



Marist Vocations and Brothers Today

Introduction

The 2012 Mission Assembly provided an opportunity to not only reaffirm the place and value of Marist vocations within the Australian Marist Community, but also a strong commitment to grow Marist life in the coming years. The statement of priorities included;

- an emphasis on a renewed and expanded understanding of vocation
- promotion, support, and encouragement of the invitation to the Brothers' vocation
- animating, supporting and encouraging Young Marists, both Brothers and Lay, who are our future

With regard to new expressions of Marist life and community, the Assembly affirmed;

- the exploration of diverse models of community for Brothers and Lay Marists so as to continue its mission creatively into the future, of making Jesus Christ known and loved, particularly through ministry to the young, especially the marginalised.

This report will highlight (i) the ministry of the Marist Vocations Team (first three points) and (ii) identify the development of the Lavalla Community Project (fourth point) as a potential project for members of the Marist Association into the future.

Marist Vocations Team

Inspired by the 2012 Mission Assembly, the Marist Vocations Team (MVT) viewed its ministry as one of promoting and nurturing vocations and Marist life in all its expressions. We have particularly endeavoured to encourage vocational awareness by conducting programs with youth and young adults through Marist Schools Australia and Marist Youth Ministry. We view these two ministries as privileged places of connection with young people, where they can be invited to further consider God's call for their lives through their baptismal commitment.



The MVT has valued our working relationship with [Marist Schools Australia](#) and [Marist Youth Ministry](#) in each region as we endeavour to work closely with the Regional

Coordinators and their teams. We are grateful for their support and assistance and the mutual sharing of time and resources that enable us to carry out our ministry.

What's been growing?

- New life! **James Hodge** (Brisbane) and **Jack O'Sullivan** (Shepparton) have been professed as Marist Brothers. We rejoice in their 'Yes' as they fully enter into Marist consecrated life.



- Establishment of a **Brothers' Vocations Reference Group** to advise the MVT on strategies and future directions.

- **Ongoing Accompaniment** of several young men in vocational discernment.

- **Vocations presentations** have been conducted in 33 Marist Schools across Australia with a specific focus in Years 7, 11 and 12.

- A **Marist Life Mentors** program has been established in 13 Marist schools with 80 members of staff having participated in this formation workshop, aimed at affirming senior students in faith and ministry, connecting senior students to Marist Youth Ministry and post-school opportunities, and inviting particular students to consider a vocation to consecrated life, priesthood and being young Marists into the future.



- **Discernment Retreats** and **workshops** have been run for young men at Mittagong and for young adults at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, Ignite Youth Festival, Theology in the Pub, and Young Marist Footsteps program.

- **Marist Forums** in NSW, QLD and ACT continue to provide education and formation for students in the areas of Vocation (Year 12) and Justice (Year 11).



- **Live Marist Dinners** have been hosted in Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Sydney, to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life, and to provide education and awareness among young men about the Brothers' vocation in the Church today, and ways that they can 'live Marist' into the future as Brothers and Young Marists.



- Healy House, a **Marist House of Discernment** was established in 2014 in Eastwood, Sydney with one young man living in residence. It has now become a place for Young Marists to hold monthly meetings. In 2015 a proposal is being made to reimagine Healy House as a young adult community for Young Marists to engage in study and ministry.
- Employment of a **multi-media officer** to promote vocations and Marist life. This has enabled the creation of a vocations website, Facebook page, video clips and various print media, allowing Brothers to share their personal vocation stories.

- The MVT has been present at **MYM Contact and Exchange** evenings, and regularly participated in, and presented at **Remar Leadership Weekends and Retreats, Student Leaders' Gathering, the National Marist Youth Festival, and the Young Adult Pruning Retreat.**



New Directions / Future Hopes

As the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat continues to grow and give shape and direction to its sense of being community at the local level, we would hope that each local association group continues to see the value in nurturing future life by calling forward young people to vocational life within the Association to be the next generation of Marists – both Brothers and Lay.

The following points have been identified as important to be addressed as we continue to look at how best to grow Marist vocations into the future:

- closer collaboration with and support the work of other ministries (Australian Marist Community Pastoral Team and Marist Life Formation Team) involved in the growth and formation of Marist life
- providing opportunities for young people to work alongside Brothers and Lay Marists in ministry with marginalised youth (e.g. Heidelberg West, Mt Druitt, Santa Teresa, Timor Leste)
- future look and make-up of a Vocations/Marist Life Team
- stronger connections and links with Catholic Tertiary Institutes (e.g. ACU, Aquinas College, Notre Dame)
- offering ongoing vocational accompaniment for young Marists and discerning young adults
- establishment of a Young Adult Community (Eastwood)
- providing contemporary teaching/learning resources for Primary-Secondary Religious Education classes.

Br Greg McDonald
Br Rod Thomson

Brothers Today – Lavalla Community Project

Our Vision

As Marist Brothers of the La Valla Community Project we long to respond to the invitation of the XXI General Chapter of our Institute to embrace a consecrated life which promotes a new way of being Brother through a significant presence among disadvantaged young people. We believe the time has come for us to ‘awaken the dawn’ of a new beginning for Marist Brothers in Australia.



Principles

- Operating from the paradigm that the ‘project’ is principally the ‘community’, and that ministry will develop from the relationships fostered by the members of the community in the local area.
- Developing a contemporary style of religious community which promotes a simple lifestyle, in solidarity with disadvantaged young people.
- Establishing a distinctive religious lifestyle – open, prayerful, balanced and hospitable – in the midst of those we serve.

- Being prophetic signs of brotherhood through strong fraternal support for one another in the daily life of our community.
- Deepening our own vocation and witnessing to Marist religious life as a viable choice for young men.
- Engaging with and exploring new ways of being in communion with the local Church.
- Developing an expression of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat in the place in which we will live.
- Exploring new creative ways to educate, evangelise and advocate for disadvantaged young people and their families.

Action and Understandings to this point

Since gathering in late January, the Brothers of the La Valla Community Project have been active in their research and development of this new initiative.

Much of the work for the first months of the year was a process of consultation with various community groups and organisations who work directly with poor and disadvantaged young people. Some of these included the Marist and Exodus Communities at West Heidelberg, Edmund Rice Education Australia, the Parramatta Diocese Pastoral Planning Office and Institute for Mission, Marist Youth Care, Holy Family Parish Emerton, Chifley College Mount Druitt, Fr Chris Riley from Youth off the Streets, Blacktown City Council, McAuley-Champagnat Programme at Notre Dame Shepparton and others.

Consulting with such a wide variety of organisations provided a sense of the reality of some of the poorest young people and families in Australia, and also emphasised the importance of listening, genuine dialogue, and how initiatives such as the La Valla Community Project need time and patience.

This process of discernment has called the Brothers to establish the community in the suburb of Mount Druitt in Western Sydney and in recent weeks a rental property has been secured.

While much focus has been placed on location and ministry, the Brothers are also very committed to forming a contemporary religious community. In doing so, fraternal dialogue, in-depth sharing, regular community prayer and contemplation are priorities of each day. Group accompaniment with the assistance of Br Peter Carroll and several meetings with the Provincial Council have also aided the formation and discernment of the community.

There are hopes that this community will have an international component. Also, there is active thinking that this new community will be aligned with the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. Already, some initial dialogue has begun to ascertain how this may become a reality in the near future.

As the first steps are taken in forming this community in Mount Druitt, Michael, Justin and Lawrie are conscious that the gifts they offer are their consecration as religious Brothers, their Marist spirituality, an openness to listening, and a readiness to develop relationships. This is the work of the La Valla community that will have its expression in simple initiatives yet to emerge, that hopefully make a difference in the lives of those they live amongst.

Please continue to pray for the Marists of the La Valla Community of Mount Druitt.

Br Michael Callinan
Br Justin Golding
Br Lawrence McCane