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CHAMPAGNAT

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Inside:

- Underground Cathedrals • Tudella Novitiate
- Fourviere Reflections

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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Viewpoint...

This edition of the Champagnat Journal is longer than usual given the fact that we have been in 'recess' for all sorts of reasons. The papers in this journal reflect something of the conversations that have taken place in the Marist network since the last edition was published. One would hope that they reflect good personal reflection for each one of us in our respective ministries.

The small paperback book by Iain Matthew titled: "The Impact of God" is for me a goldmine when it comes to explaining my journey. The book was published in 1995, which for many may seem a lifetime ago, but it speaks to me far more eloquently now than what it did when I first read it. I know that this situation is very much tied to what has happened to me since the book was published. My life experiences, those physical, mental and spiritual episodes on my road map are very much reflected in the suggestions that come from the book. Iain Matthew writes about Saint John of the Cross and the impact that he has had on him. Despite the fact that they lived four-hundred years apart from each other, one speaks to the other. Recently I read the book again when I felt my life was falling apart and despite the collapsing walls, the words of both Iain Matthew and John of the Cross spoke to me. They told me to stop asking the wrong questions like: "what happened", "what might happen" and "when"? Instead, the interpretation that Iain Matthews places on John's writings provided a 'freeing' from such questions; and as a result of the easing of the tension that goes with these questions, one is then able to think positively, to hope in tomorrow, and to know once again that God is there waiting to get in!

The famous words from the Book of Genesis: "Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it!" (28:16), also reflect this situation of obtaining a freedom that does not require us to 'control the present moment or tomorrow'. We need to acknowledge that as a result of acknowledging God-as-present – we automatically reach a 'transcendent reality' within our spiritual quest, within our search for God-with-us. This is a very

sacred and creative moment that can energize us, for God never makes anything hard or impossible. This divine reality can be explained with a number of other phrases:

- *the ground of our being* (Paul Tillich)
- *the matrix surrounding and sustaining life* (Rosemary Ruether)
- *the power of the future* (Wolfhart Pannenberg) and
- *the holy mystery* (Karl Rahner)

This list can of course be extended. My point is that the phrases given by these theologians are all saying the same thing: how we respond to the fact that God is always with us; God is always at that meeting place waiting for us. What we are required to do is to switch the mobile phone off; to stop trying to control the world around us for a few minutes and to meet God who is already at our front door. The divine reality of this meeting place can change our worldview.

St Marcellin Champagnat may not have put what is being suggested here in the exact words, but he was very keen to ensure that both the first Brothers and the first students at Lavalla and beyond, had an understanding that their first task was to know, to live and to experience the presence of God in their daily lives. This is our challenge as people of the spirit; as people called by God through our baptism, to be people of mission introducing our neighbors to the divine reality of God. In other words it is something more than just a few lovely catechetical statements. These may be helpful, but God hopes for more than that in his relationship with us.

Thank you to the Contributors for this edition of the Champagnat Journal. Through your reflections in this journal, you are helping us to meet God at that 'right here and now' meeting place. That place where God waits for us to stop and to encounter the divine reality of the present moment.

Happy reading!

Br Tony Paterson
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS:

Maria Baden is a Lay Marist who is very committed to all branches of the Marist Family. Her homily was delivered at the Fourviere Mass and celebration in early July this year at the Holy Name of Mary Church in Hunters Hill. The reflection is important for us because it carries the intimate thoughts of one woman reflecting on Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth.

Mark Hederman is a Benedictine monk who lives, prays and works at Glenstall Abbey in Ireland. He recently completed his term as the Abbot of that monastery; and then launched out on a series of lectures across Australia for the Australian Marist Province. The focus of his presentation is contained within these pages and challenges us to ask the question: What sort of Church do we want in the future?

Brendan Geary is a Marist Brother and currently Provincial of the North West Province of Europe. Both of his reflections are for busy people, but provide just that right amount of time and space for us to think in terms of the reality of the present moment in our lives without the mobile telephone in front of us. As we go to print, Brendan

is currently attending the Marist Brothers General Chapter in Columbia.

Michael Green's speech is important for all of us as we acknowledge the fact that he led the process of establishing Marist Schools Australia over the past seven years. His creative approach has been to our advantage and we thank him for that. Michael is also at the current General Chapter in Columbia.

Robert O'Connor is a Marist Brother resident in the Hermitage Lavalla Community at Mittagong. He is a former Principal of a number of schools in Queensland and New South Wales, and he is a qualified Spiritual Director. He reflects on a recent visit to Newman College in Perth; and on the Hermitage Project at Mittagong.

Rod Thompson is a Marist Brother, and after a number of years teaching and working in Aboriginal Youth Ministry and Vocations in Australia he is now a community member and formator at the Marist Novitiate in Tudella in Sri Lanka. As he indicates in his paper, this is an international novitiate for the region, and reflects our future in so many ways.

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.

MARIA BADEN

Fourviere in Sydney

The visitation is such a beautiful story. I find it so ALIVE and visceral. Mary *hurries*, Elizabeth *cries out loudly*, babies *leap* and all seems *blessed!!*

Today, face to face visits are often replaced with technology. *Visit us on Facebook. Visit our website.* Can you imagine if Mary had sent an email or a text message to Elizabeth instead of actually going to the Judean hills to Elizabeth's house? No, the physical encounter with the other can never be replaced.

We had a visit last week down at Kiama.

I belong to a little group called Kiama Welcomes Refugees. Some are Catholic, some UC, Anglicans, a Baha'i couple, a Quaker and several others not affiliated with any religious group.

Last week we hosted 50 refugees from Granville. After many months of negotiation with Miriam, the woman who runs the organisation, we finally settled on a date for their visit.

Originally, we wanted to offer a few days of respite for them in our homes because these refugees are living in limbo. They are on bridging visas or TPVs. A cloud hangs over them as they await news from the Australian government – will they be sent back to their countries or will they be allowed to settle in Australia, a land “with boundless plains to share”?

But Miriam was hesitant: legal requirements; police checks on us; the psychological vulnerability of these people who have seen and heard what most of us here never have! We would have to be in-serviced by case workers to prepare us with the stories and situations of these refugees.

So an interim plan was adopted. They would all come down on a coach and we would give them lunch, a walk along the beach and of course, the famous Kiama Blowhole!! It's a beautiful place, the South Coast. Nature is evident wherever you look. This is its power – a power to bring beauty, awe, peace and joy to those in need.

Why am I telling you this story? Because it has

Marist connections!

So, our little KWR group inherited a heap of mattresses and furniture from a local motel which was closing down and shortly after that, a restaurant closed down and gave us all their tables, chairs, cutlery crockery etc. Luckily, we were able to store all this in an unused warehouse.

But, we don't have refugees in Kiama! It's still very Anglo!

And then, Jim Cartey SM popped into my head! He began the **House of Welcome** many years ago, helped by Marist Sisters, Gail Reneker, Grace Ellul and Therese Campbell. So I rang ... *Yes we need mattresses. Yes, we need tables and chairs.* And here I was, delivering stuff to a house at Hector St. Sefton, which I had visited several times when the Marist Sisters lived there. And now, thanks to the sisters generosity, refugee families have a roof over their heads!

Mary goes to Elizabeth's house; The House of Welcome; we are wanting refugees to stay in our homes for respite; the Sisters' house at Hector Street has become a home for refugees.

It seems to me that the house, the home, the domestic is the place where help and support and love of the other are most naturally found.

Mary goes where and when she is needed – to the house of Elizabeth who is in her 6th month. And it is in this house where Elizabeth's prophetic utterance, a LOUD utterance, is cried: *Blessed are you and blessed is the fruit of your womb...and blessed is she who believed there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord*”.

And likewise, Mary's prophetic utterance in the Magnificat!

The place of prophecy, in the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, seems to be the beginning of a series of events that happen in Luke's Gospel and in the life of the early church, the domestic church, the church in people's homes. Prophecy, the proclamation of the Word, **finds its matrix in the home.** Both the home at Nazareth and the early

church, the home churches, are focal points of Marist spirituality.

You will find cards on your seats of an unusual depiction of the Visitation by Michael Galovic, an iconographer, who has strong Marist connections. I recently attended a conference at ACU Strathfield where Michael's latest artwork was on display and saw an updated version of this very painting. The only difference was that the babies stood out in gold relief!!

But I rather like this one. It's unusual. I'd invite you to have a good look at this Visitation scene. *(give a few moments for people to gaze at the painting)* The faces of Mary and Elizabeth show a depth of sorrow. It's as though they are looking deeply into each other's eyes and seeing what awaits their as yet, unborn sons.

Sorrow and suffering are present even in our most joyful moments just like hope and joy must exist even in our darkest times.

Back to our visitors last week!

It was truly wonderful!

It was LOUD, chaotic, with lots of little kids LEAPING AROUND!! There was too much food.

And then, the walk along the beach – the brilliant blue of the Pacific ocean, the soft blue of the sky, the lighthouse and the blowhole.

In the joy and excitement of the visit, I think we all felt a sadness as the bus took off back to Granville. Yes, just for one day, we were all “lifted up” and “filled with good things”, but what will the future be for these men, women and children refugees?

“Mary, Bearer of Hope to the world, pray with us”.

MARK HEDERMAN OSB

Underground Cathedrals Renewal for Our Church

My talk is about how the Holy Spirit, in spite of all appearances, manages to lead us at all times. Even when the established Church as we know it seems to be crumbling, the Holy Spirit is busy in the underground cathedral establishing new ways of serving the Lord. And I am using the situation of the Marist brothers in Australia as a litmus test of this hypothesis. The Church, as well as everyone else, must understand that the world was hit by a cultural tsunami in the Twentieth Century. We must humbly begin to pick up the pieces and put them back together again, in constant touch with the Holy Spirit. Only then can this vibrant twenty-first century begin to sing its new song to the Lord. Such work of learning a new Magnificat is the task of those whose second name is Mary.

The Marists were founded to undertake such a task, to share in ‘Mary’s work,’ to actually ‘be Mary.’ Their constitutions speak of ‘sharing in the motherhood of Mary . . . of bringing Christ-life to

birth and nurturing its growth.’ Every century is a new opportunity for the incarnation, new visits of the angel Gabriel to those who are willing to become vehicles for the Holy Spirit. Never was a century more in need of a Theotokos.

When the holy spirit needs to take extravagant and unheard of initiatives to salvage a particularly critical situation can the Holy Spirit rely on you? Mary was asked to become an unmarried mother at a time when punishment for adultery was stoning to death. How far would you be prepared to go – and what would you be prepared to do – or are there certain no-go areas: limitations, restrictions, caveats attached to your commitment. You are called to be streams of living water in a land almost synonymous with drought.

‘We have come to the sense, Les Murray suggests, which the aborigines had before us, that after all human frenzies and efforts there remains the great land. As George Johnston wrote, nothing has yet happened in Australia which stands out

above the continent itself. We know in our bones that the land is mightier than we are, and its vast indifference can drive us to frenzies of desecration and revenge. We know, deep down, that the land does not finally permit of imported attitudes that would make it simply a resource, a thing; it has broken too many of us who tried to make such attitudes fit in. Unlike North America, it is not a vaster repeat performance of primeval Europe, a new Northern Hemisphere continent with familiar soils and seasons into which a liberal variation on inherited European consciousness might be transplanted with prospects of vast success. It is something other, with different laws.¹

Like everyone else, you have to examine your past in order to evaluate your future. You opened your first school in 1872. Now you have over fifty Marist schools around the country. You could be in a position to act as mid-wives to a Twenty-First Century Christian spirituality. *Australia del Espiritu Santo* as Pedro Fernandes de Queirós called it in the Sixteenth Century when he mistook it for another land mass and named it for Spain with all the Pacific region to the South Pole. That was the way things were done in those days, when men were men! And you came with the conquerors, which means a change of idiom at this time. Poetic thinking is the way forward in destitute times. In this sense, all art is essentially poetry. There should be a dialogue between the artists and the philosophers which should be some of the backdrop to Christianity's way forward in this century in Australia. Our job as Marists is 'to think our way soberly into what the poetry says.'²

Listen again to Les Murray: 'It is hard to resist the speculation that a decline in religious certainty has provoked an upsurge in searching and questioning – and a decline in an odd sort of anti-religious hectoring, which required a firm opponent to batter against. Things have arguably gone too far for that now, and the near total divorce of State from any underlying religious ethic has produced not 'freedom' but a terrifying void against

which comfortable old Enlightenment audacities are meaningless. It is generations since an agnostic involved any daring, and atheism tends to put one into coercive rather than generous company. More seriously, whether we believe in the soul or not, neither of these positions feeds it; we feel its hunger as a matter of experience, and have nothing to feed on but our own selves. At bottom, we cannot build a satisfying vision of life upon agnostic or atheist foundations, because we can't get our dreams to believe in them.'³

Surely, Christianity was meant to survive the vicissitudes of whatever century. What can we do, and what should the Church do, to become a vibrant presence in this country and in this century. David Tacey suggests that 'despite the unfortunate baggage they carry' Spirit, Soul, and God, 'are still the best terms we have for describing the realms of experience to which art, prophecy and our deepest intuitions continue to point.'⁴

The first thing to understand is the real miracle that Christianity has survived at all. Although 2000 years is short when compared with the history of the universe, it is still significant in terms of our human history. This Church of ours began in Jerusalem with a small group of disciples who believed in the resurrection of Jesus.

So many religions, political parties, businesses, have thrived for a few inspiring and energetic years before collapsing into oblivion. Statistics supplied by sociologists [mostly in America] suggest that 75% of small businesses fail in their first 5 years and 50% of the remainder collapse by their 10th year. Unless your business is big and boisterous, it is never going to endure. And Christianity is no exception. Every large institution that hopes to survive on this planet has to become a sustainable corporation. The Catholic Church [The Greek word *καθολικός* (*katholikos*) means 'universal'] has over one billion members living in almost every country in the world and is the oldest religious institution in existence. That is the paradox, and that is the reason why the Roman Catholic Church

¹ Les A. Murray, 'Some Religious Stuff I Know About Australia,' in *The Shape of Belief, Christianity in Australia Today*, Dorothy Harris, Douglas Hynd, David Millikan, [Eds.] Lancer Books, 1982.

² Cf Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, and Thought*, New York, 1971, p. 96.

³ Les Murray (1997), 'Embodiment and Incarnation,' in *A working Forest: Selected Prose*, Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, Pp. 319-22.

⁴ David Tacey, *Reenchantment, The New Australian Spirituality*, Harper Collins, 2000, P 38.

inevitably became a massive institution over the 2,000 years of its existence. I have written a book called *Dancing with Dinosaurs* to suggest ways of negotiating such a dance partner without getting your knees capped or your toes crushed. The secret is that the Holy Spirit is the dinosaur's mahout. Guidance from the Holy Spirit allows for genuine development and prevents both ourselves individually, and the church as an institution, from losing our way.

In the 300 years or so between the historical life of Jesus and the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, the church focused primarily on survival. Christianity spent those first three centuries as a sometimes outlawed organization unable to possess property or make any great sociological impact. Early Christian meetings gathered in the houses of well-to-do individuals. After the ban was lifted by the Emperor, the Church's private property grew quickly through donations from pious and wealthy people. The Lateran Palace was the first significant donation, given by Constantine himself. From the fourth century, this Palace of the Lateran on Piazza San Giovanni became the principal residence of the Popes, for a thousand years. Now, if you go to Rome you will be gob smacked by the size of everything Catholic. St Peter's itself is the very symbol of overly massive Corporate Catholicism. One visitor, asked what he thought of it, replied: 'it's certainly a great improvement on Nazareth anyway.' It has markings on the floor to show where St Paul's Cathedral in London would end, and lines sneering at other pretenders in the contest for the heavyweight title of 'biggest church in the world.' You emerge onto the square which could be a stage-set for a further remake of *Ben-Hur*. 'You won't find Christ in Rome unless you bring him there with you yourself,' says an Irish proverb.

But this is the Church we've got, and this is what we have to work with. *The Acts of the Apostles* supposedly written by Saint Luke, one of the disciples of Jesus, between 80–90 AD, describes how the first small group began, and how they tried to live the Christian life as it was intended to be. This book mirrors, in a way, your own founding father with his small band of disciples, as described in *Water from the Rock* [2007] Pp32–35, which shows the very simple beginnings of Marist spirituality.

The Acts of the Apostles has an interesting passage

[5:34] where the disciples were about to be put to death by the authorities, which might have meant the end of their story, but for a famous intervention by a leader of the Sanhedrin. I'll read you the passage: 'Then one of the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, held in high reputation among all the people, and he asked that the apostles be put outside while he spoke as follows: elders of Israel, take great care how you treat these people. Remember how some years ago a man called Theudas, boasting that he was somebody of importance, gathered around him up to 400 followers. These were all slain and his movement came to nothing. Then after him, Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, who also drew many after him. He also perished, and all belonging to him were dispersed. So, I say to you, stand back, and let them alone: if their movement is simply human it will come to nothing; if it is from God, you will not be able to thwart it; and, furthermore, you will be remembered as people who fought against God.' This famous speech has echoed through history, and the law of Gamaliel is this: 'if what is happening comes from God, then do what you like, you won't be able to stop it.'

We are privileged to live in such times. And if the Church is to continue in its present form or in any other form it will be the work of the Holy Spirit and no one will be able to stop it. The underground cathedral which has been trying to emerge will eventually break ground and become a home for us. And so, our first and most important task, each and every one of us is to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Just as in the Sixteenth Century, the Jesuits were formed to be soldiers fighting for Christ in the Post-Reformation scenario, your 'Society of Mary' was seen as necessary in the Nineteenth Century, when all 'belief' seemed to have disappeared. Your founder, Marcellin Champagnat, was born on the day that the Bastille fell, in 1789, and the French Revolution began. 'The rise of secularist thought and the failings of the style of church of the *Ancien Regime* had conspired to leave both society and Church in ruins.' The Church in France had been irretrievably associated with the establishment now toppled. Stendhal's famous novel, *Scarlet and Black* showed how the only social ladders which upwardly mobile French people could climb if they were not born to the aristocracy were the army or the church.

Louis XVI asked to have a priest accompany him to the guillotine, but as any French priest would have been executed with him, he was accompanied by the only English priest in Paris at the time. Mr Edgeworth, who later wrote an account of his adventure, was the priest who accompanied the monarch on his final journey. He escaped with his life, much to his surprise, because the executioner was paid sufficiently. Such an anecdote describes the position of the Church as an institution at that time. Rebuilding here would not be the work of soldiers fighting against heresy, but the work of a mother with an 'unshakeable belief in her children.'⁵ Marcellin was inspired to found 'a new kind of church' which would be more egalitarian than the one which had been levelled by the Revolution in France. He was one of the architects of a new church which the Holy Spirit has continued to support as an underground cathedral which only broke ground, so to say, at the Second Vatican Council. Reading the history of his Marist organization we can see that within a hundred years of his inspiration, the Church authorities in Rome had reorganized it into pyramidal structure which reinstated the recognized divisions between men and women, and between clerics, religious and lay people. [Story of three kinds of ecclesiastical structure represented at Vatican II: Pyramidal; Concentric; and Mushroom methods]. In recent times Marcellin has again been pigeon-holed into the pyramidal structure which the Church of Rome has also identified as a hierarchy in heaven. He has moved from being a mere Venerable, to being Beatified, and finally to the highest rank of sainthood which happened on the 18th April, 1999. Hierarchy is a paradigm which remains endemic and it will require much persuasion to remove it as a brand mark from the identikit of those who follow Jesus Christ in the Roman Catholic template of that vocation.

Now in the 21st Century, something new is required to answer to the specific needs of our time. The Underground Cathedral which Marcellin envisaged two hundred years ago can serve as

blueprint for a contemporary design. A paradigm shift is necessary to re-contextualize the Marist charism in the Church of today. Australia has been a pioneer in this regard. Here you have recognized the fact that in every Province over 95% of the leadership and work of Marist projects is in the hands of lay people. Among these are many who identify themselves as Marist both in their spirituality and their professional practice. They feel a strong vocational call to be Marist.⁶ Such must surely be the way forward: some recognized structure whereby these admirable people can belong fully and can exercise full communion in and co-responsibility for Marist life and mission. In this you would surely become a pioneering paradigm for the role of the laity in the Church all over the world. If, as the document just cited suggests, the identity of religious is sourced in the role they play in the Church as guides for people who seek God and as a leaven of communion and exemplars of service, the challenge for 21st Century Marists, as Pope Saint John Paul II puts it, is to have 'an original and specific way' of making visible 'the presence of Mary' in the Church today.⁷ To follow the example of Mary is to disappear whenever appropriate. In the Christian idiom disappearance does not mean failure or proof that something must have gone wrong. It has always been necessary so that the Spirit may come. 'I am impatient for that loss,' James McAuley puts it, 'by which the spirit gains.' New wine needs new wineskins. 21st Century wineskins will not be three storeys high. The new Marist identity would be as leaven, as that element in the Church that loses itself in the batch in order to promote growth in the rest. Relinquishing all status and self-promotion, they would share the self-emptying of their Lord who emptied became as nothing, to serve the springtime of the world. Anyone who wants to share in this work, in this charism, in this service, should be Marist by definition, as in fact, should all Christians be, by virtue of their baptism. Where better for the new cathedral to take shape than in the down under of Australia, one of the most egalitarian societies in the world, where

5 Michael Green FMS, *Something New For Our Time*, January, 2016, Pp 3-4.

6 Cf., for instance, the document *Gathered Round the same Table*.

7 Pope John Paul II, Address to the Men and Women Religious of the Institutes of the Marist Family, Castel Gandolfo, 17th September, 2001, quoted in Michael Green, op. cit., p 11.

everyone from everywhere is a 'mate.' [Validation afterwards is easier than permission afterwards: the example of cremation].

Our Church is built on the principle of Incarnation, which means that God became one of us and joined us in the socio-political maelstrom of world history. Incarnation today means incorporating ourselves fully into the twenty-first century, not suggesting to our members that they remain ensconced in the Nineteenth. We as human beings are the voluntary partners in the work which the Holy Trinity is trying to establish with us. And I'm sorry to say that as equal and responsible partners we are often as much use to the Trinity as a hole in the head. But that's the way they have chosen to work it and so we must live with that decision. Marists would be those who answer 'Fiat' to that call, that vocation, which properly belongs to every human being on this planet.

But the Church is human, all too human, and has made too many very serious mistakes.

Institutional religion, and certainly Christianity the religion, is always a human construct. It is itself a work of human hands and manned [if you'll excuse the pun] by ordinary men and women who are no more gifted by the grace of God than the rest of us . . . Christians must recognize the fact that they have regularly distorted the truth of the faith of Jesus, in various ways and to varying degrees over virtually the whole history of their religion.⁸

However, in spite of the aberrant behaviour of many of Christianity's adherents, the truth which it embodies and which is its direct source and origin, is still the truth that can save us and save our world. And by 'save' I mean accomplish for us, in us, through us, the highest form of life possible to imagine, both now and in eternity.

It is as if our world were precariously poised, metaphorically speaking, on two tectonic plates as far as socio-political awareness is concerned. On the one hand you have the more advanced and sophisticated cultures, such as many of us in the so-called 'first-world' enjoy, where democracy has become the accepted idiom. Then you have the

Catholic Church, and many others who, in certain respects, have not yet moved out of the nineteenth century. But, at this time, it is as if these two tectonic plates were on the move. The place where they could meet is called a *plate boundary*. Plate boundaries are commonly associated with geological events such as earthquakes. When previous tectonic plates separated, some millions of years ago, the cliffs of Moher on the west coast of Ireland represented one half of the divide and Nova Scotia in Canada became the other, with the Atlantic Ocean in between. We may have to experience an even greater divide if the two tectonic plates I have been describing collide before the Church realises that such danger is imminent. Dr David Barker responsible for the 2004 Report of the Church in America, refers to the 'perceived wisdom that culture change takes 200 years in the church.' 'This is no longer an acceptable point of view; it is an excuse for inaction,' he warns. The Catholic Church has probably five or, at most, ten years before being reduced to a tiny irrelevant minority within our so-called Western World.

We have been slow to appreciate what the Pope's core revolutionary strategy is. Francis is convinced that radical change is not the same as 'obtaining immediate results which yield easy, quick, short-term, political gains' [EG,224] – what is required for the third millennium is a 'synodal church,' in which there is free and open debate and consultation. We don't belong to a global organization as such – we are part of an organism [wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them]. That is: it is not simply constituted by the macrocosm of its universal totality, it is alive and well and fully present in each part of itself wherever 'two or three are gathered in my name.'⁹ 'I call you friends,' Jesus says to each one of us. It is not enough for the hierarchy or even the Pope to be in direct connection with the Holy Trinity. Always it is each individual member in direct touch with the Holy Spirit and not simply in touch with HQ here on earth. So, how do we promote such an organism in the local church where we are, sometimes in spite of those officially in charge? Although it is true that we have to play

8 James P. Mackey, *Christianity and Creation, The Essence of the Christian Faith and its Future among Religions*, A Systematic Theology, Continuum, New York & London, 2006, Pp 397.

9 Matthew, 18:20.

our parts in trying to make 'our church' into a community of equals, because God loves us all equally; we must realise that we can't do much on our own and we have to acknowledge that this Church which we belong to needs to make some radical changes if anything of such a transformation is to take place.

Let me start with myself. In October 2008 I was elected fifth abbot of Glenstal Abbey in Limerick, Ireland. This vote could not be ratified in Rome, however, unless I, who had been a brother monk for almost fifty years, was prepared to be ordained a priest. Why was this so? As far as I could determine, since the year 1983, which is only thirty years ago, a canon has been added to the Revised Code of Canon Law which stipulates that 'power' in the church can only be exercised by those who are ordained priests. This raises serious problems for the Roman Catholic Church in general. What can possibly have happened as recently as 1983. One explanation is that a theological opinion about 'sacred power,' which was not sufficiently debated by theologians, became incorporated into the Revised Code of Canon Law (1983), in particular in Canon 129.¹⁰

This canon specifies that only those who have received sacred orders are qualified for the power of governance, also called the power of jurisdiction. The canon further stipulates that although lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this same power, they really cannot wield it in any significant way because, legally speaking, 'cooperate' does not mean 'participate.' Such is the view of Ladislav Orsy, a great expert on Canon Law, who himself attended the Second Vatican Council [which gives you a hint about what age he must be]. Where this insertion into the code comes from is not clear; what is clear is that it is now irrevocable unless this recent incorporation into the revised code is rescinded. Priestly anointing is deemed necessary for legitimate exercise of divine power. You either have that power or you don't; if you don't, you can't have any effective participation in government; and the

only way to plug into this source is through priestly ordination. The logic at least is consistent.

Some theologians point out that such has not always been the case. Even women have not always been so excluded from governance, although experts really do have to travel back some centuries to produce any pertinent examples. The Empress Irene, I am told, both convoked and presided over parts of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 CE.¹¹

This is a matter separate and different from the question of women's ordination. What we are talking about here is the total clericalization of the Church we all belong to. Whether priests are men or women, or both, we cannot have a situation where only priests can exercise power. This amounts to a clerical oligarchy in which lay people have no say whatsoever in matters of legislation or governance and can have no real or effective participation in the running of the Church. So, it concerns not just lay people who might want to become Marists, it concerns the whole Institute of the Marist Brothers themselves. This has to change and any ambiguities about it have to be ironed out. We have to believe that Pope Francis is doing the best he can to bring this about.

Can one man pit himself against the deeply entrenched conservatism of one of the largest and the oldest religious institutions in the world? Even more important, is he interested in doing so?

Whether he is or not, other inexorable forces are on the move. Times have changed; both the world and ourselves are different from what they were one hundred years ago. The task of spiritual leadership is not to silence but to discern, where and when, to whom, in whom and by whom, the Spirit is speaking. The task of the spiritual leader is to read the signs of the times. At the head of his people on earth, God puts authorized agents who are not political figures, they are mediators, interpreters, ambassadors. Pontifex, the word we use to describe the Pope, means in Latin, a bridgebuilder, a passageway between two worlds. This pope has to build bridges between the conscious and the unconscious, between the masculine and the

10 Can. 129 §1. Those who have received sacred orders are qualified according to the norms of the prescripts of the law, for the power of governance, which exists in the Church by divine institution and is also called the power of jurisdiction.

§2. Lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this same power according to the norm of law.

11 Gerard Mannion, 'Changing the (Magisterial) Subject: Women Teaching-with-Authority – from Vatican II to Tomorrow,' *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Volume 81, no 1, February 2016, p 17, footnote 52.

feminine, between the underground and the overground cathedrals.

And all of us have to decide whether we intend to work from a nineteenth or a twenty-first century template. And certainly for anyone claiming to be 'Catholic' refusal to embrace universality must go against the thrust of conviction that His salvation should reach to the ends of the earth. It is important not to allow the perception of a reactionary ghettoized minority to be foisted upon us by the media and some hostile public opinion. The world itself is the universal religion that precedes all organized religions. Nature is the first scripture wherein we read the word of God. And, we have to face reality; another unfortunate but understandable difficulty is that the word 'Catholic' can have bad press in the twenty-first Century thanks to the catastrophic revelations of evil-doing in the recent past, which has undermined trust in the institution as such. Banner headlines, cartoons and caricatures, depict The Catholic Church, for the Pantomime which the Press is keen to promote: Wicked Stepmother, Cruella de Vil, the strict governess in General Montgomery's autobiography who used to get up every morning and say: 'Go out and see what that child is doing and stop him!'

If we wish to remain conservative and old-fashioned, at least let us not be sectarian and supportive of values and lifestyles which have been rejected by the majority of twenty-first century people. Otherwise we are categorized as out-of-date leftovers from a previous era, such as the Amish communities in America and Canada. These were founded in the Seventeenth Century and they steadfastly refuse on principal to move into the Twenty-First. They use horses for farming and transportation, dress in a traditional manner and forbid electricity or telephones in the home. Church members do not join the military, nor do they apply for Social Security benefits. They refuse to take out insurance or accept any form of financial assistance from the government. They value rural life, manual labour and humility, and they discontinue formal education at the age of fourteen. We might be less identifiable and less obvious retros but nonetheless determined to remain behind where the nineteenth century left off.

Our cultures in the past have undervalued and degraded the feminine, both as internal part of each

one of us, and as incarnated in over 50% of the human race registered as women. We should no longer make such stark divisions between the two genders but should recognize the continuity of the spectrum in which we all share, in varying degrees. Each of us is situated somewhere along a spectrum of masculine and feminine traits and characteristics, making each of our particular identities as unique and unrepeatable as a finger-print.

We need different strategies, policies, norms and behavioural patterns, to live together in harmony, not just as one island continent and community, but as part of an ever-expanding and, at the same time, interconnecting universe. The Twentieth Century was a crucible. The world which has emerged from this time-machine is changed, changed utterly. There is no going back; our only way is forward. Discovery of the world of the unconscious; full acknowledgement and acceptance of the dimension of femininity, both inside and outside of ourselves, with all this implies in terms of gender balance and sexual diversity; recognition of the immensity of scientific discovery; and humble apprenticeship in a laboratory of ever-expanding technology; these are some of the characteristics required for access, capability and survival in the new world we have inherited. The human species is in charge of its own cultural development. It is not like the animal kingdom, prisoner to the laws of its nature, to the instinctive coding in its DNA. We can invent whatever culture we choose to endorse, provided we have the collective will to do so. But to do so we must change our paradigms. Domination is the hallmark of the patriarchal paradigm. It should be replaced by a paradigm of partnership. And this goes for any form of leadership in the world today.

Apart from all this, my intuition is that we all have to come to terms with a deeper unconscious reality which turns itself into the psychic situation of Western culture in general today. It is clear that the patriarchal dominants of Western society are declining and are rapidly being eclipsed by the long-suppressed matriarchal equivalents. In symbolic terms, this would mean that the Father is failing, losing his power, and the Mother is rising up as never before, claiming her rightful place with a fury and vengefulness that come from centuries of oppression. We find this reflected in many aspects of contemporary life: in the new concern

for Nature and ecology; in the revolution in sexuality and the new attitude toward the body and the instincts; in the liberation of women and the rediscovery of female power; in the concern for creativity and free expression; in the revival of occultism, magic and natural religion. A Special Issue of *The National Geographic Magazine* for January, 2017, is devoted to 'Gender Revolution: The Shifting Landscape of Gender.' It is no longer a question of men or women, there is a spectrum of sexual identity which introduces us to a new vocabulary of possibility unimaginable thirty years ago. Agender, Cisgender, Transgender, are three of a list of twenty-five different identities. Whether we like it or not, we live in an age where the feminine is on the ascendant in a massive archetypal battle, which we belittle to our cost by reducing to a mere struggle between men and women. This underworld heave is happening within each of us and the so-called feminist movement is only a symptom of it. Gender is not the same as archetype. Male and female, masculine and feminine, are principles within each one of us in differing proportions and modalities. This struggle affects all of us and each of us individually. It is as if Donald Trump were the last hurrah of the old male chauvinist patriarchal paradigm. I don't think he has any idea of the forces already unleashed and now encircling him as an identifiable and antagonistic catalyst, and I don't hold much credence in his capacity to withstand the onslaught his very presence will have unleashed. Liberation of femininity affects the whole human race and its transforming power is beyond our socio-political imagining.

However, let's get back to examining our half of the equation, our job as members of the church and as Marists helping to bring about the changes in both the Church and the world which are necessary. Education will continue to be one of the critical ways we can make a difference in the future. But here too we are in need of a new paradigm shift.

Martha Nussbaum's insights in, *Not for Profit* are worth a closer look: "We are in the midst of a crisis of massive proportions and grave global significance ... I mean a crisis that goes largely unnoticed, like a cancer; a crisis that is likely to be,

in the long run, far more damaging to the nature of democratic self-government: a world-wide crisis in education."¹² Thirsty for national profit, nations, and their systems of education, are heedlessly discarding skills that are needed to keep democracies alive. If this trend continues, the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements. We should focus our attention on creating systems of primary, secondary, and tertiary education that support, practice, and promote the cultivation of persons who possess "the faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships, rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation."¹³

We should not harness our children to the business needs or the short-term economic growth of our countries. Just because a multinational company is offering payment for a number of jobs to be done, does not mean that our children's prospects should be tailored to meet this requirement. Apart from the fact that the job may become obsolete or be done by robots in a few years' time, the child should have been harvesting other benefits. The whole obsolete factory model of education must be challenged.

Discovery of the 'unconscious' was as world-shattering as the discovery of America in 1492. We had to reinvent our map of the world. We had been living on the top storey of a house with a vast cellar underneath and had only been given the key to the trap-door leading to these uninvestigated depths. It is now a whole century since we discovered this reality about ourselves and yet, we have to admit, that although it should have changed the whole centre of gravity in our self-understanding, our systems of education have hardly changed at all from the times before the discovery was made.

From four years of age our children are treated to a bookish commercial education. The United Nations are determined to inflict this myopia on the children of the world in the name of equality of education. In Europe it became the Lisbon agreement of December 2009. The European

12 Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit, Why Democracy needs the Humanities*, Princeton University Press, 2010, Pp. 1-2.

13 Ibid. p. 6.

Union developed a 10 year strategic plan for the new century in the year 2000. It 'set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.' The punishing study regimes we are imposing on our children affects their health, their welfare, and their personal development. Filling their heads with irrelevant knowledge which they then have to regurgitate to pass required examinations, which are well past their dell-by date. Education systems are weapons of mass destruction where imagination is concerned.

Imagination not memory – the future not the past – who needs to memorise vast chunks of information – google replaces this kind of memory exercise.

Christian education is neither indoctrination nor restriction. It is based on a full understanding of the mystery of the person.

Our task as educators is to turn those who are born individuals into persons. Becoming a person means entering that space between us and the world around us. This means leading them into the open space between them and every other person. All real living is meeting. Education is the personal relationship between a genuine educator and those he or she is called to educate. Genuine educational contact is the exercise of a certain kind of influence which is not domination and which requires the

respect of the being of the pupil as someone on the way to the independence of genuine personhood.

Just as we have to enter this world through the human body of another person, so this confusing world has to be mediated to us by a human person. Education is being led out into the world by a teacher who has learnt how to make this connection. The teacher is a human person with enough imagination and humility to know what parts of this wonderful world are likely to open the door for us into our own personhood. Education means nothing less than creative encounter with the precise person who can provide you with the golden key to unlock that door. The genuine educator makes that introduction without second-guessing or pre-empting the possible results. Anything can happen when personhood meets the universe.

Finally, as Christians and Marists we believe that the Holy Spirit may have plans and hopes for any and every child in our care. Each child should be allowed the time and the wherewithal to entertain such a possibility and process in their own freedom and in their own way the privilege of such a challenge. Two hundred years ago St Marcellin Champagnat responded creatively to the mysterious Spirit of God. Opening our imaginations to that same Spirit, often at work 'underground' in the depths of our souls, is our only future.

Fourvière: Icon and triptych

On 23rd July, 1816 the newly ordained Marcellin Champagnat climbed the 800 steps to the Marial Shrine at Fourvière in Lyon, along with Jean – Claude Colin, Jean – Claude Courveille and nine other young men who were either seminarians or newly ordained priests. As we know, they made this pilgrimage in order to commit themselves to the foundation of a new religious order in the Church which they proposed to call, “Mary-ists.” They signed a pledge which outlined their plans. Fr. Donal Kerr, a Marist historian, commented on the Fourvière pledge as follows:

It is a generous and courageous statement by twelve young clerics. This pledge in its exalted piety, heroic commitment and romantic language bears the trace of the fervour of young neophytes emerging from the hothouse of the seminary which at that time St. Irénée certainly was.¹

I am not an artist, but I found myself wondering what I would expect to see if someone were to paint an icon of Fourvière. Would I look for a group of young men climbing a hill, or would I want to focus on the mass in the newly restored church, which had been inaugurated by Pope Pius VII in 1805? Or would I want to put the emphasis on their expansive sense of mission, as they left the Church to go to their new parish appointments, with the pride and excitement of the newly ordained priests?

As I reflected on this question I realized that no one image could capture the essence of Fourvière for me. I wondered if a triptych might better express the meaning of Fourvière, and its significance for today.

CLIMBING THE HILL OF FOURVIÈRE.

The image of 12 young men climbing the steps

to Fourvière works effectively as a metaphor for the individual stories and shared experience of the men who made their way to the top of the hill that morning. They had all been touched by the profound changes ushered in by the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, establishment of the Empire, and the consequences in every part of France of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. They also lived through unprecedented changes in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the French state.

They all had their own individual journeys. Marcellin Champagnat had to overcome a lack of formal education, limitations in his academic ability, and the death of his father in 1804 and his mother in 1810. Jean – Claude Colin lost both of his parents before he was five years old, and was brought up by his uncle, and a housekeeper who was pious but rather dominating. We know that our adult lives are marked – for good and ill – by experiences in childhood.

The young seminarians were inspired by the vision of Jean-Claude Courveille to found a Marist Society, and had many meetings to discuss and clarify their ideas prior to their ordination. We also know that the establishment of the Society of Mary, Fathers and Brothers, Sisters and Missionary Sisters, and the Marist Brothers, had many uphill moments in the years after the Pledge that was made at Fourvière. In that sense, the image of the young men climbing the hill in the early morning is a good image that captures part of the Fourvière experience.

MASS AND PLACING THE PLEDGE ON THE ALTAR

The mass which was celebrated by Courveille was a solemn moment. It was the culmination of their personal journeys and shared discussions in

1 Kerr, Donal. (2000). *Jean – Claude Colin, Marist. A founder in an age of revolution and restoration: the early years 1790- 1836.* Dublin: Columba Press, p. 141.

the seminary. Such moments are important in life. They help us to articulate what is important for us, and are part of the process of maturity as we make a public statement of our hopes and life plans, involving a commitment to others and to ourselves. We pledge to use our efforts and energies in pursuit of a dream and a common purpose. Like treasured wedding, profession, ordination or graduation photos, they capture a moment in time which contains a marvelous and inspiring human story.

ITE MISSA EST

After the mass was over the twelve young men left to return to the seminary or to begin their new parish missions. The mass was ended: the mission had begun. As we know, only four of the twelve signatories continued to be part of the Marist project. For the others this commitment was seen, perhaps, as part of their youthful enthusiasm. No doubt it remained as a cherished memory of idealism and brotherhood, as they went about their ministry as diocesan priests.

FOURVIÈRE TODAY: THE UNFOLDING STORY

My triptych begins with a group climbing a hill and ends with dispersal to the world. The Marist story involves all three movements: the personal stories and shared moments that bring us to this point in time, key moments of celebration and commitment, and moving outward in mission.

We know that the early Marist founders had a vision of a tree with many branches. The branches that were obvious to them were branches of priests, coadjutor brothers, and sisters. We know that Fr. Champagnat wanted something different – brothers who would be professional teachers, who would also break new ground in their ministry by

learning how to teach deaf children, for example. Fr. Colin, who never fully understood Champagnat's vision for his brothers, did have a sense of a lay branch, which was never developed in a satisfactory way in his life time.

If we return to my imaginary triptych, perhaps the unfolding Fourvière story is asking us to revisit the initial vision to find a way for the lay dimension of the Marist project to be more fully developed. One of the foundational insights of the Second Vatican Council was the universal call to holiness, reminding us that the Church is the whole People of God – and not only bishops, priests, and professed brothers and sisters. The decline in vocations to consecrated Marist life, and the expanding interest of teachers, administrators, fellow workers, carers, friends and others who have a relationship with us, who express a desire to participate more fully in the life, leadership and management of the Marist Institute, offer us a new hill to climb, leading us to a second Fourvière, where the original vision can be fulfilled in a way we could not have dreamt of, even fifty years ago.

There will be a celebration in the basilica at Fourvière on 23rd July, with representatives from the Marist branches and young Marists from all over the world who will gather for a Marist Youth event as part of World youth day. Brothers Maurice Taildeman, Gerard de Haan, Colin Chalmers, Alois Engel and John Hyland will be there from our Province. I am sure that it will be a memorable and uplifting event. I suspect that most people will arrive at the top of the hill by car, bus or the funicular railway. No matter which way people arrive at the top of the hill, this gathering provides a new opening panel for my imaged triptych, or, possibly, an icon of Marist life in the future.

BRENDAN GEARY

Moving into November

Reflection: Sister Death

Dear Brothers and Marist Friends,

The month of November is the time of the year when we traditionally think of those who have died. This is a valuable tradition, as it invites us to call to mind those who had an important place in our lives, and whom we want to remember with gratitude and affection. Thoughts of death have not been far away for me in recent months, with the deaths of Brothers John Hyland and Ludwig Spitzer, as well as the death of my uncle during the month of June.

As well as calling to mind those who have died, our Christian tradition puts before us thoughts of our own death. I remember singing the hymn to St. Joseph as a child on the feast of St. Joseph. I was slightly amused when we sang the chorus inviting St. Joseph to “Teach us how to die.” As a child under twelve years of age, thoughts of learning how to die were rather far from my mind! As we get older, of course, the reality of death impinges on us in a different way.

St. Francis of Assisi spoke about “Sister death,”
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister
Death, from whose embrace no mortal can
escape.

For St. Francis, death was a natural part of life. A few years ago I asked Brother Alan Hargan to prepare a graph with the average age at which brothers had died in the Province of Britain and Ireland. During the first eighteen years (1852 – 1870) the average age of death was 35. In our Province at the moment it is currently around 82 years of age. As a society, we have significantly extended life expectancy, with all of the advantages and benefits that come with an increase in length

of years. However, this increase does not take away the inevitability of death. As we know, death can sometimes be a gift and a blessing. That was certainly true for my own parents. Their deaths were graced moments for me and the members of my family, partly as it brought the suffering associated with their illnesses to an end, and partly as their last days and weeks were significant moments for the family, despite the inevitable sense of sadness at losing people who were dear to us.

With these thoughts playing around in my mind, I recently read a short article by a man who had a terminal illness, and who wrote about how fortunate he was that he had time to prepare for the end of his life. He wrote about having time to come to terms with his condition, to become reconciled to his life, to avoid anger and regrets, and to enjoy the life he had left with a spirit of gratitude.¹

By another coincidence I am currently reading a book of spiritual reflections by Robert Wicks. The day after reading the article I mentioned above, I turned to the next reflection in the book which is entitled, “Understanding the important role of death . . . while you’re still alive.” Wicks begins by mentioning how we are culturally conditioned to avoid talking about death, but how our spiritual lives can benefit from a healthy awareness of our own mortality.

Wicks suggests that holding an awareness of death in our spiritual lives can give us a sense of perspective: “When we realize that we are dying and so is everyone else, we tend to be less demeaning, demanding, or hard to please.”² He continues by suggesting that this awareness may also make us more tolerant of those with whom we live or work, and whose behaviour we may find

1 Riley – Smith, Jonathan. (24th September, 2016, *The Tablet*). At the hour of our death, p. 6.

2 Wicks, Robert. (2014). *No problem, Turning the next corner in your spiritual life*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books. pp. 48-49

difficult: “We will realize that those who use unpalatable defences have to live with themselves and this is the best they can do at the moment.”

It will not surprise you that, for me, these thoughts about mortality and endings also relate to what is happening to us as a Province. We know the statistics about our age profile, and the number of houses that have been closed in recent years. I have spoken to brothers about these as part of recent conversations. I find that the majority of brothers are realistic about this situation. However, there are two ways of responding; we can accept this situation and look for ways that our Marist mission can continue with the participation and leadership of lay Marists, or we can give up in a spirit of resignation, as there is nothing we believe we can do.

In the book I mentioned above Wicks quotes Richard Bode, who writes:

The day will come when I will die. So, the only matter of consequence before me is what I will do with my allotted time. I can remain

on shore, paralyzed with fear, or I can raise my sails and soar in the breeze.

The same can be said of us as a Province. We can decide to “remain on the shore,” paralyzed with fear and despondency, or we can raise our Marist sails and soar with the breeze of the Spirit. As I look back on the developments in our Province over the past 16 years, I can see many ways that the Spirit has led us to new shores. I would like to think that this attitude can offer us new perspectives and hope, with confidence that the work we have done in our lives can continue – but in different ways.

We cannot avoid death, and we need to plan for the gradual completion of the work of the Brothers in our Province. Following the advice of the writers whom I have quoted in this article, we can plan for this reality and embrace it with honesty, and have confidence in the Spirit who inspired St. Marcellin and who can continue to work in us and our lay friends. Keeping death before us, which is appropriate at this stage in the liturgical year, can provide healthy perspectives that can enhance our spiritual and Marist lives.

BR MICHAEL GREEN

Farewell Address at MSA Dinners

A few weeks ago I attended a class re-union. My own class – from another century. We’ve actually been fairly regular in meeting up like this over the years, over the decades dare I admit it, but for the first time, we determined that we had reached that stage of age, grace and wisdom where such gatherings were more sensibly held in the middle of the day rather than in the evening. Certainly, the similarity of hairstyles suggested men of a certain age. So, a luncheon reunion. But a long lunch, nonetheless.

There’s often a mix of both eagerness and apprehension involved in going to one’s class reunion. Not all memories are good ones. But, in my experience, that quickly dissipates on arrival. It’s just wonderful to be together again. At least, it is for us.

As we end this year, I would like to make a few comments this evening about what you and I are on about in Marist education, comments that were prompted by that reunion. The conversations during the afternoon brought home to me, not that I needed any persuading of it, just how influential and defining can be a person’s experience of school. We’ve all been kids; we’ve all been affected by school. We’ve all known what it was like to have companions who were good friends, and those who weren’t; teachers and coaches, great and poor; those who mentored and inspired, and those who didn’t. The culture of the place – so, so impactful. And the personal relationships of our youth. Those that brought wholeness and those that brought hurt, those that nurtured and those that damaged. For we males, slower as we are to develop a fully functioning frontal lobe in our cerebral cortex, school years are not always a time marked by prudence and planning. Some of our teachers and acquaintances got that, some didn’t. It could get messy. It could get a lot worse that messy.

It is a profound responsibility that you and I elect to accept: to take on the conduct of schools; to spend our lives among the young, as their educators and carers; to create experiences for them

that will influence who they become as human beings; that will mould their minds and shape their hearts; that will facilitate or impede their readiness to engage this world critically, justly, daringly, wisely, compassionately; that will build or diminish

their capacity to believe, to hope and to love. It’s not only us, of course, but we play a mighty part. Saint Marcellin, when writing to a young Brother, had a deep sense of this. “You have in your hands,” he wrote to him, “the power to open heaven for your students, or to close it.” Strong words, those. Sit with them for a moment. The power to open heaven or to close it; the power to bring Christ-life to birth in them – as Water from the Rock puts it – or to abort it. To teach them how to grow to be people of patience, kindness, forgiveness, trust, empathy, resilience, self-control, generosity and gratitude – the signs, St Paul tells us, of Christ-life or love – or to sentence them to paler and fraught lives denied of these, or at least denied their rightful measure of them.

A profound responsibility, to be sure. Let us never lose sight of just how significant it is, or what a privilege and trust we have chosen to accept.

One of the guys at our re-union the other week told me of a book that his son (now an ex-student of the same Marist school as his father and I attended) had recently written. It recounted in a rollicking and robustly boyo way the journey of his life, especially as member of Australia’s Special Forces and later as a private security operative in some of the world’s more volatile locales. You might know it; I hadn’t heard of it. Undaunted is its title. My mate told me I could get it on Kindle, so I did. It was a boys-own page-turner, and I have to admit that I devoured it. It revealed a young man who searched for and found purpose and



foundation in his life, someone of both wit and wisdom, of reverence and irreverence, of intelligence, guts and self-awareness. I finished the book wanting to meet him, and to share a pint or two with him. He'd be great company, I'm sure. In many ways, he'd made it. He'd had the self-belief, talent, personal support, and a generous dose of good luck, to take risks, to dare, and to prevail. His pride was not loud or boorish, but it was there and it was deserved. One the quotations he included in the book, a kind of criterion against which he measured his own manhood was one of the more famous utterances of that journeyman, Theodore Roosevelt. It might be familiar to you:

It's not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles; or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, comes short again and again ...; who knows great enthusiasms, great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, or who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place will never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory or defeat.

That's one measure of worth, and thank God for people who have built the capacity to be like this. Our world needs them. But is that the best measure we might use for what you and I are about, for what we have given ourselves again this year in our Marist schools. Is our success measured by how many Kiplingesque, daring-do, muscular Christians we can turn out? I suggest not. The Gospel which you and I seek to share with the young is not a boys-own, me-against-the-odds, adventure story. I suggest that a better yard-stick might be that proposed by former Governor General and another alumnus of that same Marist school, William Deane, who put to the Australian people that the ultimate litmus test of the worth of a nation was how it treated the least among its people – those with least capacity or means to make it in life. So, too, for a school, I think, at least

a Marist school. A telling measure of our worth as schools, of the Marist-ness in them, is, notwithstanding all the outstanding opportunities that are offered and seized by our young men and women, how do the least of our students experience school, experience us. Those who are least ready or able to meet the expectations we make of them – scholastically, socially, emotionally, physically, even spiritually. The least. What is their experience?

We have honoured some very fine Marist educators tonight, women and men who embody Marist qualities that we all admire and which we rightly applaud. I add my warmest congratulations to those already offered. My hunch, and I think it would be a well-founded one, is that each of these people is someone who helps to make our schools places where the smallest, the weakest, the most challenging can find a place, can belong, and can be nurtured into self-belief, into other-centeredness, and ultimately to be people of faith, hope and love. This is to be Marist, to be Marian – to build a home and a family, in all the ways that a good mother and a faithful sister would: to believe in the possibility of growth and change, to expect and want it, to nurture it, to go out and cheer for it, and to rejoice quietly when it flowers.

Yes, it is a profound responsibility we accept as educators. We do not always prove worthy of the trust we have been given, but nights such as this call us back to what we are about, to the worth and purpose of it. They celebrate the best in us. Can I say a word of deep gratitude to everyone here – and to the hundreds of others you represent – for all that all of you have done in the name of Marist education for another year? Whether you have done that as a teacher, a principal, a senior administrator, a gardener, a chaplain, working at the level of the Marist Association, a member of a council, board or committee, or in your supporting us by your encouragement and prayer and advice – whatever has been your role – without you we wouldn't have Marist schools. You have helped Christ-life to come to birth in our world. And on that little Marist-Advent note, I offer you my appreciation and thanks.

BR ROBERT O'CONNOR

Reflections from a casual visitor from the Far East, on the great work at Newman College in the Far West

At the outset let me admit to having only ever once in my 75 years of life been privileged to visit the great state of Western Australia. My loss, I hear you say, and I agree! The last time was via the Indian-Pacific Railway and allowed only a brief stint in the city of Perth and no opportunities to investigate the other stunning parts of the state: Bunbury, the wheat-belt and not least, the Pilbara!

But to the purpose of these reflections? A visit to the great Marist school in Perth: Newman College, an amalgam of Brigidine, Dominican and Marist traditions: strength and gentleness, the search for truth, and all this through the example and guidance of Our Good Mother, was a great opportunity to experience first hand this fine Marist school, where all that Marcellin Champagnat held dear as part of his dream for young people, is being realised thanks to the vision of staff members past and present and continuing under the watchful eye and forward-thinking vision of the current leadership team and a dedicated and enthusiastic staff.

The invitation from John Finneran and his leadership team of Lisa and Dan in particular, was to participate in a full morning of input and reflection on two biblical themes.

Firstly, from **1 Kings 9-13**. Here our focus was on the repeated question from Yahweh God to the prophet: **“What are you doing here Elijah?”**

Secondly from Exodus 3:5: to unpack Yahweh's message to Moses that **“The ground you stand on is holy ground!”**

These rich passages from the Hebrew Scriptures opened for us the opportunity to reflect on the sacrament of our personal journeys; the holiness of the College as a sacred site; and the presence of the Holy Spirit alive and active in the lives of all those privileged to learn and minister here.

Yes, indeed we were reminded from scripture that, “the Holy Spirit came and settled on EACH one of them”; not just some, but indeed each one of them.

What we can at times hear in staff rooms, it was suggested, often replicates Elijah's, self-justification and judgementalism for himself being a faithful follower, but with no one else much measuring up to the mark! Then there is the temptation at times for us to be less than generous, or even blinded to the real purpose of our coming together each day on this site. There was much for us to ponder together, as Mary teaches us.

This provided a comfortable segue into a focus on who is this Jesus, the historical itinerant teacher at the heart of our mission? Do we really know him? Do we really hear what he says to us in his parables and teachings? Do we really see what he is doing for us and to us, in his miracle and encounter stories?

Some gentle soul-searching into how well we have heard Jesus' Mission Statement in **Luke 4:16-21** was broken open, pondered and shared.

A variety of readings was made available throughout the morning: scriptural, plus some pertinent reflections from Rohr, Rolheiser, O'Leary, allowing time for personal space, self-reflection and sharing.

Our second session focussed in particular on the gift that each one of us is to our school communities; that it is our own fullness of the Holy Spirit and the sacredness of each of our journeys, that touches and enriches the lives of one another and our students. The Pentecost event reminded us that indeed each one of us is 'impregnated' by the Holy Spirit, and that our journeys are really about how well each one of us can respond to that gift freely given, and which merely awaits our responding...
.to the best of our abilities; for Jesus at no stage

expects us to be perfect, just willing, to follow him as best we can.

We then asked: what is it we are building together here at Newman College? Again this seemed a natural question to ask and to ponder.

We concluded our time together with reference to Marcellin's dream, our response to it, how well we think we do it, and would he recognise what we are on about if he was to make a visit to Newman College, Perth? Are we resting on our laurels? Do we seriously believe that we have already found all the answers? Or are we, as all committed institutions are, on a journey, that really never ends, but only gets better, richer, more focussed as the time goes by.

In reality is it not true that for Newman College as for every other Marist work across the Province and our Marist world, conscious that if we remain open to God's Spirit at work in our hearts, "the best is yet to come!?"

Our final focus was on the person of Mary, our disciple par excellence and guide; and a consideration on her faith journey: from feisty teen asking some tough questions of the heavenly visitor; as ashamed unmarried pregnant girl; as devoted supportive niece of Elizabeth; as refugee fleeing Herod's horrors; as terrified young mother losing her son in a crowded city; as anxious mother of a scandalous preacher; as attentive guest at Cana; as heart-broken mother at the foot of the Cross; as participant and mentor at the Pentecost event. In all this, as a model for the faith journey of each one of us.

The long journey across the continent was well worth the opportunities to meet and work with such a gifted and devoted staff, and a leadership team with vision and trust that this is, as our Marist documents remind us, not our work, but God's work. Thank you to the staff of Newman College, and especially to the leadership team for their warm and open-hearted welcome.

BR ROBERT O'CONNOR

The New Hermitage – Keeps meeting the signs of the times

Perhaps it is timely to provide some details to the Province as to what is happening and what we hope might begin to happen over coming weeks, months, years.

The Province decided to re-establish a second Brothers' community at The Hermitage LaValla site to allow for some consideration as to the development of a community that, as well as continuing to provide a place, facilities and support for the hosting of the many Province programmes run by the MLF team; Brothers' Province Retreats; private retreats etc. may also develop over time, the opportunity for Brothers, members of the Association, lay colleagues and other associated Marists, to take time out to live in the Brothers' community here for periods of time – perhaps up to a month or so, sharing prayer and life as appropriate.

Currently, the Community has a regime of morning prayer, beginning at 7.15am with the

reading of the Scripture of the day: normally the Gospel, but sometimes the First reading or as appropriate; and allowing a 15 minute period of quiet time. At 7.30am the Community prayer commences as in other communities, with our Marial greeting, intentions, appropriate prayers or hymns, and possible use of psalm(s) or reflective reading to conclude.

We have begun negotiating with Fr Ronan O.Cap. from.....to join us and provide Eucharist following meditation or prayer on Monday mornings.

Currently, any groups who are in residence for their own formation programmes or MLF programmes, are invited to join the Community for meditation and prayer if they so wish. To date it is noteworthy that almost always some join the community at this time.

We are also, after we have discussed the possibilities with the local parish authorities,



Mittagong: the New Hermitage just after Blessing and Opening. Note novices on verandahs and balconies. Also the newly planted garden. How things have changed.



Brothers Andrew, Gregory and Arcadius all key men in the development of the Australian Marist Province. The photograph was taken on 2nd July 1936 at Mittagong.

considering opening this same opportunity to the local community via the parishes.

Already some steps to encourage the use of the Community for retreats for individuals have been taken. Recently a young man in his 30s, ex-student of Parramatta Marist has lived and worked in the community while discerning where his life might take him in the coming years. He has prayed with the community, shared meals and done work around the property, while recently deciding to return to study and take up residence in his own accommodation in the local area.

Also there is the beginnings of some coming to live-in for directed Retreats, weekend retreats etc. For example, a young OMI brother/student, spent a week with us recently doing a directed retreat as he prepares for renewal of his vows.

We see many possibilities developing for the LaValla community to host such groups and

individuals. Our hope would be that our own Brothers and hopefully members of the Association and others beyond specifically Marist connections, could consider joining the community for a short or longer period of time. Possibly school or ministry staff on long-service leave for example, might see a week or so here for their own 'care of the soul' as a positive option.

Further thought is being given to the possible development on site of a number of hermitages/cottages in which people could stay for extended periods of time, while also being prepared to live in as part of the LaValla community, something akin to, but not quite the same as what is available at The Abbey at Jamberoo. We perceive that whatever develops here at LaValla will have a distinct Marist dimension and spirit to it; and this will of course, be more of a movement of the Spirit to which we hope we can be open and attentive.

Above all we hope that the Brothers of the Province and members of the Association will continue to pray that this initiative might grow and develop and produce rich fruit for our Marist life and journey into the future.



In the back row: Brothers Patricius, Paul Mannes and Angelus. Front row: Brothers Placidus and Ignatius (Master of Juniors). All five Brothers were on the Juniorate staff and the photograph was taken in 1922.

BR ROD THOMPSON

Marist Brothers Novitiate Tudella

International Novitiate Life – New Beginnings!

After some months of preparation I arrived in my new community on May 27, 2016. This was to be a very different experience of community and ministry ... I was assigned to be on the staff of one of the Institute's International Novitiates. Most of these Novitiates are 'bulging at the seams', and here in Tudella, Sri Lanka, we are no different. We boast 12 First Year Novices and 6 Second Years, with a Staff of 5 Brothers. Looking at the numbers in our Postulancies, we could have a room shortage in 2018!

What better place than a Novitiate to live out the recent calls of the Institute in this, our Bicentennial year. One expression of these calls can be found in the concluding statement of the first Lavalla 200 group. A few lines from this are helpful in reflecting on our New Beginnings here in Tudella:

"...We are moving beyond dreaming together for a new beginning, as we have done throughout the Institute in recent years in chapters and assemblies. It has been a 'long dawn' but now there is daylight: a time for decisions!"

In lessons on the Constitutions, the first year novices were asked to present their dreams for the future of Marist Life in Asia. Some of their reflections included: "We are dreaming ...to build community with love and warmth infusing it; ...to continue the mission among poor children and young people in teaching, refugee centres, orphanages, social youth centers, counselling; ...to develop intercongregational collaboration and formation; ...to deepen interreligious dialogue; ...to be a Marian face in the church.

"...We believe that the Spirit is calling us to embrace a new way of sharing life in community: internationally, interculturally... Our relationships are core to our mission and central to a new beginning for Marists".

Fr Anthony Gittins once wrote that "intercultural living is the future of international

religious life. If not, Religious Orders will not survive. This requires a revolution in Religious Life: it's both NEW and OBLIGATORY". We aim to embody this revolution, by living well our intercultural experience, with members from Bangladesh, East Timor, Vietnam, CN, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Australia, and Canada. Considering the possibilities for difference and misunderstanding, we get along remarkably well! Twice a year we run Workshops on "Intercultural Living", and, as well as our monthly Community Meetings, we gather to share more personally twice a month with our 'Group Accompaniment' sessions. In these it is with confidence and courage that we can sort out our differences, and we can say to one another in an exercise using an empty picture frame, the positive we notice in each one and also the aspects that might need improvement. It is always a good moment of freedom and truth to build relationships with one another.

"...We experience the Spirit of God within ourselves, within one another, within all of life and creation. We contemplate. We cultivate silence. We meditate on God's Word. Our spirituality encompasses every moment of our lives: our love, our passions, our hopes and fears, our successes and failures..."

These areas are 'bread and butter' for all of us here, in the way we are called to animate our daily prayer life, as well as in our monthly Reflection Days and special Retreat times. Spiritual Direction and weekly Personal Accompaniment help Novices to deepen these areas of life, plus we have a 20 minute "Emmaus Walk" held at the end of each 'Group Accompaniment' time. In these, Novices go off in pairs to listen and share more personally.

"...It is an annunciation moment for us and for all Marists: 'Do not be afraid. Nothing is impossible with God'".

Recent annunciations for us have been with our

gatherings to prepare for the General Chapter, “creating new conversations in contemplative dialogue” between our Novices and Lay Marists and Brothers belonging to two local groups. Our most recent meeting was an immersion encounter with local fishermen, whose plight involves being squeezed out of the industry by encroaching tourism and the Government’s push to support larger fishing companies operating commercial boats. Lay Marists have befriended these fishermen, and among other things, have helped them access better educational opportunities for their children. Our Second Year Novices have

further experienced the call to be Marists together, having just returned from their three month Apostolic Community Experience. As well as working alongside Lay Marists, two of the five communities they lived in were made up of Lay and Brother members.

In conclusion, these four Lavalla 200 statements embody aspects of life in an International Novitiate that have been both challenging and life-giving for our Novices, and as one accompanying them, I believe that their reception and integration of these experiences augurs well for the next 200 years of Marist life in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

