

LAVALLA WEEKEND 2017

The Annual LaValla Weekend is sponsored by the combined efforts of the Office of Marist Youth, the Office for the Promotion of New Members, the MBCE as well as this year's Bicentennial Committee.

Opening Gathering

On Friday night, Matt Fallon, Br. Owen and Scott Kuhner each welcomed the students to Esopus and introduced them to the program for the weekend. The Marist Young Adult team as well as students from Marist College were introduced as the group leaders for the program. Students from Archbishop Molloy, Central Catholic, Christopher Columbus, the East Harlem Youth Group, Marist Bayonne, Marist Chicago, Mount. St. Michael, St. Mary's, St. Joseph Academy, St. Joseph Montvale, and Roselle Catholic participated.



Panel Discussion on Refugees

Following the opening ceremony, Br. Dan and Br. Rick gave an overview of why the Marist Day of Service was chosen as the cornerstone event for students during our Bicentennial Celebration this year.

As a way of allowing the students to gain greater insights into some of the International Marist Projects that the Marist Day of Service will support, students

heard first hand stories from a panel of folks.

Tomas O'Riordan, a Marist Volunteer, shared stories about his month-long experience working with Refugees in McAllen, TX in January,

The Hallak Family from Aleppo, Syria shared their story and gave the students a history of the Blue Marists in Aleppo. The Hallak Family was part of the Blue Marist community for many years and survived the recent tragedies in their home country. They moved to NJ in October. The USA Province is grateful to welcome Joe, Carla, Karam and Lea Hallak to our USA Marist Family.

[Click here](#) to see part 1 of the powerpoint from the Hallak family presented, [Click here](#) to see part 2, [Click here](#) to see part 3.

Opening Prayer Service and Water Ritual

To end the first night of the retreat, Maureen Hagan guided the group through a beautiful night prayer service which included a water ritual. Every school group arrived with a bottle filled with water symbolic of their local areas. During the prayer, water from Esopus, the Gier River near l'Hermitage in France as well as from each school group was poured into a large bowl to symbolize our joint Marist heritage.



[Click here](#) to view the prayer service handout.

Morning Prayer with Br. Sean Sammon

Br. Sean Sammon offered a morning prayer and reflection which focused on how so many children in the world are being exploited and mistreated. He also spoke about how we as Marists are helping to fight these abuses in many places around the world including our work with the United Nations Office of Children's Rights.



Br. Sean with the Hallak Family of Aleppo

[Click here](#) to see Br. Sean's slideshow presentation.

Passages Simulation

For most of the day on Saturday, students and Marist Young Adults participated in a refugee simulation coordinated by Ed Kennedy, the Director of Outdoor Adventure Activities at the MBCE.

The refugee simulation was based off of "Passages", a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees simulation game. The simulation works by creating simplified yet dynamic models of realities while providing an effective way for participants to live-in and feel remote situations. "Passages" was designed to help create awareness, arouse emotions and encourage participants to be comfortable taking action on behalf of refugees.



Throughout the simulation program, students had numerous opportunities to debrief and share their insights and reflections. The program had a tremendous impact on the students and gave them a much deeper understanding of the difficulties and frustrations encountered each day by millions of people in our world.

[Click Here](#) to view pictures part one the Simulation experience.

[Click Here](#) to view pictures part two the Simulation experience.

Liturgy Celebration

Fr. Mike Ramos, from St. Joseph Parish in New Paltz, celebrated liturgy on Saturday night for everyone involved in the LaValla weekend. The mass continued to utilize the weekend theme of "Gathered around the LaValla table".



WHAT WE
NEED YOU TO
DO!

School Groups Challenged

Br. Dan and Erin Gilbert introduced the students to concrete ways they could take this experience back to their school communities and help facilitate the upcoming Marist Day of Service on Wednesday.

Each school group met for a planning session to finalize their school wide prayer service as part of the National

Day of Service as well as strategize how they will engage as many students as possible to participate in the social media campaign **#maristdayofservice** on Wednesday.

Saturday Night Prayer



To close Saturday night Matt Fallon and Br. Owen led a Champagnat themed night prayer which challenged the students to dream as Champagnat dreamed and to dare to change the world as the Marists of tomorrow.

Final Commissioning Ceremony

Matt Fallon and Br. Dan led the final commissioning ceremony Sunday morning. Each school was presented with a handmade Marist Cross to be utilized during their upcoming prayer service for the Marist National Day of Service on Wednesday. Each school also received a small bottle of water from the bowl of the collective waters from all of our Marist communities that was gathered during the opening prayer service. The students were sent off as the official Ambassadors for the Marist Day of Service for their individual schools.



Pictures of Each School Group

[Click here](#) to see individual group pictures of each school that attended the LaValla Weekend.



FOLLOW #MARISTDAYOFSERVICE!!

 Like us on Facebook

Follow us on [twitter](#)