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Vocation

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CHAMPAGNAT

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Inside:

Called to be Contemplatives

Living the Rule in New Norcia

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

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in my view...

EDITORIAL:

I was particularly taken by the suggestions included in the invitation offered us recently by our Superior General, Br. Emili Turú to commence our preparations for our Marist Bicentenary. We celebrate this wonderful event on 2 January 2017. It will be 200 years since Marcellin Champagnat invited his first two recruits to join him on a mission to teach children to read and write as a means of nurturing their faith. We now know that this mission led to the establishment of the Little Brothers of Mary or Marist Brothers, with Marcellin's instruction to take this work to all dioceses in the world.

Much has happened in the intervening two hundred years and much is developing today as the pages of this Journal attest. Now spread across a very different world, we Marists have expanded



opportunities, albeit with the same core call 'to make Jesus known and loved'. In his Champagnat Day message, Br Emili captures beautifully three key aspects of the current state of our Marist Congregation. He focuses on 1. our mission 2. our participants, Brothers and lay and 3. our interiority. To assist us in our reflection, he invites us to contemplate the newly renovated house at La Valla near the Hermitage in southern France where Marcellin established his first Brothers' community.

The top floor of this building, through its windows, opens us to the long-standing hamlets and beautiful French countryside. The view invites us to focus on our mission – 'go and make disciples'. The floor below contains the original Marist table symbolising the many conversations of the early Brothers, and now of Brothers and lay Marists, as they visit this sacred place. The third of our symbols, what used to be the basement at the La Valla house, an area which has only recently been opened up, encourages us to focus on our interiority, the mystical side of our lives, our journeys into holiness.

Every Marist is called by God to serve. While we get much satisfaction from what we do, we get even more when we know it is nourished by our spirituality. I always find when I gather with Marists for liturgies, particularly Eucharists, I come away feeling uplifted. There is a sense of being part of something bigger. Our spirituality is apostolic. This motivates us to participate in our world's challenges and opportunities.

Br John McMahon

CONTRIBUTORS:

John McMahon celebrates his Golden Jubilee as a Marist Brother this year. He is well known to many readers in that he was responsible for the establishment of the Champagnat Journal some years ago. Currently he resides in Melbourne, works with the Marist Life and Formation Team across Australia; he Chairs the Marist Tertiary and Online Committee, and is involved with the delivery of tertiary courses through the Australian Catholic University. His reflection on our Superior General's recent letter calling us to journey over the next three years to the Marist Bicentenary in 2017 provides all Marists with a compass as we seek to prepare for the given celebration.

Brendan Geary is the Provincial of the Marist Central-West Province in Europe. He has visited Australia, he has worked as both a teacher and counselor in Europe, and he writes extensively on the spiritual life. His letter in this edition of the journal invites all of us – Brothers, Lay-Marists, and Friends – to consider our call to be contemplatives for this is the heart of our being; it energizes or fuels our ministries so that we are effective in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Natasha Mohamad is the Youth Ministry Coordinator at Marist College Kogarah. She is a graduate of the Australian Catholic University and her paper here focuses on Marist pedagogy and

how it is a source of evangelization in her school community. The paper was written as a result of Natasha's participation in the Footsteps program at Mittagong and is part of the requirement for the completion of her Master's in Religious Education. Natasha became a Catholic in 2011 after witnessing the Marist charism and the presence of the Holy Spirit within her school community.

Tony Paterson is a Marist Brother and works for Marist Schools Australia. He is based in Sydney. His paper here is of interest to Marists who have visited New Norcia or who know that the Marist Brothers established a school there in 1913. The paper considers the story of one of the pioneer Benedictine monks at the monastery and his two Aboriginal assistants. The paper also raises the question of the possible tension between prayer and work – something that we all seek to address daily. Thank you to **Dr Katharine Massam** from the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne who coordinated the live-in experience at New Norcia titled "Living the Rule" in conjunction with the Institute of Benedictine Studies; to the Good Samaritan Sisters **Carmel Posa** and **Margaret Malone** who assisted with the input along with the Archivist, **Peter Hocking**, and the **Abbot** and the **Benedictine Community**. The experience was a great spiritual investment for one who seeks Jesus Christ.

THANK YOU

Our gratitude to those who 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.

BRENDAN GEARY

Called to be Contemplatives

A Brother writes to us on Contemplation....

The following letter was penned by Brother Brendan Geary, the current Provincial of the West – Central Province of the Marist Brothers in Europe. The content provides all readers – Brothers and Lay Marists – with a wonderful insight into our need to be people of contemplation as we seek to deepen our understanding of our call to holiness – a key starting point for each of us in our Marist ministries.

Dear Brothers and Marist friends,

As you know the Marist General Conference, where the Provincial and District Leaders met with our General Council, was held last September at The Hermitage in France. The main focus of the Conference was on internationality and looking towards the future of Marist life in a globalised world, where there will be fewer Brothers, and a need to find new structures of animation and government. The Institute will continue to deal with these topics in the years ahead, particularly as we prepare for the XXIIInd General Chapter in year 2017.

CONTEMPLATION AND OUR MARIST VOCATION.

Another key theme of the Conference was contemplation.

It is not always easy to talk about prayer and spirituality, particularly for Brothers whose formation discouraged any kind of personal sharing about feelings or prayer. The word “spirituality” has only recently become part of our vocabulary. Previously, the spiritual life was considered as part of a Brother’s private life. Spiritual Direction, as we now understand it, began to develop in the 1970s. It has not been part of everyone’s experience.

Every Superior General has spoken and written about the importance of personal prayer and meditation. During the General Conference Brother Emili quoted these words of Pope Francis which were addressed to the Carmelite General Chapter that was held in September 2013:

Here is the heart of your witness: the “contemplative” dimension of the Order, to be

lived, cultivated and transmitted. I would like each one of you to ask yourself: how is my contemplative life? How much time during my day do I dedicate to prayer and contemplation?

It can be easy for us to say that Marist Brothers are not “contemplatives.” However, we are all called – Brothers and Marist Friends alike – to find spaces for silence and contemplative prayer in our lives.

EXPERIENCES OF PRAYER

When I look back on some of my early experiences of community prayer as a Brother, the word “silence” does not come readily to mind! I can still remember an experience where the community made a commitment to an hour of prayer as a community once a week during Lent. We agreed that there would be thirty minutes of silence as part of the hour. This happened during the first week. During the second week the silence was reduced to five minutes. During the third week it lasted around 90 seconds – and there was no fourth week!

Brother Charles Howard once said that the difference between the Office said well and said badly – is 90 seconds. I gather that he was referring to a conscious decision to slow down in order to have pauses for silence and reflection. Brother Benito echoed this when he mentioned “a weak personal prayer and the formalism and poverty of community prayer” in his opening address to the XXth General Chapter.

Thankfully, I am pleased to say that these comments do not reflect my experience of community prayer in the Province over the past four years. In many communities there is a gentle rhythm of prayer, and efforts are made to animate community prayer in various ways. Some communities continue to have shared times of silence as part of their community prayer. I believe, though, that many Brothers still feel uncomfortable with the words “meditation” and “contemplation.” In this letter I do not want to address the issue of what is meant specifically by each of these words.

My concern is with the practice of personal prayer, and a commitment to developing a contemplative attitude to life.

THE ONLY ULTIMATE ANSWER . . .

Both Pope Francis and Archbishop Rowan Williams (former head of the Church of England and the worldwide Anglican Communion) speak and write about contemplation as a necessary response to our fractured and ever changing world. I want to repeat the inspiring words of Archbishop Williams in his address in Rome to the Synod of Bishops on Evangelisation that was held in October 2012:

Contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

This is a striking intervention, and makes a bold claim about the importance of the practice of contemplation. There are many important and necessary ways to respond to the needs of our world, but Archbishop Williams says clearly that contemplation is the only **ultimate** answer.

I am very conscious about making statements about the personal prayer lives of the Brothers. Many Brothers, in particular the older Brothers, spend many hours in the chapel, and give witness to a love of the things of God, and a desire to know God better through prayer and prayerful presence. At the same time there are many Brothers for whom personal prayer is difficult and where they may have a sense of dissatisfaction or failure. This is a source of concern to me, and I ask myself what we can do to support Brothers who want to pray, but who do not know how to grow in this part of their lives.

WE ARE ALL BEGINNERS

I have been gratified and moved when Brothers have had the confidence to address the subject of prayer during the sharing that takes place as part of presentations I have made in some of the communities. I believe that the first stage of wisdom is to be honest about our experience. I remember when I was a member of the retreat team at Kinharvie House in Dumfries that we advertised a workshop entitled, "Prayer for beginners." Bishop Maurice Taylor, who was visiting,

looked at this and said with sincerity, "I think we could all benefit from that workshop." When it comes to the spiritual life we are all beginners.

It seems to me that among fruits of prayer are peace, joy, gratitude, generosity, magnanimity, humility, empathy and compassion towards others. These are profoundly Marial values, and reach into the depths of the heart of Marcellin Champagnat, who, we know, could be as recollected in the streets of Paris as in the chapel in The Hermitage. Fr. Champagnat was imbued with a contemplative attitude to life, an attitude which sought out moments of silence and had the desire and necessary skills to be attentive, present to self, and open to hearing how God speaks to us in our experiences and in our feelings.

CURIOSITY

A capacity to be curious and to want to notice what is happening inside and around me can be an asset in the life of prayer. This attitude of curiosity can lead us to be open to the movements of the spirit with uncritical observation. I suspect that whenever we have distractions or thoughts or feelings that disturb us that it can be easy to try to dismiss them, or to feel uncomfortable or embarrassed by them. An attitude of curiosity allows us to notice them and then to ask what they might be telling us about ourselves – and the state of our lives, spiritual and otherwise.

This attitude is evident in one of St. Ignatius' introductory prayers for the Spiritual Exercises. I found the following translation on a piece of paper inside a Bible in a retreat house many years ago:

PREPARATORY PRAYER (SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 46)

Direct, O Lord, and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer . . .

All my thinking and longing and fearing;
my moods and feelings and ever-changing attitudes,

my remembering and hopes and desires
and repugnances and resistances . . .

my sense of depression or boredom
or joy or hopelessness;

Direct and influence all this

To your greater service

And my growth in the Spirit.

Amen.

(Paraphrase by Paddy Meagher SJ).

This prayer invites us to attend to, and notice, all that might happen inside me during my time of prayer. An experienced Spiritual Director once said to me, "If I experience peace during my prayer, the chances are that it is of God. If I experience anxiety, the chances are that God is telling me that this is not where he wants me to be." If we reflect honestly on our experience of prayer we can discern how God might be speaking to us, and we can allow him to lead us to places where we will live in accordance with our values and his desire for us. As we can see from the prayer above, the goal of prayer is God's greater service and our growth in the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

I hope that what I have written in this letter may help to create a space for conversations on this topic in a way that people in our Province will feel encouraged and supported to grow in their spiritual lives.

I would like to offer you a few questions to help

you reflect on your experience of prayer. Sharing your thoughts on these questions with a Brother, Spiritual Director, adviser or trusted friend would be an excellent way to continue your reflections related to this letter:

- What role does silence play in my life?
- Can you think of an occasion when you found contemplation / meditation:
 - i) frustrating . . . ii) rewarding?
- Who taught you most about contemplation / meditation?
 - . . . and how did they do it?

Brother Emili offered us three icons of Mary in his Circular, "He gave us the name of Mary." These icons featuring Mary in the stories of the *Annunciation*, *The Visitation* and *Pentecost*, are intended to draw us deeper into the mystery of God through contemplation and prayer. Perhaps we can return to these images to attend more to the Marial spirit that is at the heart of the Marist vocation passed on to us by Marcellin Champagnat.

NATASHA MOHAMAD

Marist Pedagogy and Evangelisation

"How does Marist pedagogy influence the nature of evangelisation at Marist College Kogarah?"

INTRODUCTION

¹ I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more¹.

The 'branch' is symbolic of a Christian community connected back to the 'true vine' within Jesus. The religious message is epitomized when Jesus focuses on what it means to be a true Christian. For the purpose of this essay, the true vine is indeed Jesus Christ, and the branches that

are connected to the true vine entail five key areas at Marist College Kogarah including Parish association and youth group, community outreach and social justice, formal religious education and curriculum, laity group and prayer life and liturgy within the College. The fruits of these five key areas that the 'branches' produce become the five Marist characteristics including presence, simplicity, love of work, family spirit and in the way of Mary. These five characteristics define Marist evangelisation as they bring the messages of the Gospel into the heart of the growing community.

1 John 15:1-2

2 Perkins. P. "The Gospel According to John". in Brown. R.E., Fitzmyer. J.A., Murphy. R.E. "The New Jerome Biblical Commentary." (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), 976.

This part of the Last Supper Discourses, refers to Jesus being the true vine (Jn 15:1) and God the father being the vinedresser. The passage highlights the quintessential importance of the Christian community remaining obedient to Jesus' teachings. Abiding in Jesus, mirrors the 'joy of Jesus' oneness with the Father filling the lives of the disciples (Jn 15:11). "The disciples now represent Jesus in the world"² signifying the prominence of displaying acts of love towards one another which in essence reflects their love for him. As Marist educators, it becomes our role to be the embodiment of Christ and his teachings to our students, as current societal trends deter youth away from the Church as Marist teachers also become the only means of the Church to some of our students.

The Last Supper Discourse reiterates the greatest commandment repeatedly to ensure that the disciples understand their commissioning into the world after Jesus' departure.³ The clear instructions for the disciples necessitate for them to act as bearers of Jesus' teachings. This is particularly important for educators as they embrace their role of mentoring students through providing guidance both within the classroom as well as extra-curricular activities.

The metaphoric concept visualized as Jesus being the 'vine', is an idea that would not have been new to the Gospel of John, adapted from the Old Testament as Israel was often referred to as being the 'vine' or the 'vineyard'⁴ (Ezk 15 1-6, Jr 2:21, Is 5 and Ps 80). Moreover, the portrayal of the disciples as 'branches' of the metaphoric tree of Christian would have been a original concept to the Johannine community, revealing the notion that the fruit that this 'Old Testament' vine produces are either 'bitter or non-existent'.⁵ Respectively, as the 'True Vine', Jesus calls upon the disciples to produce real fruit that is nourishing and abundant. This goes to the heart of expanding the Christian community, despite the relentless persecution which they faced. From a Christological perspective, the Last Supper Discourses and the

injunction by Jesus "I am the true vine...you are the branches" accentuates the fact that all of this occurs within the context of the 'Eschaton', the 'end time', hence the urgency to what Jesus is proclaiming.

The new commandment of love (Jn 15:12, 17) is found at the center of this discourse. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. My command to you is to love one another." It is this love, in which Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, which is the genesis for Jesus' initiative in choosing the disciples to 'bear fruit' (Jn 15:16).⁶ Subsequently, St Marcellin Champagnat focused the essence of Marist spirituality on the concept 'make Jesus Christ known and loved'.

The metaphoric grand gesture of the vinedresser regularly pruning the vines "that bear much fruit", in order for them to bear more fruit asserts a certain degree of pain. The inevitable negative life experiences that we face such as sickness, failures, accidents and even death of loved ones⁷ hurt and wound us, and are in essence paralleled to a vine being pruned. However, it is only after the vine has been pruned that we are able to blossom and be fruitful, something that a community as big as Marist Kogarah fosters in the life of the College. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ mirrors this representation of pruning because it is only through these adverse life experiences that 'we are pruned for something new'⁸, allowing us to bloom into a life that is centered on God. Fostering a sense of community has been the paramount motif to integrating evangelism within the MCK culture. Evangelism is considered to be the foundational platform on which the living, dynamic MCK community is centred upon, essentially the 'stump' of the flourishing MCK tree. Branching off this stump are the areas of RE curriculum, prayer and liturgy, youth group and parish, social justice and laity. All of these 'branches' stemming out from the 'stump' interweave with each other, correlating with each other to manifest a spiritually fortifying learning experience.

3 Moloney, F.J. "Reading John. Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters." (Australia: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 49.

4 Taylor, S.J.M. "John: the Different Gospel." (New York: Alba House, 1983), 181.

5 Obach, Robert E., ed. "A Commentary on the Gospel of John." (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 200.

6 Moloney, "Reading John. Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters." 54.

7 Vanier, "Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John," (Canada: John Garratt Publishing, 2004), 269.

8 Vanier, "Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John," 269.

FORMAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The tradition of Catholic education that is known as 'Marist' was initiated by a French priest, Marcellin Champagnat, in 1817⁹. Today, Marist educational institutions are found in over seventy countries internationally, leading hundreds of thousands of young people to what Marcellin believed each of them could become good Christians and good people in this world of uncertainties.

From the beginning Marist Schools reflected many of the qualities of Marcellin himself; they were placed where hard work and excellence were valued, places where individuals were genuinely loved, warm places where a strong family spirit was evident, places characterised not by a lack of misrepresentation but rather through presence and simplicity. A special concern was afforded to those students who found school most difficult, just like a younger Marcellin¹⁰. Above all, the schools were in essence living educational institutions empowered by the Gospel at the heart of their teachings, encouraging students to respond to it with the same faith and generosity as Mary, our Good Mother.

St Marcellin Champagnat taught the first Brothers '*To make Jesus known and loved*'. The straightforwardness of Marcellin's pedagogy has survived two centuries later as Marist and Catholic educators acknowledge that Jesus is the human face of God, as we then become the hands and feet of Christ as spiritual role models to our students.

A good teacher is a good learner. It's all about lifelong learning. An effective teacher is a reflective teacher. Students need to have a certain amount of control based around student centered learning. Jesus came to give us life and urged us as Christians, to live life to the full. The world which our young adolescents are faced with today is an adversely different world to that of their parents. Marist Kogarah prides itself on being a centre for Catholic Culture in the twenty first century, working towards the tradition of the common good for all. Religious Education today must be seen as

a vehicle through which young adults can be immersed in their culture and tradition, through which, they can become literate and well educated members of their society. It is anticipated that from this they can learn to have enriched and meaningful experiences in their world.

Our aim at Marist Kogarah is to engage students fully with their Catholic faith. Our hope is that through our work students will be nurtured to become informed young adults in the society in which they live. Through Religious Education we strive to develop in them, an ability to be more discerning and reflective of the contemporary culture around them. We hope that this will lead them to develop capabilities of making more informed decisions as to how they choose to live. Through this process we strive to encourage young adults to build a relationship with God adopting Gospel values as guides for their lives. It is anticipated that through their interaction with faith both inside and outside the classroom, our young people will allow Jesus to be part of their life's journey. We endeavour to help students make connections between the Jesus story and their own lives allowing the Gospel to have a deep and profound impact on them as individuals, guiding their daily interactions and relationships.

The College aims to foster each student's Catholic identity, guided by the Marist Charisms which are at the very core of our College. It is hoped that through learning about the life and works of Marcellin Champagnat students may be guided by his example in their everyday interactions and relationships. Our mission as Marists is to make Jesus Christ known and loved. This calls for a special commitment from all members of our College Community; staff, students and parents to live out Christian values in their lives. In our efforts to make Jesus Christ known and loved in the College we encourage all to develop concrete relationships with one another through our pastoral care programs, in our classrooms and through our daily interactions¹¹.

As staff at the College we commit ourselves to building strong relationships with our students, relationships built on honesty, trust and open

9 Institute of the Marist Brothers. *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: A Vision for Marist Education Today*. 1998. Page 13

10 Ibid, p31

11 <http://www.mck.nsw.edu.au/freeform/index/menuItemId/89>

dialogue in our everyday experiences. Like the journey Jesus embarked on, we too endeavour to walk with our students in their moments of births and anticipations, through their individual crucifixions and disappointments and to celebrate with them in their resurrection moments and celebrations. We pledge to lead our students to a greater understanding of themselves through Christ, that they can reach their goals by hard work and trust in Christ. Through engagement with Marist Charisms we strive to lift students to new horizons and therefore work towards individual transformation.

Jesus has already established the symbol of the kingdom of God being the 'vine' in the synoptic Gospels (Mt 20:1-8), which the Johannine community would have been familiar with; as the 'fruit of the vine' becomes the 'Eucharistic sacrament of the new covenant'¹² again reinforcing the notion that God is perfecting his plan. This time it is through Jesus' new commandment of love, which echoes the two great commandments of love found in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 22:36-40), which becomes pivotal in the manifestation of religious education.

Religion and culture are inextricably connected. Each one affects the other. Both are fundamentally important for religious education, particularly the intertwined nature of their interaction¹³ with each other. Critical evaluation of culture focuses on the way culture affects people's thinking and behaviour, reasons behind political and economic changes and social and environmental issues. These issues are all relevant to an issues-oriented religious education program. There are a variety of ways educators can make the curriculum more accessible and personalised to their students. Issue-oriented content can take on the form of using a religious perspective to critique popular culture and contemporary issues. For example, the spirituality of a song or moral issues in a television program. It is imperative that educators understand the culture that youths are surrounded by so they can relate their common issues with religious issues. Once educators are aware of such personal

situations then they can model this to their students and allow them to critically analyse their environments and values.

A 'personal' dimension to religious education can be identified both in content and process¹⁴. Crawford and Rossiter suggest the most effective way to address content and pedagogy in religious education is by making it personalised and relevant. In regards to the content and classroom practice, attention needs to be given to religious traditions and meaning. Students need to be given the opportunities to ask questions regarding an area in which questions can be directly related to youth's own meaning and identity so they can evaluate the relevance of the topic in respect to their own lives. Personalism is great when it can relate to individual interests; however this cannot always be the case. Religious education content leads well to interest as it is dealing with meaning, values and beliefs; however content does need to be covered. It is 'how' it is covered which is important. Personalism as a process and form of pedagogy is the most significant as personal learnings are then usually worked out; which usually take place during reflection. This can be in the form of private, group sharing, and whole class sharing which helps students correlate and learn from the personal contributions of others and learn how to develop and grow in a morally and ethically sound manner.

The language of the Church in its doctrinal expressions does not mesh sufficiently with most people's experiences of the mainstream issues of life. They are not likely to listen when the Church apparently has nothing to say¹⁵. Several practical issues for educators arise as a lot of students are adamant that if they believe in the theory of evolution then they can't believe in the Genesis story of Adam & Eve. It is important that educators, when teaching the Genesis story, reiterate the fact that Christological creation stories are similar to the indigenous mythical stories that would be told by elders in regards to the dreamtime, hence the stories of creation in Genesis were told to the Hebrews at that time to get a philosophical message across; that is the

12 Wansbrough. H. (Ed). "The New Jerusalem Bible." (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 177

13 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter 17, p. 12

14 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter, 17, p.1

15 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter 17, p. 7

manifestation of God's divine creation. Religious and theological language can become more relevant if it makes greater use of the constructs meaning, identity and spirituality. The language of psychological spirituality assists in translating gospel values and theology into contemporary psychological principles, and in relating the Christian gospel to people's lives. This approach has helped Catholics and other Christians retain their confidence in the Church at a challenging time when a significant decline in mainline Christianity has become evident, as the words the churches have traditionally used to encapsulate Christian teachings have lost much of their force and underlying meaning. However, the benefits of psychological spirituality have been more or less limited to those who have studied Social Sciences and Theology/Scripture (and related spirituality) from this perspective¹⁶.

Content within the Religious Education classes, linked with experiences, have the ability to positively shape students thinking and thus have a significant impact on their culture. Religious Education lessons must be vessels for students to question the spirituality that they experience, giving them a sense of where they fit in and providing them with reasons for the choices they make. This can be a vessel by which they learn and identify that they are acting in an individual sense rather than just going with the crowd. Sociologist Raymond Williams proposes that one of the aims for Religious Education is to encourage and skill young people to go beyond being 'passive consumers of culture' to become 'active constructors of culture' with greater social engagement in community¹⁷.

Religious Education today plays a vital role in shaping the spiritual and moral needs of modern society's youth. Teachers must provide critical pedagogies in the curriculum which allow students to develop their own sense of spirituality. Classroom activities should allow time for the young person to be reflective of the values they hold and how these values impact the choices they make. They need an opportunity to question how they are impacted upon by popular culture so to

avoid becoming passive adherents to pop culture. For example, the Religious Education teacher might use Facebook as a teaching tool in helping students reflect on the cultural meanings and implications of social media. How many hours are appropriate for Facebook each day? Can it be a tool to substitute face to face relationships? How can it impact on what's happening in society? And so on. Recently the husband of Jill Meagher, an Irish journalist murdered in Melbourne asked that people not make comments on Facebook as it was hindering police operations. Students could greatly benefit from looking at the effect of Facebook on specific case studies. The same studies could be carried out on a range of topics with which young people are faced with on a daily basis.

PARISH ASSOCIATION AND YOUTH GROUP:

At Marist College Kogarah, Parish association with the Mary Mackillop St George Deanery has played a pivotal role in providing students with a connection to the Church. The St George Deanery Youth Group aims to simply connect students to our local school Parish. Once or twice a term a gathering is organised with the students being personally invited to Mass, followed by a gathering afterwards.

At different stages individuals who experience closeness with God at different times in their lives experience internal voids. This experience is often a time of anguish which leaves doubt and confusion in one's mind and heart regarding the legitimacy of God. During such spiritual dryness dialogue with my fellow students would aim to challenge their horizon of how they understand and communicate with God.

By identifying all the barriers which have accumulated over a lifetime we can take comfort in the fact that regardless of all the distractions, God's Grace resides with us. "One can accept or refuse this offer of closeness, but the offer is not thereby revoked¹⁸." Often in hindsight, by reflecting on the past we can recognise God's operative Grace working during times when we have suffered the hardships of life and essentially felt abandoned. Reflecting on the past can also help a person

16 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter 17, p. 8

17 Williams as cited in Rossiter, 2006

18 Elizabeth A. Johnson. *Quest for the living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. New York: Continuum, 2008. 42.

through future trials. If they encounter periods of spiritual emptiness in the future, by remembering that they have previously felt like this and last time the feeling was distorted, it could help them in managing or overcoming their present suffering. Sometimes we need to cling onto previous experiences with Grace to see us through.

The other aim is to help individuals not to over spiritualise Grace, where they think that their own personal decisions and actions play a minimalistic if not irrelevant role in their spiritual development. It is to be hoped that young people will see that religious and moral education can help them learn how to identify and address the spiritual and moral dimensions of life, and that the quest for relevance in this endeavour is authentic, and not an institutional trick to help make religion teaching more palatable to uninterested youth. The educational process behind 'religion' should be regarded as a valuable assistive tool to strengthen their morality, ethicality and acceptance of others - whether or not they are formally religious. A student in year 9 claims that through participating in the Youth Group and "attending at least one, you are not just professing your faith to God and having a good time with students from both schools, but also actively participating within the school and parish communities¹⁹."

Most human beings hold a basic spirituality recognising that there is more to life than themselves. Humans have a genetic capacity within to understand the possibility of the divine and develop their own sense of spirituality. Religion can be seen as a cultural religious overlay that envelopes each individual's basic spirituality. This calls for the adherent to be absorbed by and identify themselves with a religious culture passed on from previous generations involving ritual and practise as well as a deep spiritual dimension. By presenting these to students they are given the opportunity to connect with their own religious culture or tradition, and delve beyond their superficial knowledge of it to further enrich their spiritual life. It is through the receptive nature of the parish priest that the students feel welcome within the parish community, much like the image of the prodigal son returning home²⁰.

PRAYER LIFE AND LITURGY:

Through our work as educators we hope to instil a sense of commitment towards Church practise in the lives of our students. By providing opportunities to engage in an active prayer life it is hoped students will develop and nurture their relationship with Christ. Prayer and reflection opportunities are offered both inside and outside the classroom. Reflection days and retreat opportunities are offered to all students across all year levels as well as to members of staff. Many students enrolled at the College commit themselves to attending prayer group that is offered in their own free time. This regular prayer time is both teacher and student oriented, allowing each individual to express their own faith and lead others in their preferred way of praying be that Taize chant, mediation, *Lectio Divino*, formal church prayer or reflections. Student involvement in Church Ministry is also encouraged and developed by various members of staff; altar servers, musicians, ICT experts, Eucharistic Ministers and College leaders.

A resounding quote from Marcellin Champagnat in our Marist community is '*To raise children, we must love them and love them equally. I cannot see a child without wanting to tell them how much God loves them*'. If we are true to the legacy of Marcellin we must love all and welcome all into our community despite their race, religion or creed. Our College strives to develop a school culture that is of a multi-cultural and at times, a multi-faith culture. Marist Kogarah provides an education for all students despite creed! We focus on breaking up a sense of institutional identity so that students have a choice of ways in which they can relate to their individual spiritual needs. However, being a Catholic School it is hoped that through their experience at the College and the relationships that are built with others, many of our community may choose to join the Catholic Faith. With this in mind the College supports an active Sacramental Program where dedicated staff members walk with students on their journey firstly towards baptism and then followed by Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation through the local parish.

19 http://www.mck.nsw.edu.au/uploads/newsletters/2014/2/College_Newsletter_4_June.pdf. Page 3

20 http://www.mck.nsw.edu.au/uploads/newsletters/2013/3/College_Newsletter_05_17_September.pdf page 2.

In Cana and at Calvary Mary becomes both a symbolic and physical role model for those that Jesus has come for, 'the people of faith.'²¹ Mary becomes the mother of the Church that has been formed by the faithful people. Her belief and conviction in Jesus is exemplified as she 'patiently awaited the fulfilment of that faith'²² as Mary embodies a being, who unlike the Samaritan woman, already has unconditional faith in Jesus, not needing any further clarifications from him. Mary, as the model and motherly figure of the Church today, stands as a symbol for the 'need for fidelity'²³ as the reward outweighs the lack of understanding. Being the fifth Marist characteristic, Mary becomes a spiritual guide for students which is reinforced through the prayer life at the College.

MARIST LAITY GROUP:

Developing one's relationship with God takes time, reflection and action. Each journey is unique and each individual needs to solidify their inextricable connection to God on a personal level in order to be able to identify how God communicates with them individually. The consequence of not developing a personal relationship with God means a person is not given the opportunity to really get to know God on an intimate level, and subsequently the relationship becomes somewhat superficial or stagnant. Without an intimate relationship with Grace the communication becomes unclear. Some common errors people might make is to rely too much on God, when God is actually trying to convey that they need to become more responsible, or have more trust in themselves and others (not solitary in God). In this instance God might be purposefully calling the adherent to be more involved with the world rather than be detached from it. Usually, friendship with God should not be an explicitly private matter causing a person to isolate themselves from loved ones and the community, "... turning to God in friendship [does

not mean] turning our backs to others'²⁴. Friendship with God should lead us towards friendship with others.

A Marist Laity group was formed at Marist Kogarah in early 2012 in order to develop and foster a strong sense of community and family spirit amongst the staff. Jesus stresses the prominence of discipleship and faithfulness and that only through a conversion of heart that true discipleship can transpire. This conversion of heart 'involves living day by day with Jesus'²⁵. Jesus' commandment of love (Jn 15:17) replaces the commandments of Moses, as Matthew's Gospel reminds us. "On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets too" (Matt 22:40). Educators become role models for the students, but more importantly they become disciples of Jesus. Thus, it is through this laity group that staff can discuss the challenges encountered on their spiritual journey as role models. Pope Francis addresses this in his first Apostolic Exhortation by saying "We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness."²⁶

Like Grace, in most instances God does not force conversion. Like Grace, conversion involves a personal experience with God which prompts change. Because God does not force the friendship, people are free to turn away from the friendship, even after experiencing Grace and conversion. Human weakness caused by Original Sin can interfere or disrupt one's relationship with God. This is why it is crucial to always try and remain close to God so that He can support and uplift us through our Fallen Human Nature. Sometimes we need to walk away to realise just how much we need God in our lives. He waits patiently, respecting each individual on their personal journey to seek spiritual fulfilment. God does not force His friendship because He wants it to be a genuine conversion. God understands and knows if we are not ready to receive Him. Forceful conversion could

21 Crane, Thomas. "The Message of Saint John. The Spiritual Teaching of the Beloved Disciple." 38.

22 O'Grady, John. "The Gospel of John. Testimony of the Beloved Disciple" 35.

23 O'Grady, John. "The Gospel of John. Testimony of the Beloved Disciple" 35.

24 Paul J. Wadell, "An Itinerary to Glory: How Grace is Embodied in the Communion of Charity," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23. 2010. 432.

25 Moloney, "The Living Voice of the Gospel. The Gospels Today," 276.

26 *Evangelii Guardium* 42.

impair a person and "... disrupt the psychological identity..."²⁷ God is always initiating Grace, but first we need to be ready for it, and secondly we need to want to cooperate with it. Once fully converted our will merges with God's to the extent [that it is] the only motive in all our actions.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND OUTREACH: PRESENCE, SIMPLICITY, FAMILY SPIRIT

The mission of the Catholic school is to be evangelical. It is the evangelizing arm of the Catholic Church, to announce and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Living the life of Jesus Christ implies a living spirituality and authentic morality, strengthened by the word of God in Scripture and celebrated in the Sacraments of the Church. Marist Kogarah does this through word and deed through relationships and the notion of communion at the Eucharist. Follow the charism of the patron saint Marcellin Champagnat. Teacher's identity is that they are a Catholic first, teacher second. Teachers become witnesses to their Catholic Faith in the way they live their lives and act as morally and ethically plausible examples to the students they teach.

As a College we see that the work of Religious Education and Catholic Identity must happen both inside and outside the classroom. The College takes pride in offering programs that are focused, personal and relevant to the lives of each student. To facilitate this students are offered a wide range of opportunities to foster their individual and communal faith development:

- The Social Justice program at the College aims to encourage students to understand and appreciate the multicultural and multi-faith culture that surrounds them in Australia. We hope to develop an understanding of their need to see injustices in the world which in turn compels them to take action driven by their love for humanity. Through the various opportunities offered to students it is hoped that they can be Christ like in their work with others in our wider community guided by their understanding of the Marist message of making Christ known and loved. Through our work as educators it is hoped that students are

capable of proclaiming the Gospel message to all whom they meet.

- Our solidarity programs are offered in a range of ways. We feel it is important not just to go out into the world and help others but to also educate our students as to why people are faced with the difficult situations in which they are present in. It is through our work in educating students about the problems of our world that we can hope to develop good citizens who are willing to stand up and fight against injustices in the hope of making our world a better place. We strive to develop strong advocates for the plight of the poor and the needy in our world through our Ministry Week Programs, Marist immersion, Night Patrol, Nursing Home visits and our work with Caritas.

A healthy personal meaning is when a person has a sense of satisfying purpose and goals in their life, is ready to ask questions about the meaning of life and recognises that the key to happiness and wellbeing is satisfying personal relationships²⁸.

Charity becomes a fruit of the works that the students love performing. God *is* Love. Love is created *by* God. The Three Persons in the Trinitarian God loves the other Selves equally. God in loving Himself is not a selfish act since the action involves a boundless sequence of love amongst each God Person; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is then logical to state that only the Trinitarian God can genuinely Love Himself since it is a communal act of Loving. On the contrary a human cannot love himself for his own sake and purpose, because 'loving' one's self is a stagnant action. An individual human cannot produce the effects of love on their own. To exercise any form of loving, humans need another person to love.

A person with a distorted image of God and His universal friendship might think, *'I will love you because God loves you and I want to do what is right by God'*. Certainly God desires humanity to love one another, however this attitude of pleasing God makes God appear vain, and again the human becomes a medium through which an individual gets friendlier with God. Christ is present in the Eucharist. In Holy Communion we receive Christ,

27 Neil Ormerod. *Creation Grace and Redemption*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007. 126.

28 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter 4, p.8

body, blood, soul and divinity. We receive him as true God and true man. Christ, the Word, is present in the Scriptures. *Just as the hearts of the two men burned within them* as Jesus explained the Scriptures, so too can our hearts burn, if we read and reflect upon them.

Christ is present in the Stranger. Just as Jesus took the guise of a stranger on his journey to Emmaus, so too does he take that form today. He is the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. He is the face of the poor, the dispossessed and the lonely. Our encounter with him is not limited to the Eucharist and the Scriptures but perhaps more confronting – in the face of the Stranger. We must remember that when we welcome the stranger we welcome Jesus.

Developing a healthy identity during the teen years, adolescents begin to establish a sense of who they are and what directions they will take in life. They do this by integrating their childhood dreams with their aspirations for adult behaviour²⁹. For some, this process takes a relatively short period of time. For others, however, the search for identity may take most of a lifetime. The desired outcome of this process is a person who knows and likes themselves in all their many roles³⁰.

CONCLUSION

In summation, the Marist legacy that exists today in a vibrant youth ministry framework for evangelisation at Marist Kogarah is evident in the five key areas of; formal religious education curriculum, prayer life and liturgy, youth group and parish association, social justice and staff laity group. In order for a youth to develop a healthy identity the following factors and processes have been discussed by many scholars. Having a community frame of reference and focusing on the positive contributions from the youth is essential in developing a healthy identity³¹. Maintaining a positive family environment is fundamental for the development and expression of a personality. Hence, it is vitally important for the students at Marist Kogarah to realise that the fruits of their

work will sustain a healthy relationship not only with God, but also with those around them, in turn forging a healthy identity for themselves.

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29 De Botton, 2004, p.30

30 Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, Chapter 5, p.

31 De Botton, 2004, p.40

TONY PATERSON

Living the Rule in New Norcia

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

One of the pillars of spiritual teaching in Eastern Christianity is deification (Greek: *theosis*),¹ which means participating or sharing in the divine nature of God. According to Saint Dorotheus of Gaza, this is our inheritance.² It is an inborn spark of divinity like a burning deep within our hearts, within the core of our being, that guides us as we discern what pleases God, what God calls us to, and illuminates our journey upon this earth.³

The 'River Walk' at Holy Trinity Abbey at New Norcia in Western Australia, highlights the continuous history of Benedictine life since its foundation in 1846. The energy, the commitment, the seeking of God by successive generations of monks in their daily lives of prayer and work at this monastery reflects an inheritance that is burnt into the physical and spiritual landscape of the given environment. It is within this framework that one encounters the former Blacksmith's Shop.⁴ Outside the building is a small plaque containing a photo and description of the monk and his two Aboriginal assistants who were associated with the Blacksmith's Shop in the late nineteenth-century. There is an attraction to this photograph: it tells a story; first and foremost a story of one man who is a monk, seeking to live the Rule of Saint Benedict. The story highlights the physical reality of his day to day labor, and as the central figure in the photograph, the story is extended to capture that of his two Aboriginal assistants. For the historian

it raises a number of questions: who are these men? How did they come together? What were the common threads that kept them together, or forced them apart? Did they realize that they were an integral part of the monastic enterprise? From a theological as well as religious life perspective, how did the monk reconcile the tension between *lectio*



Photograph printed with permission from the Abbot and Benedictine Community, New Norcia, WA

- 1 For the Eastern Fathers, the formulation of the doctrine of deification affirmed the reality of humanity's inner-most hope as "belonging to God." Put another way, the ultimate redemptive destiny of humanity is to attain likeness to God and union with him. See Mary Margaret Funk, OSB., *Lectio Matters*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013. p.211. This point becomes important when we consider the primary objective of *The Rule of St Benedict* in this paper.
- 2 St Dorotheus of Gaza (505-565 Or 620) was a Christian monk and abbot. He wrote instructions for monks and a number have survived and have been compiled into *Directions on Spiritual Training*. See 'Dorotheus of Gaza' in *Cistercian Studies Series*, Number 33, July 1978. Dorotheus has been canonized by both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.
- 3 Based on comments by Rebecca Crown in 'Iconographer's Preface', in Mary Margaret Funk, *Lectio Matters*, pp.ix-xvii.
- 4 Map of this walk and the location of the Blacksmith Shop included in the Appendices of this paper.

divina (spiritual reading), communal prayer and the long hours required to operate the Blacksmith's Shop? Despite these questions, that this paper will seek to investigate, one obvious starting point is the photograph itself. There is a fire in the eyes of the monk; there is a sense of contemplation; an acknowledgement of his sense of call, a sense of belonging, a sense of something burning deep within his heart, and the suggestion that his work helps to illuminate the life and journey of the monks and their aboriginal helpers at the New Norcia Mission.

In light of these opening comments, this paper will focus on the following two points:

1.1 Seeking to trace the stories of the three personalities in the photograph. Even though the names are given on the plaque outside the Blacksmith Shop, 'identification' here is tied not only to what one can find out about their personal stories, but what is also being suggested through this process about the story of the monastic enterprise at New Norcia in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵

1.2 Once this framework has been put in place, the paper will analyze the two key threads of the life of the monk. That is, his life as a monk, and his life as a blacksmith. This will be undertaken in the context of looking at two sections of the Rule of St Benedict: Chapter 48 titled "The Daily Manual Labor" and Chapter 58 titled "The Procedure for Receiving Brothers".

2.0 THE STORIES OF THE THREE MEN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH:

The centre figure, the monk, is Spanish, and

from the other side of the world. From the New Norcia Community Annals, we know that he is Brother Isidoro Brea. He was born in Spain on 15th April 1824 and his baptismal name was 'Anastasio'. He arrived in Australia on 29th December 1849 as a twenty-five year old single male. Anastasio, as he was known at that time, entered the novitiate at New Norcia on 8th September 1859 and received the religious name 'Isidoro'. He made his First Profession as a monk on 8th September 1861 and he would have been thirty-seven years of age at that time. Brother Isidoro was the blacksmith in New Norcia until his death on 19th August 1904. The annals record the fact that he had been the blacksmith at the mission for fifty years.⁶

The Aboriginal on the left of the photograph is Yawel. Green and Tilbrook suggest that his Christian name was 'Tomas'.⁷ He was born in 1849, and he arrived in New Norcia in 1854. He was baptized at the mission in 1859.⁸ Green and Tilbrook note that Yawel agreed to work at the mission for six pounds a year; he undertook to attend Chapel on Sundays and Holy Days; he agreed to learn a trade.⁹ Yawel married Maria Elizabeth Gigina at New Norcia in 1863 and he is also listed as marrying Maria Anna Nangiak in 1867 at New Norcia.¹⁰ Yawel was accidentally killed in 1874.¹¹ It is also important to note at this stage that in a report that appeared in the Perth Gazette in 1862, reference is made to a 'T. Gowell', and Green and Tilbrook suggest that this refers to Tomas or Thomas Yawel.¹²

The Aboriginal on the right of the photograph is Chictel. He was also known as Geital and as

5 This process will focus primarily on material that was made available through the New Norcia Archivist and as a result of interviews with the Archivist, Peter Hocking, and with the Prior, Father David Barry OSB. These interviews took place at New Norcia during the week 8th -15th July 2013.

6 This factual profile on Brother Isidoro comes from the entry on him in the Community Annals in the New Norcia Archives. The annals contain a section with a list of monks who have lived and worked at New Norcia.

7 Neville Green and Lois Tilbrook, (eds). *Aborigines of New Norcia 1845-1914: The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*. Volume VII. University of Western Australia Press. 1989. p.173. The assumption is made that this would have been the name given to him by the Benedictine monks.

8 These details provided by Neville Green and Lois Tilbrook, (eds) in *Aborigines of New Norcia 1845-1914*. The parents of Yawel are listed as Yiatap and Coat but no further details given p.173.

9 *ibid.* p.173.

10 One assumes that his first wife, Maria Elizabeth Gigina died. No children are listed for either marriage.

11 No details are given with regard to this accident. See Neville Green and Lois Tilbrook, (eds). *Aborigines in New Norcia 1845-1914*. P.173.

12 *Perth Gazette*, 11th April 1862. Reference to the successful training of Yawel at the mission. Also mentioned in Neville Green and Lois Tilbrook, p.173.

Peter Dinnell or Pedro Dinnel.¹³ The entry in Green and Tilbrook for 'Pedro Dinnel' states that he was born in 1859, he was baptized on 14th August 1869; his godfather was a John Walley, and that he died on 26th October 1875.¹⁴ No details are given with regard to how he died.

3.0 EXTENDING THE PROFILE:

At this point, even though the information on all three personalities is quite limited, it is possible to extend the picture beyond the factual information provided. First and foremost, it is possible to provide an approximate date for the photograph. Given the fact that Brother Isidoro was professed in 1861 and is wearing the religious habit of the professed monk, and the fact that Yawel died in 1874, and that Chictel was about sixteen years of age when he died in 1875, it would seem plausible to suggest that the photograph was taken in the early 1870s.¹⁵

The second immediate point to note from the photograph is the fact that the three men come from two very different cultures and language backgrounds. Brother Isidoro's first language would have been Spanish, his culture and that of the Benedictine monks at New Norcia was Spanish; the first language of Yawel and Chictel was that of the local Nyoongar community, and their culture was that of the local Nyoongar community even though they had been living at the mission for some years. Somewhere in this situation the assumption is that they could communicate either

in English or in their native languages or a combination there-of.

The third important observation from the photograph is tied to the fact that in the 1860s through to the 1880s the New Norcia Mission witnessed significant expansion: the Church was completed, the Monastery was extended, the orphanages for Aboriginal boys and girls were built and extended,¹⁶ cottages were built for Aboriginal families,¹⁷ a new Flour Mill was built, a Court House, Postal and Telegraphic Office were opened, and Abbot Rosendo Salvado was extending the farming interests of the mission.¹⁸

Salvado envisaged the Aboriginal community becoming tenant farmers on the land that he purchased or leased. This proposal is exemplified in his correspondence in this period with George Shenton his contact in Perth. Shenton, who was born in 1842, and who was a Methodist, was Salvado's agent in Perth.¹⁹ On 20th November 1875, Salvado sent the following letter to Shenton:

"...Herewith I send you two applications; one to take up 6,000 acres of pastoral licence at a spring called Began or Beewanding near Wongan Hills; and the other to purchase forty acres of the same spring Began or Beewanding, in the said pastoral licence..."²⁰

The point here is that this form of business correspondence between Salvado and Shenton either by letter or through the telegraph office is significant during these years of expansion at New Norcia. All of these activities were geared to make

13 In discussion with the New Norcia Archivist via email on 26th September 2013, there is agreement that these names are all tied to the given person in the photograph. The names Peter Dinnel and Pedro Dinnel are associated with the mission and 'Peter' or 'Pedro' reflect the fact that Chictel was probably baptised at the mission.

14 Chictel's parents are listed as Curgier and gnoerd. No other details are provided. See Green and Tilbrook, p.39 for the entry on Chictel. No trace on John Walley could be located at the time of writing this paper.

15 Taking into account Chictel's age, the photograph was possibly taken in 1873-75. Working in a Blacksmith's Shop would have required some 'muscle' and even at 13 to 16 years of age it would have been tiring. Yawel is older, he would have been in his early twenties, and Brother Isidoro would have been in his early forties.

16 St Mary's residential school for boys in 1847 and St Joseph's residential school for girls in 1861. Dates given in *The Story of New Norcia*, published by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia, 2010 edition. p.16.

17 These cottages commenced in 1854 on land opposite the monastery. See *The Story of New Norcia*, *ibid.* p.16.

18 By 1900 Salvado had either purchased (with financial assistant from Spain) or leased from the Colonial Government of Western Australia a total of 400,000 ha of land primarily for sheep and cereal farming. See David Hutchison, (ed). "The Aborigines of New Norcia", in *A Town Like No Other: The Living Tradition of New Norcia*. Published by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia Inc. 2007. p.63.

19 Sir George Shenton 1842-1909. He was a banker, merchant, goldmine owner, importer, one time Mayor of Perth and Member of the Colonial Parliament of Western Australia. He married Julia Theresa Eichbaum in 1868 and they had nine children one of who was a boy who died in his infancy. See B.K. DeGaris, Shenton, Sir George (1842-1909) in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 6. MUP. 1976.

20 Salvado's correspondence as sighted in New Norcia Archives. It is in letter form as it included the two applications for the land, although there is reference to the applications in Salvado's and Shenton's telegrams to each other during this time.

the project not only viable by way of financing the missionary enterprise, but to ensure that his monks could live and proclaim Jesus Christ through their primary ministries of prayer and work.²¹ By 1859, following his appointment as Bishop and Abbot, Salvado had the independence needed to develop the mission.²² By this time forty-seven Spanish monks had joined him at New Norcia.²¹ In addition, by 1875 the number of Aborigines at the mission reached 180.²⁴

It is in this context of growth and expansion that one of the key themes in the *Prologue* of the Rule of St Benedict emerges: that is, a call to action. As Michael Casey reminds us, there is a roll call of verbs directed to the reader: “Listen...fulfill...labor...fight...rise up...run...do good...seek...pursue...set out...respond by deeds...amend evils.”²⁵ In other words, the ongoing activity at New Norcia in these early years exemplifies the fact that St Benedict does not view the monastery as a “pious country club in which the monks (and their helpers) lounge around all day waiting to be

sanctified.”²⁶ Brother Isidoro Brea, Yawel and Chictel are no exception to this rule. They are an integral part of the developmental strategy implemented and led by Abbot Salvado to build the New Norcia Mission. This strategy rested on a number of concrete assumptions: that the monks would be the key to the developmental process, that they would care for, educate, train and work with the local Aboriginal community and that they would need to rely on the good will and support of many people in Perth. The fact that Yawel and Chictel are photographed as assistants in the Blacksmith’s Shop; the fact that the Aboriginal woman, Helen Cuper,²⁷ was trained in morse-code to run the New Norcia Telegraphic Office; and that the Aboriginal, Matthew Colcop,²⁸ was trained a horse breaker at the mission in the 1870s all exemplify Salvado and his monks seeking to incorporate the indigenous community into the daily life of the mission. Similarly, Salvado’s reliance on the merchant and land agent, George Shelton, and the Sisters of Mercy in Perth;²⁹ as well

21 The work had a twofold purpose; to establish the monastic enterprise and to minister to the Nyoongar people.

22 In 1859 a decree from Rome made the New Norcia Mission entirely independent of the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Perth, it appointed Salvado its sole superior, and gave the numerous monks, lay brothers and candidates for monastic life in the colony the option of joining New Norcia. Prior to this Joseph Serra OSB, as Bishop of Perth, had sought to develop a Benedictine community in Subiaco in Perth. As a result of the decree, Salvado found that he was responsible for a community of 47 monks at New Norcia, and it was this group that became the nucleus to develop the mission with Salvado. Comments here based on the booklet: *The Story of New Norcia*. Prepared and Published by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia, 2010 printing. p.16.

23 John McMahon, *Bishop Salvado: Founder of New Norcia*. Perth: Paterson’s Printing Press. 1943. p. 51.

24 David Hutchison, (ed). “The Aborigines of New Norcia’, p.63. The number may have been higher than this prior to this date, but one needs to take into account that even though some Aboriginal families did settle and take up farming at New Norcia, many did not. The booklet: *The Story of New Norcia*, prepared by the Benedictine Community (2010 printing) suggests that even though there was a solid foundation laid for the mission in the 1870s people suffered the destruction brought about by increased exposure to European culture and diseases such as measles and influenza. See p.18 of booklet.

25 Michael Casey, *The Road to Eternal Life: Reflections on the Prologue of Benedict’s Rule*. Melbourne: John Garratt Publishing. 2011. p.7.

26 *Ibid.* p.7.

27 Helen Cuper, the first postmistress and telegraph operator at New Norcia. See George Russo, *Lord of the Wilderness: The life and Times of Bishop Salvado*. Melbourne: Polding Press. 1980. pp.202-203.

28 David Hutchison (ed). *A Town Like No Other*. p.65. See also T.A. Parker, *New Norcia’s Contribution to the Trotting Industry* in *New Norcia Studies*. Number 3. July 1995. pp.63-65. Parker records that the ‘horse books’ at New Norcia record some two thousand entries about the invaluable contribution of the mission to the young colony’s stock of horses prior to 1910. The stock of horses went to a variety of outlets such as the Military Paymaster in Perth, the Fire Brigades Board, and the Perth constabulary. The horses were used for pulling heavy wagons and the carriages of the more affluent colonists. The New Norcia horses were also sold to the British military in India.

29 George Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness*. pp. 129-130. The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Perth with Serra and Salvado in 1846. Sister Urshla Frayne agreed to care for the young six year old Aboriginal girl that needed medical attention when Salvado took her to Perth in 1848. This mutual relationship of the Mercies and Benedictines assisting each other continued over the years that followed. The Sisters for example assisted at one point with the care of Helen Cuper, the New Norcia postmistress, when she was dying of tuberculosis.

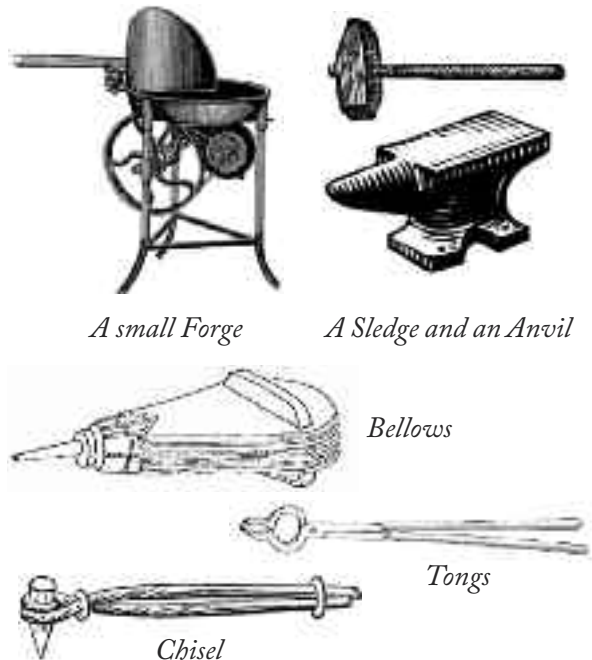
as his ongoing contacts with those that passed through New Norcia like Ernest Giles,³⁰ all suggest that the monastery was a very busy place, that it was in constant communication with the world around it. The comments by the Reverend James Innes, a Perth Presbyterian minister, in 1871 reflect this activity when he wrote: “The settlement (of New Norcia) is like a hive of bees” and he invited others to visit it for an “ocular demonstration that the natives are not irreclaimable, but are capable of being both civilized and christianized.”³¹

Thus, these comments lead to the observation that these three men in the photograph were an important part of the enterprise. The mission would have needed a blacksmith and he in turn would have needed assistants. The photograph is ‘very neat and tidy’ suggesting that it was staged.³² The reality of their work though would have been very different. A blacksmith was someone who worked with metal (iron in particular). It required considerable physical strength to hammer a piece of raw metal until it was shaped into something useful. The Blacksmith’s Shop at New Norcia had very large doors so that horses, wagons and farm implements (that were being produced) could fit inside. The main tools of the blacksmith were a *forge*, a *hammer (sledge, tongs)* and an *anvil* (see diagrams that follow). Brother Isidoro, Yawel and Chicel are photographed with some of these tools in the central photograph for this paper.

By way of a process, the blacksmith heated the iron in a forge that contained coal. He pumped the bellows and forced air through the coals in the forge. The more he pumped the bellows, the hotter the fire became. Once the metal was red hot he would use tongs to hold the metal on his anvil. Then he would hammer the hot metal into different shapes with his sledge. The metal was then

cooled in a tub of water.³³ The Blacksmith’s Shop would get very warm from the heat of the coal fire, so the blacksmith would always keep the large doors open with the intention of letting some of the heat escape. The open doors would have also provided more light for the workers in the shop.³⁴ Some of the items that the blacksmith produced were: ploughshares, sickles, scythes, metal parts for wagons and wheel rims, tools, ax heads, hammers, shovels, hoes, pitchforks, nails, screws, bolts, hooks, knives, forks, spoons, pots and pans, fireplace tools, door and fence hinges, chains, cowbells, and horse shoes. All of these items would have been central to the development and ongoing operation of the New Norcia Mission during Brother Isidoro’s fifty year tenure as the blacksmith.³⁵

THE BLACKSMITH’S TOOLS:



30 Telegram dated 24th January 1876 in New Norcia Archives. See also David Hutchison, (ed). *A Town Like No Other*. p.97.

31 *Perth Gazette* and *West Australian Times*, 10th March 1871. Also in George Russo, Lord Abbot of the Wilderness, p.242.

32 The former Abbot, Father Bernard Rooney OSB suggested at the final meeting of the *Living the Rule* seminar at New Norcia on Monday, 15th July 2013, that many of the photographs were staged. It is also important to place the photography of the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of it being a new phenomenon, and quite extraordinary to think in terms of professional photographs being taken at the mission in the early 1870s.

33 The Blacksmith’s Shop at New Norcia was located not only close to the main entrance to the farm but also within reach of the Moore River so that water could be carted for this purpose.

34 The process the blacksmith followed is outlined in further detail in *Blacksmith – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacksmith. pp.1-13.

35 It is recorded in the Community Annals that Brother Isidoro was the blacksmith for the fifty years up until his death in 1904. Many of the items produced by Isidoro and his assistants over this period are on display in the New Norcia Museum today.

Thus, one readily identifies with the comment made by Michael Casey when he states that “the sense of vocation is verified only when it leads to the practical living out of the values of that vocation, not only for a short time, but over many years and through many difficulties and reversals of fortune.”³⁶ For Brother Isidoro, this included the ongoing smell of the burning coal that would have been engrained into both his physical and psychological sense of being. The deaths of Yawel and Chictel in the 1870s and having to train new assistants; summer temperatures of about forty degrees centigrade at New Norcia were not uncommon (in addition to the hot coals burning); the smell of bushfires in the district; waiting for the coal to arrive from Albany or Freemantle were all part of the composition of his life.³⁷ In addition, he would have known every inch of his workplace even though his “monastic workshop” encompassed the whole monastery and its daily work as opposed to just the Blacksmith’s Shop.³⁸ The implements of his trade were not just the tools that have been described here, but included those explicitly referred to by St Benedict in his fourth chapter of his Rule where he speaks about the implements of a monk’s trade, namely: good works.³⁹ This involved the activities of the monk for the whole day, not just his manual labor, but his approach to his prayer, his *lectio divina* and his community relationships. ‘Good works’ in effect were how the monk served his God and his neighbor in the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. There was no time ‘to waste’ in the eyes of St Benedict, and this is clearly reflected in his chapter on manual labor.

4.0 THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT: CHAPTER 48 –THE DAILY MANUAL LABOR.

Kadong suggests that this chapter follows the corresponding chapter in the Rule of the Master.⁴⁰ In the latter, the argument for the necessity of monastic work, the division of the chapter into the seasons of winter and summer and the four ‘watches’ of the day: Prime, Terce, Sext and None, form the basic structure for the monk’s day of work, lectio, and prayer.⁴¹ Kardong comments that in the Master’s view, the human soul is beset by constant pressure from both the flesh and the spirit, being pulled this way and that toward sin.⁴² Consequently, in the Rule of the Master, “the abbot must arrange every moment” of the lives of the monks in his community.⁴³ St Benedict, on the other hand, is not as prescriptive in his Rule, but he does use the general thrust of the Master’s viewpoint as a starting point. He also states very clearly in his Rule that it is “for beginners in the spiritual life”.⁴⁴ For the purposes of this paper, Benedict’s chapter on manual work is divided into three clear sections:

- His ‘opening’ where he states the need for manual work and its relationship to *lectio divina* and recitation or singing of the Divine Office in choir; suggestions are made with regard to how these activities should be timed throughout the day. (48:1-9).
- Here St Benedict stresses the fact that there needs to be some flexibility in the horarium, particularly when one considers the seasons of the year.⁴⁵ For example, reduced daylight hours in winter up against the summer months. This section

36 Michael Casey, *The Road to Eternal Life*, p.51.

37 Coal was not discovered in Western Australia until 1846 near Albany and this was only a small deposit. In the 1880’s commercial coal was located at Collie. Consequently, coal had to be shipped in to the colony from the Eastern colonies or from overseas – from the British Colony in South Africa for example. This information was provided by the New Norcia Archivist by email on 12th September 2013. Hence, the importance of the Telegraph Office at New Norcia. The Mission could be notified when supplies were leaving Perth and its ports. This would allow an estimated time of arrival at the Mission to be calculated.

38 Michael Casey, *The Road to Eternal Life*, p.51.

39 Timothy Fry (ed). *The Rule of St Benedict in English*. Chapter 4:78. p.29.

40 Terrence Kardong, *Benedict’s Rule: A Translation and Commentary*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press. 1996. p. 396. The *Regula Magistri* or *Rule of the Master* is an anonymous sixth-century of monastic precepts. It was used by St Benedict when he wrote his Rule later in the same century.

41 *The Rule of the Master*, Chapter 50.

42 Terrence Kadong, *Benedict’s Rule*, p.397.

43 *Ibid.* p.397.

44 *The Rule of St Benedict*, Chapter 73:1-9.

also considers the arrangements for *lectio divina* and how it is to be supervised by the abbot or his delegate, and the procedures to be followed if a monk fails to adhere to such arrangements (48:10-21).

- The third part of this chapter considers some of the more practical points with regard to what he has proposed. These practical points include comment on the expectations placed on the aged and infirm monks and arrangements for Sundays (48:22-25).

Benedict commences this chapter with the statement:

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brothers must be busy with manual labor at specified times, and also with divine reading at specified hours.⁴⁶

This sentence immediately sets the scene for the chapter: a focus on manual labor balanced with divine reading at specified times. Evagrius and Cassian had both forcefully asserted that idleness was dangerous for the monks, particularly in their reflections on the fearsome vice of *acedia*.⁴⁷ This issue is acknowledged by St Benedict in this chapter and he suggests that there is only one remedy for it: work. However, reflection on this chapter clearly suggests that work is not only a condition for mental balance and spiritual health, it is also a duty toward one's neighbor. Benedict would have understood the fact that a Christian must earn his living and give alms.⁴⁸ Hence, a social aim complements the ascetic purpose. So in this chapter Benedict indicates that the monks undertake manual work for specified periods of the day and this is balanced by spiritual reading that nourishes their prayer. Benedict does not dispute

the fact that all Christians must "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), but not to the detriment of the obligation of work. He does however, provide a framework so that one can do both: work and pray without ceasing. He understood that the monks must first listen to God without ceasing. Hence, the necessity of reading and learning Scripture by heart. Knowledge of the sacred text acquired during the daily hours of reading allowed the monk to repeat it throughout the day, and thus listen constantly to God, answering him in prayer as he undertook his manual labor. De Vogue suggests that the monk is not unlike the workman of our time who listens to his radio on the job.⁴⁹ The monk recalls the word of God as he goes about his manual labor, and this is compared by ancient writers "to an animal chewing its cud."⁵⁰ His personal prayer, his response, emulates from this.

Immediately after this introduction, Benedict introduces the horarium for the monastery. This is undertaken in some detail in this chapter. In a world dependent on the rising and the setting of the sun, Benedict shifts manual work and reading periods from season to season to allow for some of each and not too much of either as the days stretch or diminish from period to period. Based on the information given in this chapter, the community usually prayed from as early as 2am⁵¹ to dawn and then worked for a couple of hours until the hour of Terce at about 10am. This was followed by a couple of hours of reading until Sext before the midday meal. After this meal the monks rested until about 2.30pm and then went back to work for three or four hours until Vespers and Supper. After saying

45 St Benedict uses both the Liturgical Seasons such as Lent and Calendar months of the year to divide the year into seasons whereas the Rule of the Master uses the Climatic Seasons – Summer and Winter. Essentially, both approaches are the same, and making allowance for extra daylight hours in Summer and not in Winter.

46 Ibid. Chapter 48:1.

47 Adalbert De Vogue, *Reading St Benedict: Reflections on the Rule*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications. 1994. p.235.

48 For example, as St Paul advises in Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12. The issues of idleness and disunity emerge in these scriptural references.

49 Adalbert De Vogue, *Reading St Benedict*. p.236.

50 Ibid. p.236.

51 There may have been some variation in this depending on work commitments and solemn feast days. For example, at the Holy Thursday ceremonies at the monastery in March 1902, Vigils were recited at 4am. This is some years later compared to the initial establishment phase of the mission; and some of the monks like Brother Isidoro were in their senior years. See: 'Chronicles of the Benedictine Abbey of New Norcia: January 1 to December 31, 1902'. Translated by Mary Chamberlain, in *New Norcia Studies*. September 2002. Number 10. p.79.

Compline they retired after sundown for the night.⁵² It is within this horarium that the monk focuses on his search for God, a search that is central to Benedictine spirituality.

It is within this structure that Brother Isidoro, the monk and blacksmith, lived and worked at the New Norcia Mission. Two avenues of thought emerge when we consider how he fared in such an arrangement. First and foremost, in the interview with Father David Barry on Saturday, 13th July, 2013, he mentioned that the Lay-Brothers carried the “full burden of the Office”.⁵³ By this he meant that the Lay-Brothers, who were in the numerical majority in the community, had to be able to sing the Divine Office in Latin and a number of them would have acted as Cantors.⁵⁴

This would have required significant training, and Abbot Salvado as an accomplished musician himself, would have identified those recruits who could take on such a leadership role.⁵⁵ He also relied on the leadership of Brother Oltra from the 1870s onwards to train the monks in liturgical music.⁵⁶ However, this arrangement clearly suggests that all of the lay-brothers did not have the necessary requirements to fulfill such a role.

The second avenue of thought then is focused on the fact that some of the work that the brothers had to fulfill would have meant that they were exempted from some of the Divine Office and *Lectio Divina*. St Benedict anticipated such a situation when he notes that there are exceptions to the rule. For example, on a Sunday the monks

are engaged in reading “except those who have been assigned various duties”;⁵⁷ and that if a brother cannot read or is unwilling to read, “he is to be given some work in order that he may not be idle.”⁵⁸ Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel suggests that this section of the chapter is referring to not only the brother who wants to apply himself to idleness and gossip, but also to the brother who is unable to read or study.⁵⁹ One would assume that Brother Isidoro had some basic literacy and numeracy skills as the blacksmith, and it would be a reasonable assumption to expect that even though Sunday was a day of rest, on the other six days of the week he was required to be on duty at the Blacksmith’s shop for a significant part of the daylight hours. One could not imagine that he would start the coal-fire in the mornings for a few hours work and then have to start again after the siesta in the afternoon. Given that both Yawel and Chictel worked for him for a short time only, and even though others undoubtedly assisted, he would have been required on site more often than not. Likewise, when one considers the blacksmith’s role, as outlined earlier in this paper, along with the expansion of the mission in the second half of the nineteenth century, there would have been a fair bit of pressure placed on Isidoro to produce the goods that were being requested. This argument is further supported by information from Salvado’s Diary when he lists the teams of monks and aboriginal assistants needed for the ploughing and seeding process each year. A blacksmith would have had to

52 *The Rule of St Benedict*, 48:3-15; and commentary by Joan Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. New York: Crossroad. 2010. pp. 212-213.

53 The writer of this paper interviewed Father David Barry OSB, the Prior at New Norcia on 13th July 2013.

54 In 1900 there were approximately 50 monks in the community at New Norcia. About 30 were Lay-Brothers and the remainder were priests. Only 10 of the priests may have been in residence; the others were out in parishes or mission stations (as were some of the Lay-Brothers). These numbers came out of the interview with the New Norcia Archivist on Wednesday, 10th July 2013. The given number here also corresponds (approximately) with the number of monks in group photographs that were taken at the time. For example, the 1893 community photograph on Page 81 in David Hutchison’s book: *A Town Like No Other*, has 45 monks in the photo. This may not have included those who were ill or who did not wish to be photographed, or who were away from the monastery at the time. This would have been a very small additional number, like 5 monks? Father David Barry also suggested when interviewed on 13th July 2013, that the number of monks was probably higher in the 1870’s given the arrival of many monks and candidates from Spain in that period. He quoted the number 70 for the 1870s.

55 Salvado had given a three hour concert in Perth in 1846 where he played the piano and sang popular Spanish songs to an audience that could only be considered as ‘the elite’ of Perth society. The proceeds from the concert helped to establish the New Norcia Mission in its infancy days. See George Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness*, pp. 44-45.

56 David Hutchison (ed). *A Town Like No Other*, p.49.

58 *The Rule of St Benedict*, Chapter 48:22. Monks would have to prepare community meals for instance.

59 In other words, a brother who may not have learnt to read or write, or who has very poor skills in this area. See: Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel: *Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Translated by David Barry OSB. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Studies Series. Number 212. 2007. p.438.

be on call for this process.⁶⁰ The Diary also lists ‘work times’ and these would have commenced after Vigils that all of the community would have attended. Consequently, his Diary lists the following duties:

- 3.30pm: Feed the horses – two brothers per week.
- 4.00am: One brother to help feed the horses.
- 4.15am: Everyone to hear Mass [*One assumes that ‘everyone’ is all members of the community*]
- 5.45am: Breakfast
- 6.15am: Harness and off to work
- 11.00am: Back to stables and feed the horses
- 12 noon: Dinner
- 1.00pm: Harnessing and back to plough and seed [*Note that the ‘Siesta’ is not listed*]
- 5.15pm: Back to stables, feed horses, tea and attend Compline.
- 8.00pm: Retire to cells.⁶¹

It is important to keep in mind here that this schedule was for 1873 when the mission was undergoing significant development by way of the organization of the farm and the construction of the mission buildings. The assumption is that Brother Isidoro’s schedule would have been similar. St Benedict advises that the monks should not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty forces them to do the harvesting themselves.⁶² It would seem reasonable to suggest that in this expansionary period at New Norcia the monks would have little option but to work longer hours to build a monastery so that they had a roof over their heads; and even though they set out to train their aboriginal helpers, the monks would have been required to take-on a major role in not only the ploughing, seeding and harvesting processes but in the construction works and associated matters. Benedict reminds the monks that when they “live by the labor of their hands... then they are really monks.”⁶³ Here we see through

the inspiration of Benedict’s Rule, a situation where Salvado, had to make leadership decisions that focused on a vision that in the first instance, probably required long hours of manual labor for many of the monks. This may well have caused tension for some, for a number of the monks left the monastery; but the majority, including Brother Isidoro stayed.⁶⁴ Braniff also supports the proposal that some of the monks were probably committed to long hours of manual labor in the establishment years to 1890 or thereabouts. For example, he comments that when Abbot Fulgentius Torres succeeded Salvado in 1900, one of his first tasks was to move some of the older lay-brothers, who had traditionally slept in the orchards or stables at the monastery and “dressed more like agricultural workers than monks” back into the monastery and dressed them in the Benedictine habit.⁶⁵ This discussion on the relationship between manual work and the other monastic obligations of the monks, and the possible tension that this caused leads to the other important chapter of the Rule of St Benedict.

5.0 THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT: CHAPTER 58 – THE PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING THE BROTHERS.

This chapter can be divided into three sections:

- The testing of the applicant and the preparations for his reception (58:1-16).
- The profession ceremony that takes place after the novitiate of one year (58:17-26).
- A short appendix to the chapter regarding the storage of the secular clothing of the newly professed monk and the filing of the profession document (58:27-29).⁶⁶

Bockmann points out that when one considers the sentence structure of this chapter, the words “if” and “whether” appear ten times in the first section, and in the second only four times, and in a

60 To repair ploughs, wheel rims, to make horse shoes, or other metal farming equipment for example.

61 Salvado’s Diary, 3rd May 1873.

62 *The Rule of St Benedict*, Chapter 48:7.

63 *Ibid.* Chapter 48:8.

64 Archival records at New Norcia and Interviews with the Archivist and Father David Barry during the week 8th- 15th July 2013. Father David suggested that some of the former monks moved to Perth, married and their descendants are well known identities in the Catholic community in that city now; others went to the gold fields in the eastern colonies; others went to the Philippines where the Spanish Benedictines had a mission in Mindanao.

65 Valerian (John) Braniff, *St Ildephonsus College, New Norcia: 1913-1964. School of education and Social Enquiry*, Murdoch University, Western Australia. 1984. p.4. Also in Flood, J. *New Norcia*. London: Burns and Oats, 1908. pp. 198-201.

66 Aquinata Bockmann, *Perspectives on the Rule of St Benedict: Expanding Our Hearts in Christ*. Colledgeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005. p.108.

“weakened, negative sense”.⁶⁷ The suggestion here is that the first part focuses on testing the applicant and outlining the conditions of entry with an emphasis on freedom, while the second section, the profession is definitive and binding. It is in this context that St Benedict develops his *tripartite expressions*:

- There are three activities for novices: study, eat and sleep (58:5).

- Three criteria for novices: they must truly seek God; show eagerness for the Work of God; and eagerness for obedience and trials (58:7).

- Three gates through which the candidate passes: entry to the guest quarters after being tested at the door (58:4); the ritual actions the candidate passes through during the novitiate such as the reading of the Rule to him three times over the novitiate year to check his firm commitment or otherwise (58:9-15).

- The three promises of the candidate: perseverance in stability (58:9); to observe and obey (58:14); promises of stability, fidelity to monastic life and obedience at the end of the novitiate year (58:9,14,17).⁶⁸

Bockmann points out that the process over the novitiate year focuses on a movement to a “total act” where the commitment of the entire person as well as that of the entire community to the newly professed, involves a consenting to live and work together for the glory of God.⁶⁹ This is highlighted

in this chapter where, in the presence of all the monks, the novice makes his vows (58:17). The entire community responded with the *Suscipe* (58:23); and the new brother prostrates himself at the feet of each monk (58:23). In addition, the new brother does not keep “anything at all” of his possessions (58:24). This is the process that the blacksmith, Anastasio Brea, would have been required to follow when he sought entry into the novitiate at New Norcia. When he entered the novitiate on 8th September 1859, he was already 35 years of age; he had been living at working at the mission since 1849.⁷⁰ He would have been given his religious name “Isidoro” at the commencement of the novitiate and the full habit at his profession on 8th September 1861.⁷¹ The “senior chosen” to accompany the novices during these years was usually Father Ildephonso Bertran.⁷² The archival records on Bertran reflect a very spiritual man and references in the archives refer to him as “a venerable and kindly looking man”; he is referred to as a “saintly” novice director; a man with “practical piety, sound religious spirit... who trained them [the novices] to that Divine Model which they have so faithfully endeavored to copy”.⁷³

Given this information, it is important to note that Brother Isidoro spent two years in the novitiate.⁷⁴ The question then is: Why did he spend two years in the novitiate when the Rule of St

67 Ibid. p.108.

68 Ibid. p.109.

69 Ibid. p.110.

70 Dates as outlined in the biographical details earlier in this paper. The assumption is that he was one of a number of lay missionaries that Salvado had recruited in Spain. Brea may have expressed an interest in becoming a monk; and one question would be whether or not the ten years as a layman at the mission prior to the commencement of his novitiate was in fact testing his spirit? As the Rule states: “Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry” (58:1). It would probably be more reasonable to suggest that the idea of joining the community ‘grew’ on him over the decade prior to his entry.

71 Benedictine novices simply wear the black tunic and belt during the novitiate year.

72 The Rule states: “A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention” (58:6). The position is often called “Master of Novices”. Bertran was born in 1827 in Spain; he completed his novitiate in Subiaco in Italy in 1854, and arrived at New Norcia in 1855. He died at New Norcia in 1911. At various stages he was master of Novices, Parish Priest, Prior and Vicar General of the Abbey Nullius of New Norcia. He was responsible for the mission at the time of the death of Salvado in Europe in 1900 until the arrival of the new Abbot, Fulgentius Torres. Torres named ‘St Ildephonsus College’ (1913-65) after him.

73 These quotations are found with other references in the archival file containing the early Benedictine Community Annals at New Norcia. Information provided by the Archivist via email on 10th October 2013.

74 Checked details twice with the New Norcia Archivist and reply on 1st October indicated that the handwritten register clearly indicates that Brother Isidoro was professed in 1861, two years after entering the novitiate. This is not in step with the recommendations in Chapter 58 of the Rule of St Benedict.

Benedict suggests that this initial period should be for one year.⁷⁵ A number of possibilities exit here. First and foremost, if Abbot Salvado was absent from the mission, those due for First Profession may have been told that they would have to wait for his return. This seems unlikely given Salvado's commitment to build the monastic community and to follow the Rule. Prior Venantius Garrido could have received the vows in place of the Abbot.⁷⁶ Another possibility may have been the fact that Brother Isidoro, during one of the three appointed times over the first year of the novitiate where the Rule is read to him may have had some doubts about continuing as a novice monk. There is no record of this in the New Norcia Archives; but if it did happen he would have been required to start the process again if he 'left and came back'. This is doubtful because the re-entry phase would presumably have been more demanding with regard to keeping him waiting at the door (58:3). More to the point, the best scenario for the two years is focused on the fact that in the given period the New Norcia Mission was in its 'establishment phase' and Brother Isidoro may have been needed more than what was initially anticipated in the

Blacksmith's Shop. There is no record of anyone else being able to take up the blacksmith's role in the 1859-61 period.⁷⁷ Consequently this may have interfered with his novitiate and a decision made to extend the time period.⁷⁸ This is speculative, but it is a reasonable position when one considers that Brother Isidoro was thirty-five years of age and novitiates have never been easy experiences. As Michael Casey recalls, entering a monastic community is:

...like diving into cold water; the initial shock induced a kind of temporary numbness. Before long the novice had lost his clothes, his hair, his name, even his power of speech.⁷⁹

Casey also suggests that most monastic observances will only have their intended effect if their meaning is apparent. He suggests that *lectio divina* is an art that requires more than simply knowing how to read the Bible; and even though "plonking" a novice down "in front of Scriptures is a start" the process requires more than that.⁸⁰ It is a process that requires a measure of spiritual literacy as well as intelligent reading. Thus, Brother Isidoro may have been happy to have more than one year in the novitiate if it gave him time to

75 Timothy Fry, (ed). *The Rule of St Benedict in English*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press. 1982. Chapter 58:9-14. p.79.

76 This is normal procedure for the Prior to stand in for the Abbot if the latter is absent. Salvado had only returned to Western Australia in 1859 and it is unlikely given the expansion of the mission at this point, that he would have left for a prolonged period of time. The suggestion then is that there was a reason for holding Brother Isidoro's profession off until 1861.

77 Checked this with the New Norcia Archivist via email on 26th September 2013.

78 Given the missionary zeal of the late nineteenth century, it would seem that it was commonplace for novices to accompany missionaries to new foundations. For example, when Sister Urshla Frayne of the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Perth in 1846, three of the Sisters were novices. From all accounts these novices were involved in teaching and nursing from the very beginning. See: Imelda Palmer, Urshla Frayne 1817-1885, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, (MUP), 1972. Also: in 1872 when the Prioress of the Dominican Sisters in Adelaide died, the Prioress from Maitland, New South Wales, Sister Mary Agnes Bourke, was sent to care for the fledging community in South Australia until reinforcements arrived from Ireland. Sister Agnes travelled from Newcastle to Adelaide by boat and travelled with one other Sister and a Novice. The point being that novices in the nineteenth-century seemed to have been very 'mobile'. See: Helen Northey, *Living the Truth: the Dominican Sisters of South Australia 1868-1958*. Published by the Holy Cross Congregation of Dominican Sisters, Adelaide, 1999. pp.73-74. It was not until the Catholic Church passed the 1917 Code of Canon Law – called the Pio-Benedictine Code – that some 'order' was put into novitiate requirements across all religious congregations. For example, in Canons 544 to 565 the arrangements for the novitiate are clearly outlined indicating that novices – clerical or lay brothers – are to be burdened with the primary ministry or work of the congregation. They can help but it is not to be a primary focus of the novitiate year. Similarly Canon 555 indicates that the novitiate must be one continuous year; and Canon 556 indicates that any days 'lost' must be made up. The point is that even though this legislation was passed after Brother Isidoro's time, it would have been on the agenda for most religious orders prior to 1917. Likewise, the absence of this legislation, probably gave Salvado some flexibility in how he used his novices in the early years of the mission. See: Edward Peters (ed). *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001. pp. 210-220.

79 Michael Casey, *The Art of Winning Souls: Pastoral care of Novices*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press.

80 2010. p.33.

continue in the Blacksmith's Shop and to discern his religious vocation. For it is through this novitiate period Father Ildephonso and those involved in the formation of the novices such as Salvado and Garrido, as Abbot and Prior respectively, would have had to be sure that Brother Isidoro was making the progress required by the Rule.

Similarly, one needs to consider the 'normal questions' that a good novice would consider during his novitiate: What would he do if he did not continue? Stay in Australia? Return to Spain? Then there would have been the normal issues around what Michael Casey calls the 'monotony' of day to day life: set times for rising, prayers, lectio, bells, work, irritable confreres, arriving in Choir 'smelling' of burnt coal, 'rough hands' permanently stained with the black coal; the issue of hygiene – only being able to bathe in the river at certain times and not every day.⁸¹ In addition, there were the ongoing physical trials and hardships ranging from Brother Isidoro travelling to help at Marah; the endless heat and insects over the fifty-year period that he was at New Norcia. Salvado writes of grasshoppers of a 'veritable plague' particularly where cereal crops were being grown.⁸² This would have had an impact on all the monks along with the other physical discomforts that the environment produced like bee stings, the noise from cicadas as big as bees; bush fires, blow flies being able to infect the wounds of man and beast alike; and having to shake the maggots out off blankets in the mornings when the monks got out of bed.⁸³ Despite the difficulties and disappointments, such as the loss of his first two aboriginal assistants, in Yawel and Chictel, Brother Isidoro was professed and lived the Rule of St Benedict to the best of his ability. The New Norcia Archives suggest that he was not only the blacksmith for the ten years up until his novitiate, but for the forty years after profession. This put him at 80 years of

age at the time of his death in 1904 and he is still listed as the blacksmith. It would seem quite feasible to suggest that Brother Isidoro continued with this role (in some capacity at least) until about a month before his death on 19th August 1904. On Tuesday, 19th July the Community Chronicle recorded that he "is going down-hill"; on Sunday 24th July he received the Eucharist and was Anointed; and on 18th August he is in his last agony and that he is "all skin and bone" suggesting that he had cancer; and on 19th August he "delivered his soul to the Lord".⁸⁴ The "bells tolled for the deceased at a quarter to nine" and this was followed by the community gathering to recite the Office for the Dead followed by a Sung Requiem Mass. Burial followed the next day, Saturday 20th August 1904.⁸⁵ It is from this profile that commenced with the photograph, and included some reflection on two chapters of the Rule of St Benedict, that some concluding observations can be made.

6.0 CONCLUSION:

First and foremost, to go back to St Dorotheus of Gaza: he spoke of us sharing in the divine nature of God and an inborn spark of divinity burning within our hearts. Something held Brother Isidoro, something captured his whole sense of being, a sense of meaning that said to him 'this is where I belong'. It would have been quite easy for him (as happened with other monks) to leave or to 'flee' the monastery when the trials became too heavy; when the call to be a monk, to be a blacksmith lacked light, lacked a sense of vision by way of relationship with God and neighbor. Instead, his commitment, his understanding of his religious vocation grows over the fifty years. The Cistercian monk Thomas Merton, who lived the Rule of St Benedict, writes that the monk grows into his vocation over a lifetime. Merton writes that:

81 Ibid. p.7.

82 Michael Casey, *The Art of Winning Souls*. Casey mentions similar issues in this book when advising monastic formators on issues surrounding the admission of candidates to monasteries. What he says has a focus on the normal human and psychological issues that any group that attempts to live together in community have. The issues do not change from one century to the other.

83 E.J.Stormon, (ed). *The Salvado Memoirs*. Published by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia Inc. New Norcia, Western Australia. 2007. p.206. This would have frustrated the monks and their aboriginal helpers no end.

84 Information taken from Benedictine Community Chronicle for July/August 1904. Available in the New Norcia Archives.

85 Ibid. Assume that a group of monks needed the rest of the Friday to dig the grave for burial on the Saturday morning.

The monk's business is to empty himself of all that is selfish and turbulent and make way for the unapprehended Spirit of God. That is his ministry and his whole life: to be transformed into God without half realizing, himself, what is going on.⁸⁶

I suspect Brother Isidoro was no exception to this. The Rule of St Benedict was his guide, it guided him as he discerned the will of God, it illuminated his journey, it was a way forward where he continued to answer "Yes" to each new day, and to each new reading of the Rule to the monks he would recall the formal times during his own novitiate when the reading had been directed to him as the candidate.

The second point is centered on the fact that the life of Brother Isidoro is one example of the work of the New Norcia Mission in its first fifty or so years. The core agenda by way of ministry, was to the aboriginal community. Abbot Salvado had accepted this task when he first arrived in the Colony of Western Australia in 1846, it was a task that he could not do alone. He had to rely on the monks that followed from this Spanish missionary community. Hence, like all of the members of the Benedictine community, Brother Isidoro is an important part of the equation.⁸⁷ He works with Yawel and Chictel and their successors. He trains them, he is obviously happy to work with them as the photograph is suggesting in its own way. When one considers the lifestyle choice he made, one is reminded of the choice of the hermit St Anthony. When he emerged from the desert people:

...did not see a dead man or a man twisted by madness and fanaticism and crude, half-idiot hatreds, but one whose countenance shone with simplicity and the peace of Eden and the first days

of the unspoiled world.⁸⁸

Even though the central photograph for this paper was taken early in his monastic career, Brother Isidoro seems happy, and this is further supported with his ongoing commitment to the monastic enterprise be it at New Norcia, or helping at Marah⁸⁹ or participating in the ongoing religious observances and exercises of the community such as having his feet washed with twelve other lay-brothers at the Holy Thursday 'Washing of the Feet' ceremony in March 1902.⁹⁰ The point here is that two years before his death, Brother Isidoro is still very much an active participant in the life of the monastery.

The third point that can be drawn from the paper is the fact that New Norcia has a contemporary significance both from historical and theological perspectives. Historically, the monks were part of the missionary thrust of the late nineteenth century. Many of them who came from Spain initially arrived as a result of the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of Mendizabal in 1835-37 which resulted in the confiscation of church property including monasteries by the Spanish Government at the time; and others came due to the missionary zeal that was being promoted across Europe at the time.⁹¹ This movement of personnel, be it as a result of persecution or revolutionary activity in Europe that created a sense discontinuity for the religious concerned in their homeland, or simply religious groups wanting to be part of the action, resulted in the 'planting' of a European style of religious life in the new countries. During Salvado's tenure, and that of his successors until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), this process generally worked.⁹² However, it is

86 Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*. New York: Harvest Publishing. 1979. p.3.

87 The words of St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4 – many parts to form the one body of Jesus Christ.

88 Thomas Merton., *The Waters of Siloe*. p.3.

89 One of the properties Salvado purchased in 1868 and carried 3,000 sheep. A blacksmith would have been needed at this out station from time to time. George Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness*. p.88.

90 "Chronicles of the Benedictine Abbey of New Norcia: January 1 to December 31, 1902" translated by Mary Chamberlain, in *New Norcia Studies*. September 2002. Number 10. p.79. Not sure why 13 had their feet washed when Jesus only washed the feet of twelve apostles. Not that it matters. All of the thirteen brothers are listed in the record.

91 For example, the Spanish Benedictines (some via Italy) came to New Norcia. They also came with what would be called 'lay-missionaries' today. Some of these men and women became monks and nuns at New Norcia. The Spanish monks also went to the Philippines. The German Benedictines – both men and women – went to the United States of America. Other religious orders like the Sisters of Mercy, and the Christian Brothers came to Australia in this period from Ireland; the Marist Brothers came from France and the Jesuits from Austria. Salvado advertised in Spain for artisans and his visits to Europe always resulted in him being able to secure the services of further volunteers and resources for the mission. He was a good 'salesman' and this is reflected in George Russo's comments in: *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness*.pp.222ff; 227ff.

92 The ministry changed over this time from care of aborigines to education, but the monastic community was essentially Spanish until the late 1950s early 1960s.

only since the 1960s that these religious groups, while loyal to their charism or core of their existence, have moved more in the direction of an 'inculturation process' that is in keeping with the reality of the world where they now find themselves. In other words, despite Salvado's work with the aboriginal community that was acclaimed by both State and Church; effectively, monasticism at New Norcia prior to the late 1960s was a bit like a 'little parcel of Spain' when it came to living the Rule of St Benedict. The actualities were based on the Spanish experience. In effect there may have been no alternative at the time. However, when one considers the present, the future of Benedictine life in Australia is very much centered on how Australians respond to it in the twenty-first century. Salvado, and Isidoro Brea and the monks that came to New Norcia in the nineteenth-century and first half of the twentieth-century, gave us a gift, the Rule of St Benedict in the context of their lived experience at New Norcia. The future of monasticism in this country is focused not on more monks coming from Spain, but how we respond to the gift. I suspect, that like the experience of Salvado, Isidoro and the early monks at New Norcia, a 'key' to the future or our response to Benedictine life in this country is its strong ecumenical tradition and how we develop this.

Brother Isidoro and his fellow monks from Spain were immigrants to Australia. Their gift of living out the Rule of St Benedict provided many additional benefits for not only the local community, but the wider community in Western Australia in particular: their care and training of the local aboriginal community; their farming expertise; their dedication to music and the arts from the very beginning of the monastery; and eventually their involvement in Catholic education. All of these projects, along with their active involvement in the wider community such as advising the Western Australian Colonial Secretary on how to grow tobacco that was used to develop

a 'tobacco dip' for sheep with scabs;⁹³ or their introduction of vineyards and an olive plantation all attracted interest from Perth. Brother Isidoro was an integral part of this story and with a monk's understanding of Benedictine hospitality would have approved of the sharing of whatever information they had that would assist with the ongoing development of the colony.⁹⁴

Central to their life as monks in the 1846 to 1900 era at New Norcia was their ministry to the local aboriginal community. The Rule of St Benedict, firmly based on the precept of love of God and neighbor (Mark 12:28-34) required the monks to reach out to the local aboriginal community. Salvado and the monks sought to understand the culture of this indigenous community, they sought to help the community, to instruct it in the Christian faith, to educate, train and employ members of this community, to provide housing and land for the aborigines so that they could work alongside the monks as tenant farmers. While it is possible to criticize some of these actions, the general consensus is that these Spanish monks fared much better with the local aboriginal community than their counterparts in other missions in Australia at the time.⁹⁵ One of the key reasons for their 'success' was undoubtedly the Rule of St Benedict that taught the monks that the starting point for all communication was compassion, respect, seeking to understand the local aboriginal culture and patience. These basic principles were often ignored in other parts of Australia.⁹⁶ The point is, these basic principles are still crucial starting points for any form of reconciliation in Australia today.

Finally, from a theological point of view, the Rule provides us with a guide to Christian living. St Benedict indicates in Chapter 58 of the Rule that the candidate has to be tested at the door; entry is not automatic.⁹⁷ The assumption is that the candidate is coming for life, not for a weekend's comfort. The testing is important because the

93 George Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness*, p.88.

94 This proposal has Gospel connotations. It is what the monks are called to do for their neighbour. For example, the explanations on Chapter 53 of the Rule titled: "The Reception of Guests" touch on this very point – the monks sharing what they have; food, accommodation, spiritual care, advice. See: *The Rule of St Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living*. Translated by the Monks of Glenstal Abbey. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 1982. pp.248- 250.

95 David Hutchison, *A Town Like No Other*. pp. 59-71.

96 As exemplified with the Tasmanian experience in the late nineteenth century. It should also be noted that even though the monks may have had a degree of success in caring for the aboriginal community, they also had their disappointments. For example, a number of aborigines left the mission, the two novices taken to Rome to study did not survive, and so on. See David Hutchison, *A Town Like No Other*, p.51.

97 *Rule of St Benedict*, Chapter 58:3.

candidate like the professed monk has one purpose: to seek Jesus Christ through his Gospel. The Rule is based on his Gospel. As Benedict suggests in his *Prologue*:

Let us get up then...for the Scriptures rouse us when they say: *It is high time for us to arise from sleep (Romans 13:11)*. Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: *If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts (Psalm 94[95]:8)*.⁹⁸

In other words, it is a call not only to Brother Isidoro and the monks, but a call to all Christians, to be open to the voice of God in their lives: to listen, to seek the light, to avoid closing our ears to the possibilities that God puts before us. This is an important theological inheritance from the Rule of St Benedict. To do this, St Benedict also provides us with the means; namely, to commence with the gift of *lectio divina*. It is in this context that Brother Isidoro, despite the daily trials, sets an example for all of us to move forward in living the creative story of the Incarnation.

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APPENDIX

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98 Ibid. Prologue: vv 8-10.

