



VIA LATINA 22

358 - October 2026

News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

INDEX

- [A Joyful 'Yes': First Professions in the Eastern Africa Region](#)
- [Perpetual Profession in the Region of Korea](#)
- [Province of Meribah 50th Jubilee](#)
- [Commission studies possibility of lay religious as Superior General](#)
- [General Council begins third year with retreat at Nemi](#)
- [Chaminade International Seminary \(2026 – 2027\)](#)
- [9th International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities](#)
- [MLC Election of International Team](#)
- [Through the Pyrenees, a fraternal pilgrimage to Lourdes](#)
- [In the footsteps of Blessed Fr. Gapp](#)
- [Another glimpse of how units and communities around the world are putting the General Chapter's ideas into action](#)
- [42nd World Day of Marianist Prayer](#)
- **Publications**
- [Faustino](#)

A Joyful 'Yes': First Professions in the Eastern Africa Region

On 1 August 2026, the Society of Mary in the Region of Eastern Africa rejoiced as four young men took a decisive and joyful step in their vocational journey. Brothers Simion Kinara, SM, Stanslous Luhanga, SM, Daniel Ayako, SM, and

Christopher Swila, SM, made their First Profession of Vows at a Eucharistic celebration in Limuru, Kenya.

Surrounded by members of the Family of Mary, relatives, friends, and their fellow Marianist brothers, the four professed poverty, chastity, and obedience, committing themselves wholeheartedly to Christ and to the mission of the Society of Mary. The celebration was a profound moment of thanksgiving for the gift of their vocations and a hopeful sign of new life and vitality for the Region.

In his homily, Fr. Stephen Wanyoike Mburu, SM, grounded the occasion in the fundamental truth that every vocation begins with God's initiative and is sustained by His grace. He reminded the newly professed that their commitment was both a grateful response to God's personal call and a public declaration of their belonging to Him: "I am the Lord's." He encouraged them to nurture this call through a life of prayer, ongoing formation, deep fraternity, and generous service.



**L:-R.: Bros. Simion Moracha, SM, Stanslous Luhanga, SM,
Daniel Ayako, SM and Christopher Swila, SM**

Reflecting on the life of the first Christian community, Fr. Stephen emphasized that a Marianist vocation is never lived in isolation. It is cultivated within

community, through shared life, mutual support, forgiveness, and a common commitment to mission. When these values are lived authentically, he noted, Marianist communities become visible signs of Christ's presence and credible witnesses to the Gospel.

The day's Gospel, the wedding feast at Cana, placed this call within a distinctly Marianist perspective. Mary, ever attentive to the needs of others, directs the servants to her Son with the words, "Do whatever he tells you." Father Stephen invited the newly professed brothers to make this instruction their lifelong guide: to listen attentively to Christ, to trust in Him unreservedly, and to remain generously available for His mission. He reminded them that their vows are not merely sacrifices or restrictions, but paths to greater freedom, deeper availability, and wholehearted self-giving to God and His people.

As these brothers begin their journey in vowed religious life, we entrust them to Mary, our Mother and First Disciple. May she continue to form them in faith, humility, availability, and missionary zeal, so that, through their lives and service, they may lead others to Christ and help make Him known and loved.

Perpetual Profession in the Region of Korea

On September 12, 2026, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Name of Mary, the Marianist Region of Korea celebrated the perpetual profession of Bro. John Geunwoo Shim at the Marianist Center in Todang-dong, Goyang.

Brother John laid the foundations of his Marianist religious life during his novitiate in the Province of the United States. He nurtured his vocation with the support and guidance of Fr. Chris Wittmann, novice director; Bro. Dan Klco, assistant novice director; Fr. Tim Kenney, former Assistant for Religious Life; and the brothers of the U.S. Province. In July, he completed a 30-day retreat in preparation for perpetual profession in St. Louis, under the direction of Bro. Tom Redmond.

The Mass of Perpetual Profession was presided over by Fr. Dominic Park, Regional Superior of Korea. Twelve priests, including Marianist priests and priest friends of Brother John, concelebrated. The beautiful singing of the Seoul MLC's Pilar Choir added to the joy of the liturgy.



Around 200 people, including Brother John's family, relatives, friends, and members of the Marianist Family, gathered to pray together and celebrate his lifelong commitment. Many were deeply moved by the presence of his father, who, despite his illness, attended in a wheelchair to witness his son's consecration.

Representatives of the different branches of the Marianist Family were also present, including the Provincial Superior of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (FMI) and the presidents of the Seoul and Incheon MLCs. Fr. Tim Kenney of the U.S. Province also attended and offered his congratulations. A congratulatory message from Sr. Susanna Kim, Superior General of the FMI, was read aloud.

This perpetual profession ceremony was made possible by the dedication and service of many people. The Region of Korea extends its heartfelt thanks to Fr. Bosco Shin, who coordinated the liturgy; Bro. Joseph Choi, who provided technical support for livestreaming the Mass on YouTube; and the Seoul MLC, whose members helped with the preparation and coordination of the celebration.

Supported by the Marianist Family's prayers during the preceding 30 days, this perpetual profession ceremony concluded with a time of fraternal fellowship shared by all those present. Everyone departed with joyful hearts, deeply grateful to God for the gift of a new perpetually professed brother.

Province of Meribah 50th Jubilee

On August 18, 2026, the province of Meribah marked its fiftieth anniversary of foundation. On Saturday, August 15, 2026, the Province held a Mass of thanksgiving and a reception to celebrate this major milestone in the life and history of the Province. Bro. Ed Violett and Fr. Bob Jones (Provincial and Assistant Provincial of the Marianist Province of the US) were also present for this celebration. Over 500 family, friends, and collaborators joined the Marianists on this special occasion.



Bro. Joseph Bellizzi, Provincial, welcomed the guests and expressed the Province's gratitude for their support and presence, many for the fifty years since the province's foundation. He reflected on God's blessings for the past and hope for the future, that a jubilee is for remembering, recounting, and rejoicing.

Bishop John Barres, the local ordinary of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, was the main celebrant for the Mass. Bishop Andrzej (Diocesan auxiliary) as well as several priests from the Diocese, many of whom were graduates of the two high schools of the province, joined the priests of the province to concelebrate the Mass.

Commission studies possibility of lay religious as Superior General

Last year, the General Council established a special commission to study the requirement in our Rule of Life and Canon Law that the Superior General be a priest. Pope Francis' *Rescriptum ex audientia Sanctissimi* of May 18, 2022, opened the possibility for a lay religious to serve as superior of a clerical religious institute of pontifical right. As mandated by the XXXVI General Chapter (78), the General Council was asked to study whether this possibility would be appropriate for the Society of Mary.

The commission consists of Bro. Michael McAward (ME), Fr. Manuel Cortés (ES) and Bro. Erick Otiende (EA). Its work asks whether the possibility of electing a lay religious would be consistent with our charismatic identity. The question is complex and goes beyond personal preference. It involves the Founder's vision, the history of the Society and the Church's developing understanding of authority, especially since Vatican II.



L.-R.: Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema, SM, Bro. Erick Otiende SM, Bro. Michael McAward, SM, Fr. Manuel Cortés, SM Bro. Dennis Bautista, SM and Fr. André-Joseph Fétis, SM

The first phase examined the Marianist charism and tradition, canonical questions and signs of the times. During the second phase, experienced persons within and outside the Society were invited to provide written comments.

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, the commission met with the General Council to review its progress and plan the final phases. These will include a symposium in January and the participation of the entire Society before the General Leadership Assembly in July 2027.

The day ended with homemade pizza on the terrace. As one Italian Marianist often says, “All psalms end with Glory.” May we continue this important discernment with prayer, careful attention and fidelity to the gifts we have received.

General Council begins third year with retreat at Nemi

The General Council gathered at Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Sept. 7-10, 2026, for its annual retreat of prayer, reflection and planning. Now beginning the third year of their six-year mandate, the council reviewed current trends and challenges facing the Society of Mary and set priorities for the year ahead.

The members also shared personally about the demands of leadership. They discussed how each person tries to fulfill his responsibilities while maintaining physical health, spiritual well-being and healthy relationships. This balance is especially important because their roles include many responsibilities and frequent international travel. Their honest conversation helped them consider how to support one another and what new structures may help them serve the international congregation more effectively.

On Thursday evening, during Vespers, the council renewed the statement of commitment first made at their installation during the XXXVI General Chapter in 2024.



One step at a time! During a walk near Lake Nemi, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema, Fr. Pablo Rambaud, Fr. André-Joseph Fétis and Bro. Dennis Bautista paused for a selfie on the steep stairs rising from the lake's crater. The climb offered a good image for their third year together: much work lies ahead, but they will take the steps together.

This annual gathering gives the council time to connect personally, fraternally and spiritually. It also creates space for honest conversations about how they work together. Such time is important for every leadership team. Many unit councils in the Society of Mary already hold similar gatherings, and others may wish to consider this practice to strengthen their shared life, leadership and service.

Chaminade International Seminary (2026 – 2027)

Chaminade International Seminary community welcomed the 2026 - 2027 academic year with a profound journey into its spiritual roots. The community hosted a four-day course on the Letters of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade. Fr. Enrique Aguilera, SM, delivered the course, which ran from September 2 to September 5. After the course, the seminarian community traveled to Verbania-

Pallanza for their annual seven-day retreat, marking the final stage of preparation before resuming first-semester studies.

This year, the seminary community brings together 13 brothers from 7 countries - standing as a living testament to the international character of the Marianist charism. Life inside the seminary community balances the intense academic demands of Rome's pontifical universities with the fraternal realities of our Marianist religious life.



The seminary community at the end of the annual retreat in Verbania-Pallanza. From left to right (front): Enock Pierre (Haiti, ES), Nereo Ramirez (Mexico, US), Rayappa Bilavendiran (IN), Emmanuel Saopa (Malawi, EA). Left to right (back) Jerin J. Pananthanam (IN), Nicolas Assogba (TO), Antony Owino (Kenya, EA), Hervé Dagbo, Vice-Rector (IV), Patrick Bataka (TO), Roméo Angba (IV), Henri Baragou (TO), Michael Otieno, Rector (Kenya, EA), Juan Pablo Espinoza (Mexico, US).

9th International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities

From August 17–22, 2026, members of Marianist Lay Communities from around the world gathered in Bogotá, Colombia, for the 9th International Meeting of the CLM. Six days of prayer, reflection, dialogue, fellowship, and discernment

celebrated the richness and diversity of the international Marianist Lay Community while looking toward its future.

The theme was *Called by Jesus in Alliance with Mary*. Each day was devoted to a section of the 2025 MLC member survey: our personal faith experience, our experience of community, our experience of the local/national Marianist Family, being a charismatic family, and young people. In that context, the days consisted of reviewing survey results, listening to presentations, and participating in dynamic activities where participants could exchange ideas and learn from one another.

The gathering highlighted both the diversity and unity of Marianist communities across North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Visits to Marianist ministries in Bogotá demonstrated how a shared mission connects the Marianist Family despite differences in culture and geography. Participants also heard reflections from Sr. Susanna Kim, FMI; Fr. André-Joseph Fetis, SM; and Maria Elaina Rebolledo, AM.



The participants outside the Salt Cathedral in Zipaquirá, Bogotá.

Official actions taken include approval of updates to the International Organization's Statutes, approval of its first Organization and Management Manual, and election of a new International Team.

One reflection captures the spirit of the week: “*The Charism Is Life*.” Participants returned home challenged to listen for God’s call, strengthen community, respond to emerging needs, and make the Marianist charism a living reality today. Priorities for the future include young adult participation, communication and transparency, authentic collaboration, formation, spiritual development, and accompaniment.

MLC Election of International Team

During the 9th International General Assembly of the Marianist Lay Communities, August 17-22 in Bogota, Colombia, delegates elected the new Leadership Team of the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities.

The new International Team consists of:

- Matt Dunn (USA) - President
- José Julián Matos-Auffant (USA) - North America, Ireland, Australia
- Lilliam Valle de Garagorri (Peru) - Latin America
- Mercedes “Leles” Quero Molina (Spain)- Europe
- Kiyoshi Hirata (Japan) - Asia
- Elvis Omondi Oweya (Kenya) - Africa

The Assembly expressed its gratitude to outgoing leadership team members for their service: Boris Giambanco (President), Mercedes de la Cuadra (Europe), Narcisse Atsé (Africa). Matt Dunn was the previous Regional Responsible for North America, Ireland, and Australia.



L.-R.: (back): José Julián Matos-Auffant, Matt Dunn, Kiyoshi Hirata, Mercedes "Leles" Quero Molina, Fr. André-Joseph Fétis. L.-R.(forehead): Sr. Susanna Kim, Lilliam Valle de Garagorri. Not pictured: Elvis Omondi Oweya

Based on its 2025 MLC member survey results as well as conversations that took place during the assembly, priorities that have emerged for the new team include outreach to and participation of young adults, better communication and transparency, authentic collaboration, and a framework for formation, spiritual development and accompaniment.

Through the Pyrenees, a fraternal pilgrimage to Lourdes

From July 28 to August 1, 2026, seventeen Marianist brothers from various backgrounds made a pilgrimage through the Pyrenees, between Spain and France, heading to Lourdes as their final destination. In total, six brothers from Spain, six from France, two from Austria and three from the International Marianist Seminary in Rome set out together. Beyond a simple hike, this journey

offered the pilgrims an experience of prayer, fraternity and sharing. Along the way, in effort as well as in moments of rest, the brothers lived together an experience that allowed them to become better acquainted with each other, to contemplate the beauty of creation and to renew their spiritual journey.



From Sabiñánigo to the heights of the Pyrenees

The brothers arrived on the evening of July 28 at the first campsite, in Sabiñánigo, Spain. This first stage marked the beginning of several days dedicated to walking and discovering the Pyrenean landscapes. The hikes took the brothers up to an altitude of more than 2,300 meters, to the Ibón Azul. In this high mountain environment, walking also became a time of prayer and encounter. The physical effort, sometimes demanding, was experienced in a spirit of fraternal support: each one moved forward with the others, attentive to the difficulties and the rhythm of his companions. The beauty of the landscape and the silence of the mountain offered the group a privileged setting for contemplation and prayer. The pilgrims also discovered the lake of Estaing, in the Hautes-Pyrénées, located at an altitude of about 1160 meters.



From Spain to France

On the evening of July 30, the brothers arrived at their second campsite, in Luz-Saint-Sauveur, France. The change of valley and country did not interrupt the dynamic of the pilgrimage. On the contrary, it allowed them to continue this experience of walking and fraternity in the landscapes of the Hautes-Pyrénées. An important stage was dedicated to Gavarnie, in the heart of one of the emblematic landscapes of the Pyrenees. The walk also continued along the Gave de Pau, in the direction of Lourdes. Following the course of the water towards the Marian city gave the pilgrimage a particular orientation: after crossing the mountains, the group gradually approached the place where their pilgrimage was to end.

In the diversity of the countries and communities represented, the brothers discovered that fraternity is also built in small gestures: encouraging those who are tired, waiting for those who walk more slowly, sharing a meal, praying

together or simply tasting in silence the beauty of a landscape. After a short stay in Lourdes, punctuated by a visit to the museum and the grotto as well as by a Eucharistic celebration, the brothers concluded their pilgrimage with a fraternal lunch. They parted in the afternoon of August 1st.

In 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.

Another glimpse of how units and communities around the world are putting the General Chapter's ideas into action

On Sunday, July 26, forty student and faculty pilgrims from Kellenberg Memorial High School (Meribah Province) made a visit to Via Latina, 22. They were accompanied by Marianists Fr. Daniel Griffin and Bro. Patrick Cahill. Their visit was the final stop on a ten-day pilgrimage to Italy in the footsteps of the "Young Saints of Italy," like St. Carlo Acutis, St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, and Bl. Chiara Badano.

Following a visit to Castel Gandolfo in the morning to pray the Angelus with the Holy Father and Mass celebrated in the catacombs of San Callisto, the pilgrims were warmly greeted by Fr. André and Bro. Jérôme. Fr. André gave them a tour of the chapel and spoke about the life of Blessed Chaminade; he also offered them a blessing with the Founder's relic. Bro. Jérôme answered many questions about the mission of the General Administration and of the Marianist Family throughout the world. The visit concluded with refreshments and even a stop for gelato!



The group at the General Administration church

42nd World Day of Marianist Prayer



This year the 42nd World Day of Marianist Prayer 2026 is celebrated on October 11, 2026. On this day, the Marianist Family from all over the world joins in prayer before the image of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre in the shrine of the same name in Pinar del Río, Cuba. We do so together with all the members of the Marianist Family in this country, the pilgrims who visit the shrine every day and those who on September 8 celebrated the Day of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre.

Publications

Faustino

The bulletins published regarding the Cause of Venerable Faustino are available in the three official languages via a link.

With Faustino [September 2026](#) [October 2026](#)

We invite you to read and share them.

G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notices: n. 10-14**
- **September 7: *Marianist World Day of Prayer - October 11, 2026***, in three languages, to all the Marianist Family, sent by the World Council of the Marianist Family.
- **September 12: *Marianist Solidarity Fund (MSF) and Marianist Formation Fund (MFF) 2027***, in three languages, sent to Assistants for Temporalities and Unit Leaders, from the Assistant General for Temporalities, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema, S.M.

General Council Calendar

- **September 23 - October 18:** The General Council visits the Region of France.
- **October 22-23:** The General Council participates in the meeting of CEM directors in Sacrofano (Rome).