970. The old house was sold and the community moved into a former primary school as their residence. Groenlo²⁶ was the first secondary school in the area, very close to the Marist house in Lievelde. It was open for boys and girls. The Marists left in the early 1980s. The school united with a Carmelite school and thus the Marists left. One of the Marist priests is involved with pupils engaged in charitable works.

Germany

The German Province only ever had two schools, Meppen and Fürstenzell. The school in Meppen opened in 1901 as apostolic school to win vocations for the missions in the South Pacific.²⁷ It was a boarding school for boys. The Nazis closed the school and it could only re-open in 1948. With the number of priests going down, the Province handed the school over to the diocese in 1978. On site was established a diocesan secondary school combining the Marist and a girls only school of sisters in town: ‘Gymnasium Marianum Meppen’.

The secondary school in Fürstenzell was opened for boys only as boarding school with few non boarders in 1948. In 1960 they won state approval for their final exams. On 6 October 1969, the Marists, the county, and the commune agreed to build a complete new school paid by the state. The school is now available for boys and girls and not limited to a private Catholic school (2018/19: 711). On 23 September 1977, a trust was formed: ‘Maristenschulstiftung Maristengymnasium Fürstenzell’: The county (Landkreis Passau), the Marists, and the commune of Fürstenzell. Chairperson of the board meetings is the higher Marist superior in Germany. The superior of the Fürstenzell community is member of the board. The trust replaces the Marists as owners of the school. On 13 December 1994, the contract was modified. The three members are the county, the diocese of Passau, and the local commune. The Marists are present but have no financial involvement. In 1987, the Marists renounced all rights to get back the area or the school or the investments. In 1988 the boarding school closed. In 2005 the last Marist priest principal retired and a lay person took over. Fürstenzell is a semi-private state school with limited church or Marist influence.

²⁴ Information SM Index and e-mails from Fr. W. Brand SM, archivist, Hulst, from June 2020.

²⁵ For a critical echo of former students see Aloys Gosselt - Joop Volkers, *2010-2012 enquête onder de oud-seminaristen van het juvenaat St. Joseph kleinseminarie van de Paters Maristen Hulst Z-VI. En Loenhout naar de persoonlijke beleving van de jaren op het Juvenaat St. Joseph te Hulst en later Loenhout*, Ommen, Koggel Reclame, September 2012.

²⁶ Groenlo: R.K. H.B.S. = Rooms Katholieke Hogere Burger School.

²⁷ *100 Jahre freie katholische Schulen in Meppen*, Meppen, 1996.

England²⁸

After an initial stage of sending men to the Missions and the US (also for education) and internal formation work, their schools marked the history of Marist presence in the country. Mainly it was secondary schools but also parish schools:

Paignton (Devon): 1881-1971

Kew: 1898 - 1984

St. Mary's, Middlesbrough (Yorkshire): 1904-1992

St. Lawrence's, Sidcup (Kent): 1912/1924-1979/2011²⁹

Marist College, Hull (Yorkshire): 1925-26 June 1988

St. Mary's, Blackburn (Lancashire): 1925- 1 November 2020³⁰

St. Mary's, Winslade (Devon): 1948-1972

What happened to the schools after the Marists left? Some amalgamated as boys only school with a girls only school of a congregation of sisters and became a diocesan school or a school of another educational institution. Winslade was simply closed altogether.

First, there was hardly a Marist to teach. Then, the last priest resigned as headmaster. Marists would be on the governing body of the school or in the trusteeship of the school building. If a Marist residence was nearby, some chaplaincy work was done. The last priest as member of the governing board of Middlesbrough resigned recently. Marists are still somewhat involved in Blackburn on the governing body and for chaplaincy work. St. Mary's Blackburn is member of the European Network of Marist Schools.

After the experiences of Middlesbrough and Blackburn it became clear that a planned and accompanied process with the right people was needed as well as a substantial hinterland.³¹ Both schools suffered from a sudden change to a lay principal. Blackburn still has a Marist community present and to a small degree involved. There, the school counts 81% non-Catholic students. In Middlesbrough, the last Marist on the board left and the schools has no Marist ethos since some time. The diocese had refused to take on the school at the time. Both schools struggle with the completion of neighbouring schools better funded.

In London, Marists are involved in the chaplaincy and catechism work of the Aumônerie du Lycée Français.³²

Ireland

The first house in Ireland became the community, novitiate-scholasticate and secondary school in 1861. A brief glance over older two booklets to advertise St. Mary's College, Dundalk, 'conducted by the Marist Fathers', illustrates a straightforwardness in the Marist ethos as basically explicit Catholic ethos with a Marist background and nuances like Marian devotion, St. Peter Chanel, humility, and support for the foreign missions in Oceania.³³

²⁸ Philip Graystone SM, *Society of Mary (Marist Fathers and Brothers) in England from 1850 to 2001*, England, 2001. He discusses all schools and gives literature for individual schools.

²⁹ *Marist Fathers Sidcup 1911-1961*, Sidcup, 1961: The school started as parish school St. Ethelbert's Marist College in 1912. It grew into St. Mary's College for boys in 1924. A grant from the state allowed a further growth in 1957 to become St. Mary's Roman Catholic Grammar School for Boys.

³⁰ Provincial Dispatches for 6-7 November 2020 reported that the Marists had to decide to withdraw.

³¹ Frank Dowling, Donal Lillistone, Martin McAnaney sm, *Marist Education in France and in England: Marist to Lay Management*, private paper, February 2020, 'England'.

³² Isabelle Le Chevallier, *Rendez-vous Leicester Square. The History of Notre Dame de France 1865-2015*, London, Transform Management Ltd., 2015.

³³ The Archives in Dublin have two examples, not dated but after 1954, in slightly different format, but similar on the ethos part: *St. Mary's College, Dundalk*. The College is conducted by the Fathers of the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers). The quotes are from both which have the same title. Similar in a contemporary witness: Fr. Michael Murtagh C.C., *St. Patrick's Dundalk. An Anniversary Account*, Dundalk, Bellew Print, Park Street, 1997, p. 78: "The objects of the Marist Fathers' mission in Dundalk were said to be twofold: a To establish a school for the education of children of the merchants and shopkeepers of the town, and b to establish a novitiate for their own Religious order, chiefly with a view of providing priests for Australia."

“Object. The object of the Marist Fathers in this country, as in their Colleges throughout the world, is to impart to their pupils a thoroughly Religious and sound Literary Education which will enable them in after life to discharge their duties with honour to religion and Society, and with credit and advantage to themselves. ...

Religious Training. The Religious and Moral Training of the Pupils entrusted to the care of the Marist Fathers holds the foremost place in the College Curriculum. A course of Religious Instruction comprising Apologetics, Holy Scripture, Church History and Christian Doctrine, is of obligation for every Student. Gold and Silver Medals and other special prizes are offered for competition every year in these all-important subjects. All Students are enrolled in the Archconfraternity of St. Joseph, which is established in the College Chapel. ...

The College buildings are planned and equipped for the specific purpose of catering for the three constituents of any sound system of Education: 1 Religious and Moral Training; 2 A Sound Literary and Scientific Course of Studies; 3 Physical Health. ...

For this reason, the College Chapel holds pride of place. Pupils attend Daily Mass and are encouraged to receive Frequent or Daily Holy Communion. ...

All applications must be accompanied with a Certificate of Birth. Baptismal certificate will not suffice. ...

Each boy must have Rosary Beads and all boys outside the Preparatory School should have a Missal.”

Again, it was a school founded in the hope of vocations for Ireland and for the missions.³⁴

Much has changed since for the Catholic Church and the educational context. Rev. Dr. John-Paul Sheridan, Director of Education Programmes, Faculty of Theology, Maynooth, writes about the tension of faith-based education in modern Ireland:³⁵

“...The subject of education and its provision is one of the great cultural and societal battlegrounds in Ireland today. At St. Patrick’s College, we aim not only to foster an awareness of these issues and debates, but also to instil in student teachers an understanding of ‘the pearl beyond ice’ that is Catholic education and all the while rising to the challenges and needs of the questioning and questing child in Catholic schools today.”

This indicates an immense change in the country from the time when the Marists arrived. Like the beginnings in England and Germany, the schools were founded to answer the local need for higher education, but also in the Marist interest to find vocations for the foreign missions. Many Irish Marists worked in the schools in England or went to the missions.

St. Mary’s, Dundalk, was opened in 1861.³⁶ It has an impressive family tree.³⁷ They sent Marists to schools in Dublin, England, New Zealand, and Fiji. Marists from Dundalk came to Jefferson College (La), Van Buren (Maine), Salt Lake City (Utah), Atlanta (Ga), and St. Mary’s Manor, Langhorne (PA). This meant a heavy loss of manpower. Later, some New Zealanders came to help out with teaching in Ireland.³⁸ On the other hand, it illustrates a major hope for most Marist schools – recruit vocations for the Marist works.³⁹

³⁴ For experience of pupils in the 1920s: Ciaran Clerkin, *To be Truly Missionary. The Life of Fr John Clerkin*, unfinished manuscript, Archives Dublin [Fr. John Clerking (1911-1984)], here ‘Chapter Two The Dundalk Years’, 1926-1931; *A Man of Many Missions. Fr. Eugene McVicar S.M. Tells His Own Story*, KAMAC Publications, 3 St. John’s Terrace, Mount Brown, Dublin 8, 1987, p. 32-38.

³⁵ *St. Patrick’s College Maynooth. An Education to Value*, Issue No. 5 (Advent 2019).

³⁶ *St. Mary’s College Dundalk 1861-2011. Commemorating 150 Years*, Dundalk, 2011; James McElroy SM, *Marist Spirituality*, in *St. Mary’s College Dundalk 1861-2011. Commemorating 150 Years*, Dundalk, 2011, 88. Father Jean Leterrier (1836-1902) worked in Dundalk and then moved to start CUS. He became leader of the Vice-Province England, Ireland and America. Father Francis Redwood (1829-1935), who had met Colin in France as a pupil, taught in Dundalk, before he became archbishop of Wellington; Kevin Coney SM, *Region of Ireland. Selected History*. CS 2013, booklet, s.d.

³⁷ *St. Mary’s College Dundalk*, family tree, p. 37.

³⁸ Cocoran, *Irish Province*, p. -155.

³⁹ See Appendix I, List of Past Pupils who became Marists, in *St. Mary’s College Dundalk. 1861 – 1961 Centenary Record*, Dundalk, 1961, 45-49.

Catholic University School (CUS), Dublin, a secondary school for boys, was taken over in 1867, and includes a junior school as well.⁴⁰ Chanel College, Dublin, opened in 1955. Ireland became a province in 1953 and this college was one of the first initiatives to start and staff.⁴¹

Leo Varadkar, then An Taoiseach, said in Dublin at the reception for Pope Francis on 28 August 2018: When the Irish State was founded in 1922 they did not establish a department for health or social welfare. Those and education were not considered state duties. They were carried out by the Catholic Church and other churches. The departments came only in 1947. Today, more than 50% of the state budget goes into these areas – now in lay hands.

Withdraw or not withdraw from the schools? And if so, how?⁴² Arguments were lack of vocations and the appropriate mission for Marists and priests in the 1980s and 1990s. Professional lay people might be better teachers, and priests could move on to more pastoral work, parishes, or the poor. How was this decided? It caused great controversy within the order. Where they lay people involved enough? Possibly not. When the transition came, suddenly Marists had to put words to a certain way of doing things – and did not find that easy. This issue is ongoing: formation and training in spiritual leadership.⁴³

Big novitiates around 1980 had raised hopes to keep the schools Marist. Around 1990 however, more and more of the young men left. In consequence, the option was discussed to leave one of the schools, Dundalk, but that was withdrawn.⁴⁴

The Provincial Newsletter of October 1999 presented three options about the future of the three schools in Ireland:⁴⁵

“Establishing forms of trusteeship on a collaborative (inter-congregational basis)
Establishing forms of trusteeship for individual congregations and
Withdrawal from the process at this stage.”

The Province wanted to involve as many confreres as possible besides external advice. They allowed pros and cons. A task force was established. An issue of *Ireland Forum*, an A5 booklet published from time to time on a topic, dealt with reactions from the confreres. Here is one which summarizes parts of the discussions:

“Although the present lay-staffs are above praise for their commitment, yet if the priests pull out will our schools after 10 or 20 years remain Catholic? We don’t want ‘power’ but we do believe in the value of a Catholic education. Can the mere ‘presence’ (as RE teachers or chaplains) suffice for that? Is this the time in the church’s history to disengage from the schools? It is doubtful.

Are our confreres our greatest asset and if so must on-going formation, Marist and professional be the priority?

⁴⁰ *C.U.S. 1867 - 1967, A Centenary Record*, Dublin, Catholic University School, 1967; Corcoran, *The Irish Province of the Marists*, ‘Chapter 20 Early Days in CUS’, 121-124. It has links to John Henry Newman’s efforts to start a Catholic University for Ireland. The junior school existed seemingly at least since the 1890 as one of the few surviving roll books shows. This one names Joseph Mary Plunket (1897-1916), of Eater Rising Fame; information kindly provided by Kevin Jennings, Dublin, 27 April 2020. The Wikipedia entry mentions: Catholic University School and Belvedere College; accessed 27 April 2020. In the 1980s the State asked to open a school in Castleknock/Dublin and leave Leeson Street. A committee was established. The provincial newsletter of 28 November 1984 announced the decision to cancel the Castleknock project.

⁴¹ John Charles McQuaid had Clondalkin or Malahide areas in mind. The provincial, Fr. Cusack, visited the Coolock area at the time developing and opted for the present location. Kevin Coney SM, *Region of Ireland. Selected History*. CS 2013, booklet, s.d.

⁴² The Marist Fathers are off course not the only congregation in this process. See for example Seamus O’Brien and Tommy Coyle, *Mapping the Search for Identity: Accessing the core characteristics of the Christian Brother network of schools*, in Ned Prendergast – Luke Monahan (eds.), *Reimagining the Catholic School*, Dublin, Veritas, 2003, 183-188, and Marie Celine Clegg IBVM, *Trusteeship: A Model in Progress*, in *ibid.*, 189-194.

⁴³ This paragraph is inspired by a response from Kevin Jennings, Dublin, former MEA director, to a draft version of this paper; E-mail 1 May 2020. MEA Directors: Fr. Luke Monahan SM (2003); Kevin Jennings (2007); Mary Forde (2019).

⁴⁴ Provincial Newsletters of 1995-1997.

⁴⁵ For the newsletter, the issue of *Ireland Forum*, and other related material: Archives, Dublin.

Mission or maintenance? Of course we want mission and reject mere maintenance. Does ‘mission’ here lie, not in abandon our schools, but in a re-evaluation and an on-going change in our approach within this apostolate.”

The outcome of the process was the establishment by the Irish Province of the ‘Marist Education Authority’ (= MEA) or Trust or Sponsor for the four schools in 2003:

St Mary’s College, Dundalk. St. Mary’s is a coeducational secondary school since 1990. The last boarder left in 1983. The first lay head-master came in 1980. Students Male: 455 Female: 286. Staff Permanent: 51 Part-time: 5 (2009: 670 pupils, boys and girls). 240 students joined the Society, others other religious congregations, and about 100 the secular clergy.⁴⁶

Chanel College, Coolock, Dublin. Chanel is a single sex secondary school with DEIS status (= school in a socially difficult area receiving state support). Students Male: 569. Staff Permanent: 41 Part-time: 11 (2009: 416 boys).

Catholic University School Primary, Leeson Street, Dublin. CUS Primary is a coeducational school. Students Male: 140 Female: 5. Staff Permanent 12 Part-time 1; first lay principal in September 2017.

Catholic University School Post Primary, Leeson Street, Dublin. CUS is a single sex fee paying secondary school (3800 Euros/year). Students Male 516. Staff Permanent 28. Privately paid 12 (2009: 464 boys); first lay principal in September 2017.

In a first experience with the new structure it became clear: Principals, board members, staff, parents, students need to be well informed. The aim was to establish a good relationship especially with the school leadership. The sponsor was asked to produce an ethos statement, to assist in the work of the MEA. People felt this is additional work, needs funding, and extra time.

The schools established ethos teams. Their role needed clarification in relation to chaplaincy, counseling, and other services.

Gradually an acceptance of the new structure was felt. The MEA began to develop initiatives and reported on their implementation:⁴⁷ information for applicants for new jobs, induction sessions for new staff, four days in La Neylière with members of the staff of the three schools and Blackburn school,⁴⁸ ethos days in the school, seminars for principals, links with the European network, teachers to join leadership courses, teachers wrote a thesis about the Marist ethos, and outside speakers were invited. The schools introduced Marist names, images, and symbols. Some schools support Marist projects in Thailand and the Philippines. All schools help in fundraising for charities. The MEA has its own publications to work with.

Induction of new Marist staff

“The rate of change is so accelerated that material conditions cannot be foreseen. Today’s teachers can be assured of only one thing: man of every age will need an appreciation of the true, the beautiful and the good; man of every age will need other men; man of every age needs God.”

By 1960, Sr. Eileen was optimistic about the religious ethos of religious schools or even schools in general.⁴⁹ The changes have accelerated more than foreseen. Ethos, especially a religious ethos like the Marist ethos needs reflected presentation and implementation.

As proposed in the MEA guidelines, new staff for the Marist schools receives an induction into the Marist schools and their ethos. Firstly, they receive a booklet with the application form. Those who get a job have three sessions over the course of their first year. The director of the MEA and a Marist give these sessions. I was involved in 2018 – 2020.

⁴⁶ Kevin Coney SM, *Region of Ireland. Selected History*. CS 2013, booklet, s.d. Chanel College: *Acta SM* (October 1968), story and photos.

⁴⁷ ‘MEA Report 2009;’ Some subheadings: History and Ethos Matters; Evaluation & Management; Individual Schools Information; Support for Management & Stake-holders; Finance & Property; Commentary & Recommendations. Appendices: Ethos reports 2007 + 2008; Interview with ethos teams, and Principals...

⁴⁸ Example: Dermot Murphy, *MEA School’s Journey. In the Footsteps of the Founder*, private, Dublin, 2008.

⁴⁹ Eileen Randles IBVM, *Post-Primary Education in Ireland 1957-1960*, Dublin, Veritas, 1975, p. 327 for the quote – the final sentence of her book.

The three sessions are shared between the MEA director and myself. The director gives input on the MEA as structure, on the school, on dealing with leadership, staff, and parents, and on the core values of the Marist ethos. My part is the Marist story and the Marist ethos.

The present program is about 'Heart', 'Head', and 'Hands'. 'Heart' invites to reflect on my personal attitude towards faith and working in a school sponsored by religious. The teacher as person is the main vehicle of communication. 'Head' provides information about the Marists, the founder, and the Marist ethos. 'Hands' tackles how to include Marist material in the subject taught by a teacher and offers a summary evaluation at the end of induction. Two of the exercises (2 + 3) from this program I propose to work with in our session today.

MEA Ireland

As a new structure it needed clarification to find acceptance. The Marists as sponsors of the Trust try to assist and have to make their contribution. The work depends very much on establishing good relationships between all involved. From the new staff I hear a positive feedback – they had had no induction in previous schools they worked in.

With the difficult situation of faith in Ireland, questions around ethos are linked to chaplaincy work. One priest is still involved and other priests who occasionally say mass or visit. The schools have different experiences with lay chaplains: full time, half time, a team. A clear profile, a qualified person really committed and free is essential.

Conclusion

The great tradition in education, here in secondary education in Europe is very visible until the 1960s both in the number of schools and in the number of Marists as staff members. In addition, some provinces ran schools outside Europe (Senegal, Venezuela, Peru). During the 1940s the provinces were still strong enough to take on new schools.

The 1970s saw a move from education to parish and other ministries or houses with confreres doing different things. Only Oceania took on new schools.⁵⁰ Schools in Europe were either handed over to a diocese, another congregation, the state, or were closed. A number of schools continue the Marist tradition and ethos but now run by lay people with various links to the Society of Mary. Still, education is a major mission of the Society of Mary albeit carried out more by lay people than by religious.

To engage in this transition from Marists present to lay people running a school is a world-wide process and answered in different ways.

There could be irritation: what is ethos, what is Marist ethos? Marists may not be able to answer it and so how could lay people continue it? Ethos has its own terms and language.

How do the Marist Trust and the leadership of the school relate? What is the contribution of ethos team, chaplaincy, counselling, and so on? What place does the Patron hold in an established school structure? I remember a principal telling me: Yes, I want the Marist ethos to continue. But I also expect help from the congregation. Otherwise I go for other options. In France we have former Marist schools with no Marist religious present since years. Lay people and lay Marists continue the ethos.

The transition is most likely very emotional. Marists have to face the end of their important tradition or develop trust in lay people. It may come as a surprise that lay staff are professional and creative and motivated for chaplaincy and ethos work! The first aim is to build up mutual trust and recognize the purpose and good will.

In most European regions, this process gets much support from the Marist leadership. Education is a unique opportunity for us (Marists, teachers) to communicate something valuable. It is the time for lay Marists and lay people and youth itself to carry this process forward as in general the laity in the church is much more involved.

Contact with young people, young families and adults is often rare or irregular in a parish ministry. A school is a constant meeting with precisely these age groups.

⁵⁰ Philip Graystone SM, *A Short History of the Society of Mary 1854 to 1993*, Rome, SM, 1998.

In a world-wide process, the third stage has lay people only. In the past and possible in the future one option is to withdraw completely from a school. Political, financial, legal and other aspects come in here off course. A middle path is to engage another Catholic institution like the diocese. These options are valuable and possibly of more fruit than us Marists continuing. For the better of the young people we may want to decide to respect our limitations and accompany the transition into other hands.

In Toulon, France, two schools were Marist Fathers based and one school Marist Sisters. At the time they live in competition with each other. Now there are lay people leading in all three and they do it in great cooperation. Other schools in France have strong support from Marist laity. Riom offered to start a group called 'young Marists' and this became surprisingly popular. In Fürstzell, the staff pushed for a continuation of the Marist ethos. In Ireland, the province decided for a Marist network instead of joining other network for schools. Other schools moved eventually away from their traditional Marist link and developed their own ethos.

The Province of Europe is engaged in different ways with the process in the respective schools and is committed to continue.

Marists teach, lay people teach. There are strengths and weaknesses in common for both groups. It was automatically better in the past and it will not be automatically better in the future. A more fruitful question could be: what is specific about each group to the educational process? Basically, a spiritual process results hopefully in a clear profile of the ethos and respective structures, bearing fruit in a visibility and a pursuit of the three aims albeit in a modern formulation. In Atlanta you have an example: 'Be Unwaveringly Marist; Excel in Academics; Educate the Whole Child; Form Global-Ready Servant Leaders; Secure the Future. Re-Interpretation of Colin's traditional aims'.⁵¹

Sometimes the literature comes across as vague on the topic. And it is necessarily so. Because it is a work in progress that needs us as the actors to constantly adapt.

Marist ethos is a religious ethos but this is not identical. Many Catholic schools will have an emphasis on spirituality and liturgy. Marist ethos is broader, the religious dimension is one. Others are: the Marist history and tradition, Marist founders, a global ethos in solidarity, a certain way of doing things. For the staff, it is 'we' and not 'they – us'. For the students, it is to be a good Christian, a good citizen, and a good academic.

Let me end with a story. The king of a country asked his council of wise men and women to find out the most important person in his kingdom. He wanted to honour this person. Not an easy task for the council. Finally, they presented a few men and women to the king. One was a great artist. One was a great scientist. One was a successful person in business. One ran important charities. The king was confused. Whom should he choose? Then he noticed, there was one more person in the room, a rather elderly lady, grey hair, quietly sitting in the background. The council had not presented her to him and so he asked: Who is this woman? The council answered: She? She is the teacher of all the others. The king honoured her.

In a book about Marist seminarians who have left in New Zealand, Fr. Mervyn Duffy, a Marist, wrote about the seminary in Greenmeadows. He calls its story the secret history of New Zealand.⁵² So many people have gone through this school who in one form or another made important contributions to the country. But who knows the school they went through?

As religious, yes, we have become elderly and grey. But we tried to support the talents of the young people in our schools so that they could become personalities. And we encourage lay people in their educational and more and more spiritual competence. This is the hour of lay staff, of lay Catholics committed to education, of lay people with sympathies for the Marist spirituality, of Marist laity.

⁵¹ Kevin Mullally, *Being Marist: One School's Vision of the "Greatest Work"*, in *Today's Marists* 5, 1 (Spring 2019) 20-21.

⁵² 'Fr Mervyn Duffy SM', in Shaun Davison, *On a Mission. Men of Mount St Mary's tell their stories*, Steele Roberts, Aotearoa, 2013, 142-150. See the series in *The Tablet*, 'The Teacher who Inspired me', for example 14 March 2020, p. s2, Austen Ivereigh, *The Wounded Pope*, on the importance of one of his teachers when he was a difficult young boy.

Educators can say yes, many of our pupils will outdo us in their achievements. But that is a reason to celebrate and not a rivalry.

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Appendix: Partial List of Marist Schools in North America

Jim Strasz sm, November 2020

Northeast:

St. Mary's College Van Buren, ME (1887-1925)

(Secondary and college in northern Aroostok County, Maine. It had the facility to grant bachelor degrees at the beginning but was primarily a secondary school)

Marist Preparatory, Bedford, MA (1925-1969)

(Apostolic school or minor seminary with secondary level and first two years of college)

Bishop Grimes, Syracuse, NY (1966- circa 1980)

(Diocesan school started as a constitutional school but run as a coeducational high school. The diocese still runs the school)

The Van Buren Maine Public School System (1925-1932; 1942-1968)

(Public High school or secondary school)

Marist College and Seminary, Framingham, MA (1939-1973)

(Originally philosophy and theologate for Boston Province and eventually was four years of college granting bachelor's degrees)

South:

St. Mary's Jefferson College, Convent, LA

(1864-1928. The first school the Marist Fathers and Brothers had in the United States. It was a secondary school that also could grant bachelor's degrees)

Marist School, Atlanta, GA (1901-)

(School going from 7th grade through high school. Originally could grant bachelor's degrees and was known as Marist College. It became a coeducational institution in the 1970's. Still owned and operated by the Marists)

Notre Dame Academy and Sophia Academy, both in Atlanta

(School sponsored by the Marists. Sophia Academy has since been amalgamated into Notre Dame Academy in Duluth)

Marist College, Washington, D.C. (1900-1974)

(After Dodon and Brookland this was the major seminary of the Society in the United States and was one of the first religious schools located on the campus of the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. In 1974, the scholasticate as a House of Studies moved to the building known as Marist Seminary and in late 1990's to Varnum St. building)

Marist Seminary, Washington, D.C.

(Originally an apostolic school with secondary and two years of college.)

St. Mary's Manor, Pendel, PA

Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans, LA (1923-1967)

(Archdiocesan seminary for New Orleans, LA)

Midwest:

Chanel High School, Bedford, Ohio

(Secondary school founded in 1957 as an all boy's secondary school and in 1973 gave control to the diocese of Cleveland. In mid-1980's the school became co-educational and the Marists were present until 1990. The school retained association with the Marists and closed in 2012.)

Cathedral Central, Detroit, MI (1951-1956)

(Archdiocesan High School next to cathedral in Detroit)

Notre Dame High School for Boys, Harper Woods, MI (1954-2005)

(Boys secondary school)

Notre Dame Preparatory School and the Marist Academy, Pontiac, MI (1994-)

(Originally a Marist Fathers and Brothers coeducational school with grades pre-K through 12 in 2014 became an independent Catholic school with Marist sponsorship)

St. Joseph College, Bettendorf, IA (1959-1972)

(Marist house of studies for college level)

West:

Minor Seminary for diocese of San Francisco, CA (1880-?)

(A school established as a Diocesan seminary for the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Short lived because of numerous problems. There were a couple of priests ordained for the diocese)

St. Peter Chanel Seminary, St. Raphael, CA

(Minor seminary for San Francisco Province it was composed of secondary years and first two years of college)

Bourgade, Phoenix, AZ (1962-)

(Diocesan high originally co-institutional and under auspices of Marist Fathers and Brothers from 1962 to 1972. There were also two religious congregations of sisters who taught in the school)

All Hallows, Salt Lake City, Utah (1889-1918)

(Secondary and college in Utah. It had the facility to grant bachelor degrees at the beginning but was primarily a secondary school)

Ecole Notre Dame de Victoires, San Francisco, CA

(1924, parish school sponsored by the Marists)

Marist sponsored schools as of 2020: Atlanta, GA: Marist School and Notre Dame Academy, Pontiac, MI: Notre Dame Preparatory School and the Marist Academy, San Francisco, CA: École Notre Dame des Victoires.