



VIA LATINA 22

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News from the General administration of the Society of Mary

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First Vows and Perpetual Vows in the Region of Eastern Africa

On August 2nd, 2025, the Region of Eastern Africa celebrated with great joy the first profession of vows of five of their brothers: Brothers Joel Agayo Obilo, Alphonse Odhiambo Oluoch, Geoffrey Odiwuor Otieno, Kenneth Mung'enti Murithi, and Yoakim Kazembe.

The profession was held at the Pavilion on the grounds of the Marianist Novitiate in Limuru, Kenya, just outside the capital, Nairobi. Marianist religious were and members of the families of those from Kenya were in attendance. Brother Yoakim, who is from Malawi, joined in with Brother Kenneth's family. Members

of the MLC, other religious known to the novices and the Society, representatives of the places for Apostolic work by the novices – the Nest, Nazareth Hospital, St. Paul's University Catholic Students Association also joined the celebration.



Left to right in front: Yoakim Kazembe, Kenneth Mung'enti Murithi, Joel Agayo Obilo, Alphonce Odhiambo Oluoch, Geoffrey Odiwuor Otieno
Back Row: The Regional Council: Bros. Godfrey Ssenyomo and Innocent Chikwanda; Frs. Stephen Wanyoike Mburu and Michael Otieno Ochieng'.

In his homily, the Regional Superior Fr. Stephen Wanyoike challenged and encouraged the five Brothers to always focus on Jesus and His Blessed Mother. Like the nameless servants in the Gospel, they must place their trust in Mary's invitation to do whatever the Lord tells them, even when the invitation may not seem to make any sense because Jesus knows the outcome. Of course, the celebration continued with a sumptuous lunch, the cutting of the cake, and dancing.



L-R: Bros. Justin Mwaniki Njue, Emmanuel Mwakabanga, Simon Cyrus Njenga and Erick Odhiambo Otiende.

On August 16th, 2025, the Region of Eastern Africa celebrated as three brothers - Bro. Emmanuel Mwakabanga, Bro. Justin Mwaniki Njue, and Bro. Simon Cyrus Njenga - made their perpetual vows at the Marianist Novitiate, Limuru, Kenya. In the same celebration, Bro. Erick Odhiambo Otiende celebrated his Silver Jubilee. The Regional Superior, Fr. Stephen Wanyoike, was the main celebrant and received the vows.

The professed and the Jubilarians were joined in the celebration by other Marianist brothers, family members, lay Marianists, and the faithful from different parts of Kenya. Congratulations to all.

Marianist Youth Gather in Rome for Jubilee of Youth

Over 150 Marianist youth from Japan, Korea, France, Spain, Italy, USA, Togo and Peru gathered in Rome July 31–Aug. 2 for three days of prayer, reflection and community during the Church's Jubilee of Youth.

The gathering was first envisioned at the General Chapter in July 2024 to engage

young people more deeply in the Marianist charism. That vision came alive in Rome this summer.

Day 1, Thursday, July 31, focused on identity. Participants met at the Marianist school Istituto Santa Maria to reflect on “Who am I? Who are we?” Inspired by Blessed William Joseph Chaminade’s words, “Let us be before men what we are before God,” they prayed, shared Scripture, and introduced their countries with symbolic objects.



Istituto Santa Maria

Day 2, Friday, Aug. 1, highlighted the Marianist charism at the Curia Generalizia Marianista on Via Latina through six activities: prayer with relics of Blesseds Chaminade, Adèle and Marianist martyrs; learning about young Marianist witnesses Faustino Pérez-Manglano and Miguel Quiroga; writing messages of hope to their future selves; a Marianist scavenger hunt; enjoying gelato together; and learning a traditional Spanish dance.



Curia Generalizia Marianista

Day 3, Saturday, Aug. 2, focused on mission. Guided by the Gospel of the wedding at Cana, youth prayed, offered petitions in multiple languages, and pledged to carry Marianist spirit home. The day concluded at Tor Vergata with Pope Leo's vigil, joining more than a million young people.

We hope this experience inspires Marianist communities everywhere to share their own stories of engaging youth, to keep "walking the promise of the path of life," and to bring alive the vision of our General Chapter. We are especially grateful to our Marianist brothers and sisters who helped coordinate and guide the three days of activities.

The Chaminade Seminary in Rome

This year the community of the Chaminade Seminary in Rome began the academic year with a pilgrimage to the founding places of the Society of Mary in France and Spain. It is an activity that takes place every three years at the seminary. This time it took place from September 6 to 16. It began in Bordeaux and included visits to Périgueux, Mussidan and Agen. From Bordeaux the community traveled to Madrid, where the tombs of four of our brothers martyred in 1936 and that of Fr. Domingo Lázaro are located. The next stop was Zaragoza, the city of the exile of Fr. Chaminade and the Basilica of Nuestra Señora del

Pilar. They were intense days of encounter with our roots and with witnesses of Marianist holiness. In addition to the visits, there were extended times of reflection and prayer around the great themes of our spirituality.

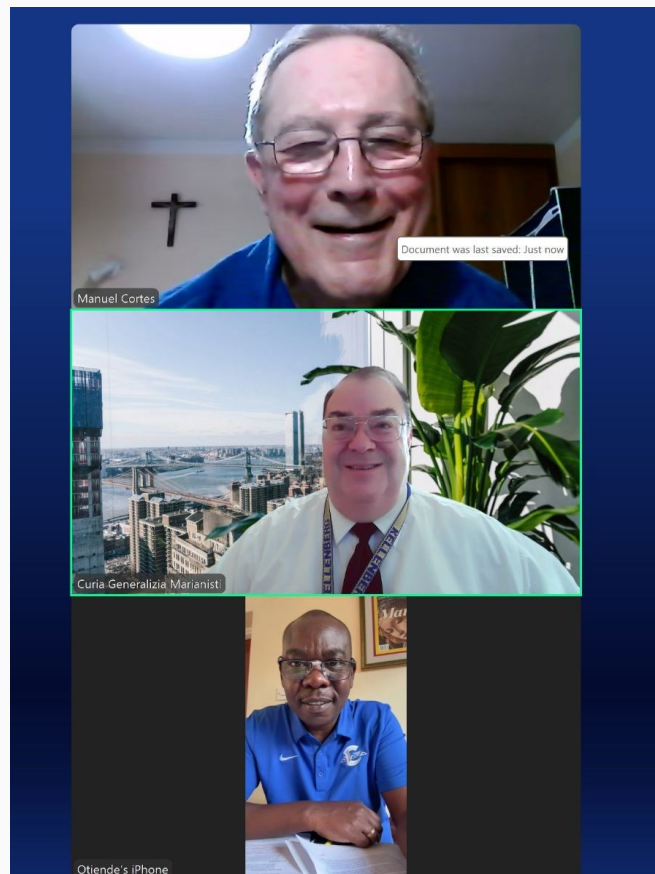


The pilgrims in the chapel of Blessed Chaminade in the Madeleine. From left to right: Jerin J. Pananthanam (IN), Raoul Rouamba (Burkina Faso, IV), Miguel Ángel Cortés, Rector (ES), Hervé Dagbo, Vice-Rector (IV), Emmanuel Saopa (Malawi, EA), Roméo Angba (IV), Daniel Orellana (Chile, LA), Nicolas Assogba (TO), Christophe Mbonde (DR Congo, FR), Henri Baragou (TO), Epiidius Ngosa (Zambia, EA), Antony Owino (Kenya, EA), Patrick Cahill (United States, ME), Yves Agbadou (IV), Gilbert Okade (Kenya, EA), Juan Pablo Espinoza (Mexico, US).

It is worth highlighting the splendid welcome that the pilgrim community found in all the communities that they visited: the community of the Chapel of the Madeleine, the community of the Sisters of Agen, the community of the Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Madrid, and the community of the Colegio Santa María del Pilar in Zaragoza. The seminary Community was able to share prayer and meals with all of them, and in all of them they felt very welcomed. In addition, they were able to learn about the rich missions that these communities carry out in the different contexts in which they exist. In Madrid they also had the opportunity to celebrate our patronal feast of the Holy Name of Mary together with the entire Marianist Family of that city.

Study Committee on the Category of Superior General in the Society of Mary

As you know, our last General Chapter wished to open a reflection on the category of the Superior General in the Society of Mary (*A Promise of Life*, 78). According to our Rule, he must be a priest (RV 97). But while Pope Francis has opened the possibility for clerical congregations to choose a brother as Superior General (by a rescript of May 18, 2022), "in a discretionary way and in individual cases," should we consider resorting to this possibility? By exception or as a permanent possibility? Does our charismatic tradition, from Father Chaminade to today, encourage us to do so? What would be the consequences of the election of a brother as Superior General for the governance of the Society of Mary?



The three members of the commission during their meeting: from top to bottom:
Fr. Manuel Cortés (ES); Bro. Michael McAward (Meribah, leader);
Bro. Erik Otiende (Eastern Africa, GA).

A committee has been appointed by General Council to advance the study on this issue. The committee is made up of three religious: Michael McAward

(Meribah, leader); Manuel Cortés (Spain); Erik Otiende (East Africa, AG). They began their work with an online meeting on September 18. They will meet in person in October. We encourage them in this important work.

General Council begins second year with retreat at Nemi

The General Council held a three-day retreat of prayer, reflection and planning at Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Sept. 16-18, 2025, to prepare for its second year of service. The sessions reflected on lessons from their first year, identified current priorities, and explored how to lead with focus and sustained energy amid the diverse and complex issues the Society of Mary faces. The spiritual conversational method helped the council move from reflection to concrete priorities and practical commitments, guided by the Holy Spirit, for living their mission faithfully.



L-R: Bro. Jérôme, Fr. André, Fr. Pablo and Bro. Dennis.

To encourage creativity and renewal, the group took walks on Wednesday morning and Thursday afternoon. These outdoor moments offered fresh air, movement and continued conversation on complex topics that benefitted from a change of setting. Retreat discussions balanced collaboration, practical methods and long-term visioning with time for common prayer and shared meals.

On Thursday evening, during Vespers, the council renewed their statement of commitment first recited at their installation during the XXXVI General Chapter in July 2024. This annual retreat, begun last year, strengthens the General Council as a team and orients its ministry of service. We encourage all unit councils to hold similar gatherings to renew purpose and deepen leadership.

IMRI scholars visit Via Latina to share Marian research



Neomi De Anda, professor and executive director of the International Marian Research Institute (IMRI) at the University of Dayton, and research professor Gloria Falcão Dodd recently visited Via Latina. While staying at the Curia during the XXVI Congresso Mariologico Mariano Internazionale in Rome, Sept. 3–7, they shared IMRI's work and met with scholars from around the world.



Founded in 1974, IMRI grew from the University of Dayton's Marian Library, established in 1943 to mark key Marianist milestones. The library became a respected resource for Marian scholarship, supporting IMRI's work in theology, devotion, historical Marian practices, and Mary's role in contemporary faith. Students and scholars study Marian artwork, explore historical devotion, and examine Mary's influence in different cultures.

Many Marianist religious and members of the Marianist Family have studied there, earning advanced degrees or certificates, contributing to scholarship and ministry—a voice we are honored to have and aim to continue.

IMRI shares its research through lectures, exhibits, symposia, its Marian Library Studies journal, and the podcast, "All Things Marian," produced with Radio Maria. This weekly series features experts, alumni, and friends of IMRI discussing Marianist topics, and listeners can access it and learn more about programs at <https://udayton.edu/centers/imri/index.php>

Visit of a Group of Young Teachers from Spain

On August 28, we received in our house at Via Latina 22 a group of 35 young teachers from the Marianist schools of Spain. They were accompanied by three Marianist religious: two of the provincial assistants, Fr. Paco Sales and Bro. Lander Gaztelumendi and Bro. Gustavo Pollon, from the community of Brazil.



The group of teachers and religious in front of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

This initiative of the Provincial Council responds to the calls of the last General Chapter on the pastoral care of young people, and consisted of a five-day pilgrimage to Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee.

During the visit to Via Latina they were able to visit the General Archive, guided by Fr. Antonio Gascón, S.M.. They also had meetings with the Secretary General, Bro. José Ignacio Iglesia, S.M. and the Assistant General for Religious Life, Fr. Pablo Rambaud, S.M.. Then the group celebrated the Eucharist together and enjoyed dinner on our splendid terrace.

41st Marianist World Day of Prayer



This year the **41stWorld Marianist Day of Prayer 2025** will be celebrated on **October 12, 2025**. On this day, the Marianist Family around the world unites in prayer before the image of **Our Lady Salus Populi Romani** in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. We do it together with all the pilgrims who visit the city and those who celebrate during these same days, in the Basilica, the Jubilee of Marian Spirituality.

We remind you that this Day will be celebrated on October 12. This day is also the last day of the novena (October 4-12) in thanksgiving for the 25th anniversary

of the beatification of Father Chaminade. As previously reported, it is proposed to use the prayer materials for this day, as the last day of the novena.

Marianist Rule of Life for a People of Saints

Father José María Salaverri (1926-2018) was elected XI^o Superior General in the Chapter of Linz (Austria), in 1981. It was at this chapter that the Marianist Rule of Life was drafted. He was given the task of making the new rule known, loved, and practiced. In Appendix XXXV of the Chapter document, the Chapter exhorted all Marianists to receive the Rule with both mind and heart. Intellectual knowledge was not enough. The new rule had to be received with faith and prayer, with an open disposition and not criticism. The Rule called for a conversion to the spirit of the Society of Mary. In short, it was a call from God to personal and community sanctification.

In fact, it was Father Salaverri's conviction that there could be no conciliar renewal without Marianist identity, nor without personal and collective holiness. He taught his religious that in order to live this new expression of the Marianist charism, which is the Rule of Life of 1983, holy religious are needed. This is what he stated in his first circular, significantly dated November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints: "The new Rule of Life needs saints"; and he will insistently exhort his religious to desire holiness. To this end, within the objectives of his office, he promoted the opening of new Causes of virtues and martyrdom of Marianist religious. To aid in this program, in 1982 he appointed Father Enrique Torres (b. 1934) as postulator. He opened the Causes of the Spanish Martyrs, Father Gapp, Faustino and Father Domingo Lázaro; in addition, he supported Father Joseph Verrier (1904-1993) in the task of drafting the Positios of Adele de Batz and Mademoiselle de Lamourous.

The 1983 Rule of Life teaches that the sanctity of consecrated life belongs equally to each religious as to the social and institutional body of the Institute. This is what we read in Article 33, where it is stated that "the consecrated life belongs inseparably to the holiness of the Church"; that "God loves us and calls us to holiness" to make "our lives, personally and communally, bear witness to a holy people"; and the following article, 34, explains that



"we live in community to bear witness to God's love, to reach holiness and to carry out our apostolic mission".

Canonized holiness is an expression of the holiness of the People of God; of those thousands and thousands of unknown saints next door, as Pope Francis said. For this reason, the Causes of Sainthood of the Marianist Postulator are only the tip of the iceberg of a people of saints. Let us dare to be holy; only in this way will the Causes of our venerables and blessed prosper.

G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notice: N. 16-19**
- **September 2:** *Walking the path of the 'Promise of Life' Letter #3*, in three languages, to all Marianist religious, sent by the General Council.
- **September 9:** *Marianist World Day of Prayer - October 12, 2025*, 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) 2026*, in three languages, sent to Assistants for Temporalities and Unit Leaders, from the Assistant General for Temporalities, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema, S.M.

G.A. Calendar

- **September 29 - October 30:** The General Council visits the Region of Eastern Africa