



MSA Newsletter

A newsletter for Member Schools of Marist Schools Australia published fortnightly during term time



From Brother Michael Green

Dear Brothers, Colleagues and Friends

A long time ago, in a world far away, the people erected “May altars”, and they decorated them unsparingly, in kitsch sorts of ways.

It was a very Catholic thing, the May altar, a practice that became fashionable in western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, and was to have an ecclesial shelf-life of around a hundred years. The centrepiece was a statue of Mary – more typically called “Our Lady” as the Europeans had the custom of doing – either a statue that was already fixed in place or one that was specially brought in. Those blue-and-white plaster ones were popular, especially those with Mary standing alone. May was Mary’s month. A simple approach was then to keep up a steady supply of fresh flowers with which to adorn the statue, but to stop with only some flowers would have been a fairly no-frills effort. More ornate augmentations could be introduced through reams of flowing satin or silk, candles – lots of them, even cotton wool to represent clouds and Mary’s celestial home. And maybe an ornamental crown or a string of party lights. Perhaps a plastic serpent to be trod under foot. The front corner of classrooms was a preferred location, and also the Marian shrines of churches and chapels. People had them also at home. With a May altar in place, then May Devotions could be held. Or even, in the case of a school, something more banal such as a competition to see which class had the best altar.

Contemporary Marian theology might prompt a few questions about these particular expressions of popular piety. Largely, the practice has vanished. But in 1872, in the opening weeks of the first Marist school in Australia, it was the latest religious fad. Do you know the story? Brother Ludovic, a Frenchman, at his wit’s end to devise some way to tame the wild and uncouth lads of The Rocks, asked them all to bring in some flowers. During the day, with these flowers, candles, and other things to hand, he secretly constructed a stunning May altar in another part of the school building. When he herded in his impious urchins in to see it the afternoon, they were reportedly mesmerised. The event seemed to elicit a marked change in the attitudes of the lads and in the culture of the school. In the Australian Marist folklore it became soon known as the “May Miracle”. The full story is actually more colourful and includes a few other endearing twists but space precludes a longer recounting of it.

You’ve heard the laments that supermarkets have their hot cross buns out the day after the Christmas decorations are taken down, and that chocolate Easter eggs appear in early February, and that ‘Mardi Gras’ has hopelessly lost any conceptual link to Ash Wednesday and Lent. The links between these cultural traditions and the religious meaning they once signified, or at least brought to mind, are largely broken. Perhaps they weren’t especially effective at a meaning-making level in the first place, perhaps even a little counter-productive. Some might say the same of the old May altars. Customs, symbols and rituals, can lose their salience once the nexus is broken with the meaning they signify.

Yet we always need to be alert to babies being tossed out with bathwater. One of results of the May altar in a school was to heighten an awareness of Mary, and her place in the lives of the members of the school and their collective identity. What are the ways we do that now? What are the images, practices and rituals that can work for this time? For us Marists who define our spirituality and our educational approach as Marian, it is well to ponder this. May might be a good a time to do it.

Nisi Dominus

Brother Michael Green FMS
NATIONAL DIRECTOR

COMING UP...

9-10 May Marist Association Local Coordinators programme
 10 May Association Council meeting
 10 May Remar Blue Helm In-Service, NSW
 11 May Remar Red Caravel Day, Northern Territory
 13 May Next Gen1 programme, Melbourne
 13-15 May Remar Blue Retreat, Northern Territory
 17 May A Theology of Mercy, Perth
 17 May A Theology of Mercy, North Shore

18 May Next Gen2 programme, Sydney
 20-22 May Remar Blue Retreat, New South Wales
 23-24 May MSA Regional Council meeting, Melbourne
 25 May Meeting of Principals of MSA-Governed Schools
 25 May Remar Red Caravel Day, New South Wales
 26 May MSA Regional Council meeting, Brisbane
 27 May MSA Regional Council meeting, Sydney
 29 May - 1 June Footsteps 1: Making Jesus Known and Loved - Mittagong

JOEYS MUMS, 2016 RETREAT – “A JOURNEY OF FAITH WITH JESUS, MARY AND MARCELLIN!”



For 4 years now a group of mothers with sons at St Joseph's College Hunters Hill, have gathered at **The Hermitage Mittagong** in early Autumn, for 2 days of reflection and community. Originally suggested, imagined, and encouraged by one of the Mums – Maggs Thomsett - these gatherings are facilitated by Brother Robert O'Connor MLF Team member and Spiritual Director/Consultant, and to all accounts are a special event for the Mums. Attracting around 30 Mums on each occasion attests to their attraction to the event. Generated originally as a way to “learn more about Marcellin and Mary, who we know are so central to our boys being Marists”, the retreats have morphed into a more reflective consideration of the place of Jesus in the faith journeys of these Mums. This year, recognising that only a small number of the group had attended earlier Retreats, and that many of the group were Year 7 Mums in their first year of connection at the College, we spent some time recapping the stories of Marcellin and Mary in their relationships with Jesus and their personal faith journeys. On Day 2 time was spent on: “**Befriending my own inner silence**” and **Coming to know Jesus more deeply: “Who do you say I am?”** One of the Mums on our first night conducted a sensitive reflection on the child refugee crisis and our response to it. Mass was celebrated on the second evening by Father Martin Maunsell PP of Eastwood and Old Boy of the College who kindly travelled to Mittagong and joined us for dinner after Mass. Meals and free time allowed for much interaction and sharing by the Mums themselves. Another Retreat event has been booked for 2017!



FEAST OF ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT WEEK RESOURCES



As usual, a number of resources have been prepared for schools to use to help them celebrate the Founder's Feast Day on 6 June, drawing on this year's theme: “**Mercy. The name of our God.**” Follow this link: [2016 Feast of Saint Marcellin Champagnat - Week Resources](#)

This year a bookmark is available for purchase (including a prayer on the reverse side). A link to the order form, should you wish to purchase any, can be found here - [Bookmark Order Form](#)

A reference image of the bookmark can also be found on the form. Please note the closing deadline of ordering the bookmarks is the **13 May 2016**. For further information or any questions, please contact Bessie McConnell at bessie.mcconnell@marists.org.au or 02 9218 4007.

MARIST BASKETBALL CARNIVAL 2016



Another successful Marist Basketball Carnival was held last month, involving 33 teams from MSA schools from all over Australia.

Thanks to the hosts St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, for their warm hospitality and thorough organisation.

Congratulations to Marcellin College Bulleen and Lavalla Catholic College Traralgon who respectively took out the boys and girls championships, with Sacred Heart College Adelaide, as runners-up in both. Full results are on the [MSA website](#).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP VACANCIES

MARIST COLLEGE ASHGROVE

Leadership Positions Available



Marist College Ashgrove is currently advertising for the following positions, which will commence 11 July 2016:

- **Head of Staff Services (Senior Leader); and**
- **Head of Mathematics (Middle Leader).**

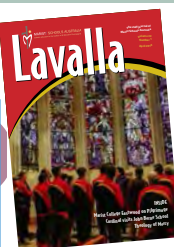
Applications close 3pm 13 May.

For more information, please see the College website



LAVALLA & CHAMPAGNAT JOURNAL PUBLICATION

This year's first edition of Lavalla and Champagnat Journal has been printed and distribution to schools has begun. The next cut-off date is **Wednesday, 22nd June 2016**. The cut-off date for the final edition this year is **Wednesday, 14th September 2016**. Circulation will be in early October (start of Term 4).



MARIST MISSION AND LIFE FORMATION



Marist Pilgrimage 4 - 24 April 2016

Pilgrims from 25 MSA schools took part in this year's pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome and France. They are pictured here outside the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

FORMATION IN THE RED CENTRE

During the week of 11 April staff across the three campuses of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Alice Springs, participated in a number of formation programs. The week provided a chance for all involved to come to a deeper understanding of their own spiritual awareness and an opportunity to explore personal and communal prayer. A group of 8 members of staff worked closely with the 'Our Daily Bread' program where they discussed the importance of taking a prominent role in their own spiritual formation and that of their colleagues.



Our Daily Bread - Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College, Alice Springs
John Chew, Joanne Dermody and Fleur Summers
11 - 14 April 2016



Marist Methodology
Sacred Heart College, Adelaide, 14 April 2016

FIRST MARIST METHODOLOGY COURSE FOR 2016

The first Marist Methodology session for 2016 was held at Sacred Heart College, Adelaide on 14th April. Eighteen staff from Cardijn and Sacred Heart Colleges are undertaking the Course which is provided by Marist Schools Australia and Sacred Heart College, in partnership with Catholic Education South Australia and the University of South Australia. The Course includes twelve two hour sessions which are being taught between April and September, 2016.

For a copy of the course handbook or further information please contact:

Steve Byrne steve.byrne@shcs.sa.edu.au

John McMahon

john.mcmahon@marists.org.au

MARIST VOCATIONS FORUM

Forty-one Year 12 students from fourteen Marist Schools in the Sydney region attended the annual Vocations Forum at the Hermitage, Mittagong, organised by Marist Vocations Ministry and the Sydney MYM Team.

During the two-day program, participants were invited to reflect on and grow in their understanding of vocation and God's invitation to them to live their lives to the fullest. A particular session of the program invited them to consider three key questions to help unlock the potential of their future vocation:

- What gives you joy?
- What are you good at?
- What are the particular needs in Society and the Church that you can offer?

In encountering the personal stories of guest speakers from a variety of vocations on the Saturday afternoon, the participants gained valuable 'lived' experience about how others have responded to God's call in their lives and in service to those around them.

The quality of the young men and women who attended and formed a mini-Marist community over the two days was outstanding. Their openness to discuss, challenge and listen to different viewpoints, all with a genuine respect for the other, was a hallmark of the group. They easily engaged in shared and reflective prayer and participated fully in our weekend Eucharist. It is a credit to the schools for their thoughtful selection of those who attended.

Along with the Year 11 Justice Forum in September (also run in Brisbane), these forum weekends help to establish deeper bonds of connection and family spirit between students in our Marist schools, which is vital for their take-up and participation in future post-school MYM events.

Thanks to the Hermitage Community for their hospitality and welcome to the team and our young people. Photos of the weekend can be accessed via our Marist Vocations Facebook page during the coming days.

<https://www.facebook.com/MaristVocations/?ref=bookmarks>

Brother Greg McDonald



CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MARISTS IN INDIA



In the Tamil Nadu city of Trichy in India, the latest monthly gathering of local supporters for the Marist Brothers' project known as Operation Rainbow attracted a joyful crowd of about 200 on Sunday, April 17.

Marist Solidarity project partner, Brother Raj said that the gathering was a wonderful celebration of life and activities generated much fun and laughter.

The gathering was organised by councillors and the youth group from Saint Theresa's Church at Theresalpuram in collaboration with Operation Rainbow staff and their Director, Brother Saul (pictured above, centre, with social work students).

Saint Theresa's Parish Priest, Father Arulanandham, attended as a special guest of the Marist Brothers.

Operation Rainbow was established by the Marist Brothers in 2003 to address the lifetime of fear, isolation and social stigma experienced by the very large number of children and their families, who are affected by HIV/AIDS. It provides free access to resources like medical seminars, counselling, and home visits.

The monthly gatherings are a successful and ongoing aspect of the Operation Rainbow program and help those supported by this program to live with dignity.

Celebrating the achievements of our project partners in India will be the focus of our forthcoming event 'Eyes on India'.

It will showcase the work of acclaimed photographer Conor Ashleigh following his recent Marist Solidarity assignment visiting our partners in India.

'Eyes on India' events will be held from 5.30-7.00 pm at the **Marist Centre Melbourne** on **Sunday, 5 June** and at the **Brother Cyprian Pavilion** at **Marist College Ashgrove** in **Brisbane** on **Thursday, 9 June**.

Please save these dates in your calendar and join us for an evening of visual discovery, drinks and finger food.

For further information, or to make sure you receive your personal invitation, please email msol@marists.org.au or phone **Helen Quirk** on **(07) 3354 0600**.