



The Marist Brothers

ADVENT 2019



A Lumen Award-winning publication of the Province of the United States of America

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# TODAY'S Marist Brother

## Br. Luis Ramos Professes First Vows



Brother Luis Ramos professed his first vows during a ceremony held August 10th at Mount Saint Michael Academy in the Bronx, NY. He professed the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience,

committing himself in accordance with the constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary.

"Br. Luis, on the day you entered the Novitiate, you received the habit of the Little Brothers of Mary, given to our first Brothers by our founder, St. Marcellin. Today, you will receive cords with three knots: A symbol of your commitment to follow Christ-poor, chaste, and obedient." Br. Patrick McNamara, Provincial of the Marist Brothers, Province of the United States, announced the honor as he accepted Luis' vows. Following the Mass and ceremony, guests celebrated with the community at a luncheon held at the school.

Br. Luis grew up in the Bronx. He graduated from Marist-founded Mount Saint



Michael Academy in 2011. After high school, Luis received his first sacraments through

the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Program at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY, where he completed his bachelor's degree in religious studies in 2015.



During Br. Luis' college years, he became involved in the Marist Young Adult Program, and spent one year living and working as a volunteer at the Marist Brothers Center in Esopus, NY. He entered the Marist Brothers Postulancy in September 2016, and he lived in community with Brothers in the Bronx, NY. He became a Novice to the Marist Brothers on August 19, 2017, and he lived in community with Brothers at the Marist Brothers Novitiate on the campus of Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Br. Sean Sammon served as the Master of Novices.

"Professing vows was a beautiful experience to have the Marist Family, my family, and my friends there helped me feel God's love and kindness."

Br. Luis now teaches religion at Marist High School in Chicago, IL and lives with Brothers at the Leavitt Street community. During the next year he will continue to discern his call to a lifetime commitment as a Marist Brother.

FROM THE DESK OF

# the Provincial

ADVENT 2019

Dear Marist Family,

God's closeness and blessings to you as we enter Advent, the preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, and the dawn of 2020.

As we look ahead, let's place our hearts and thoughts with Mary, our good mother. Our founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat, always reminded the first Brothers that their lives and mission depended on Mary. He looked to her for guidance, protection, and loving support. In 200 years, she has never failed the brotherhood. Often I find, in good times and in challenging ones, that I am like our founder: talking to Mary and asking her to be with one of our Marist Family members, or to be with the Brothers and me when we are in need. I join the chorus of our students, who finish each school day with the words of the Memorare, "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, with confidence, I pray to you" and, in confidence, we know she will seek grace for us from her loving son, Jesus. We live by that trust and love.



In this past year, Mary has inspired and looked after so many of us in the Marist Family and in our work. May our Good Mother be close to all of us during Advent, in the tender moments of Christmas, and as we joyfully ring in 2020.

Along with all of the USA Marist Brothers, let me thank you, dear friends and Marist Family members, for your generosity and support toward keeping our Marist Mission alive. Your help brings Jesus to life for thousands of young people in the United States and throughout our Marist world. For myself, and for Marist Brothers, there is no greater example of the Christmas spirit.

God bless you and thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Br. Patrick McNamara, FMS". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Br. Patrick McNamara, FMS  
Provincial  
Marist Brothers USA Province

# ESOPUS CORNER

Written by: Summer Bourlier & Valerie Savino

Autumn is in full swing here at The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus: the leaves are turning gorgeous shades of red and gold, there's a crisp breeze traveling throughout the property, and change is imminent.



Our new executive director, Jim Raimo, and our new director of operations, Valerie Savino, officially started on September

1st and have been settling into their new home well. Br. Owen Ormsby has previously said, "The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus will always be in a state of transition, but it is a place where people's hearts help smooth over the bumps in the road." That has become evident with the addition of Jim and Valerie – Welcome to the team!

The Esopus Runners participated in the Long Island Marathon Weekend this spring, competing in the 10K, half marathon, and full marathon. The event not only served as a fundraiser, but also as an MBCE team-building



event to foster camaraderie and friendships. A huge thank you to all of our runners and donors. Because of their generosity, we were able to raise \$15,606.75 for new pool equipment this camp season. In addition to The Esopus Runners, our 2019 Century Riders raised more than \$43,000 for the MBCE by completing a 100-mile bike ride from New York City's Central Park to Esopus. Thank you to all who participated!

Lastly, we had an incredible camp season this summer, as campers enjoyed the newly renovated pool. As many of you know, the Mid-Hudson Valley Camp has served hundreds of persons with disabilities for more than 40 years. What started as a one-week summer session in the 1970s has turned into 10 week-long programs that cater to different groups of marginalized children. We would

not be able to continue serving our children without the generosity and support of those who continue to believe in our mission. Thank you to all of the volunteers and donors who made this summer possible.



In continuing the spirit of transition, here at the MBCE we are now well into our retreat season, which got off to a great start with students from schools that included: Roselle Catholic, Mount Saint Michael Academy, Kingston Catholic, Notre Dame Academy, and The Young Women's Leadership School. In this sacred space, on this holy ground, God's grace continues to touch the lives of people in many ways throughout the year. As we wait in reflection and anticipation for the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, we use the themes of the Advent season to remind ourselves why our work at the MBCE is important: to make Jesus known and loved.

At the Marist Brothers Center at Esopus, our programs continue to ignite hope in the young people we serve, while continuing to inspire our staff and our residents for the future. Our young people are returning home, renewed and refreshed, ready to change the world in ways they never thought possible. We are filled with peace, knowing our joy and love of evangelizing to young people continues to make Jesus come alive in the faces of everyone who comes through our center.

From our staff here at the MBCE, we wish you an Advent season filled with hope, peace, joy, and love, as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus in our lives, once again. From our family to yours, have a blessed Christmas Season, and we look forward to welcoming you home soon! May God bless you, and keep you always.



# Marists Seeds Thriving in Kentucky

Lay Marist Ellen Salmi Van Cleef and her husband Josh Van Cleef are doing inspiring work as Lay Administrators of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Jackson, KY, an area gripped by poverty and addiction.

Ellen is a 2008 graduate of Roselle Catholic High School in New Jersey, where she became involved in the school's Marist Youth Group. During her college years at Villanova, she remained committed to her Marist roots, and was a leader in the Marist Young Adult Program. After graduation, she volunteered for two years as a Marist Lay Missionary in Senegal, Africa. Upon returning, she completed her masters degree at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she also met her future husband.

Jackson is the poorest county in the state of Kentucky. While parish membership is small, it serves the broader community through outreach, evangelization, and children's programs. Ellen and Josh also purchased a 50-acre farm and turned it into a Catholic worker farm focusing on prayer, retreats, and hospitality. After much prayer, they decided to name the

property Magnificat Farm, inspired by Mary's prophetic words. Magnificat Farm welcomes all who wish to serve the community, build the kingdom of God, and be transformed by grace.

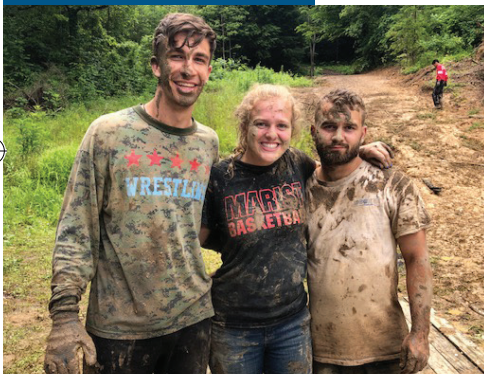
## Marists Help One Another

For the past few years Ellen and Josh have been renovating the property. In the summer of 2018, a group of Marist volunteers from the Northeast helped convert the old barn on the property into a 'House of Welcome' for displaced women and children. There is no other program or facility available in the county to assist women with young children in need of transitional housing.

Last summer, 26 Marist Brothers, Lay Marists, and Marist Young Adults joined Ellen and Josh for a week-long

mission trip. The group battled difficult working conditions including severe rain and mud to build a chapel honoring St. Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers. This chapel now stands in the beautiful woods located on Magnificat Farm.

Next June, a third group of Marists will return to Kentucky with two projects to complete. The first will be to finish the chapel by enclosing the structure with glass windows and doors, in addition to building an altar and pews. The second project will be a three-day workshop focusing on Marist leadership skills and faith-sharing among youth members of the Holy Cross Parish.



Last year our USA Marist schools helped raised more than \$20,000 to cover the cost of building the chapel. An additional \$10,000 is needed to finish the chapel this year. All donors are recognized in a dedication plaque within the chapel.

# The Beginnings of the Marist Community

## *Welcome to Austin, Texas*

**W**e call ourselves the “Marist Community of Welcome,” but we’ve also been called “The Bros House,” “Marist,” and “The Fellowship House.” Over the summer the seven of us who live here gradually arrived at our rented home on an acre of land, bordered by Waller Creek.



We have welcomed almost 100 guests so far! Family members, staff from the University of Texas Catholic Center, religious women and men, students, graduates, and friends of community members have all joined us. In the coming months we will be looking for other opportunities to welcome young adults. We’re considering hosting a praise and worship night (we have a number of musicians in the community) in our large backyard, a “Vino & Veritas” evening to speak about important personal/spiritual topics over a glass of wine, and also service opportunities in the local community.



We have been truly blessed with the men in our community and each of us is grateful

for the opportunity and support the Province has given us to begin this new initiative. As we join together, we know we are not a formation community, and this isn’t a discernment house (though both are happening informally!) We listen to the spirit and to each other to help create our community. It’s been said that in the early...

*Continued on page 7*



During our first gathering, we joined for a conversation on three scriptural questions: “Where are you?” “What are you looking for?” and “What things can we do to help each other?” It was a wonderful opportunity to identify our needs, hopes, fears, and expectations as

we began this new incarnation of the Marist charism. We concluded with a community prepared meal and night prayer.

We’ve decided to keep our commitment to each other simple in our early days together. Monday is designated as “Marist Monday.” We have morning prayer at 7:30, which is led by Br. Peter and I on a Marist theme. We then gather later in the day for a festive meal, a conversation on the week ahead (or some other topic), and a shared prayer. This day is a firm commitment for each of us. The rest of the week, we gather for morning prayer at 7:30, and for those who are around we have dinner at 6:30, followed by night prayer. Each of us take part in preparing meals and we often welcome others to our table. There is also time to hang out, play games, talk, or watch a movie together.

# Dear Friends,

*Greetings this Advent season to our extended Marist Family!*



Here at the Development Office we're preparing to celebrate our 30th Anniversary and we are very grateful to our Marist Family for making these last three decades so successful!

Thirty years ago it was clear that the Marist Brothers needed financial support to continue making a difference as educators, counselors, spiritual directors, social workers and youth leaders. With gifts from our extended Marist Family, the Brothers could safeguard care for our elderly and disabled Brothers and further our mission to bring young people excellence in education. They would have the means to expand our unique youth ministries and advance recruitment and retention of vocations to continue in St. Marcellin Champagnat's tradition.

With faith and a prayer, we opened a fledgling Development Office and began our first Annual Fund. We were blessed with a small army of volunteers who made phone calls, processed mail, and did anything they could to help spread our message. We've refined the process since those early years, but we couldn't have come this far without them!

Today, we are still surrounded by family, friends, and alumni, who generously continue to help us meet our financial needs. Many of you graciously send gifts to our Annual Fund as well as our yearly Retirement Appeal, which helps us meet rising healthcare costs for our elderly Brothers. Some of you donate through our Prayer Card Program, while others remember the Brothers in their estate plans. To everyone, we are deeply grateful for your help.

As Christmas approaches, I want you to know that your unselfish support and encouragement always reminds us that we are not alone in our mission. Your care and concern surrounds our Brothers – and you are remembered every day in their prayers.

I send you my very best wishes for a blessed Advent and Christmas season. May you share peace, love, and joy with family and friends. And may the New Year ahead be filled with happiness and good health.

**Merry Christmas!**

*Paulette M. Karas*

Paulette M. Karas, CFRE  
Director of Development

# STORY CONTINUED...

*Continued from page 5*

## The Beginning of the Marist Community...

...days of our Institute, there was a similar experience of not having a clear understanding of what God was bringing forth in that simple home in LaValla. But Marcellin and our early Brothers had to trust "The Lord will build the house..." Faithful to our Marist tradition we begin and end our day with the Salve Regina— placing our lives

and our community into the heart of our Good Mother.

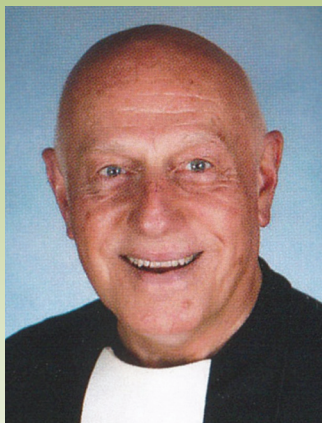
Thanks for those who have supported us with prayer, gifts – and soon, visits!

**Y'all are most welcome to our Community of Welcome!**

Br. Rob Clark

# IN MEMORIAM

## Brother Michael Fisher



Br. Michael Fisher, FMS, died on Saturday, May 11, 2019. He was a member of the Marist Brothers of the Schools for 55 years. Br. Michael was 71 years old.

Born and raised in Mexico, Br. Michael became a postulant with the Marist Brothers in 1963, and he entered the Marist Brothers Novitiate in Mexico City in 1964. He professed first vows in 1965.

After completing his religious and academic studies at the Marist Scholasticate in Queretaro, Mexico, he began his ministry serving as a teacher in Pachuca, Mexico, from 1968 until 1974. Br. Michael also served as a teacher in Sauayo, Mexico (1974-76), at Colegio Mexico in Mexico City (1976-80), St. Mary's High School, Manhasset, NY, (1984-90); and at Archbishop Molloy High School in Briarwood, NY.

Br. Michael served at Molloy from 1990 until his passing. He also was as principal/director at the Marist School in Pachuca, Mexico (1980-84). Br. Michael professed his final vows in 1970. He earned two master's degrees during his years in Mexico.

At Molloy, Br. Michael taught Spanish, coached varsity soccer (1990-92), and moderated the Student Activities Committee (1992-97). He is remembered for his faith and commitment to St. Marcellin Champagnat's mission, his inviting classroom demeanor, his professionalism, and his warm sense of humor. He loved and cared for his Brothers, his fellow faculty members, and the thousands of Stanners he taught. He always brought smiles to the faces of those around him.



To read additional obituaries on deceased Brothers, visit [www.maristbr.com](http://www.maristbr.com), and go to "Marist Archives." Click on "Deceased Brothers."

**Real Brothers.  
Real Stories.  
A Real Difference.**



For more information about a vocation to the Marist Brothers, visit:

[www.maristbr.com/vocations](http://www.maristbr.com/vocations)

Or contact:

Br. Al Rivera, FMS  
Br. Brian Poulin, FMS

Marist Brothers  
Provincial Office  
70-20 Juno Street  
Forest Hills, NY 11375

Phone: (718) 480-1306  
Email: [vocations@maristbr.com](mailto:vocations@maristbr.com)

### The Marist Brothers Mission

To bring Christian education to young people, especially those who are most neglected.  
*(Article 2, Constitutions)*

### The Marist Brothers

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 413  
Worth, Illinois 60482-0413  
Phone: (773) 881-5343  
Fax: (773) 881-3367

Email: [maristbr@maristbr.org](mailto:maristbr@maristbr.org)  
Website: [www.maristbr.com](http://www.maristbr.com)

**For more updates on what's happening in our Marist circles, visit [www.maristbr.com](http://www.maristbr.com).**



**The Marist Brothers**  
Provincial Development Office  
4200 West 115th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60655-4397

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## The Marist Brothers Remembrance in Prayer Program



**T**he Marist Brothers offer two different series of Remembrance in Prayer cards: Traditional and All-Occasion cards. Our signature Traditional cards feature the image of Christ and a Marial design. Both of these Traditional cards may be used as memorials to remember the deceased. Our two All-Occasion cards may be sent to honor birthdays, weddings, or anniversaries or to extend get-well greetings.

All cards carry a special promise of Remembrance in Prayer from the Marist Brothers. We would be delighted to send you a complimentary packet of our Traditional or All-Occasion cards. Please send your request through email ([maristbr@maristbr.org](mailto:maristbr@maristbr.org)) or to the mailing address at left.