

Central Europe - Visit of Brother Superior General to Romania

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The beginning of spring coincided this year, for us, with a special visit that Brothers Armin Luistro, Superior General of the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Schools, Christopher Patiño, General Councillor of the Congregation and Sergio Leal, Executive Secretary of the General Council made in Romania in the two Lasallian communities and centres from Pildești and Iași. An important and honourable visit for us, which must be included in the program that the Brother Superior General and his Council have proposed for this school year 2022-2023 for the five Regions of the Institute.

Along with Brothers Armin, Christopher, and Sergio, we were happy to have in our midst Julia Mayer, from Austria, as responsible for the Lasallian Educational Mission at District level, Br. Peter Magac, from Slovakia, as Auxiliary Visitor and Br. Gregor Fietko, also from Slovakia as District Councillor.

The visit to the Romania Sector took place between March 1 and 4. On Wednesday, March 1, our guests arrived in Iași and stayed in the community of the Brothers. Thursday, March 2, the entire day was dedicated to visiting our High School and the educational community from Pildești. After the traditional welcome with bread and salt, Brother Armin accompanied by the other guests went down to the gym where the entire educational community was gathered: students, teachers, auxiliary teaching, and non-teaching staff. The student representative in the School's Board, Gherghel Andreea, welcomed the guests and two other student representatives handed them flowers and a beautiful symbol of spring — a Mărțișor*. The six guests addressed the students, thanking them for the warm welcome and wishing them success in school and in life.

The dialogue with the students continued in the classrooms and workshops of the school. Divided into three teams, our guests, accompanied by the headmaster of the school, Iștoc Cristina, Brothers Jose Maria, Daniel and Vicențiu and the

English teacher Alina Enea Blaj, were able to make direct contact with the students during class hours, either in the classrooms or in the school workshops or in the gym.

The visit of the distinguished guests continued with a meeting attended by representatives of the entire educational and local community: students, teachers, members of the Board, members of the Signum Fidei Fraternity, the mayor of Cordun, Ciobanu Adrian and the Vicar of the parish community from Pildești, Fr Gabriel Iulian Cociangă. After a brief presentation of the activities carried out in the high school by the principal, a “Lasallian conversation” followed, during which Brother Armin, Christopher and Sergio answered the questions of those present. The mayor, taking the floor, emphasized the importance of the presence of the Brothers’ community and the high school both for the village of Pildești and for the surrounding villages. Brother Armin appreciated the fact that the entire local and parish community joins their efforts in supporting the Lasallian educational work and encouraged those present to continue carrying on this educational mission that their forefathers preserved at the cost of their lives, in the period of persecution of communism. Also, Brother Armin reminded those present that the educational centre in Pildești is part of a wider network of schools and educational centres present in almost 80 countries and invited them to take advantage of this aspect of internationality. Before returning to Iasi, the guests visited the new parish church, Father Vicar Gabriel giving explanations and answering the questions.

Thursday’s program continued in Iasi, where Brother Armin had the opportunity to meet the 7 beneficiaries of the La Salle Family House Project accompanied by their educators. The dialogue with them was a suitable opportunity to find out directly from them what are the topics that interest them and to answer some of their curiosities related to the cultural specifics of the countries of origin of Brothers Armin, Sergio, and Christopher.

During the morning of Friday, March 3, Brothers Armin, Christopher, and Sergio, accompanied by Br. Vicențiu, visited the Bishop of the Diocese of Iași, His Excellency Iosif Păuleț. Bishop Emeritus Petru Gherghel, affiliate of the Institute, and Auxiliary Bishop Petru Sescu also participated in the meeting. During the discussions, the activities of the Brothers from the two centres in Pildești and Iași were mentioned, as well as their involvement in parish activities, especially in animating the scout group in Pildești and in first communion and confirmation

catechesis. The visit of the two cathedral churches, as well as the Museum dedicated to Blessed Anton Durcovici, martyr of the faith, former student of the Brothers, at the Archbishop's Schools in Bucharest, crowned this fraternal visit.

Friday's program also included two meetings, a first meeting with the educators of the La Salle Family House project and the second meeting with the Brothers from the two communities, as well as with the members of the District Council and the District Educational Mission Council.

Brother Armin listened carefully to the topics discussed, appreciated the activities that take place at the level of the two centres and at the level of the District and urged those present to continue analysing what are the most urgent needs specific to the areas where these Lasallian works are located and to provide an answer as appropriate as possible to them.

At the end of the meeting, we had the joy of having in our midst Mr. Karl Kempf Delacote, one of our very important benefactors. Mr. Karl, together with the CarElveția Foundation, has been supporting the high school in Pildesti for several years and annually offers scholarships for our graduates who want to continue their studies after finishing high school and do not have sufficient financial resources to continue them.

Saturday, March 4, before returning to Paris, Brothers Armin, Christopher and Sergio, Peter, Gregor, and Julia, accompanied by Brothers Juan and Vicențiu, visited the Cetățuia monastery, from Iasi, an Orthodox monastery of monks, founded in the century XVII by voivode Gheorghe Duca. This short visit gave our guests the opportunity to get in touch with the Orthodox tradition and worship, which is the majority in Romania (85.3%). Since the monastery is located on a high hill, you can see a beautiful panorama of the city of Iași.

The presence of Brothers Armin, Christopher and Sergio in our midst was for all of us a sign of fraternity and communion with the entire Institute. The encouragements received help us to look with more hope into the future and urge us to be open to the needs of those entrusted to us in the Lasallian educational mission and to make the most suitable decisions for the perpetuation of this mission that continues to last for more than 160 years in our country.

** Mărțișor is a traditional festival celebrating the beginning of spring corresponding to 1 March. It is celebrated in Romania, Moldavia, Bulgaria, North*

Macedonia and Greece. The name is derived from the diminutive of 'March' and has the meaning of 'little' or 'dear March'.