

n the footsteps of Blessed Fr. Gapp

From August 6 to 14, a group of eighteen Marianist religious from five countries made the spiritual exercises in Greisinghof (Upper Austria), in the house of spirituality of the Austrian Marianists where Blessed Fr. James Gapp made his novitiate and where he lived "the happiest year of my life."

The exercises were preached by Fr. Emilio Cárdenas, SM, developing "The Journey of Faith of Blessed Fr. Jakob Gapp". The starting point of all the meditations was the process of faith of our Blessed, illuminated with biblical texts and articles of the Rule of Life.

The fact that it was a small group greatly favored communication. The house and the surroundings of Greisinghof helped with prayer and contemplation. The liturgy was celebrated in French or Spanish, and some Eucharists, when joined by other guests of the house or the people of the village, in German.

The pilgrimage to Wattens (Tyrol) at the end of the exercises allowed them to deepen their understanding of the life and journey of faith of Blessed Jakob Gapp. They visited the Church, where they saw the baptismal font in which he was baptized, a small memorial and the pulpit from which he gave his last homily, after which he was "invited" to leave the village. Also visited were the village museum, where Father Gapp is also remembered, and his birthplace.



The pilgrims to the “Virgin of the Snows” chapel in Umlberg

From Watens the pilgrims went to nearby Umlberg where Fr. Gapp had celebrated the Eucharist on some occasions in the small chapel, "Our Lady of the Snows" of the Roaner family. The pilgrims also celebrated the Eucharist there, with the same chalice with which Jakob Gapp celebrated his first Mass on the day of his ordination and his last mass before leaving Austria.

The next morning the pilgrims traveled to the nearby Mauthausen concentration camp, a witness to the horrors of the Nazi regime. In the afternoon the Superior General presided at a Eucharist accompanied by the Austrian Marianists, members of the Marianist Fraternities of Austria and people from the surroundings area. The Mass began with a procession from the Blessed Jakob Gapp monument to the chapel. At the Mass the renewal of vows took place.

In short, they were good spiritual exercises, very well prepared by Father Emilio. A good experience of prayer and meeting with Marianist brothers from various countries and of contemplation of nature.
