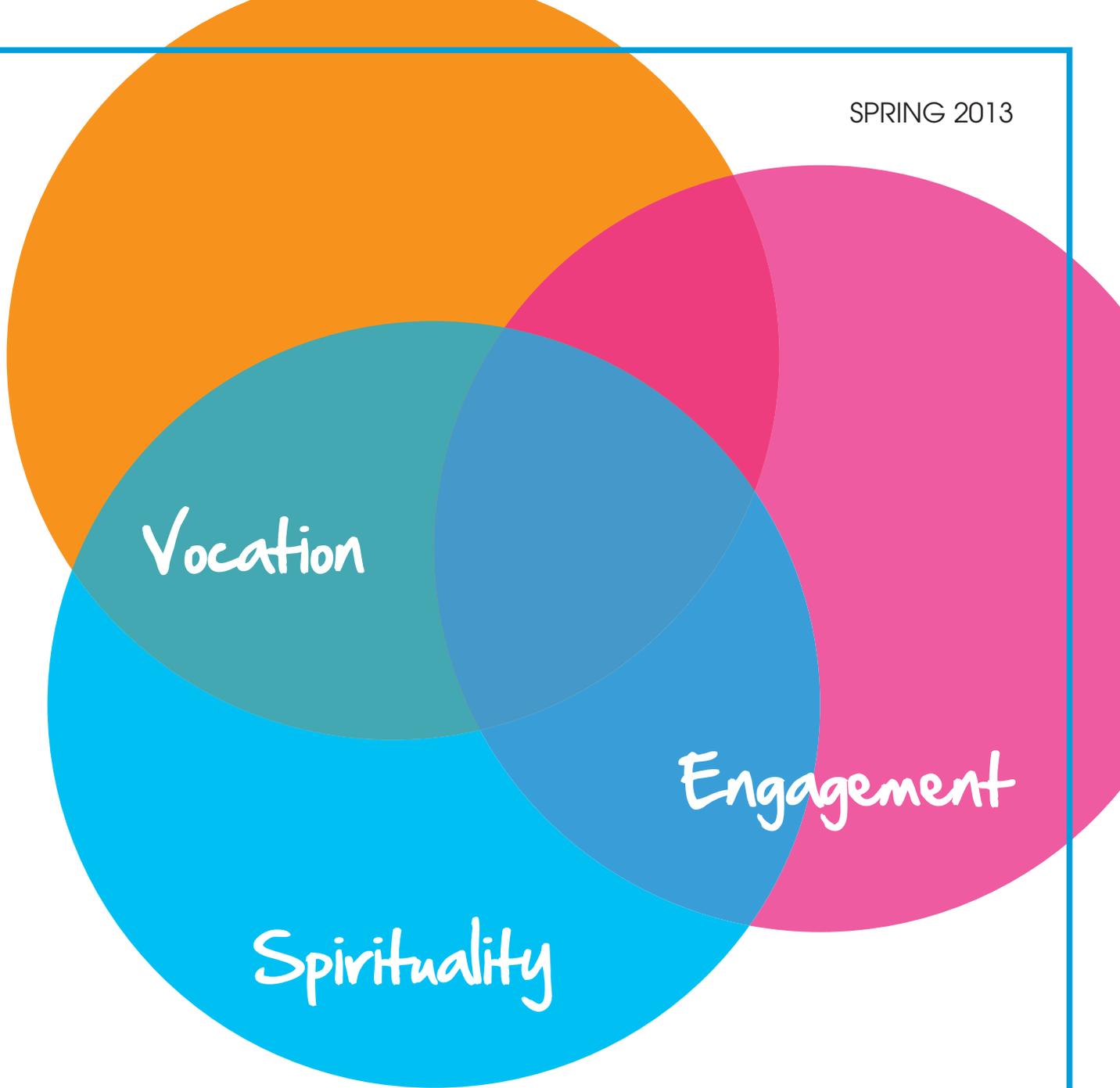


SPRING 2013



# CHAMPAGNAT

AN INTERNATIONAL MARIST JOURNAL OF CHARISM IN EDUCATION

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Feature Articles:

Doers of the Word: Reflections on a Visit to Notre Dame de l'Hermitage  
Living Portraits of Marcellin Champagnat

*Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education*  
aims to assist its readers to integrate charism into education in a way that gives great life  
and hope. Marists provide one example of this mission.

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# Champagnat

An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education

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## EDITORIAL:

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### **The Cairns Conference: Reflection on Brother Emili Turu's Presentation**

**G**od is nowhere. It was confronting to see the Superior General of the Marist brothers display this on a large screen at the recent inaugural Marist Schools Australia conference in Cairns. In his usual quiet but challenging way Br Emili made us all pull up short. As a group of two hundred Marists, mostly working in education, we were all definitely in the wrong business if God is indeed nowhere.

Having grabbed our attention Br Emili took on the task of stilling and focusing the large group in the conference centre, taking it to a meditative place within. He encouraged us to calm our minds, clear our thoughts and create the Shekinah- the space where God can enter. He wound this meditative space into his discussion with us about interiority so we not only heard about it, we experienced it. The reality of making this space and time for God to enter and for us to listen, waiting to hear whatever might come was almost mystical. In a setting such as a conference, where the expectation is that there will be constant talk and external input, to sit silently in our own space and simply give God the opportunity to speak to us without the noise of everyday life, was an unexpected delight. I have no idea what whisperings others at the conference heard, or what moved them, it did not become a point of sharing, it was simply a sacred time of sitting and being present with God and impacted on each of us differently. Br Emili encouraged us to take the time to "find what God has written on your heart and follow it".

The meditation session put us in right brain mode or the present, through the narrow gate that leads to life and focuses us on the now. We were encouraged to see contemplation as a means to develop ourselves further, not some additional burden or task to slot into our days. Along with meditation spiritual intelligence is an area that he encouraged us to explore, to remember that "In God we live and move and exist". I have since learnt that the four quadrants of Spiritual Intelligence in general terms are: Higher Self / Ego self-Awareness, Universal Awareness, Higher Self / Ego self-Mastery and Spiritual Presence / Social Mastery and I can see and value all these things in so many aspects of life.

Of course Br Emili was not going to leave the delegates in this contemplative state. His point being that this interiority for its own sake is lacking, it should lead to action. He made us question "What can we offer to a community of faith? What am I ready to give to build this community?" To help bring about this Community of faith we were encouraged to think about what we could

STOP, START or CONTINUE to do. He reminded us that Mary, the first apostle, brought Jesus to others through service. It was not for her about power, control or self-aggrandisement, she simply knew it was important for others to know and love Jesus. She committed her life to this and Br Emili, as is the Marist way, offered her as a model to us of this selfless service.

This led him to "The Church of The Apron". This is a call to action, to 'do something' particularly for the young, marginalised and disadvantaged. We were asked to take a view of the world from below- to imagine ourselves in the same position as Jesus when he washed the feet of the apostles with same sense of selflessness and service that this implies.

The group were left with many images to ponder; the Pentecost icon where Mary seems to preside over the apostles and the Visitation Icon where Mary is already taking Jesus out to others to share the good news when she visits her cousin Elizabeth. A simple glass of water became a metaphor for Religion and Spirituality : spirituality the water and religion the receptacle. These were all images that the delegates spoke of during breaks and considered at great length. Brother also reminded us that faith and spirituality are like a labyrinth. Such an apt image, a labyrinth is a journey which is not linear, it is not possible to see clearly where we are going, sometimes we are close to the heart of the labyrinth and sometimes on the outer edge, but we have a clear understanding that although we cannot see all the twists and turns in the journey we know that there is an ultimate destination and purpose to our journey.

After taking us on a tour through meditation, icons and symbols, Brother returned to "God is nowhere." We had experienced making space for God, opening a narrow gap to explore our interior life and what we found was that with just a little space, GOD IS NOW HERE.

The time with Brother Emili was rich, reminding us of our collective Marist work and personally challenging us to be responsible for taking action where we see need. At the conclusion of the conference we were given an unusual gift: an apron. The apron is symbolic of the work we need to do, that building our interior life is not enough, having made space for God we now need to act. As always with Br Emili, we were left with a strong sense of being co-workers in the Marist mission and challenged to go where the need is greatest.

**Lee McKenzie**

## CONTRIBUTORS:

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**Lee McKenzie** is a Senior Teacher and member of the College Leadership Team at Lavalla Catholic College in Traralgon, Victoria. She has held many roles at the college including those of English Coordinator and that of Head of Campus at the St Paul's site. Lee is a member of the Management Committee for the Champagnat Journal; and in this edition she reflects on the presentation made by Brother Emili Turu, the current Superior General of the Marist Brothers, at the Australian Marist Education Conference held recently in Cairns. Lee reflects particularly on Emili's comments on 'interiorization', a process that is central to all of us who place emphasis on the spiritual dimension of our lives and our work.

**Des Connelly** is a former Editor of the Champagnat Journal, former Principal and Lecturer in Education at the tertiary level. In this edition he reflects on his recent visit to Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in France. The paper not only brings back memories for those that have made a pilgrimage to the 'cradle of the Institute', but it is excellent reading for those who followed the recent renovations and changes to the centre, or who might be planning a pilgrimage in the near future. Above all of these thoughts, is the fact that such a pilgrimage touches us in a special way, and this is certainly reflected in this paper.

**Jeffrey Crowe FMS**, is a former District Superior of what is now the District of Melanesia; he is a former member of the General Council, a former Rector of the Marist Asia Pacific Centre in Manila, and a former Provincial of the Sydney Province. He is now the Provincial of the new Australian Marist Province. In his paper titled "Living Portraits of Marcellin Champagnat" he reflects on a number of individuals that have made an outstanding contribution to Marist life and ministry in recent years. This inspirational paper offers us good advice for our own lives and ministries in the Marist community.

**Tony Paterson FMS**, reflects on Chapters 9 to 11 of St Paul's Letter to the Romans. The paper titled "Paul's Hope for Israel" provides some valuable background for those Marists who teach Scripture in our schools. If we understand what Paul is saying, by way of a starting point, we have a guarantee that any class discussion with senior students on Israel and the current situation in the Middle East, will be far more effective and fruitful for all concerned.

Two books are reviewed by the Editor of the Champagnat Journal, Tony Paterson. The book by Tim Fischer provides excellent background for the Marist pilgrim that might have the opportunity to spend a day or two in Rome. The second book by Sister Maria Casey, a Josephite Sister, provides some excellent canonical points for any organization seeking to establish an Association of Christ's Faithful – something on the Australian Marist agenda at this time.

### THANK YOU

Our gratitude to those that have contributed papers to this edition, and to the proof-readers and to those that have assisted with the peer-review process. The Management Committee.

DESMOND CONNELLY

## Doers of the Word

### Reflections on a Visit to Notre Dame de l'Hermitage

*He who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets, but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing. (James 1, 25.)*

Over almost two hundred years a valley near the town of Saint Chamond in France has been enshrined in the lore of the Marist Brothers. Built on that site with the physical involvement of its early members, the first Mother House of the Institute epitomised in many ways the singular qualities of the founder. Over generations since, by one means or another, many people closely acquainted with the Brothers, have gained at least a mental image of the surroundings. It includes wooded slopes rising sharply on the eastern and western sides of a valley floor, with a swift, narrow stream splitting it and flowing virtually beneath buildings that hug a precipitous wall of craggy rock. Welcome to 'The Hermitage' of Marcellin Champagnat, simple rural priest, man of vision, builder, saint.

How might Marist pilgrims today respond when the image yields to the actual experience of finding themselves in this hallowed ground? Their answers are likely to be diverse, depending on the degree to which they are receptive, inquiring, questioning, informed, reflective – or a mix of some of these. Some will be struck by an aspect that appeals to them as a special feature of the Centre and will retain it as a dominant and rewarding impression of their visit. Nostalgia or sentiment may lead others to an idealised picture of an earlier era. For many there will be a person, a word, a sight, an event that acts like the lifting of a veil. What was seen in vague outline comes into sharper focus. With that clearer perspective there comes an insight into and an appreciation of a precious part of Marist heritage having personal significance for the individual pilgrim.

#### LA VALLA TO THE HERMITAGE

Guided by members of the Hermitage community pilgrims can go further afield to visit places of special significance in the life of St. Marcellin. Back at the Centre they can also learn from the displays and exhibits of the *Parcours Champagnat*. They may also find it rewarding to take the sloping ascent to the graveyard that looks out over a good deal of the surrounds. It is an engaging sight. The complex of buildings along with extensive level

stretches of gravelled avenues, grassy spaces and gardens nestle in the encircling arms of steeply rising wooded hills. Up the valley to the south the relatively benign landscape progressively yields to the equally attractive but inhospitable approaches to Mount Pilat. Seven kilometres away is the small town of La Valla servicing a district of sudden variations in altitude between 440 and 1390 metres. Marcellin's first biographer described it as "abrupt declivities, rocks and precipices... where hamlets were almost inaccessible for want of passable roads". Even today finding a relatively direct route can prove an unrealistic and indeed hazardous venture. To this unwelcoming parish the newly ordained Father Champagnat came as curate. An unlikely spot, it was the cradle of the Institute he founded.

Within half a dozen years Marcellin's association of Brothers gave promise of outgrowing its first home. Foreseeing much greater expansion the founder was attracted to the present Hermitage location as a more suitable headquarters. Comprising 5 acres it was comfortably large, but many would have considered the collage of "woods, scrub, rocks, field" quite uninviting. To Marcellin there were 3 major features in its favour: while somewhat secluded it was near a sizable town (Saint Chamond), it had a good supply of running water, and especially it was cheap. A grant from the archdiocese was used to make the first purchase, and perhaps also to pay for the acquisition shortly after of an additional 1.3 acres. Generations of Marists have tamed and shaped this land. It now takes a discerning eye to appreciate the gruelling labour entailed in the task.

#### OPPOSITION AND SUPPORT

Through much of his relatively short life as priest and founder Marcellin had to confront strong opposition. It came not only from those who pitted themselves against his work for unworthy motives, but also from people of good will. Painfully for Marcellin some of the latter were friends and supporters who doubted the prudence of expansion beyond the local region. Early in 1822, when the young priest's association numbered only eight Brothers, the apparently providential arrival of eight recruits from Velay 60 km. away had been followed by the early departure of five of them. Before the year was out a further twenty had presented themselves from the same

area. Being barely literate these mountain youths needed lengthy formation before they could take on teaching responsibilities. Observers must have wondered how long they would stay. Some months later ten further potential recruits from another locality promptly decided that the Brothers of Mary were not for them. Not surprisingly even people with good intentions feared that the inexperienced curate's project would fail and considerable harm would ensue. But despite warning and remonstrance Marcellin pushed vigorously ahead.

Nevertheless, he could not have undertaken and completed this first stage of the Hermitage project without the backing of generous and influential supporters. They included the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese and his advisers, particular priests, certain local government bodies, and some well disposed friends. In 1825, less than a year after construction started and eight years after the La Valla foundation, the Hermitage building was ready for occupancy. Ten postulants moved in along with 20 Brothers in various stages of formation. The Institute comprised in addition twenty-four teaching Brothers spread over eleven schools. Such facts underscore the faith and indeed obstinacy of Father Champagnat.

Today the scene from the vantage point of the cemetery is often peaceful. But in Marcellin's time, especially during the summer months when the schools were closed, there was considerable activity designed to support the community. In addition to ongoing construction, the occupants were engaged in silk weaving, making of ribbon and cloth, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, farming, milling, baking and of course the original La Valla occupation of nail making. More important, however, was the less conspicuous work of guiding zealous young men of simple piety towards a more strongly based religious commitment. A major factor in this regard was the instruction and especially the example of the saintly priest who was for them Superior, inspiration and guide.

### WORRIES AND ADVERSITY

Although for some Marcellin at first seemed somewhat intimidating, on closer acquaintance he revealed the kind of personality that wins respect, admiration and affection. A major contributor to his success, it has been claimed, was an ability to relate to all classes of people and communicate with them at their level. To those who came to know him he soon revealed a profound spirituality and a lively awareness of being called to demonstrate God's presence in the world. This combination of qualities exerted a powerful attraction. For example, a year before the Hermitage project was undertaken, when strong opposition led the beleaguered priest to think of seeking a different mission overseas, the Brothers in a body expressed their determination to stay with him wherever he went.

The Hermitage might be seen as a triumph over adversity. However, the impact of such adversity should not be underrated. It came in many forms. The turmoil of the times threw up inter-related political and church conflicts that at times frustrated his efforts at the local level and were a likely major cause of the failure of his attempts to gain official recognition of his Institute. With regard to finance Marcellin may have been less worried than many would have been about his substantial debts. But he must have been concerned that supporters like the Council of the Archbishop considered the financial state of the Hermitage "deplorable". His almost fatal illness over the Christmas period 1825-26 led to insistent demands from creditors for repayments that could not be made. Marcellin would have learned eventually that he owed not only his partially restored health but also the appeasement of creditors to the remarkable Brother Stanislas.

There were plenty of worries of other kinds. One troublesome set came from a fellow priest, a friend and collaborator. Perversely he was also an inveterate meddler. His actions drove even the most committed of the Brothers close to rebellion. The Superior's first disciple, Jean-Marie Granjon, was another ongoing concern. A year or so after the completion of the Hermitage he had to be eased out of the Institute. Around the same time other highly regarded foundation members decided to leave.

Compounding his pain about this situation was sorrow over the deaths of young Brothers, more than forty of whom pre-deceased him and are commemorated in the cemetery established as early as 1827. Moreover, as effectively the youngest child of the large Champagnat family, Marcellin experienced the grief of the deaths of siblings and close relatives, as well as pressing concerns about the situations of others. Finally there was his own health which most saw as essential to the continuation of the Institute. It was increasingly weakened by his frugal lifestyle, his enthusiasm for physical labour outdoors regardless of weather conditions, his spartan journeys often on foot and over difficult terrain to visit the Brothers in their schools, and the constant nagging worry over his eventually fruitless attempts to gain official recognition for his Institute.

### DRIVING FORCE

The Hermitage building completed in 1825 was far from being the only structure Father Champagnat completed on the site. Indeed for most of the next fifteen years that part of the valley witnessed construction work in which he was often personally involved. At the same time the formation of Brothers and new recruits along with the foundation of additional schools advanced steadily. As the compilers of the Marist Chronology have emphasised, the brief period of 23 years that saw the

foundation and initial development of the Institute was one of concentrated activity and extremely rapid change. The driving force was Marcellin, in the eyes of many no more than a homespun peasant priest, but to those who knew him a man of unwavering faith, doggedly pursuing what he saw as God's work. In 1840 at age 51 he died, his weakened body consumed by his tireless spirit. By that year the Institute had grown to comprise 280 Brothers and 48 schools.

Marcellin's mortal remains are now held in an attractive reliquary in the colourfully attractive chapel of the Hermitage. Is he present in any other way? From one perspective he has moved to scores of countries around the world. In these places Brothers and members of numerous lay Marist movements, associations and groups, inspired by him, are working for education and social justice for the young in general and for the most neglected in particular. However, from the vantage point of the 1827 burial ground on the hill, many will see the environs tinged with a unique Champagnat quality. A multiplicity of images contributes to produce this impression. All stem from the reality that Marcellin instructed, inspired, laboured, suffered and died here. Looking south up the valley visitors may remember how as curate and later Superior of the Brothers he forced himself to fatiguing journeys to care for his charges. They may well recall his words: "Many a step have I taken on these mountains, many a shirt have I soaked with sweat along these roads." Yet in his mind's eye this extraordinary man looked beyond such a confined environment declaring that "all the dioceses of the world figure in our plans".

How many idealistic young men came to the Hermitage and were overwhelmed by the founder's evident holiness, enthused with his apostolic and educational zeal, and formed by his affection, patience and firmness. The orphan Jean-Baptiste Berne is a moving example. In 1820 Father Champagnat adopted into his infant association of Brothers this nine-year old street urchin. Fractious and insolent he was too much to handle for the small group of early Brothers. They urged their Superior to send him away. Marcellin, for whom such action would mean abandoning the boy to a dubious future, persuaded the Brothers to keep trying to win him over, and shortly the boy totally changed his behaviour. At his earnest request he was admitted to the community. Nurtured by Marcellin over the following eight years, he

proved to be an exemplary religious, but died aged only nineteen. Under the name Nilamon he is one of the many early Brothers recorded on a plaque in the simple graveyard.

### INDOMITABLE FAITH

Brother Sylvestre was another youthful entrant to the Institute. Entering the Novitiate at age 12 he was slow to mature from being an incorrigible prankster. But the Superior and senior men such as the much admired Stanislas tolerated his behaviour, rightly discerning below the surface his solid qualities. He held positions of responsibility throughout his religious life, was close to the founder for the nine years preceding the latter's death, and importantly compiled a lengthy account of his personal experience of Marcellin. In many ways the Hermitage testifies that the founder was an eminently practical man, a doer. But reflecting on the life of his venerated Superior Sylvestre concluded that an indomitable faith motivated and pervaded all he did. It was not the kind of faith described by the apostle James as "barren". Rather it was faith so linked with works as to display a wholehearted response to the injunction of James: "Be doers of the word, not hearers only." How could it be otherwise? Devoted to the Blessed Mother as he was, Marcellin was impelled by the example of Mary of the Visitation to bring Christ to his neighbour. Ever ringing in heart and mind he had the counsel of Mary of Cana with regard to Christ: "Do whatever he tells you." With Paul the saintly founder could say: "...the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

He was at first buried in the 1827 cemetery with dozens of young men who had also fought the good fight and had died holding firmly to the faith he had instilled. In a sense all were nail makers, hammering out a template to guide the apostolic work of future generations. Looking over this sacred resting place, where scores of Brothers of Mary now rest, Marists from every corner of the globe may well reflect that "they fought to forge my life". Going back down the slope towards the structures that Marcellin built pilgrims may ask themselves if he is in any way still here. Then perhaps they will sense the abiding presence of a mighty doer of the word. And, if they listen for it, they may hear, echoing from the surrounding hills, the beating of a heart that truly knew no borders.

JEFFREY CROWE

# Living Portraits of Marcellin Champagnat

*The following paper was presented by Br Jeffrey Crowe, Provincial of the Australian Marist Province at the Marist Schools Australia Conference in Cairns of this year.*

## SERVANDO MAYOR

I can still hear the voice of Br **Servando Mayor** from a refugee camp of Rwandans in Zaire/Congo in October 1996. He was making an appeal over a satellite telephone to a radio journalist in Spain. New military activity in the area had caused panic among the 100,000 plus refugees who had consequently fled into the forests.



The voice of a Brother, Servando, murdered the day after this interview. It was an extreme sacrifice in extreme circumstances. He was mid-forties, formerly deputy provincial and school principal. A book about this tragedy was given the title, “Amaron hasta el final” - They loved until the end. For Servando and his three Brothers who suffered the same fate, the choice to stay and be ready to serve the refugees was a matter of love not of ideology or political bias. These desperate people were their brothers and sisters, ones who had asked, “Will you also abandon us?”

None of us will, please God, have to be in such a situation or face such a choice. Servando and his three companions did not choose to die, any more than Br Henri Vergès, killed by Islamic radicals in the Casbah of Algiers. They had volunteered for a mission to be the “instruments of God’s love” in the way of St Marcellin in places of high risk. They have been described as “martyrs of love”.

I start this reflection with this recollection because they were our contemporaries, because I was there as a background figure in their story, and because “extremes” help us to focus on essentials. Champagnat-figures make sacrifices, putting the well-being of others before their own.

Also these events occurred in the years immediately preceding the writing and publication of the text, “In the Footsteps” on our Marist vision of education. Lives and deaths such as I have mentioned influenced the vision

even if the text does not contain the passion. These men, like Champagnat, were deeply moved by the circumstances of others, by the desire to be more than spectators of the dramas of our time, and by the story and power of Jesus as God-among-us.

So we come to the article in the text that speaks of school and ministry leaders.

## ALL CALLED TO BE LEADERS

#163. In a special way, **our school administrators** are challenged to be people of vision: to articulate and live by our core Marist values and lead others in living by them. More than anyone else, they are the Champagnat figures for the school community, leading with confidence and optimism, and modelling Marist apostolic spirituality.

Words are limited in comparison to personal stories in communicating the insight and invitation here. Vision itself is a tricky word: encompassing everything between dreams and inspiration to projects and prophetic action. It is better captured in real life. Who has been a Champagnat-figure for me?

## CHARLES HOWARD

“Be a Champagnat for today!”

This was Charles’ message as Superior General on the occasion of the bicentenary of Marcellin Champagnat’s birth in 1989.

Each person counted for Charles. His students knew this from his interaction with them in his days as a teacher. He got to know each one and spoke in a caring way that embodied the maxim, “If you want to educate a child, you must love him or her and you must love them all equally.” His Brothers knew this as well as did his friends. In spite of his huge list of correspondents across the world, his messages were nonetheless personalised.



As Principal he seized the moment to provide a solid curriculum and to review educational practices in the light of social and cultural changes. He enthused his co-workers, students and families with his vision. He undertook structural change where others baulked. Audacity and hope were favourite words for him.

He led Marist educators through post-Vatican debates in a way that did not divide. Later he succeeded in maintaining the unity of the Provinces, especially in South America, that were in danger of dividing over the focus of our mission and the place of the poor. His words were clear and prophetic but his gift was his empathy for all, his humour and his story-telling that defused situations and were parable-like.

He had a great ability to focus on what was essential, particularly when it came to mission and vocation. His love for Jesus was evident. Jesus' mission was his. It was also ours as a Marist community. He spoke of his delight in seeing Lay people take up Marist spirituality and mission as their own. As General he initiated the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family and the Champagnat Sisters, las Hermanitas.

He commissioned a new painting for the General House by Goyo that captured his vision.



Throughout his life he was serious about his own formation. He read widely. He chose carefully particular programs that strengthened his ability to emerging questions. He placed great value on the practice of discernment, especially the Review of the Day for himself, and in relation to the Signs of the times. He was a great believer in the action of the Holy Spirit.

To the end he was a person of extraordinary thoughtfulness and kindness, a man of deep passion and compassion, a source of strength for those struggling with life.

Charles was no wimp when it came to expressing himself. At the 1997 General Conference of Provincials when the draft "Footsteps" text was being discussed, he

told me as editor that he feared that we had risked a mis-reading of Marcellin's charism by not listing "solidarity" or "love of the poor" as one of the distinctive characteristics of Marist ministry.

At this draft stage in the writing, the phrase "especially the least favoured" was addressed in the final chapter dealing with "other social ministries". It could be read as an add-on to the mainstream Marist activity of schools. The Provincials demanded a more central and integrated place for the phrase in our vision statement. "Especially the least favoured" is not an add-on. It is at the heart of Marcellin's charism, the prompting of the Spirit that impels us as well.

The result was the final "vision statement" of Marist Education in the Champagnat tradition:

*Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat,  
Brothers and Laypeople,  
together in mission, in the Church and in the world,  
among the young, especially the most neglected,  
we are sowers of the Good News,  
with a distinctive Marist style,  
in schools  
and  
in other pastoral and social ministries.  
We face the future with audacity and hope.*

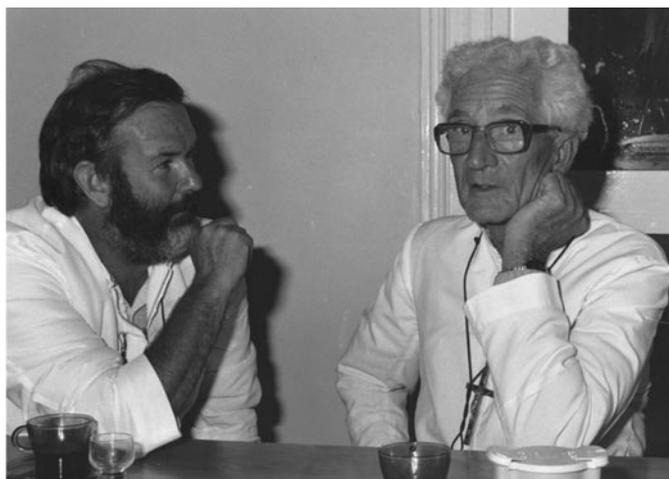
This vision, with its sharpened focus on the "most neglected", is foundational for our future as it has been for our past. Another Australian Marist leader showed us this in a special way.

#### CLETUS READ

One woman said, "When he came I was a cleaner. He taught me and now I'm a teacher." A man said, "He taught me to stand and be proud". Words of grateful people at Santa Teresa, 80 km out of Alice Springs, when Cletus died. Revealing words.

For thirty five years Cletus taught in ten different schools and was Principal of three of them. From 1972-1977 Brother Cletus was the Provincial of the Melbourne Province. If that was not enough, he then began what became 18 years in ministry among the aboriginal people at Santa Teresa.

Along the way he assumed many roles: sportsmaster, dormitory master, choirmaster, and specialist teacher; then leader of Schools, leader of his Brothers. He developed a strong and determined attitude to life during this time, as well as a dry sense of humour. He relished the chance as



leader to use his initiative and try out his own ideas. He was a man before his time in many ways and had an interior sensitivity that was masked by a cool exterior. His independent streak gave him the courage to break with tradition where he saw that tradition was no longer relevant.

He described his time as Provincial as a most enriching experience. He saw it as a time of personal spiritual growth and a time when he developed a greater awareness of the limitations of the human condition, primarily in himself, but also in others. It was the time when the local churches were trying to put into action the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council, a time of change and division, a time for courageous decisions. For example, he made a deliberate decision as Provincial to co-operate fully with the newly-established Catholic Education Offices that were being established around the country and appointed a new group of young principals to deal with these new demands in the school scene.

He made a conscious choice to go to Central Australia in 1978. He had a happy life at Santa Teresa. In fact, in 1990 he wrote to the Provincial saying "my thirteen years in the desert have been incredibly happy and rewarding." But it certainly wasn't a comfortable life by Western standards. He knew that solidarity meant to be with those among whom he had been sent. He loved the people of Santa Teresa, and they loved him. He contributed to the life of the community wherever he thought he could make a difference. It was not long before he was using his skills as a teacher and became the on-site teacher for the Batchelor Institute of Adult Education.

There were times when he sounded like an Old Testament prophet, "It is so easy to be insincere about making a preferential option for the poor. Speeches of indignation: emotional outpourings of sympathy; even prayer calling on God to redress the forces causing injustices. These can be no more than cynical posturing unless accompanied by action. Preferential option for the poor is sincere only when reflection leads to conversion

of heart and to action taken to promote the brotherhood of all through core changes in values and in attitude and in behaviour." (Br Cletus Read, September 1994)

Cletus lived a full life and one that was richly blessed. He loved his vocation as a Marist and modelled himself on the boldness of our Founder, Marcellin Champagnat. He had many hurdles in his life - some were put there by others, some were of his own making. Nonetheless, he faced them all head on and never shirked them. That was his philosophy of life.

*Adapted from the eulogy delivered by Br Jim Jolley at Santa Teresa on 11 August 1995*

### BEING A CHAMPAGNAT-FIGURE

So, Charles and Cletus, exemplars of Marist leaders for their times, people who consciously wanted to be Champagnats in Australia. What can we learn from their stories and from Marcellin himself about "core Marist values", about being "Champagnat-figures", about modeling Marist Apostolic Spirituality in our school communities?

They were each strong personalities but each would be quick to say that leadership is more about charism than charisma. Their life focus was more on fidelity to the Spirit and mission than on their own person or attractiveness to others.

- Be led by the Spirit, for the sake of the Kingdom. You are called to engage in God's mission. Marcellin wrote, "our Good God can do marvels with nothing!"
- Lead from the front, ready to be the rallying point when the community is in crisis or under threat. When you are "in the swamp", adapt. Transform long-standing habits or assumptions. Bury old hopes. Be prepared to walk on the edge.
- Ask bold questions, widen the circle of participation. Imagine and engage with emergent possibilities. Plant seeds of new dreams. Pray, discuss and discern with your leadership team before important decisions. Give people the inner space to 'transition', not just the external space to 'change'.
- Enthuse young teachers with a sense of mission. Mentor and encourage them. Show interest in their personal well-being, their vocation and professional development.
- Identify those who show signs of a Marist vocation. Value them as a gift from God. Actively support their efforts to grow the Marist spirit and charism in your school or other ministry.
- Be a person of practical compassion. Reach out passionately to the isolated, disadvantaged, religiously illiterate youth of today. Take new initiatives so as to be more inclusive of all, to educate in and for solidarity.
- Emphasise learning and formation as the "lungs" of

Marist education. Take an active interest in pedagogy itself.

- Be a leader in the local Church. Promote the missionary aspect of the Catholic school for the students and their families. Share our wealth of experience in regard to the evangelisation of youth.
- Be the presence of the love of Jesus within you. Cultivate an apostolic spirituality as a Marist: an abiding sense of God's presence and love; trust in God; love of Jesus and His Gospel; in Mary's way; family spirit; simplicity.
- Hear the words of Marcellin, "Be a saint!" He was! There is only spiritual leadership; all else is management. Forgive, heal, serve, reconcile, give, love. Be the person of trust for all. Live your life to the full.

Can I introduce you to a contemporary Marist leader who has wrestled with living up to these ideals? Some of you may have met him.

### NIMUL OUCH

"I really want disabled children to have good chances in life like other children. They do not need pity. They need education. They need a start." Such words define not only the philosophy of Nimul. They define his life's work.

Nimul is currently the leader of the Marist project for disabled young people in Cambodia: 100 in the primary school called Lavalla; another 50 post-primary students boarding at Villa Maria; a network of over 500 young people across the country being assisted in their education or small enterprise; craft and farm activities.



Quite early in the piece, Terry met Nimul. It was providential. They learnt from one another. They became



The origins of the project were in the discernment of Br Terry Heinrich in 1998: which group of young people were missing out in the country's re-building after the Pol Pot genocide of the 1970s? The Bishop and other Church people pointed him towards the disabled.

friends. Their common Christian faith gave them hope and pointed in the direction of serving others. Lavalla was born: not just a successful education centre but a community of warmth and bright spirits, a Marist community, predominantly Buddhist!

In 2006, Nimul was supported by the Marist Fathers to establish a service for the Lavalla graduates. He had Terry's blessing. YODIFEE was born and thrived. Nimul, now married with three children, proved a wise mentor for these young people especially in developing talents but also in dealing with inevitable setbacks. He learnt to be leader of a staff that includes two Brothers, to be a business manager, a planner, a reliable partner to funding agencies, adept in public relations and communication, an advocate for disabled people, an advisor to church and government bodies.

2011 saw the coming together of Lavalla and YODIFEE as a single project under a local Board, Marist Solidarity Cambodia, and a single Khmer leader, Nimul. It was time. The foundations had been laid, a spirit caught. He had been head-hunted by other agencies but he chose to remain with us.

Nimul is on a contract. He will probably one day leave the project or maintain a different connection. He identifies strongly with the person of Marcellin Champagnat and the Marist charism. This identification will remain.

### CONCLUSION

In an entry in his personal journal, 20 Feb 1841, the day when the portrait of Marcellin Champagnat painted by Ravery arrived at The Hermitage, Br François wrote, "Be a living portrait." Michael Green notes that this must have been an expression to which François gave some currency because at the end of the Memoir of Brother Sylvestre, written in 1886-87, we find this sentence, "May all the Little Brothers of Mary be always and everywhere authentic and living portraits of our Venerable Founder".

In the General House in Rome on a wall heading to the main dining room, there is a portrait or rather a dual portrait: Marcellin and François – it depends on which way you are looking at the portrait. This captures François' idea in visual terms. I have taken some liberty with the idea to produce this new version. You may like to do something similar. But even more, you are invited to be a "living portrait".

Thank you, in the name of the Australian Marist Community, to each one of you for your inspiring leadership for the young people of our time.

TONY PATERSON

# Paul's Hope for Israel According to Romans 9-11

## INTRODUCTION:

Romans 9-11 is an anguished series of arguments about the ultimate incorporation of the Jewish people in the mysterious plan of God. It is an argument based on Paul's hope for Israel; a hope that Israel will accept Christ and his Gospel. Paul develops his argument in three stages. First, after Paul's expression of his anguish for the Jewish people (Romans 9: 1-5), he reflects on God's original choice of Israel and God's extension of it to the Gentiles (Romans 9:6-29). Secondly, he then deals with the present situation of Israel's unbelief in relation to Gentiles' belief (Romans 9:30-10:21). Thirdly, Paul deals with the mystery of God's plan in which there will be final salvation for both Israel and the Gentiles alike (Romans 11:1-36). This paper will focus on Paul's argument which is centred on his hope for Israel. His argument begins in Romans 9, and moves to the declaration that all Israel will be saved in Romans 11:26.

It is important at the outset to keep in mind four points that emerge from the study of this letter and that have a particular bearing on the discussion here. First, Paul sees God as the primary actor in the drama that is taking place: "from him, through him, to him are all things." (11:36). Similarly, at the outset of the letter, Paul assumes God's activity in everything that happens (1:20); and such activity is directed to the good of humanity. Paul states that: "God works together with all things toward the good of those who love him" (8:28). This must apply also to those who are called "lovers of God", namely, the Jews. Paul's second assumption is centred on the fact that humankind can respond to God's self-revelation by means of obedience or disobedience. For Paul, God's plan involves the interplay of human freedoms to reach its goal. Thirdly, central to Paul's argument throughout the letter is the clear assumption that God is always faithful to his word; and fourthly, Paul assumes that history has a dialectical character where the drama of the interplay between God and humankind goes through alternating moments of 'yes' and 'no', all ultimately having the function of helping to work out God's mysterious will. As will be demonstrated in this paper, these four points are an anchor for any discussion of Romans 9 -11.

In addition to these four points, it is important to keep in mind that Paul in Chapter 8 of his letter has developed his crescendo on 'hope' and places emphasis on nothing

being able to separate us from the love of Christ; and Paul needs to be able to place his concerns for the Jewish people and their future in the context of such hope. He does this in these three chapters that are read and studied as a whole.

'Hope', in Christian terms, is always the anticipation of a favourable outcome under God's guidance. It is always focused on confidence in what God has done for us in the past, what he continues to do for us in the present moment, and what God will do in the future. Hope is an essential and fundamental element of the Christian life. The other dimension to such hope is the fact that we cannot see it. As St Paul writes:

*For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it (8:24-25).*

It is in the context of these introductory comments that we can now move to discussing in detail Paul's hope for Israel in the given chapters.

## HOPE THROUGH REMEMBERING:

Paul's statements at the commencement of his letter set the stage for what is to follow. Paul indicates that he is a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle (1:1). He then goes on to indicate that he is not ashamed of the gospel, for "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (1:16). In other words Paul immediately incorporates the Jews into his letter. There is no suggestion of having given up on them. This issue is stressed with great personal anguish when he commences Romans 9. Likewise, Paul would not and could not give up his basic conviction that in Christ salvation was offered equally to Gentiles as well as the Jews. Paul even utters the wish to be sacrificed for the sake of Israel's salvation (9:3). In the same breadth, Paul is also very explicit about Israel's continuing and abiding privileges:

*They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ (9:4-5).*

The emphasis here is not only the privileges of the Jews but it is tied to the fact that Paul remembers that Christ is one of them. Similarly, the elaborate enumeration of

the gifts given to the Jews makes clear to Paul's Roman audience how highly he values the privileges his fellow Jews have been given. Paul refers to them as "Israelites", that is, they are members of Israel. Throughout Romans, Paul continues to describe his fellow Jews as "Israel".<sup>1</sup> Thus, the almost emblematic use of "Israel" highlights the connection of the Jews with God's gifts and promises of old, gifts and promises that in Paul's mind are irrevocable and with their fate being tied to "all Israel".

Paul ends his introductory passage with the blessing: "God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen" (9:5). In the given context, Paul's blessing statement refers to the gifts listed in 9:4 that have been given to the Jews. By blessing the God who is over all, Paul sets the tone for what follows in 9:6-11:32. The God who is over all can accomplish all things, even the reconciliation of the continuing validity of God's gifts to the Jews and their present lack of faith in Christ. That such is Paul's purpose becomes clear immediately in 9:6 when he states: "It is not that the word of God has failed". Thus, Paul sets out to clearly indicate to his Roman audience that the Jews have not been forgotten, that they have not been cast aside. 'Remembering' what God has done for the Jews, that it was this people that nurtured the Christ, is in itself an important starting point for Paul to build his case of hope for the Jews.

#### HOPE- GOD'S WORD DOES NOT FAIL:

Paul's statement of principle that the word of God has not failed forms the cornerstone for his argument for what follows in Chapter 9. No matter how it may appear, God has not forgotten or given up on his people and Paul builds on the history of Israel to reinforce the fact that God elects whom he wills. In particular, the following points are important for the first step of his argument:

- Ancestry is determined by God's promise rather than by human descent (9:6-9); and election is based on God's call rather than human works (9:10-13).
- God's call is not arbitrary but serves the purpose of divine wrath and mercy. For example, the reference to pharaoh (9:14-18); and to potter's vessels (9:19-23).
- Both Jews and Gentiles have been called in the same way (9:24); God calls Gentiles (9:25-26) and Israel (9:27-29).<sup>2</sup>

In Paul's mind then God's sovereignty and word is beyond question. In Romans 9, Paul argues that from the time of Israel's patriarchs (9:9-13) to Egypt's Pharaoh (9:15-17) and then to all of humanity, the creature has no

right to question the ways of the creator (9:20-21). Here Paul is suggesting that there is no difference between Jews and other peoples. Thus to be born a Jew is not a privilege in itself (10:21), because not all Israelites are Israel (9:6). That is, not all Israelites belong to the children of the promise (9:8). These children of the promise consist of Jews who believe in Christ – the 'remnant' (9:27) – and of Gentiles, the newly elected people of God (9:24-26). The metaphoric language about vessels of glory in 9:22-23 demonstrates God's free will and hints at what Paul is going to suggest in Romans 11 with regard to a solution for the problem of the Jewish refusal to accept Christ.<sup>3</sup> Thus what seems to be destined for the detriment of Israel will eventually mean salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike. At this stage Paul is clearly indicating that the word of God in Scripture has always been a source of hope for Israel, God continues to hope for their acceptance of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah; and Paul is also suggesting here that God is God, and he can extend salvation to the Gentiles simply because it is right to do so. At the end of this section Paul is quite clear that God's word to Israel has been kept by God.

As Hay and Johnson suggest, the question in Romans 9 concerns not "*who is in the family and who is out but who is in charge and to what purposes?*"<sup>4</sup> The issue is the consistency and reliability of God's election. God alone calls "not only from among Jews but also from among Gentiles" (9:24). Thus, Paul redefines God's people by including Gentiles rather than excluding unbelieving Jews. This is an important step in his argument. It is a clear example of Paul's ongoing hope for Israel by 'extending' the tent to accommodate the gentiles as well as the Jews; and the given chapter clearly suggests that it is impossible for humankind to ignore or to 'undo' God's word and its implications.

#### 'STUMBLING' AND 'HARDENING' AS A SOURCE OF HOPE:

Paul then continues his argument by suggesting that the majority of Jews who have tried to obtain 'uprightness' through the law have stumbled. They stumble, Paul says, because they pursue their goal from works rather than from faith (9:32). They seek to establish their own righteousness rather than submitting to God's righteousness. In other words, the Jews consider righteousness as a "*human possession rather than divine*".<sup>5</sup> This shift in the text from an image of stumbling to a more active image of refusing to submit to God's

1 Romans 9:27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:7, 25, 26.

2 D M Hay and E E Johnson, *Pauline Theology Volume 111: Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. 223.

3 G Wasserberg, "Romans 9-11 and Jewish-Christian Dialogue" in C. Grenholm and D. Patte, *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 2000. 181.

4 D M Hay and E E Johnson, *op.cit.* 225.

5 Hay and Johnson, *op.cit.* 228

righteousness introduces an element of human responsibility into Paul's argument.<sup>6</sup> God gives those that he has chosen the freedom to respond, and as discussed at the outset of this paper, this is often in a series of 'yes' and 'no' responses from those that God has called.<sup>7</sup> But God, in Paul's view, uses this situation to his advantage. The tripping or stumbling of Israel is designed to save (10:1) because the *"very stone that causes stumbling is the rock that saves 'the word of faith that we preach'"* (10:8).

On the other hand, those Gentiles and the small number of Jews who believe in Christ have obtained it through faith (9:30-32). The law revealed God's will to Israel, but in the course of time humanity failed to live according to the law. The blame for this in Paul's view, rests on all of humanity: first on Israel as God's chosen people (2:17-3:20) but also on the non-Jews, who have always had a basic understanding of what is right or wrong in the eyes of God (2:1-16). Hence, Christ in his self-sacrifice on the cross is the *telos*, the culmination as well as the conclusion of the law (10:4). Thus, for Paul, in light of the Christ event the law lost its function as the avenue of salvation. In Romans 10 Paul is clearly suggesting that what the Gentiles and some Jews have obtained with their faith in Christ (10:11-14) will be a source of hope with regard to the eventual inclusion of all of Israel. At this point there is no question for Paul that Israel needs Jesus as their saviour (10:13).

It is in this context that Paul addresses the issue of why such a large portion of Israel has not accepted the Gospel of Christ. Paul says it is not because Christ has not been preached to Israel – it has even been proclaimed to the ends of the earth (10:18). The proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles has, in Paul's view, the function of stirring the Jews in order that they might come to faith in Christ (9:19-20; cf. 11:11). There is no excuse in rejecting Christ, Israel has been a disobedient people (10:21). However, Paul is not prepared to leave things at this point. Paul, as an apostle of hope, states that Jewish disobedience with regard to faith in Christ does not lead to rejection by God (11:1). On this Paul is emphatic:

*Has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew (11:1-2).*

In other words, God's election of Israel will never be abrogated. Paul's approach to Israel is dialectic. Jews and Gentiles alike become children of the promise (9:8; cf. Gal 4:28). With regard to possible Gentile boasting over Israel, Paul emphatically takes pride in his Jewish ancestry. But he also makes it clear that those in Israel who have

not accepted Christ are hardened. The question for Paul then is: why has God hardened the hearts of Israel?

Paul responds to this question with a proposal that Israel's rejection of Christ is in fact part of God's plan of salvation. Israel has stumbled but will not fall (11:11). The 'glimmer of hope', as indirect as it may seem at first sight, is that Israel has not fallen but stumbled. Like the person running in a race, he or she may stumble, and in this situation they have a better chance of regaining their balance and getting back on track as opposed to falling completely. This 'stumble' is Israel's transgression, her refusal to believe in Christ. However, since God is the agent behind this refusal, their transgression has to be seen in a salvific framework: through Israel's stumbling the Gentiles have gained access to God's salvation (11:11-12). This is part of God's plan.

The focus in Romans 11 then is that God's use of the Gentiles coming to faith in Christ will incite the Jews, it will make them jealous (11:11, 13-14), so that they do not remain in a state of stumbling but will rise and claim their rightful place in God's plan as the holy "first fruits" and the holy "root" (11:15-16). This 'second part' of God's plan of salvation, then, is to bring both – Jews and Gentiles – into God's covenant with Christ as its foundation. What Paul calls in 11:25 *mysterion* is not something "mysterious in the sense of a riddle, but something that fills him with great awe, and moves him to ponder in wonder God's ways".<sup>8</sup> Thus, the only adequate response to this divine *mysterion* is the joyful exaltation in praise of God (11:33-36).

## CONCLUSION:

This paper has focused on Romans 9 – 11 from the perspective of Paul building an argument that reaches its climax when he clearly states that "all Israel will be saved" (11:26). His approach, in these three chapters, has been centred on clearly establishing that Israel has not been forgotten, they are not dismissed by Paul for they will only remain 'hardened' until "the majority of pagans have entered" (11:25). Paul stresses the mystery of God's plan and the fact that God acts in his own time and his "gifts cannot be nullified" (11:29). Paul suggests that 'hope' is something that we do not see, and that it is with perseverance that we wait for the day when Israel will accept the Christ (8:25). There is a sense of anticipation about this for Paul; he writes confidently at this point and like his reference to Abraham in Romans 4, he accepts God's plan and ways in faith.

One of the clear arguments in Paul's analysis in the given chapters is his use of the hardening motif. It is a 'hardening' that occurs for the sake of the final return of Israel (11:25). Paul uses this motif in terms of a temporary

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 228

<sup>7</sup> Page 1 of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> G. Wasserberg, op.cit. 183.

stumbling motif for he argues that the reason for Israel's hardening is that the Jews fail because of their zeal, as sincere as it is, is misdirected (10:1-2). Paul sees this situation as part of the journey of leading the Jews to Christ. He does not 'cut them off at this point'. They are for him the cornerstone. In the same way, in Romans 9-11, Paul has gone out of his way to indicate that Israel not only has a positive function in past salvation-history, for there will be no final eschatological deliverance without the salvation of all Israel (11:25-26). This in itself is very much tied to the future where all of Israel will accept Christ in faith and be saved. Such a position is in keeping with God's faithfulness to Israel. On the other side of the argument, some scholars like N.D. Wright for example, argue from a somewhat judgemental position that is contrary to that of this paper. Wright attributes to Israel a whole series of "deliberate actions of culpable failure".<sup>9</sup> He suggests that God's justice on Israel "is that of judge who must judge sin properly".<sup>10</sup> This is not in keeping with Paul's consistent argument in Romans 9-11 with regard to God's mercy and hope for Israel. It would be a very inconsistent God who acted contrary to his faithfulness to the Jews. Harink affirms this position when he indicates that God shows mercy and patience and the current hardening of Israel is entirely God's doing: "It is because God has bound (them) there" (11:32). Harink concludes his comment with the words:

*Throughout the sustained argument of Romans 9-11 Paul has kept a single thesis in view. God may harden and show mercy, now towards the nations, now toward a portion of Israel, as he wills, each in its season and for a purpose...but God will never reject his chosen fleshy people or allow them to fail in the race of salvation.*<sup>11</sup>

The phase of salvation history that begins with the coming of Christ is characterized by the "budding of a new branch on the trunk of the people of God"<sup>12</sup>, by the grafting of "a wild olive shoot" (11:17). At the same time, this enrichment has caused a 'hardening' on the part of Israel. One branch of God's people – the Gentiles and some Jews – have recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Son of God, while the other branch – Israel – has not – but Paul expresses a definite hope for Israel. The situation of 'schism' between both groups does, however, provide a common stretching toward a conclusive moment of history and the full establishment of the reign

of God. Both Jews and Christians look to this moment, even if from different viewpoints. Paul provides a framework for this to happen in his letter to the Roman community. Given that Paul has stressed affiliation with and anguish for the Jews, he obviously emphasizes the fact that the eschatological fulfilment of God's promise to Israel is centred on a hope that Israel will be saved. The crucial point is that unless Israel is saved, God's faithfulness to his promises is invalidated. Similarly, as Beker suggests, unless God's promises to Israel can be trusted, how can the Gentiles trust his faithfulness and promise in Christ?<sup>13</sup> And Paul reminds us that: "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (11:29).

We also need to keep in mind that in Romans 9-11, Paul expresses his concern for Israel, but he does not vent his Christian frustration like other New Testament authors in the first century of the common era.<sup>14</sup> Beker goes on to indicate that:

*Apart from his outburst in 1 Thess. 2:14, Paul is not openly hostile to the people of Israel, and he remains eager for their conversion and ultimate eschatological salvation.*<sup>15</sup>

In other words, Paul's apostolate to the Gentiles is related to the salvation of Israel and does not mean a turning away from Israel. This eschatological horizon of Paul's apostolate entails a vision that: "until the full number of Gentiles comes in...all Israel will be saved; as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come from Zion'" (11:25-26).

Finally, following Vatican II, Cardinal Suenens detected a sense of pessimism in the Church, and confessed his own "dark night of the soul". But he also reminded Christians that it is precisely in situations that appear to be hopeless that genuine hope – a sheer gift of the Spirit – is born. It is in this same light that Paul seeks to provide hope for his Roman audience. There may have been a sense of despair with the fact that the majority of Jews had not accepted Christ and his Gospel. Paul, in Romans 9 to 11, counters this and points out clearly that Israel will be saved for the love and imagination of God is never exhausted.

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JOE MCCARTHY

## Australian Marist Community Forum

*"...other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain..." (Mtt. 13.8)*

*A reflection on the experience of the Australian Marist Community Forum held at Mittagong  
from Friday 23 August – Sunday 25 August*

The first blossoms in our garden caught me by surprise this year. I was unpacking bags after several days on the road, and looking out the window of the bedroom it was impossible to miss the pick and white flowers covering the old plum tree in the back yard. They were not there three days earlier. I stopped unpacking and found myself staring at this small miracle of nature. New life. Transformation. Hope.

The classroom of nature offered another lesson recently. I like to walk well before dawn. Darkness reigns. It is still the night sky. I have become aware of some brave birds that sing out even though there is no hint of morning. It is not the imminent chorus that resounds once the first signs of light come, but lone calls. Singular calls. Hopeful calls. An act of true faith. It is the brave bird that calls before dawn.

These two stories reflect what was at the core of the Australian Marist Community Forum that took place from Friday 23 August – Sunday 25 August at Mittagong. Forty nine Marists came together, from right across Australia. A diverse representation of involvement and participation in Marist life and mission. What was evident in the discussions that took place was that change is happening at a rapid rate for Australian Marists today, even if we can't always see it. Just like the blossom on the plum tree. Weeks, perhaps months of preparation occurred within that tree. Then, a seemingly sudden showing of what in fact had been gradual change. A moment that is noticeable to our senses. A moment that announces newness.

In Marist life, similar hidden growth and change is underway and has been for some time. New language, fresh ideas for identity and belonging to the Marist story,

discovering what coresponsibility looks like and naming the structures and personnel that will carry the Marist story forward. Unlike the seasonal blossom, this transformation has been years in the making. A widening of Mary's reach to embrace and build community among all people enlivened by the Marist story: its mission, spirituality and communion. Formation programs have been chipping away at the rock, more recently Marist Schools Australia has provided new belonging and purpose, youth ministry has invited and inspired young people for decades, solidarity initiatives have drawn people in and engaged them with core Marist values, and Marist Youth Care continues to branch out in its efforts to respond to the needs of kids who are disadvantaged and at risk. With fewer Brothers at the coal face, along with a ground swell of people other than Brothers who identify strongly with the Marist spirituality and mission, a new space is emerging. It is a shared space. A place of coresponsibility in ways we have not experienced before. A place for new life, transformation and hope.

The AMC Forum worked with the two parallel stories that are emerging, identifying and shaping this new space. One of them is the local story. The leaders of schools and other ministries are being called on in a special way – to be the Champagnat figures. They are being called on for spiritual leadership that is daring. Led by the spirit. Animators of local communities are being invited to step into a new capacity across the Province and create ways to grow belonging and community. The newly formed Pastoral Team is working closely with Marists in their most immediate context: their community of mission; their work place; their reason for engaging with the lives of young people.

The other story is the national picture. Participants at the Forum endorsed the directions of the Province towards a new canonical and civil entity that will have a formal status in the Church. This is significant for two reasons. It will provide a critical mass of people in the future for governance, leadership and animation of Marist ministries. It will also establish a pathway for all people who want to explore their vocation as a Marist and deepen their connection to the mission and life that is born out of this distinct spirituality. In one sense, the members of the Marist Association will become the reliable partner in the Church's eyes. In formal language, such a group is known as an Association of Christ's Faithful. One brief moment at the Forum considered the operational name that might be used for such a Marist Association. Personally, I liked *Lavalla Marists – sowers of hope*. But there were many other options including *Marist*

*Companions, Champagnat Marists* and most simply, *Marists*.

Developments are well underway in relation to building new ways of belonging at the local Marist scene and the national picture. There is, however a way to go. We are living a process of discernment. We are being led by the Spirit to new lands, but it is still dark. In one sense, the new Marist dawn is yet to break. We need some brave birds to sing out in the night sky and carry us through this moment of transition. Some of these people were at the Forum and have gone back to their local community with renewed vigor and purpose. Many others were not able to be at Mittagong for the Forum, but are playing a critical role in listening to the story unfolding, and coauthoring it in their place. There are many who are thirsty for new ways to connect, to give, to participate in the life of the Church.



*Daniel Head (Sacred Heart College, Adelaide); Annette Chapman (Sunshine Coast Marists); Kaylene Ryan (St Teresa's Catholic College, Noosaville)*



*Tony Clarke (Forum facilitator) leads a process for considering a possible name for the Association of Christ's Faithful*



*This slide, shared at the Forum during a session given by Mark Woolford (Marist College, Eastwood) generated much discussion*



*Terry Cooney (Assumption College, Kilmore) leads a table discussion. Pictured also is Br Jeff Crowe (Provincial) and Donna McLaughlin (Trinity College, Auburn)*

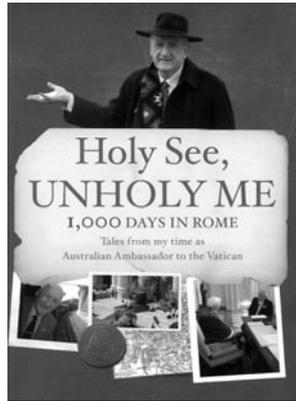
# Book Reviews

## Holy See, Unholy Me: 1000 Days in Rome

By *Tim Fischer*  
*ABC Books 2013*

In 2008, Tim Fischer, former leader of the National Party was appointed the first Australian resident ambassador to the Holy See by the Australian Government. He found himself in a singular position – observer and active participant in the dramas of a most powerful nation state city. With his newly acquired dinner-party diplomacy, Tim navigated the world of religious and political leaders – and scandals besetting the Church – and lived to tell the tales. In entertaining style he reflects on his 1,000 days in Rome and on matters of global religious significance.

The book is well-written and easy to read. It is entertaining and humorous. Tim Fischer played a key role in the organisation of the celebrations in Rome for the canonisation of St Mary MacKillop in 2010. He is one of Australia's most prominent ex-parliamentarians. His interests are broad and eclectic and in this new book he continues almost all of his favourite things: politics, trains, food, faith, history and Rome! Not only is it a book that can be read by those at airports or on planes, but it is for all of us at the end of a busy day.



## Breaking from the Bud: New Forms of Consecrated Life

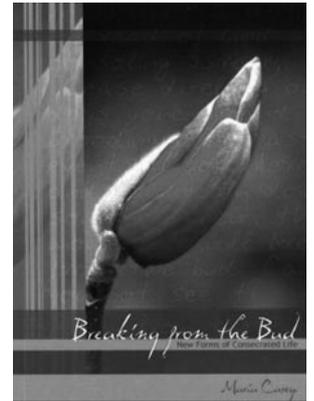
By *Maria Casey RSJ*  
*Sisters of St Joseph NSW 2001*

Although this book was published in 2001 and is based on Maria Casey's PhD thesis, it has a great deal to offer the present status quo of the Marist world. Maria completed her doctorate at St Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. The book suggests that consecrated life is in a continually evolving state.

New needs and new situations call for new responses. Maria's study examines various possibilities and pathways for the future. It is essential for us as Marist Brothers and Lay-Marists to be aware of these developments and interesting possibilities as we continue to develop the new Marist Australian Province.

Not only does the book look at future possibilities for religious life, it places it in the context of the evolution of consecrated life from the beginning of time. It reminds us of the ongoing message from Isaiah 43:18-19 that states: "Cease dwelling on days gone by and brooding over past events! Look! Here and now I am doing something new; at any moment it will break bud."

This breaking from the bud may will be the here and now for us in Marist Australia as we move a step further to establish an Association of Christ's Faithful.



*Both books reviewed by Tony Paterson*

