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Inside:

- Viewpoint: Maitland-Newcastle celebrating 150 years
- Encounters with Charism

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

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Champagnat

An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education

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1. Editorial and Contributors 4
Tony Paterson
2. The Institutionalization of Charism in a Faith-based school 7
Margaret Lee
3. Marist Methodology: pedagogical context and relevance today 15
Maree Rolfe

Viewpoint...

Recently I attended the opening of an exhibition in Maitland in the Hunter Valley, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the first resident bishop of what is now the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

James Murray was born in County Wicklow in Ireland on 25th March 1828, and he died in West Maitland on 9th July 1909. In 1865 he was appointed the first resident bishop of Maitland, and arrived from Ireland on 21st October 1866 to take charge of the newly formed diocese. Over the next forty-five years he set about placing the diocese on a solid foundation, and one of his greatest contributions, along with his successors over the 150 years, was to build the Catholic school system in that diocese. This reality is reflected in the number of religious congregations and institutes that made a significant contribution to the diocesan school system: the Dominican Sisters, the Sisters of St Joseph of Lochinvar, the Sisters of Mercy and the Marist Brothers in particular.



Bishop James Murray

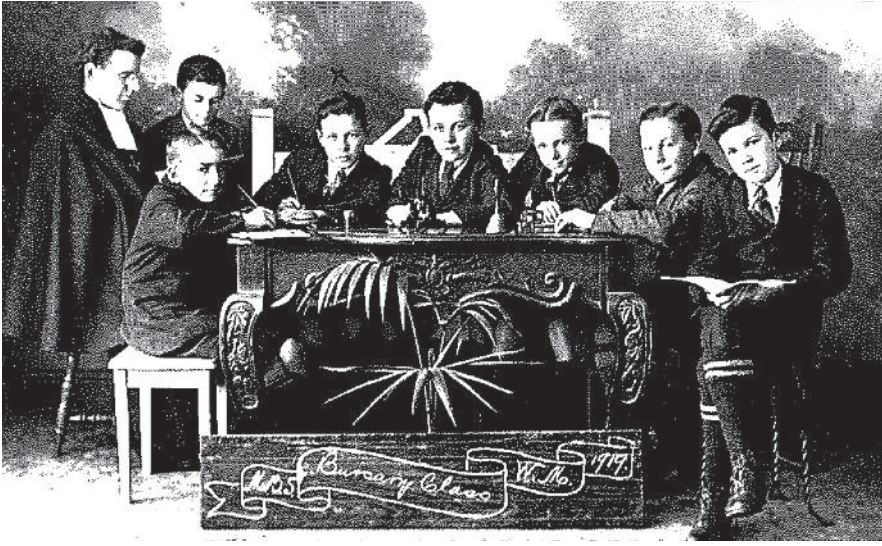
The current exhibition is jointly presented by the Maitland Regional Museum and the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, and was held between 20th June and 10th July 2016 in St John's Hall (the old Pro-Cathedral). The exhibition not only celebrated the arrival of the first bishop, but it recollects the stories of people, families, groups and institutions within the local Church, or as part of the Church's relationship with wider society.

One of the important aspects of the exhibition for me focused on the fact that photographs always tell a story, they tell us something of the past, they help to explain our present moment – how we arrived at this point, as well as saying something very important about our responsibility to keep developing the story as we move further into the twenty-first century. In preserving our Marist story, in nourishing and deepening our understanding of our own charism, such an exhibition makes a valuable contribution when we think in terms of those who have travelled with us: worked with us in Maitland and Newcastle, and lived the joys and hardships of life in the Hunter Valley.

The photographs below are from the Archives of the Australian Marist Province. They tell a story, and it is a story that we as Marists, have been a part of for 150 years. There is always a spiritual context to this: the graced awareness that all has been given by God, and this moves one in gratitude for the blessings received.



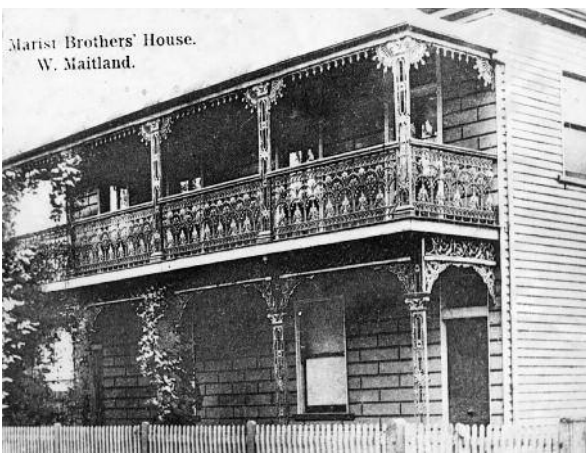
Maitland Flood of 1919: people respond in care for their neighbour



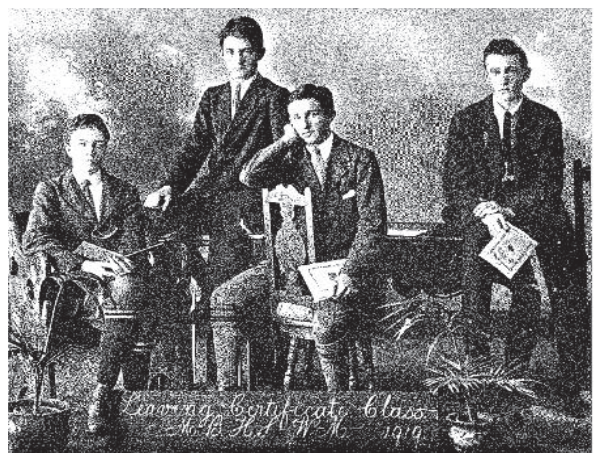
Br William Molloy and his class in 1919



Fourth Class in Maitland 1923



First Brothers House 1905-23



Leaving Certificate students 1919

CONTRIBUTORS:

The photographs that the reader has just appreciated tell something of the Marist connection with Maitland in a particular way. The written word also proclaims a story, a way of perceiving an incident, a topic, or an interpretation of one's contemplative spirit that seeks to describe one's thoughts and feelings about a particular topic, moment or event in their lives. The writer is like a composer or a craftsman (or craftswoman): everything has to be exact, it has to fit, so that the full meaning of the end product can be understood and used to go another step in developing our creative story, our Marist story. People who write on charism are very much like this. They have to be able to write as someone who belongs to the given religious group or as a member of the religious family that they are seeking to express something about in their written word. Anything else would be a pure academic exercise, and as far as this topic is concerned, would lack both a heart and a soul.

The two writers for this edition of the *Champagnat Journal* are both women who provide a powerful interpretation of their lived experience of the charism that they address. The contributors are:

- **Dr Margaret Lee** is currently engaged in research for the Brisbane Catholic Education Office and is a sessional academic at the Australian Catholic University working in the areas of Leadership Spirituality and Leading Authentic Learning. Margaret has held leadership positions in Mercy, Josephite and Dominican traditions. Until recently, Margaret was the Principal of San Sisto College in Brisbane, an Archdiocesan secondary college in the Dominican tradition. Her Ph.D. titled "*The Institutionalisation of Charism in a faith-based school*", sought to understand the nature of charism and how students, teachers and parents experience this particular way of living the Gospel at the college.

An overview of her thesis is presented in this journal. Even though it is in the Dominican tradition, it has much to offer us by way of helping us to think about how we interpret our own Marist charism in the context of our environment. A charism is always a gift to the whole Church, and so the charism of one tradition undoubtedly has the potential to enhance that of another. As a wise friend of mine once told me, all things connect in the Christian tradition, and I am sure there is no exception here.

- **Maree Rolfe** is relatively new to the Marist schools network. She began her teaching career at St Edmund's College in Canberra in 1990, and for the next three years she immersed herself in boys education under the Edmund Rice banner. Following some years at home caring for her young daughter, Maree rejoined the workforce and spent ten years teaching at St Clare's Primary School in Canberra's south. Then with this wonderful experience of having worked in both a primary and a secondary school Maree joined the teaching staff at Marist College in Canberra. In 2013 Maree was offered the role of Religious Education Coordinator in the Junior School at Marist College, and she is currently completing her Masters degree in Religious Education. A recent paper titled "*Marist Methodology: pedagogical context and relevance today*" is part of a wider study on her part. The paper is of interest because it uses the content of a Footsteps program at Mittagong as a starting point for her reflection. A number of other teachers in the Marist network would be interested in this paper as a resource given their participation in Footsteps, and their part-time studies.

The bibliography for each paper is included here in the journal, and our sincere gratitude to both of our writers.

Br Tony Paterson, Editor

THANK YOU

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

DR MARGARET LEE

The Institutionalisation of Charism in a Faith-Based School

ABSTRACT:

In Australia, most Catholic schools were founded by vowed members of Religious orders. Currently, these schools are conducted by “lay” educators, who claim they are living by the spirit or “charism” of the school’s founding Sisters, Brothers or clergy. How authentic such claims are, is the focus of this case study research, conducted in a Catholic, Dominican, secondary, girls’ school. Data were collected through focus groups, individual interviews and by documentary analysis. Participants included students, parents and teachers.

The research offers new understandings concerning authentic spirituality, particularly for young people. They are attracted to charism, because its foundational matrix celebrates inclusivity, particularly of women. Church affiliation is not a construct. In contrast, charism is embraced because it generates personal and relevant experiences, rather than dogmatic obligations. Dominican charism addresses challenges, about which young women are passionately engaged: ecological sustainability, cosmology, gender equality, non-sectarianism, global ethics, peace, justice. The research concluded that charism enhances the wellbeing of those who experience and nurture it.

INTRODUCTION

This case study is set in a Catholic secondary girls’ school in Brisbane, Australia. Although 50 years ago the college was led and staffed by religious sisters, it is now fully lay-staffed, a phenomenon commonly experienced around the world. While the college has been conducted under the auspices of Brisbane Catholic Education since 1978, the legacy of the founding Dominican Sisters remains evident. This research explores the extent to which there is congruence between the rhetoric about Dominican charism

and the reality of experiencing it at the college by students, teachers and parents. The new understandings that emerged from the voices of women in this study are particularly insightful about why women are attracted to a charism of the church within a school setting.

CHARISM IS CREDIBLE, LOCAL AND AUTHENTIC TO THE GOSPEL

The charism of the school, as understood and identified by participants in this case study, is consistent with the literature concerning Dominican charism. It is experienced as a particular way of living the Gospel of Jesus. It is viewed favourably and as credible – in contrast to how participants, particularly female teachers, and indeed the literature, describe the church. The current context of Church is that it is experiencing division and confusion (Treston, 2000), and diminished credibility (Norton, 2013). Rates of attendance at Sunday Mass continues to fall (Wilkinson, 2012). Female students in this study “identify” as Catholic, yet for most of them, their only connection with Church is their school experience (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Coughlan, 2009). Each of the three participant groups experience Dominican charism as being connected to all those activities in which they have an interest – environment, justice, promotion and equality of women in society, inclusion and community. They do not experience church as being involved in the same issues.

Students, past and present (all girls) and female teachers name the charism, rather than the church, as being the promoter of equality of women.

It is difficult for me to see, as a woman, why certain things would be wrong or banned or frowned upon. Why women can’t make their way up through the Catholic Church, in

particular given the fact that we have so few priests and so many women that are interested in this. To me, that's very staid, whereas Dominic was very ahead of his time. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

St Dominic is attractive to women because he, like Jesus, was "fighting our fight" (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). He founded Prouilhe as a place for women who had rejected heresies. Students believe that St Dominic acted in support of women, yet women's rights are denied within the church (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). Their views are consistent with both Dominican and theological literature. "[An] urgent need that I see, to which Dominican intellectual tradition can make an important contribution, is the work for greater equality for women in the global world and for the fuller use of women's gifts and wisdom at all levels in the Church" (Reid, 2012, March 19, p. 7).

Because charism is experienced as more "local" than the larger group (Christianity or even Catholic), it provides a greater "sense of belonging" (Tegan: TFG1 07/03/13). Connections between fellow "Dominicans" are made within the "local" networks such as the Dominican Common Ground conference for students (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12) and the Dominican Education Network for teachers (Isabelle II-3 20/12/12). This produces a more local story that is more specific (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). There is greater ownership, pride in identity and a stronger sense of family (Sheri: SFG5 06/11/12). The charism provides opportunities for the development of a spirituality that is nurturing of and life-enriching for those who experience it. In contrast, for some, there is a stigma in identifying as belonging to one particular religion (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Participants do not have a problem with "Church" under the local banner of "school" or "Dominican charism". "It is apparent that what the schools are offering is regarded as desirable, while the Church itself is not" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 96). Furthermore, the charism of the school is experienced as authentic to the Gospel.

It's like a way to live, rather than an institution. ... I think everything I hear about Dominican charism is exactly how we should live. As soon as you throw in ... "Catholic" it becomes about an institution and it's

someone's interpretation and a set of rules and things you have to do (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

Young people (all women in this study) need to feel **emotionally** connected to something for it to be empowering. Students do not *feel* connected to their local parish church, but they feel connected to their school and to its charism. Their authority comes from their own experience rather than from institutional directives (Bouma, 2006). It is through the experience of Dominican charism that students and teachers become familiar with how to "act like Jesus". The charism "opens a door to the spirituality of what Dominic was about, rather than [being] about the Church". (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

Students are interested in practically making a difference in the world by actions, which, they argue, are more important than "words". Students want to effect global change to make a better world. They are concerned with life and sustainability of the planet, which they connect to Dominican charism. They highly value an ethic of hospitality – of inclusion and welcoming all others – irrespective of belief. Young people are not interested in the practice of particularising brands of religion. They understand this to be a form of "exclusion" in which they are not interested. They value open-mindedness and the search for truth. They want to be able to think for themselves and have their views valued. Gender equality is a powerful agenda for graduate students and young teachers in particular. They identify the respect that Jesus and St Dominic displayed towards women. They fail to register similar respect demonstrated by the Church which they believe excludes women from full membership. Indeed, reference is made in the scholarship to this same issue. Kung argues that "[I]t cannot be denied that hardly any major institution in Western democratic countries ... discriminates so strongly against women ... "(Kung, 2013, p. 45).

DOMINICAN CHARISM PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Participant experience of Dominican charism extends beyond the parameters of, and is more than a particular expression of, Catholicism. It is not limited to or confined by church. This understanding contributes to a rationale suggesting that charism provides a framework of four

interconnected dynamics that form “[a] holistic approach towards life as a Christian” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12) as illustrated in Figure 1. There is a wholeness and integrity offered in this model is appealing to young people.

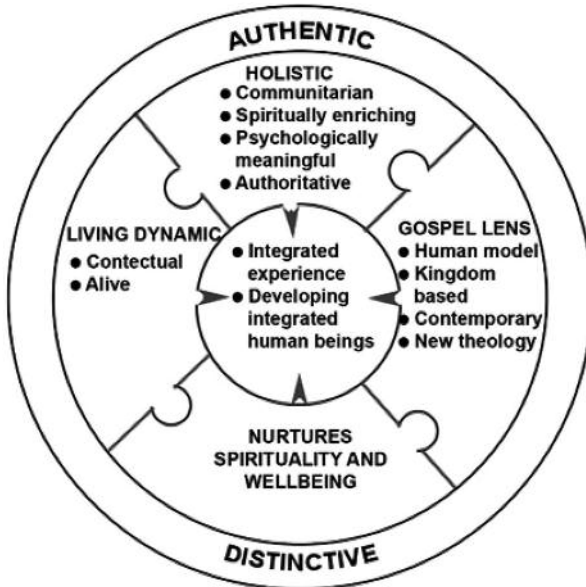


Figure 1: Dominican charism: Four dynamics for integrated living

1. Dominican charism is understood as holistic

Charism influences the “whole person, and the whole [student] and her whole journey” (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12). [E]very thing that we do relates to it. So it’s not just you’re talking about it when you go into SOR [Study of Religion]. ... It’s a part of everything, and you can relate it to everything that we do. It’s not just like a light switch that you can turn on and off. It’s constant (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

This research offers four explanations for this phenomenon.

a. Communitarian

First, the culture of the school is understood to be community-based, and inclusive of everyone (Stacy: SFG3 20/10/12). Students understand “community” to be a Dominican value (Skye: SI-1 24/10/12; Sally: SFG3 31/10/12) even though it is consistent with the Catholic theology that defines the nature of the Church as essentially communitarian (McBrien, 1994, p. 670). Communitarianism is also a concept that supposedly defines the nature of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education,

1998 par. 18). However, what is particularly insightful from this research is that the experience of “community” is understood as a consequence of the school’s Dominican charism, and not derived from its Catholicity.

The community dynamic of the Dominican charism is experienced irrespective of specific faith background or none (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

b. Spiritually enriching

Second, Dominican charism is experienced by participants as being spiritually enriching (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13), and thus contributing to an essential component of their humanity.

In terms of the spiritual, young people sift through the believable and palatable and separate it from the “fantastical” and the irrelevant (Maroney, 2008, p. 43). Dominican charism offers a plausible and engaging experience linking daily living with spiritual values from which connections are made to those things of importance to them such as their attraction to a sense of the sacred in nature and their desire for authentic relationships (Cullinane, 2007, p. 418).

c. Psychologically meaningful

Third, charism makes sense psychologically. Young people make links from numerous school activities to St Dominic, who they understand as being integral in teaching them how to “[bring] the Kingdom of God to earth” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12).

The Dominican charism provides the model for living that satisfies students’, parents’ and teachers’ need for plausibility and coherence (Weick, 1995, pp. 55-61). From a psychological perspective, participants interact with the environment, respond to the stimuli, reflect on what happens and constantly try to make sense of it (Weick, 1995, pp. 43-49). As they interact with each other, and with charismatic language, activities and symbols, they attribute meaning to their experiences (Fine, 1984, p. 239). It points to novel ways of being the Church Christ intended. It offers a palatable, credible, responsive and relevant unifying lens with which to make sense of the school experience. It also provides the foundation of a creative faith community, responding to global changes and changing spiritual needs (Teasdale, 1999). In contrast, the contemporary Church is perceived by younger participants to lack coherence, as institutional and dogmatic. Students and teachers

identify it with authoritarian teachings, empty rituals, and meaningless dualism (Tacey, 2003, pp. 114-115).

d. Authoritative

Fourth, because charism is experienced as life-giving, it is perceived to be authoritative and, therefore, is valued and is influential in identity formation. Participants understand the connection between the Dominican charism and Jesus' message that "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). They understand their role as Christians in helping to bring life to others. Dominican charism is experienced with feeling, therefore making it authoritative to contemporary youth. "It's more individual to me. Like it's more personal (than Church)" (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12). These perspectives resonate with scholarship that identifies personal experience, rather than directives and regulations from positional leaders, as authoritative (Bouma, 2006). Unless young people personally experience something, they have difficulty believing in it (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007).

2. Dominican charism provides a lens to the Gospel

Dominican charism is experienced as an entry into understanding the Gospel. Four ways of explaining this perspective are offered.

a. A "fully human" model of Gospel

First, students, teachers and parents understand that St Dominic offers them a credible, "fully human" model for practically living the Gospel.

... I can't turn water into wine or anything ... so having Dominic fully human ... it makes it more achievable. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

b. God's Kingdom

Second, students want to help bring about a just and peaceful world. Graduates in particular, have a sense of mission and want to make a difference in the world. While they generally do not use "kingdom" or "mission" language, they make the connection between charism and the Gospel message of transformation of self and the world.

c. Contemporary

A third explanation for this phenomenon concerns the contemporaneous nature of charism in its response to the Gospel. Participants identify that Dominican charism responds to the signs of

the times in an authentic and relevant way (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). It is not just applying Christian values, but it is relating them to a contemporary society by seeking the truth, interrogating perspectives respectfully, appreciating individual differences, valuing men and women equally, and being open to new ways (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). "[Jesus] would expect the ideology of [the Gospel message] to be transferred to whatever ... is needed in contemporary societies. And I think Dominic did that" (Tegan: TFG1 07/03/13).

In contrast, young people perceive church as irrelevant because it appears to be adopting yesterday's responses to contemporary problems (Coyne, 2011). They reject church authority and are indifferent to organised religion per se (Mason et al., 2007).

Charism is perceived to be free of a church that is no longer in touch with its people (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13) (Brown, 2008). In contrast to charism, the church is considered to be "out of touch with reality, focusing too much on law, power and authority and too little on service, justice and compassion" (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 227). Students have little interest in dogma and consequently, are not positively disposed towards church (Coughlan, 2009, p. 226).

d. New theology

A fourth explanation is that students and teachers have an appreciation of the theology that "we are the church" (Terri: TFG1 07/03/13) and that "[t]he church does not have a mission, but the mission has a church" (Bevans, 2009, p. 11). This theology invites flexibility, diversity and multiple ways through which the Gospel can be taught and lived. It is invitational of a re-imagining of a faith and belief that reflects life's experience and contemporary reality (Morwood, 2007). Most students generally do not express a connection to church other than that which they experience at school (McLaughlin, 1996). Indeed, there appears to be something about Church which many of today's youth see and do not wish to be a part of (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 24). For most students the Catholic school, is probably the only contact they will have with Catholicism (Collins, 2008, p. 144).

What we are all beginning to recognize is that religious institutions tend to become fossilized, legalistic, dogmatic, and authoritarian. But, whatever we choose to call

it, there is a very powerful hunger for spirituality today that cannot find the nourishment it seeks in our churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples. (Nolan, 2009, p. 12)

While the charism is unambiguously rooted in the Catholic Church (John Paul II, 1988, December 30 n. 24) and participants acknowledge this fact, students more directly link charism to the Gospel. In this contemporary reality, people are more interested in spirituality than in institutional religion (Radcliffe, 2008, p. 1).

3. Dominican charism nourishes spirituality and wellbeing

Teachers identify that the Church is not fostering youth spirituality. This concurs with Ranson's finding that "the churches are seen by many as devoid of spirituality" (Ranson, cited in Cullinane, 2007, p. 417). Young people however, *do* identify the link between spirituality, charism and wellbeing. The development of spirituality, and of a faith that helps provide answers about the meaning of life, gives life purpose. "[M]y knowing exactly where I want to go and exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life for me... takes a lot of stress off [me]" (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Students recognise that wellbeing is important to a healthy life. An environment rich in charismatic, and physically and spiritually-enriching opportunities maximises the capacity for wellbeing to be achieved. When this happens, the capacity for an individual to further the kingdom of God is also enhanced (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12).

Religion is identified in the literature as "packaging" many sources of wellbeing, including social support, spiritual or existential meaning, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code (Eckersley, 2009, p. 7). These "ingredients of health and wellbeing" were once accessible to people through church practice (Eckersley, 2007b, p. 54). Compounding the problems identified by the disconnection with church structures, is the apparent burgeoning of materialism and individualism that threaten the way young people understand themselves, what they value, and how they find meaning in life (Biddulph, 2013). Hope and coherence, concepts formerly accessible through the parish church, are now missing in many young lives (Bouma, 2006, p. 205). While psychologists refer to a "spiritual anorexia" (Carr-

Gregg, 2004), others identify a spiritual hunger in youth (Douglas, 2003, June 3; Tacey, 2003). They conclude that young people are trying to search for meaning in their lives without any allegiance to organised religion (Tacey, 2000). In spite of their spiritual needs, young people increasingly make a distinction between religion per se and spirituality (Maroney, 2008, p. 16), choosing not to nurture their spirituality through church affiliation. This reality resonates with Coughlan's (2009, p. 232) study. It identifies an emerging paradigm in which there is a search for "faith but not ... church, ... questions but not ... answers, ... religious but not ... ecclesial, and ... truth but not obedience" (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 5). Charism appears to be able to offer a palatable, credible, gospel-authentic vehicle through which this void may be filled.

Storm: It's not shoving it down your throat.

Steffi: It's expanding your spirituality to whatever point you're comfortable with.
(Steffi and Storm: SFG2 30/10/12)

Young people are indeed "hungry" for spiritual growth, but if the opportunities that lead to growth are not palatable to them, "spiritual anorexia" is possible. "New expressions of spirituality are emerging that transcend, rather than confront, the powerful individualising and fragmenting forces of modern Western culture" (Eckersley, 2007a, p. 55). The new spirituality, as epitomised by girls such as Steffi and Storm, is consistent with the scholarship. It is existential and practical rather than creedal. Girls engage in opportunities that are spiritually uplifting and which foster the practical dimension of their spirituality (Teasdale, 2000, p. 8). In this study they name these activities as belonging to the charism of the school.

4. Dominican charism is a living dynamic

The fourth dynamic operating within the experience of charism concerns its capacity to be "alive". To be both "living" today, and yet authentic to the charism that is over 800 years old, exposes not just a paradox, but a reason for why it is still relevant. Dominican charism constantly evolves in the way that it meets new needs in new times (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12).

To be formed in the Dominican Tradition "is not the moulding of passive matter, so as to produce a standard product, "a Dominican". It is to meet the demands of God's mission in ways

relevant to person, place, need and times (Radcliffe, 1999, p. 1).

A constant search accepts that humanity is changing.

Charism has the capacity to evolve with unfolding insight (Mayson, cited in O'Murchu, 2008, p. xiv). Dominicans, like Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, demonstrated courage in being open to new thinking (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 224). Similarly, contemporary work by Dominicans in relation to issues such as cosmic thinking and planetary sustainability captures the interest of students (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 220) (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). Activities such as school immersion trips to a third world country (Shelby and Sue: SFG4 06/11/12) and opportunities to provide service to needy groups engage the hearts of young people who want to be involved in current issues. The presence of the charism of the Order of Preachers 800 years after its foundation attests to its constant evolution in order to remain authentic and relevant.

A living charism capitalises upon the need to be "midwives to [a] new consciousness" (Diana Woods in Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 11). The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is variously described by participants as "an institution" (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13), "bureaucratic", judgmental and fear-mongering (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13); "very staid" and missing the "human element" (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13); "strict" and needing "some leniency" and understanding about not being able to attend Mass" (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12).

Indeed:

... one of the problems with the church today [is] that we are not dealing with the central truths of what Jesus said. We're dealing with peripherals. And we haven't contextualised that for today's society as much as we should have. And if we really understand the charism and we understand what is *true*, I don't see that much of a danger [in contextualising] because we wouldn't surrender that kernel of truth that what makes it special and unique. But we would just use it in our own context and in our own present day situations. (Terri: FG1 07/03/13)

The new understandings about charism identify it as having the capacity to transform individuals

(See Figure 2). It is these individuals who transform society and who are therefore working in and for God's kingdom. It is attractive for young

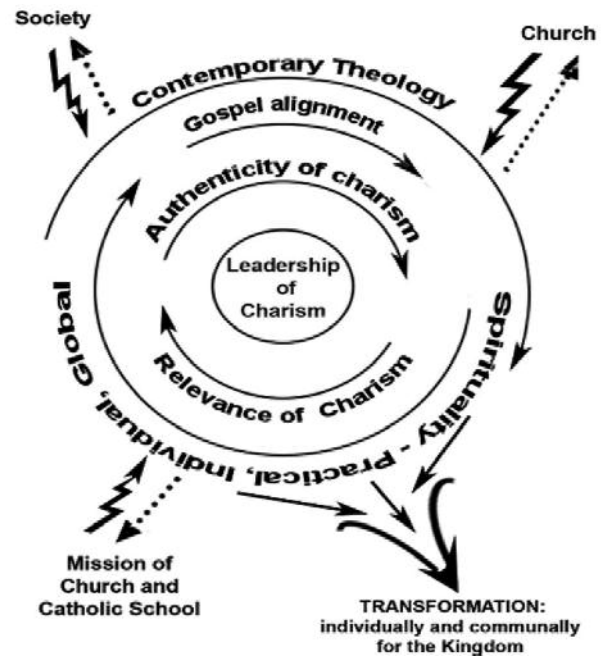


Figure 2 Charism: a vehicle for kingdom-making

people and meets their spiritual needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions of this research contribute new knowledge concerning charism and its role in nurturing the spirituality of young people.

1. Local parish church does not contribute to the spiritual development of young people. The "church", offered by the school, is however, considered worthwhile.

2. In the absence of a connection with a local church, the charism of a school provides an effective means through which students work in God's mission.

3. Charism offers a broad, authentic invitation to the Gospel. Charism is not experienced as being confined to or limited by the Church (Elvery, 2013; Finn, 2013).

4. Dominican charism nurtures a practical, individual and global spirituality that is contemporary and enhancing of one's wellbeing.

5. Dominican charism provides a Gospel-framework for Christian living.

6. Charism gives a school a particular and favourable identity with which students want to be associated, and about which they have a sense of stewardship.

7. The school is the “new church”.

8. Spirituality is nurtured in non-sectarian, inclusive ways.

Because charism has such an influential place in the development of a worthwhile Gospel-based spirituality in young people, principals, staff, students and parents need to be appropriately formed in the charism of a school. Charismatic cultures require nurturing and support by diocesan authorities. This research recommends that equality for women at all levels, needs to be explored in a renewed church. Furthermore, it recommends that there be a longitudinal study into the influence of school-based charism on the long-term spirituality of students (post graduation). From this research emerges an understanding that while students are attending, working at, or closely connected to a school in the Dominican tradition, the Dominican charism provides an attractive way of living the Gospel that nurtures an authentic spirituality.

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Marist Methodology: pedagogical context and relevance for today

INTRODUCTION

Marist methodology provides a unique style of continuing the mission of the Church through education. The Founder, St Marcellin Champagnat, a French priest of the nineteenth century, wanted to provide students not only with the skills needed to be productive citizens within a community but an awareness and understanding of the great love of Jesus through Mary.

Champagnat was “a man of action; a man driven by unfailing dynamism and missionary awareness; a man who draws all the strength for his actions from his deep-rooted faith” (Hendlmeier, 2008, p. 84). He encouraged his brothers to connect with their students and develop relationships that were genuine and sincere. He promoted active participation in co-curricular activities and insisted that the brothers bring the story of Jesus’ love and compassion to all those they engaged with.

Champagnat died in 1840 serving Jesus Christ and as the leader of the Little Brothers of Mary he insisted that the brothers always consider their purpose, that of sharing the Good News of our living God. Today, almost 200 years later, Marist schools continue the mission of Jesus Christ. “If we follow him closely as disciples, we will find fresh inspiration for the apostolic work we do under his banner and in his spirit, convinced of the worth of his mission – a mission still relevant today” (Hendlmeier, 2008, p. 86). With many schools made up of lay vocationists, the work of Champagnat continues. The virtues of presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following in the way of Mary are embedded into sound pedagogical practices and lived through dedicated and committed religious and lay Marist teachers and leaders.

TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

I have been teaching in a Marist school for almost six years. I have taught in other Catholic schools but I had always wanted to be part of the

Marist community in a more active way. I attended a Catholic school throughout my schooling and it was in my primary school years that I had heard about Marcellin Champagnat. I was intrigued. In 2010 I was fortunate enough to secure a position at Marist College Canberra in the Junior School and am currently the Religious Education Coordinator.

It did not take long for me to discover the uniqueness of a Marist school. I had a small amount of knowledge regarding Champagnat and was keen to learn more. Upon my appointment to the College I was immersed into the Marist ethos. Professional Development focused on the Marist story and the Marist Charism. I witnessed many Marists whose intention was to celebrate the Good News in the educational arena in the Marist Tradition. It was not long before I realised that I truly wanted to be part of this legacy.

Champagnat’s vision to band together a group of brothers to educate students and teach them about the love and compassion of Jesus Christ was a core value that I embraced. Being a practicing Catholic and having received all the Sacraments of Initiation I could see that the Marist characteristics would marry up with my own teaching and learning philosophy. As a Marist educator I wanted to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of every student in my class and school in a meaningful way. Before my time at Marist College Canberra, I had a committed purpose in ‘teaching Religion’. I followed the curriculum and always engaged in prayer sessions with the deepest respect and reverence. I believed in my faith and evangelising. My time spent teaching in other Catholic schools provided me with a springboard to teaching and living the Marist way. I consider myself new to the Marist story and privileged to be part of the mission in taking Jesus Christ into the lives of the young.

In being a Coordinator at Marist College Canberra it has been paramount to explicitly lead by example. I have endeavoured to incorporate the five Marist characteristics into my pedagogy in a

purposeful and intentional way. Marist methodologies are unique in how they are observed, in their delivery and the message they intend to convey. At the core of our pedagogy is the mission of Jesus Christ and its commitment to presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following in the way of Mary. My role as a Religious Education Coordinator and a teacher in a Marist school is to deliberately communicate the love of God through Mary.

The preface of 'In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat – A Vision for Marist Education Today' states 'Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat, Brothers and Laypeople, together in mission, in the Church and in the world, among the young, especially the most neglected, we are sowers of the Good News, with a distinctive Marist style, in schools and in other pastoral and social ministries. We face the future with audacity and hope' (IMEC, 1998, Preface). This statement is inclusive of both religious and lay people and recognises that both religious and lay people are disciples of Champagnat and through this we have the 'distinctive Marist style'. The disciples of Champagnat are to work with the young and in particular, the most neglected. As disciples of Champagnat, we are called to the "mission in terms of making Jesus Christ known and loved" (Elliott, 1998, p. 37).

Champagnat's 'unfailing trust in God and in Mary' (IMEC, 1998, p. 21) was the faith commitment he had in his mission. People travelled wide and far to hear Jesus speak and people did the same to hear what Champagnat had to say during his catechism lessons. He possessed the ability to communicate his messages simply and his ability to make real life connections with the love of God drew people to him. He modified "the most effective pedagogical approaches of his day" (IMEC, 1998, p. 22) so as to achieve a teaching and learning environment that promoted the development of the whole child. Champagnat's approach is as relevant and applicable to the twenty-first century Marist teacher as it was to the nineteenth century Marist teacher.

PRESENCE

Champagnat cared deeply for his students. He sought to seek a relationship with them based on love. He was attentive and earned their trust. "Jesus' message is simple but challenging; Love one

another as I have loved you" (WFTR#95, 2007, p. 57). Champagnat expected the Little Brothers of Mary to love all their students the same way Jesus loves all people. As a leader and a teacher I aim to love my students equally. It is challenging but "In Christ we find that a common mission unites us..." (WFTR#95, 2007, p. 57). My approach is to be present, to be personable and to make connections with my students the same way Champagnat did. My relationships are built on trust and I have the ability to foster an environment that is positive and affirming. I take the time to learn about my students and my presence to them extends beyond the classroom.

"The educative mission of the Catholic school ... is a deepening of his faith..." (The Catholic School, 1977, p. 34). Each and every day I aim to help the students become a living witness to God's love by my example and through sound Marist pedagogical processes. The Religious Education Coordinator role is a demanding one. It requires theological knowledge and understanding and I believe I should present the life-giving message of our Saviour Jesus Christ to our students, staff, parents, families and the wider community in the best possible way. In this dual role, I aim to bring Jesus to others. "Many people have drifted away from the Church. We need Christians who make God's mercy and tenderness visible for all" (Pope Francis, 2014, p. 98). I believe that "The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its students ... young people have to be taught to share their lives with God" (The Catholic School, 1977, p. 37).

LOVE OF WORK

Champagnat worked hard. I endeavour to emulate his example by always striving to be innovative and creative. "The initiative for our vocation comes from God. He loves us and wants our fulfilment, which is why he invites each one to follow a unique path" (GATST#13, 2009, p. 27). Through the Marist characteristic of love of work, I strive to 'roll up my sleeves' and with perseverance and a generous heart aim to carry on the work of God.

The role of the Religious Education Coordinator is multi-faceted. The duties are varied and involve a great deal of time, effort and energy. I regularly endeavour to find time to reflect on how I am performing the role, how I can best accommodate

staff, students and families and where I can make improvements in making Jesus Christ known and loved. I spend time in the College Chapel in prayer and reflection. I oversee the development, resourcing and evaluation of Religious Education Programs. Marist College follows the Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese Curriculum of 'Treasures New and Old' and currently a number of units have been and are being rewritten. I have contributed to those writing sessions with ideas and resources and pass on the new units to the staff as they become available so they can implement them into their teaching.

I believe that the Catholic school should be a place of evangelisation by proclaiming the Good News to all. Through prayer an opportunity to meet Christ becomes available. Every student is on his own faith journey and I believe that as the Religious Education Coordinator I must provide prayer opportunities of many different types. At all prayer sessions I endeavour to include time for personal prayer, reflective prayer, responsive prayer and consideration of the Gospel.

Both as a teacher and a leader I always try to encourage my students to value hard work and to appreciate the work and efforts of others. I encourage them to develop teamwork skills and to develop a strong character by being contributors. "The Marist tradition places great value on manual work because it brings us into direct contact with creation, with other living beings, and with inanimate objects" (WFTR#39, 2007, p. 35).

SIMPLICITY

Champagnat was straightforward in his teachings and in his ability to communicate. He was genuine and honest and expected the brothers to be the same. "Young people are attracted to [this] simple spirituality. The images of God we offer them, and the language, experiences and symbolism we use, are accessible and touch the heart" (WFTR#35, 2007, p. 34).

Simplicity in my teaching role and in my leadership role enables me to seek humbleness and modesty thereby 'making the "three violets" of our Marist tradition' (IMEC, 1998, p. 44). Through simplicity "we strive to be persons of integrity – truthful, open-hearted and transparent in our relationships" (WFTR#33 2007, p. 33).

Simplicity in my dual role is to explain succinctly

and concisely my expectations both as a classroom teacher and Religious Education Coordinator. Each day I endeavour to be open and honest in my relationships with staff, students, families and the wider community. My strength as a Marist educator and leader is my sincere approach. My objective is to interact with other Marists without pretence and assist my students in developing integrity. I see my position as providing activities that are individualised and collaborative. Whilst teaching and leading I aim to be gracious in success and learn from my mistakes.

FOLLOWING IN THE WAY OF MARY

Champagnat's deep love for Mary became clear in his letters where he asked brothers who were experiencing difficulty to turn to Mary, our Good Mother. This was his own term, which is used today all over the world, a term of true endearment and one of great respect. Champagnat's devotion to Mary was profound. In his letters he often wrote "Mary is helping us and that is enough" (Hendlmeier, 2008, p. 78). He trusted her and he encouraged the brothers to trust her the same way.

In my role as teacher and leader I aim to imitate Mary's tenderness and the great love and concern she had for others. In both my roles I endeavour to bring to the attention of the students in my care social justice issues and ask them to consider events and the impact they can have on others. Often, discussions on how they might be able to help such as fund raising and giving up their time are ideas that can be put into action. I encourage them to say 'yes' the same way Mary said yes to God. I entuse them to look to Mary the same way Champagnat did in seeking her help, "With Mary, we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son either in her arms or in her heart" (McMahon, 1988, p. 127).

As Champagnat took every opportunity to teach the brothers and his students about the love of Mary, especially noted in his letters, "The theme of confidence in God was underscored in many of his letters, often in the form of trusting in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary" (McMahon, 1988, p. 127), I too look for opportunities to illuminate the deep faith Mary had for God and her willingness to be servant. Through example, I aim to deepen the spiritual dimension of the lives the students by inspiring them to look to her, an ordinary woman with "dust on her feet" (IMEC. 1998, p. 47) for

guidance and direction, “By relating to young people in a Marial manner, we become the face of Mary to them” (WFTR#27, 2007, p. 31) and travel on a faith journey with them.

FAMILY SPIRIT

Marist College Canberra centres itself on the principles of a loving Christian family. As Champagnat and the first brothers “were united in heart and mind. Their relationships were marked by warmth and tenderness” (WFTR#30, 2007, p. 31) the College aims to meet the needs of the students in the school through warmth and tenderness. My commitment to promoting the Marist characteristic of family spirit is to work in partnership with staff and students in providing a sense of belonging and identity.

At Morning Assembly we announce the birthdays of all the students who are celebrating their special day and acknowledge their day with an applause. We highlight the successes of our students with special mentions and identify the people who have assisted them on their path to success. As well, we give support to students in need. A number of mentoring activities are running in the College to assist students with homework, assignment work or in some cases ‘someone to talk to.’

Every morning at prayer we refer to Mary as our Good Mother and Jesus as our Father in Heaven. “Marcellin’s preferred ways of relating to God and to Mary were through familial terms: Jesus is the ‘Sacred Heart’ and Mary as ‘Our Good Mother’” (WFTR#30, 2007, p. 32) and at Marist College Canberra we endeavour to promote a sense of family with every member of the school with these familial references.

In my role as Religious Education Coordinator I respect the dignity of every child and aim to recognise the needs of the students in my care especially those who are most vulnerable. Students who are identified as requiring special support I endeavour to show particular care and concern as Champagnat did “Mutual acceptance, tolerance and good humour are also part and parcel of family spirit” (McMahon, 1988, p. 130).

CONCLUSION

Twenty-first century education is facing fast paced technology, intense social media and

standardised testing in the race for higher scores. The necessity to embrace the vision of Champagnat and explicitly teach his core values through example and making them relevant to the students in our schools has never before been so important.

Champagnat is an inspiration and a model for staff, students and families wanting a style of education based on the love of Jesus given to us by Mary. The sense of community the Marist way provides is conducive to warm and respectful relationships with a true sense of belonging. The Marist characteristics of presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following in the way of Mary, define the Marist style as Champagnat intended, “Marcellin Champagnat lived among children and young people, loved them with passion, and devoted all his energies for them” (IMEC, 1998, p. 31).

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