

Franz Kangler CM, former head of the Lazarist St. George's college in Istanbul

Obituary text

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Franz Kangler, priest of the Congregation for the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul (Lazarists), was born on May 27, 1950 in Graz (Austria). At an early age, he was an acolyte and employee in the parish of St. Vinzenz in his home-town. He graduated in 1968 from the Pestalozzi Realgymnasium. In the same year, he joined the community of Lazarists. In 1969, after a one-year novitiate, he began studying Catholic theology as well as English studies at the University of Graz, achieving a double magisterium for teaching in secondary schools. On June 30th, 1974, he was ordained priest by Bishop Johann Weber. On September 1st, 1977, he started teaching English at the St. George's College in Istanbul. In 1983, he became the superior of the Lazarist community and was also appointed as director of the Austrian St. George's College. From 1994 to 2003, he served as Provincial of the Austrian Lazarist Province. In 2010, he retired as College director, remaining the representative of the Lazarist tutelage of the Institute. In appreciation of his longstanding services, he received the honorary decoration for services to the Republic of Austria, after also being honored by the state of Styria. In 2015, he was elected as the first Provincial of the newly established Austro-German Province. In 2018, he resigned prematurely from his position as provincial due to health reasons (several chronic diseases). On Tuesday, February 23rd, 2021, at the age of 70, in his 53rd year of a spiritual journey as a Lazarist, he passed away in his room at the Lazarist priory in Istanbul.

Franz Kangler has always shown a deep attachment to his second homeland: Turkey, where he had been called to work since the beginning of his life as a Lazarist. Getting to know this country and trying to understand its cultural peculiarities, to better respect its rules, was an essential element of his daily approach to his work. For Kangler, fulfilling the educational mission, which is part of the Lazarist charisma, meant tirelessly building cultural bridges. He never denied his Austrian origins, which he proudly claimed. However, for him, the borders were made to be crossed as the premise of great enrichment.

He lived the same passion for diversity, or the importance of building relationships and interchange in interreligious and ecumenical relations. The rigorous respect of the secular nature of the educational institution that he directed for many years, did not make him forget the importance of providing the students access to learning about the religious traditions of their families and to more easily perceive the richness of religious diversity in a "city-continent" like Istanbul. As for ecumenism, he was foremost a tireless animator of inter-

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community relations between the German-speaking, Catholic and Lutheran congregations in Istanbul. He was also a very faithful participant in the itinerant prayers of the World Week for Christian Unity, knowing fully well that the spiritual dimension is the foundation for any other type of collaboration and sharing.

Franz Kangler died in the middle of the Covid-19 Pandemic, a particularly critical time for Turkey. His fragile state of health over the last few years forced him to take physical distancing very seriously. He could only suffer from it internally. Despite this, he was probably able to recognize the need to preserve that respectful otherness which is a condition for any possible dialogue.