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AN INTERNATIONAL MARIST JOURNAL OF CHARISM IN EDUCATION

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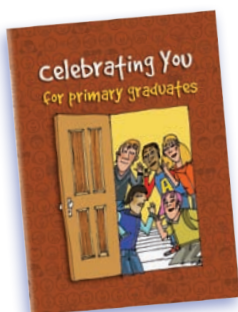


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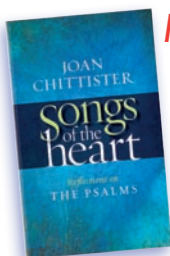
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Champagnat

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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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*in my
view...*



Using our Creative Energy

To be Marist today is to be attentive to God. Marists seek to learn how God works in our contemporary world. Marists grow in a communal setting, endeavouring to work together to make the world a better place. Our world improves when we communicate well, team effectively and, at the same time, discern the movement of God's love in and through us. God's presence can be felt, experienced and witnessed. Sometimes it seems elusive, even absent. We may ask 'Where is God in all this?' When we do experience God, we seem reticent to relate that experience to one other. Perhaps we feel too humbled by it, or feel our listeners will say we are 'too holy'. One of our most recent Marist documents, 'Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth' (2011) invites us to 'contemplate a creator-God who fashions creative people; a communicator-God who makes Himself known throughout human history; a saviour-God who champions life against every evil;

a God who accompanies' (N61). Perhaps this is why the Jesuit Thomas Berry described God as 'creative energy'.

The newly ordained Father Marcellin Champagnat was stirred to action by the realisation that young people were spending their lives unaware of and therefore unable to respond to the love of God. His reaction was to 'create' a body of evangelisers dedicated to sharing in Mary's vocation of making Christ a vital force in the lives of people in every diocese of the world. Marcellin was convinced that he was called in a special way to address the spiritual needs of the young at home and abroad. Today we recognise the charism of Marcellin as a grace of the Holy Spirit designed to guide, strengthen and sanctify the followers of Christ whatever the circumstances of their lives. This edition of the journal provides examples of how religious and lay Marists are addressing the educational, social and religious needs of the young in diverse parts of the globe. Such examples may well inspire all of us to make maximum use of our God-given 'creative energy' to further the mission of the Church in the world.

In my role as Chairperson of this Journal's Management Committee allow me to express our

Introduction

deep appreciation to our retiring editor, Des Connelly. Broad in his vision, realistic in his approach and attentive to every detail, Des has brought a new lease of life to our publication. He has given us the fruits of his incisive mind, shaping the structure of our Journal into its various sections and helping us to focus our thinking towards the Journal's Marist nature. This has led to an increase in subscribers and a financially healthier launching pad for our new editor. Des, our Management Team, the members of our Editorial Board and our readers alike, thank you for your outstanding work and wish you God's special blessings.

John McMahon

In This Issue

Laity and religious Marists constantly at work as Christ's helping hands, compassionate voice, tireless feet, creative heart and mind, this is a major theme of the Summer 2011 edition of *Champagnat*. Our feature articles present an inspiring spectrum. Michael Green sketches for us some of the admirable, simple men from the depths of revolutionary rural France who created a Marist movement that amazingly continues to impact on

people in much of the globe today. As ever their Marist message urges everyone - marginalised, 'getting by', socially and economically comfortable - to respond to the call of Christ to grow in faith and to show a practical love for one another without discrimination. How the ever increasing role of laity in the Marist mission may unfold is discussed by Joe McCarthy, Alan Parker and Shane Reid.

Two very different perspectives on the Virgin Mary are given in Neville Solomon's reflections on St. Marcellin's favoured statue of 'Our Good Mother', and in Gerard McLarney's scholarly assessment of the significance that Catholics may attach to references to Mary in the Islamic Qur'an. A moving insight into the spirituality of the elderly and their carers is provided by Marcel Père.

John Falzon and Anthony Fisher invite us to analyse our personal attitudes to the marginalised in Australian society, while Michael Elligate helps us explore how faith influences our thoughts and attitudes.

In the Education section the Marist response to the complex situations of diverse cultural groups in Latin America is powerfully conveyed by João Carlos do Prado, Ricardo Tescarolo and Luis Carlos Gutiérrez Blanco.

Rounding off the section, Mary Byrne Hoffmann complements her Spring edition article with a perceptive explanation of how to take advantage of the potential for faith formation that can be found in the pervasive media culture. As usual there is also a number of 'vignettes' that encourage reflection or practical application to daily living.

With the Summer 2011 edition my term as editor comes to an

end. I record my appreciation to Brother John McMahon for the opportunity to make this contribution to the Marist mission, and would like to express my gratitude to writers, peer reviewers, proofreaders, advertisers, other supporters and especially subscribers who have contributed substantially to making the experience informative, interesting and rewarding.

Des Connelly

Contributors

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Contributors

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Contributors

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We would like to advise subscribers that they can now request as a pdf a copy of any article from the 2011 Winter, Spring and Summer editions. The pdf allows copying and wide distribution through a teaching staff, or to a cohort of senior students. Please email requests to fmsjournal@netspace.net.au

JOHN FALZON

The Forgotten People

Another Kind of World is Possible

Keynote Address Delivered at the Launch of the 2011 St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Appeal Perth, 25 May 2011.

I would like to begin by acknowledging and paying my respects to the elders and traditional custodians of this land. I wish to pay tribute to their sense of story and their spirit of collective hope. In preparing for today I was reminded of a time some years ago when I often visited Pinjarra. It was in a past life when I delivered religious education seminars at the local high school. It was always, for me, a place that made me feel pensive. I would usually sit by the river to have lunch there with my good friend Jimmy Strong. We always fell into a strange kind of silence beneath the startling blue sky. When, some years later, I revisited the place with my family I felt a deep sense of sadness. Perhaps because I had a family of my own I was more attuned to the terrible sadness that was visited there upon families that were no different from my own. Although most Australians may have little if any knowledge of the fact, Pinjarra is the place where Binjareb women, men and children were massacred in 1834. That event powerfully evokes the biblical call to social justice, exhorting us always and unequivocally to take the side of those who suffer injustice: *Listen to the sound of your brother's blood crying out to me from the ground!* (Genesis 4:10)

I want to reflect with you about some of the forgotten people in Australia today. This reflection will be by no means comprehensive or all-inclusive. It will simply be meant as a way of thinking together about what we are taught to forget. The people who live on the edges of Australian society are not there through any fault of their own. They are there for reasons of history and social structure. In their ground-breaking and

timely 1996 Social Justice Statement the Australian Bishops made the following radical assertion: *'In the main, people are poor not because they are lazy or lacking in ability or because they are unlucky. They are poor because of the way society, including its economic system, is organised.'* We are taught to look at the condition of unemployment, for example, as if it were the fault of the individual. The people concerned are actually forgotten, their stories are not listened to, only the fact of unemployment is remembered. One could say the same thing about asylum seekers. The people themselves, ordinary women, men and children, are disregarded, only their demonised status is remembered.

Consequently, leaders can get away with policies that make life harder for people who are already doing it tough. The answer lies not in forcing people to rely on charity, however, but in listening to their stories and learning from their experiences so that we can build a truly inclusive Australian society. The St. Vincent de Paul Society, for one, will always be there to support and stand with the people who are forgotten. The 2011 Federal Budget solemnly proclaimed the Government's faith in the virtues of education and training, primarily, it must be said, so as to prepare people for the even higher virtue of work, spruiked with true Calvinist conviction. The urgency with which we must get potential workers into the labour market is intoned as a matter of national emergency.

It's funny how quickly we are meant to forget that in times past many of these people were seen as expendable and surplus to the needs of capital. Others have been injured whilst on the job, sometimes after years of hard and unrewarding work. It appears to matter little. All are bundled together by Government, Opposition, and the other dismal cheerleaders for paternalism, as being in need of at least a little nudge if not a firm hand. The people, and, let's admit it, entire localities, that previously were judged to be surplus populations are now described as the unwilling workers that the nation is crying out for. Along with the financial penalty stick and the humiliation stick they are also subjected to the stick of tiresome moralising, told in no uncertain terms that the time has come for them to take responsibility for a change! *The government and the business community are doing all that they can to help you*, so the narrative goes. *Now you've got an obligation to help yourself and stop being dependent on the state.* This discourse is as inaccurate as it is offensive. It ignores the actual stories that are unfolding in real places. Instead it wallows in the shameful rhetoric of welfare-bashing.

A MEANS NOT AN END

A strong, flexible social security system, one that actually delivers social security rather than insecurity and vilification, is essential if we are to build a fairer Australia. A good social security system, however, is not in itself the answer. It should be a *means* to social, economic and political inclusion rather than an end. 'Welfare', as the Americans like to call it, is neither the problem nor the solution, any more than hospitals are the primary cause of illness or, indeed, the creators of good health for society. But you wouldn't want to be without them, would you? Neither should we acquiesce in the whittling away of a robust social security system, especially not under the guise of forcing people to learn and 'be trained'. The Government can threaten with all the sticks under the sun but this will not lead people to learning. They can suspend a young mother's entire income if they want. This will cause hardship for both mother and child and it will mean that the young woman will need to get assistance from her extended family or friends or neighbours or from a charity. But will it instil a desire to learn? It will not. It will, on the other hand, teach the young woman something about society. It will teach her that she is of little value and that she is able to be controlled and disciplined and made to ask for charity. It will teach her perhaps how to develop innovative ways of survival; how to work within, or around, the social security system. It will teach her many things about where she sits in the social order; things that I fervently hope she will one day question, critique and, with others, undo.

During the welfare-to-work measures imposed by the Howard government a fascinating report entitled *Much Obligated* was written by Mark Considine from the University of Melbourne, Gavin Dufty from the St Vincent de Paul Society, and Stephen Ziguras from the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Their research, which received far too little recognition, demonstrated that increasing compliance measures under the hallowed banner of mutual obligation did little to actually facilitate employment participation. In their survey of the experience of disadvantaged job-seekers they found:

Contrary to the aims of active labour market policy, the emphasis on compulsory activities appears to generate avoidance and resentment. While people may comply, these requirements are in practice not a means to finding work, but rather a necessity for remaining eligible for benefits. In

effect, then, the system operates for many disadvantaged job seekers not as 'welfare to work' but 'welfare as work'.¹

And poorly paid work, at that! Since 1996 our unemployment benefit has fallen from 54% to 45% of the after-tax minimum wage. You don't create a smart and confident Australia by taking to people with a stick or keeping them below the poverty line. This might have sat well with the moral prescriptions of the mid to late nineteenth century, and it might be a clever way of scoring political points, but it will not build a stronger, smarter economy or a fairer society.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Our problem in Australia is not the 'idleness of the poor', as perniciously proposed by welfare-bashers of all political stripes. Putting the boot into disadvantaged Australians might be therapeutic for the welfare bashers but it will not help even one person into employment. Our problem is *inequality*. This is a social question, not a question of behaviour. We do irreparable harm when we turn it into a question of individual behaviour, blaming people for their own poverty, as is so often the case with people who are homeless or in jail because of society's failure to provide them with opportunities and to nurture their talents.

We build massive walls around people on the basis of their race, class, gender or disability. The same people are then condemned for lacking the 'aspiration' to scale these walls. Our task is to have the humility to listen to the people who can teach us what it is that needs to change in society. With both sides of politics singing the praises of 'tough love' in the months preceding the Budget we would have been surprised if measures smacking of coercion and paternalism had not been there. Nevertheless the Budget was far from being all negative. The investment in mental health, for example, is ground-breaking. I do hope, however, that the punitive treatment of people on social security benefits will not cause greater problems with mental health. A harsher welfare compliance regime and the extension of compulsory income management are measures based on the assumption that if you are disadvantaged your problem is idleness. Idleness is not the problem. The problem is entrenched inequality. The fact remains that for a single unemployed person, the battle to survive on \$34 a day is a battle that is waged from below the poverty line. The government is right to look at this and say that life should be better, but wrong to claim that the answer lies in making life harder.

I am very hopeful that during this time of low unemployment many people will find jobs. The story is not, however, as simple as it seems. Unemployment rates are still high in some locations and among certain age-groups. As Professor Bill Mitchell of the University of Newcastle's *Centre of Full Employment and Equity* reminds us:

The teenage labour market remains in an appalling state.At a time when we keep emphasising the future challenges facing the nation in terms of an ageing population and rising dependency ratios the economy still fails to provide enough work (and on-the-job experience) for our teenagers who are our future workforce....There is nothing good that you can say about any of that. It makes a mockery of those (like the bank economists and our politicians) who claim we are close to full employment. An economy that excludes its active teenagers from any employment growth at all is not one that is using its existing capacity to its potential. An economy that sheds 73 thousand jobs that were formerly held by teenagers (including 72 thousand full-time jobs) is no-where near full employment.²

I am still confident that no matter how hard the forces of coercion and control are arraigned to break them, people will continue to be resilient in the face of oppression. We are all broken in some ways, but out of our shared brokenness we shall create a new kind of society. The women and men who are currently not listened to still have their stories, still carry the knowledge of what has happened, what is happening, and what needs to happen. Another kind of world is possible because of the truth that is told by those who live on the margins. And if we look a little bit closer, we will see that the 'margins' are actually at the heart of our society. It all depends on where you stand.

Finally, I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude and solidarity with all the community organisations working with and on the side of people who are pushed to the margins. There is a natural affinity among all who listen to the stories of the people on the margins and who work to nurture the seeds of a new society growing from those stories. The greatest power for progressive social change lies precisely with the excluded. The people who can best define and interpret the reality of exclusion and socio-economic insecurity are also potentially the only ones who can, in the

end, determine the means towards and the ends of social inclusion. As the German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht put it so well: *The compassion of the oppressed for the oppressed is indispensable. It is the world's one hope.*

ENDNOTE

- 1 Ziguras, S., Dufty, G., Considine, M. (2003). Much obliged : disadvantaged job seekers' experiences of the mutual obligation regime, Fitzroy, Vic.: Brotherhood of St. Laurence. The research found that the 'welfare to work' system does not work effectively for people with the most severe barriers to employment, and that significant changes are required.
- 2 See 'Australian Labour Market – Flat' at <http://bilbo.economicoutlook.net/blog/=15174>

Being Close to the Reality of People's Lives

Gaudium et Spes, I

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties
of the people of this age,
especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted,
these are also the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the
anxieties of the followers of Christ.

Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise
an echo in their hearts.

ANTHONY FISHER

The Population Debate

Fact, Furphy, Prejudice and Paranoia

*Then they also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry
or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not
minister to you?*

Just a week before the 2010 federal election in Australia the national broadcaster entered the population debate with a program called *Population Puzzle* and a follow-up *Q&A* segment. It featured and was financially underwritten by a public figure well-known as an anti-population campaigner. Endorsing the Australian Labor Party's shift away from 'Big Australia' towards a smaller 'Sustainable Population', the national broadcaster gave the campaigner a platform to decry growth capitalism and its insatiable appetite for imported skilled labour. Characteristically the contribution of the Greens leader to the debate was trenchantly anti-population, while the Opposition, though more pro-population, joined the auction to be the party toughest on migrants and refugees.

Are there thoughtful and informed judgements underlying such views?

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has consistently affirmed that Western Sydney is already suffering particular 'stress' or 'congestion' from population growth. Roughly two-thirds of the extra 1.7 million people projected for Sydney by 2036 are expected to make their homes in the western region of the city. Faced with a similar prospect in other cities also, many are vociferously objecting that such areas are already over-populated. As a consequence all political parties now want to slow Australia's immigration rate and 'get tough' (or even tougher) on asylum seekers. Incredibly, some people also want to reduce Australia's family sizes – already among the lowest in the world.

A range of interests, prejudices and genuine arguments collide here: the perennial fear of newcomers; a view of human beings as 'pollution' of an ideally people-free environment; fear of a boat-borne 'Asian invasion', complete with people smugglers, queue-hoppers and terrorists; anti-capitalist and anti-development feeling; Malthusian nightmares of people over-breeding and over-consuming resources. Associated factors are: the sheer costs and complexity of providing for ever-expanding cities; evasion of responsibility for urban planning and infrastructure; annoyance with peak hour congestion and other symptoms of rapid city growth; the ongoing climate apocalyptic; and anti-family and anti-child attitudes. There are some serious issues here, as well as prejudice and paranoia. But slogans and spin driven by these concerns are no basis for sound policy.

It is a paradox that in this 'nation of migrants' anti-immigration feeling is never far beneath the surface – nowadays a surface coat of 'green' paint. There is a similar paradox in the rhetoric about the need for population control in the world's least-populated continent. Hostility to 'population' is hostility to people – people in the abstract rather than particular people – and especially to babies, especially poor people's babies. While contraception and abortion have encouraged the West to enjoy a population explosion at the same time as a population implosion, there are still too many people around for some.

Whether it's Green Australia replacing the former White Australia, or sustainable population instead of population control, Australia is again said to be 'full' or to have nearly reached its maximum carrying capacity. Yet the fact remains: Australia has close to the lowest population density in the world. By far the greatest part of our country is barely inhabited, if inhabited at all. By the standards of Manhattan we could all fit into the Canberra area and leave the rest of the country as farms and national parks. Not that everyone wants to live as cheek-by-jowl as New Yorkers.

My point is simply: Australia – including Western Sydney where I live – is nowhere near population overload. Our problem is a lack of appropriate planning, infrastructure and services to match our population.

Christ's entry test for crossing the border into heaven was this: *when I was hungry, lonely, a stranger, desperate, did you welcome me?* (Matthew Chapter 25). Australians in the main are grateful for the ways newcomers have enriched us and we can be proud of how hospitable we usually are to new arrivals. To close the borders of our country to all but a favoured few (with the right skills) would diminish us not just economically but

culturally, morally and spiritually. To close the borders of our homes to all but a favoured few babies is also impoverishing. Australia can allow and should support larger family sizes than the present rate of one or two children per family.

Governments, churches, business and the community must play their part in addressing the big infrastructure shortages in the cities, as well as providing incentives for decentralisation. It is not beyond human wit to find ways of doing this without destroying ecosystems, running out of water or being trapped in carparks posing as motorways. It is not beyond human compassion to find 'room at the inn' for more than the few who are here already. Election-time talk of population downsizing only excuses ongoing selfishness and neglect.

Michelangelo, the author of the Pietá, is considered
one of the greatest artists in the world.

I don't believe it! The greatest artists are you educators
because you try to sculpt the best of yourselves,
of who you are and what you know, not in a piece of
marble, but in living, breathing human beings,
who are the glory of God.

And in response to all the things God has given the
church on these shores - both individually
and by the thousands - whatever your place in the mix,
may God give all of you the grace to teach
ever better in word and witness, today,
tomorrow and into the future.

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MICHAEL ELLIGATE

Nourished by Stories Old and New

So often we put scripture and Gospel writings in separate worlds of their own. We may be reading a recently published novel and we may read or have the Sunday Gospel read to us, but we never quite see how they are related. Recent scriptural scholarship, particularly at the level of its pastoral application, has entered the area of examining the Gospel narrative as text. Scholars speak of the world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text. Simply it means: where is this story coming from, how is it presented now in the constructed story itself, and how might it be understood and applied by the listener today.

Let's look at the wonderful story found only in Luke, the Easter narrative often referred to as the story of the Emmaus Road (Luke 24: 13-35). Luke is a gentle, warm story teller. So this story reflects the world in which he lives – the world behind the text. Luke is very much aware of his Gentile converts. They possibly feel they are travelling second class alongside the established inheritance of Jewish converts. They have to feel at home with the heritage of Jewish stories, and find their own place in them. They have to get used to Jewish table prayer, out of which the Eucharist is forged. They have to feel as much at home with Jerusalem as with their own towns and distinctive cultures far beyond the lands along the Jordan River.

So here Luke shapes a text into a beautiful Easter narrative. The disciples are journeying away from Jerusalem, maybe they are just clearing out as the recent days are too hard to handle. The Risen Lord walks with them, he listens and pieces the story together. He recalls the Jewish prophets and explains how suffering is part of the new message. 'Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these and enter into his glory?' (Lk 24: 27) The story line later mentions how the hearts of the fleeing disciples burned as

they listened to the Lord on the road. Nowhere else but in the downside of real life could things fits together.

Towards the end of the narrative they return to Jerusalem, at home with the Lord of both Jews and Gentiles. Of course before this happens they are affirmed and restored as Jesus breaks bread with them. Foreign ways of Passover and Jewish memory fit together now, as this new breaking of the bread is meant for all disciples. Now far flung Gentile communities of Antioch, Corinth and Rome are at ease making thanksgiving in this new prayer form.

And now to the world in front of the text.... That is precisely where we are sitting. We hear or read the story and it lands with us. We are all on life journeys, sometimes fleeing and sometimes returning. We all know what it is to feel down and to be wrestling with questions about life as it is lived. Many of us may have had the pieces put together again as we come to Eucharist, not really knowing what it will offer. The breaking of the bread can be a routine experience or sometimes it can have a profound effect upon us. Life is quietly reshaped at this gathering or in the adjustments that take place afterwards.

READING LITERATURE TODAY

Geraldine Brooks is again back on the best seller lists and again looks like being short listed for international literary awards. Her new novel 'Caleb's Crossing' is an imaginative story that she constructs from small fragments of historical records that cite the first Native American to graduate from Harvard College in 1665.

The story can be seen as so close to the Emmaus Road narrative. Caleb has to cross from his own land and culture on the island of what we now call Martha's Vineyard. The disciples are making the crossing from Jerusalem out to Emmaus. We of course are making our own crossings in life too. Careers these days involve strategic crossings, not to mention adjustments in partnerships as we proceed with life. There are also those crossings to do with faith as we experience success, failure, birth and death.

Caleb has to make many adjustments, some expected some quite unexpected. He has to learn a new way of looking at things as he settles into study on the mainland. Not many people know what is going on inside him but there are times when he shares his story with people whom he trusts. Ironically the narrative that Geraldine Brooks tells is set in a Christian community - the rigid, confining communities of English Puritan settlements both on the island and in the surrounds of Harvard.

Old ways and new have to be reviewed and shaped with a new faith in the crucified and risen One.

I suggest that when we see the Gospels as life stories, we certainly relate them to our own life story. However, another possible way to nurture faith is through the stories told in our literature today. These may stimulate reflection and adjustments that are at the core of Christian life. Literature that is on our shelves, be it books purchased at local bookshops or that familiar book with Gospel stories called The Bible, all sit alongside one another. Seeing them as partners offers great nourishment.

There is a very real need for lay formation
in the Church today – a need to make the
necessary link between theological learning
and the actual needs and mission of our parish
communities (and, in particular,
of our parish priests).

We cannot simply provide theology courses
to fulfil an academic interest.

We have to be aware of the need for the kind of
formation the laity requires to help them
participate fully in the new evangelisation.

Dominic Robinson SJ
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MICHAEL GREEN

Marcellin's Marvellous Companions

*The significance of the first Brothers
as Marist Co-founders*

The Marist educational project is not essentially, or even principally, about Marcellin Champagnat. It is, of course, about Jesus Christ. Marists seek to bring his gospel to birth in the minds and hearts of young people and, through the means of Christian education, to nurture its reign in them. That is the Marist project. These days, when we make so much about Marcellin, we can lose focus on what should be the end of our mission. A Champagnat-centric rhetoric in our schools risks the fostering of a cult, and one that may not of itself draw us into the life of the Church. That is not to suggest that saints such as Marcellin do not provide us with evangelical inspiration and with accessible spiritual paths for coming to know the God-who-dwells-among-us, but at the end of the day the key imperative for us as Marist educators is to know Christ and to place Christ at the centre of our own lives, of our students' lives, of our staff communities, and of our schools. To meet the hope of St Paul that we and our students might come to be 'planted in love and built on love' and to 'know the length and breadth, the height and depth' of God, then it is Christ that must be the 'cornerstone' of what we are about.¹ If too much of our institutional identity is framed around Champagnat, we risk going no further than a cultish hero-worship of a nineteenth century French cleric, albeit a compelling and inspirational one, and not fostering a genuine and ecclesially-oriented Christian discipleship.

The founding generation of Marists would not have made this mistake, even though they had known Marcellin personally and had been inspired

by him directly. The writings and priorities of the leadership group-of-three who succeeded Marcellin – Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie – are instructive in this. Two early examples are the first major Circular of Brother François (on ‘The Spirit of Faith’) and the tome-length treatise penned by Brother Jean-Baptiste (untitled and unpublished by him, but known now as ‘The Apostolate of the Marist Brother’). These works attempted, respectively, to describe with some detail the distinctive spirit of the Marist Brothers, and the purpose and priorities of their educational project. Neither mentions Marcellin Champagnat even though both documents were written within just ten years of his death. At first sight this may seem surprising, since both of the authors had grown from boyhood to manhood under Marcellin’s direct guidance. Both had been with him since the early days in the modest house in La Valla.

That both of them felt no need to make explicit reference to the person who had played such an important role in their own lives and that of the shaping of the Marist project is telling. It provides an insight into the way that Marcellin formed his two protégés, and others of the first Brothers: Marcellin seems to have left them with no sense of dependence on him personally. Like a good parent, he educated each to be his own man. He formed each of them to develop in his own faith, free of any lingering attachment to his formator. And this was a faith in God, not in Marcellin! That is not to suggest that they did not feel deeply and affectionately for the Founder, but there were no apron-strings in play. Similarly for Louis-Marie: not constrained by nostalgia for what it had been like with Marcellin, his eyes looked forward, as attested by his eagerness to leave the backwater of the Gier valley, and indeed The Hermitage itself, and to push his confreres to move their General House closer to the heart of Lyon, something that was done by 1858.

That Marcellin – so imposing of stature, so compelling of word, and so expressively empathetic for the personal wellbeing of each of his Brothers – did not engender in them any kind of personality cult is something which bears further consideration. They were fiercely loyal, certainly. They would follow him to the ends of the earth, they told him in 1823, when a lack of support from his local diocese tempted Marcellin to consider moving his whole project to America. Or two years later, it was Marcellin, not Courveille, whom they unequivocally wanted as their Superior, despite Marcellin’s protestations otherwise. They wept at his grave. But

this loyalty did not translate into mimicry or confected imitation. There is no evidence to suggest that the first Brothers in any way tried to copy the personality traits of Marcellin, nor was there any expectation that they should do so. The first Brothers were not carbon-copies of Marcellin, not some kind of Champagnat automatons. On the contrary, they were a richly and oddly diverse group.

Among them were scholars and barely literate peasants, men at home in the outdoors and others more given to the library, Brothers who were outstanding classroom practitioners, those who were masters of the spiritual way, others who shone in their kindness and their gentleness, men who had a passion for evangelisation, rough diamonds and cut-and-polished ones. The Brothers who worked most closely with Marcellin were, ironically enough, some of the most divergent from him in their personal characteristics. Yet, it was these men together who had defining influences on what Marist spirituality, Marist educational practice, and the Marist way of forming community were to become.

We know Champagnat well, we know many of the stories about him: his struggles at school, his readiness to put himself on the end of a pick or a wood-plane, his physical size and strength, his extroverted and easy manner with people, his rustic ways, his talent as a speaker and a teacher, his doggedness, his sharp wit, his decisiveness, and so on. We would be mistaken, however, to understand that to be regarded a good Brother at the time, one had to be just like the Founder. Marcellin seems to have easily allowed his men to be themselves. While some joined young, many others were men well into in their twenties, already with the personalities formed and much life experience behind them. Their formation did not attempt artificially to alter that but, rather, to harness it in a spiritual quest. Among them were the diligent and contemplative François, the intelligent and ascetic Jean-Baptiste, the more urbane and imaginative Louis-Marie, the impetuous and joyful Sylvestre, the ruddy and impulsive Laurent, the fastidious and generous Stanislas, the spiritual and wise Louis, the simple and direct Barthélemy, the gentle and faith-filled Bonaventure, the humble and mystical Dorothée. And the list goes on. None of them from the same personality mould as Marcellin, or one another; all of them influential in shaping what it meant to be Marist. The implication is clear: just as at the beginning when to be Marist was not to be a Champagnat clone, so also today. Our band of Marist companions admits a broad spectrum of people.

The Marist foundation period lasted around fifty years – from 1817 when Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras came to live in the house at La Valla, until the late 1860s when the last document or book of what might be described as the original Marist ‘canon’ was written and most of the founding generation had either died or were no longer in positions of active influence. Marcellin was only alive for twenty-three years of that half-century, and died before most of this ‘canon’ was written or published. The last two decades of this period saw an exponential growth. When Marcellin died in 1840 there were 280 Brothers in 48 schools. Within a decade this had increased to over 800 Brothers in more than 200 schools; by 1860 there were close to 2,000 Brothers in around 400 schools. Such growth presented the leadership group with the challenge of maintaining integrity and fidelity to the original spirit. One of the ways that they met this challenge was to articulate it, to publish. The General Chapter of 1852-54 produced three key texts: the *Common Rule*, the *Teachers Guide*, and the *Rules of Government*. The *Manual of Piety* was written soon after for novice masters. In the 1860s, Brother Jean-Baptiste wrote *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* and *The Good Superior* among other works.

Two other books of Jean-Baptiste had an especially important role in ensuring the original spirit was taught to the new generation: the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat* (1856) and *The Biographies of Some Brothers* (1868). The former we know quite well; it was re-edited and published in 1989, as part of the bi-centenary of Marcellin’s birth. It was written in two parts – the first detailing the Founder’s life (in an admittedly hagiographical way) and the second describing the qualities of the Founder that should mark the ideal Marist Brother. But the latter text, the *Biographies*, has fallen largely into obscurity in the last half-century. This is most unfortunate because at the time of their writing the two books were seen by their author as twin volumes. In his preface to the *Biographies*, Jean-Baptiste quotes Marcellin himself as describing ‘the first Brothers’ as a founding group which would collectively provide a model of how Marist life and apostolate should be ideally led.² The writing of the lives of these Brothers was therefore seen by him as a critically important task to be undertaken. The approach of Jean-Baptiste was to select sixteen of the early Brothers and to identify one quality in each which exemplified something of the Marist spirit.

The significant part played by these first Brothers in sharing with Marcellin the shaping of the founding period was something also strongly

promoted by the Superior General, Brother François. His Circulars, if they announced the death of one of these men, also said something of what they had modelled as a Marist. In sharing with the Brothers on 3 July 1851 the news of the passing of two of the first four recruits, François had this to say:

My very dear Brothers, you can see that our elders are leaving us, those whom Father Champagnat trained and who, more particularly, received his spirit, the original spirit of the Society. In less than a month we have lost two of the longest serving members of the Community [Brother Laurent and Brother Antoine]. Let us ask God that the spirit of these good Brothers should live on and be perpetuated among us: their simple and sincere piety, their zeal for the teaching of catechism, their love of poverty and simplicity, for the Rule and the ways of the Institute ... How many times since his infirmities confined him to the Mother House did dear Brother Laurent come looking for me to ask if he could go catechising from village to village, begging for his supper? Almost a week went by that he did not come to me and say, 'Oh well, then tell the Brothers to teach the catechism well to the children, and to have them say their prayers and prepare well for their First Communion.' This thought pursued him ... We loved to hear him during the evening recreation delight all the young Brothers gathered around him, with some of the old hymns and the old language, which he sang in a soft and trembling voice. Dear Brother Laurent reminded us of good Brother Damien, good Brother Dorothée and all the elders who were there at the beginning and who, all of them, were marked by a special simplicity, humility ... and zeal for the teaching of religion. These are the true Brothers of Mary; it is absolutely necessary that we cause them to live on in the Society ...³

Our latter day neglect of this founding generation has begun to be redressed. The publication of a book by Brother Alain Delorme in 2009, *Our First Brothers, Marvellous Companions of Marcellin*⁴ has been a welcome and overdue move. Brother Alain has drawn on Jean-Baptiste's *Biographies* and augmented it with a number of other sources (*The Life*, the

Annales of Brother Avit, the Circulars of Brothers François and Louis-Marie, the *Memoir* of Brother Sylvestre, the *Biographie du F. Jean-Baptiste* by Brother Amphiloque, *Notices nécrologiques* Vol.I, among others) to write a short pen-picture of twenty of the early Brothers, including François and Jean-Baptiste themselves. It is a good first step, more a devotional/inspirational book than a history text, but no less useful for this. Much more can be done to bring alive these men for today's Marists.

Let us consider snippets from the lives of just four of these early Marists to glimpse something of how different they were from Marcellin and also how they complemented him as co-founders of the Marist spiritual family. Laurent – the ruddy-faced, nuggetty and indefatigable farm-hand turned catechist – is mentioned above. By way of contrast, let us look at his younger brother who took the name Brother Louis. Jean-Baptiste Audras was just short of his fifteenth birthday when he joined the ex-Imperial Guard Jean-Marie Granjon (twenty-four) as one of the first recruits. An odd couple. Within a few years, Marcellin had preferred Louis ahead of his more ascetical and exacting confrère to be the novice master, a post Louis was to keep for the next eleven years. It was an inspired choice of Marcellin. When the *Biographies* came to be written almost fifty years later, it was Louis who was given pride of place as the subject of Chapter 1. His particular trait was described as a 'love of God without measure'. Two incidents that the book cites in his life show this in a touching way:

When he confided to his parents concerning the matter of his vocation, his mother asked him why he wanted to leave her. 'To love God with all my heart,' he answered her keenly. Later when that fine mother came to see him in his community, she never failed to ask him the question, 'Do you love God well?' Brother Louis declared several times that the question was like a darting flame which re-stoked his love for God.⁵

One day [Father Champagnat] asked [Brother Louis] 'Do you love Jesus with all your heart? Do you love Jesus with your mind? Do you love Jesus with all your strength? Brother Louis, if Jesus asked you, 'Do you love me?' as he asked Peter, how would you answer? Could you truly say, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you?' Brother Louis was moved to the

point of tears by that series of questions. Father Champagnat remained just as impassioned. 'O Father!' Louis cried at the last question, 'I dare not assure Jesus that I love him, but I feel that I *want to* love him with all my heart ...' From that time on, his whole life became an exercise in love and just before he died, he said to a Brother in whom he constantly confided, 'O Brother, how sweet love is! How strong love is! If you only knew the waves of love that break against me! ... Love is all I need and from now on I only want to study, contemplate and love Jesus, my saviour, my love, my blessing'.⁶

What emerges from each of these anecdotes, and many others through the Chapter, is a spirituality that is unambiguously mystical and affective. This is what Marcellin wanted to be developed in the novices. The author, Brother Alain, makes frequent reference to Francis de Sales and others such as Vincent de Paul who were definitive in shaping the French school of spirituality that influenced Marcellin so markedly.

Such affectivity and mysticism were the same spiritual intuitions that led Marcellin to choose his second novice master in 1831, Brother Bonaventure. Unlike the rugged Marcellin, Bonaventure had been a domestic servant and was in his late twenties by the time he came to the Hermitage. Marcellin immediately recognised in him the kind of spirituality he wanted to foster in his Brothers and so, within two years of his arrival, appointed him to lead the Novitiate. He was to stay in the role for the next two decades, well after Marcellin's death. So, for thirty years there were just two novice masters at Lavalla and the Hermitage. A quite distinctive spirituality was sown in the first generation of the Institute by two men other than Marcellin Champagnat. Again, an anecdote from Bonaventure's life gives us an insight into the nature of this spirituality. Marcellin is quoted here, referring to Bonaventure's morning instruction to the novices which took place in the large sacristy before Mass:

'Listening to him, one feels his heart aflame with the love of God. It is impossible for me to continue my preparation [for Mass] when he speaks. Unwittingly, I catch myself listening to him. I don't know where he finds the beautiful things he says to his novices, but I think those young men are very fortunate to have such teachings. This Brother is a saint and he speaks like a saint. Listening to him, one is convinced that he only says what he feels and does'.⁷

And another, quoting Bonaventure himself:

I enjoy journeys because, alone on the roads, I can pray to God aloud and give full rein to the feelings of my soul. I am sometimes so carried away by joy and love that I stop to look at the sky to my heart's content or to sing the *Te Deum*, the *Magnificat*, or the *Laudate*, to invite all the animals to bless and praise God who is so good, so loving.⁸

Another giant of the founding time was someone again quite different in temperament and personality from the Founder, yet it is unlikely that Champagnat's project would have survived without him. Brother Stanislas, who was with Marcellin from 1822 and the La Valla period, was someone who, like Bonaventure, joined as a young adult. He was a tailor by trade, an indoors man: fussy and fastidious, given to ensuring the house was neat and tasteful, and checking that all things domestic were just right. He was someone deeply sensitive to the needs of others, even something of a 'mother hen'. It was he who was alert to the Brother who was sick, or feeling down, or arriving late at night after a long journey, or in need of some special attention. He was cook, cleaner, bed-maker, launderer, mender, flower-arranger, shopper, nurse, valet, counsellor, and general factotum – friend of all, not only at the Hermitage but throughout the town of Saint-Chamond, and generous to a fault.

Although not a man of natural physical robustness (it was he who Marcellin carried while lost in the snow in 1823) there was a deep resilience and inner steeliness about him. In 1825-26, when Marcellin looked as if he was dying and his key supporters had deserted him, it was Stanislas who slept by the Founder's bed and nursed him back to health; it was he who personally kept the creditors at bay and reassured the people of Saint-Chamond and his own Brothers that all would be well, and he who persuaded the local parish priest to take on Marcellin's debts when Marcellin's own confrère Terraillon would not. Many would say that he single-handedly saved the Institute in that year. He was later to use his natural eloquence and ease of manner to great effect as a fund-raiser for the Marist cause among the rich and influential people of the town. In Marcellin's last months in 1840 he was again literally by his side, as he had been continually for close to twenty years. This was an extraordinary man. He is described in the *Biographies* as a 'treasure' of the Institute.

Again, from Brother Alain's chapter devoted to Stanislas, we can gain some insight into the quiet but critical role that he played:

So many Brothers, so many postulants owe their handling of initial troubles of the novitiate to his advice and his passionate encouragement! Who can say how many of them he preserved in their vocation? ... He normally spent his recreations with the postulants and the young Brothers, and he always knew how to find himself in the company of those were wavering and had need of his help. His zeal provided him with a thousand occupations to distract those who were bored, to strengthen the weak ... Sometimes, he would assign to the sacristy or some other pleasant job the person who was down-hearted or tired of study. Other times he would take as his shopping companion a postulant whom he though needed a diversion and also some good advice.⁹

We read elsewhere of his delight in the Eucharist, his constancy in prayer, his visits to the Chapel during the day, and his profound love of Jesus.

And what consideration of the early Brothers, even one as brief as this article, could not at least mention Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet? What a providential gift to the founding time was this prolific author and chronicler, this astute spiritual director and administrator. But, at the same time, how apparently unlike Marcellin! Jean-Baptiste was a timid and asthmatic boy who was never to enjoy good health. While his peers laboured with the men on the farm, Jean-Baptiste's own health and disposition kept him at home with the women making lace. His private hobby was looking for bird-nests. Today, he might be dismissively described as a 'nerdy' boy. Although he came from the smallest of villages in the Haute-Loire, and never attended a formal school, he was a natural scholar, a voracious reader. He was at home at a desk and with his books. His later mastery of history, of Scripture, and of the great spiritual and educational authors, was all self-taught. Yet Jean-Baptiste was much more than a retiring bookworm: his confrères had sufficient regard for Jean-Baptiste to elect him as Assistant General to Brother François; Marcellin himself had not just commissioned him as the one to chronicle the founding time and to describe the Marist way of things, but had chosen him ahead of others to be the founding Director in a strategically important school in the far

north, six hundred kilometres from the nearest community. He earned and held the trust and the respect of the founding generation. Almost all of the original Marist 'canon' came exclusively or in significant part from his pen. And as a superior, he proved to be wise, pastoral and effective.

In the Circular announcing his death, the then Superior General, Brother Louis-Marie, concluded a warm and lengthy eulogy on his long-time associate:

And who, what's more, was more cheerful, more fulfilled, more lovable, more captivating than he?¹⁰

Brother Amphiloque, in his unpublished biography of Jean-Baptiste wrote in similar vein:

No-one would leave him without feeling lifted up, consoled, strengthened, joyful ... Brother Jean-Baptiste was cheerful in the gentlest and friendliest way. The attraction of this man and the happiness one felt in approaching him, the great ease with which one could speak with him, the facility with which one opened one's heart to him, were they not the result of the translucent joy in him which made him so amiable, so welcoming, so benevolent in his goodness directed towards everyone, making one feel at ease being near him.¹¹

Although he was in some ways more ascetical in his spirituality than the Founder and the first two novice masters, he wrote often about love, joy and affectivity. Indeed, the chapters concerning those very two novice masters in *Biographies* were of course written by Jean-Baptiste. Because of the hagiographical genre in which *The Life* needed to be written in the nineteenth century, its author has perhaps unfairly been portrayed as a colder and harder man than was the case. The spirit he instilled into the two Provinces of the south – which were his special responsibility for two decades – attest to a warmth and gentleness in direction. Indeed, the hundreds of his letters which are extant brim with such themes. One of his special concerns was championing the cause of younger Brothers in the face of superiors intolerant of their youthful ways. In a letter to one such superior, he suggested, 'For twenty-three hours a day play the role of their mother, and for one hour their father'.¹² Such maternal-like instinct for nurture is something modern-day Marists would recognise as a core characteristic of the Marist way.

One of Jean-Baptiste's last works was a book called *Méditations*, written to assist the Brothers to use effectively the time required by their Rule for this religious exercise each day. It is a long and thorough work, built around the three axes of God's love that are strong in the French school of spirituality and that Marcellin had instilled into the Brothers: the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Eucharist, or 'the Crib, the Cross and the Altar'. Brother Louis-Marie, in his above-mentioned Circular, reported that Jean-Baptiste often said to him that he had only one aim in writing this book: 'I want the Brothers to know Our Lord'.¹³ At the end, despite all that had transpired since he first came to La Valla in 1822, despite all his love for the Marist Institute which he had helped to found and to lead, and despite all it had grown to become, Jean-Baptiste had a simple and clear view of what was essential for Marists: to know and to love Jesus Christ. That was their project, after all. As it still is.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Ephesians 3:17-18; 2:20.
- 2 Furet, F. Jean-Baptiste, (1868) *Biographies de Quelques Frères*, Paris : Librairie Catholique Emmanuel Vite, p.xix
- 3 Rivat, F. François (1851) *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux*, Vol.I. Lyon: Institut des Frères Maristes.
- 4 Delorme, A. (2009) *Our First Brothers, Marvellous Companions of Marcellin*. Rome: Institute of the Marist Brothers.
- 5 Furet, *op.cit.*, p.25
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp.31-32
- 7 *Ibid.* p.97
- 8 *Ibid.* p.97
- 9 *Ibid.* p.52
- 10 *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux*, Vol.IV, p.244.
- 11 F. Amphiloque, (undated; unpublished) *Biographie du Frère Jean-Baptiste*. Held in Marist Brothers' Archives, Rome. p.93 and pp.112-13.
- 12 F. Amphiloque, *op.cit.*, p. 257.
- 13 *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux*, Vol.IV, p.258.

JOE MCCARTHY

Marists: Brothers and Lay

A New Epoch for a Shared Marist Charism

The following article responds to an invitation to offer one informed view about 'Champagnat's Marist Laity'. It is written from two perspectives: first and more recently, that of my job in the Melbourne Province as Leader and Formator of Lay Marists; the second results from many years of association, participation and relationship with individual Marist Brothers and their ministries. I have no authority to speak on behalf of the Brothers to whom I necessarily make many references. What I do have, though, is a deep respect for them and their continuing contribution to living a face of church that many people say 'yes' to. I also share, along with many others, a passion to contribute to the way this tradition and Charism is carried forward in this part of the world at this time.

'Charism' is a much-used term but it is rarely explained or expanded on. In many settings an assumption is made that we immediately understand what it means in relation to a religious order. According to Wikipedia: 'Religious orders (generally catholic) use the word to describe their spiritual orientation and any special characteristic of their mission or values that might be exhibited as a result of the vows that they have taken and the orientation of the order to which they belong.'

Use of the word 'orientation' here is interesting. It conjures up notions of perspective, of getting your bearings in life and of finding a way through. Accordingly, in a Christian context, charism as 'spiritual orientation' suggests a means of discovering a way to respond to and live out the challenges that are squarely put to us at the heart of the gospel. Just as there are many ways of getting from one side of a forest to another, so there are many particular charisms that ultimately serve the building

of God's kingdom. Each reveals a distinct face of church, and inspires particular ministries and works.

Late last year the Marist Secretariat of the Laity met in Rome to plan the animation of Marist Laity for the next three years. Inspired by the fundamental call of the 21st General Chapter, the Secretariat identified as its goal to 'contribute to the birth of a new epoch for the Marist charism, to bring to life and solidify a new relationship between the Brothers and the laity, to visualise the Marist future as a communion of people in the charism of Champagnat' (Marist News, Number 122, October 7th 2010).

These two dimensions to charism, namely 'the birth of a new epoch for the Marist charism' and 'a communion of people in the charism of Champagnat' are worth exploring in the context of Champagnat's Marist laity. What is the 'new' being referred to, and what will this 'communion of people' look like? Certainly, the birth pains of a new epoch for the Marist charism are evident across Australia and the Oceanic region. One aspect of this newness is the continued emergence of lay men and women who are Marist and want to deepen their connection with and commitment to Marist mission and life. This is not a new phenomenon, but it does have a new context today. The charism of the Marist Brothers, beginning with Marcellin Champagnat and continuing through the lives of Brothers today, appears to be finding new expression within the Marist laity. But is this shift really to do with the charism finding new expression, or is it to do with lay people finding new ways to deepen traditional expressions of an existing charism? Put another way, is the newness more about the *level of responsibility and commitment* that lay Marists find themselves being invited and inspired to assume in what has largely been the life and work of Marist Brothers over the years?

Such a transition has been unfolding for some time within schools where, in many cases, the responsibility for the day to day running and leadership has been handed over to lay people. Such change and transition is now occurring across other Marist ministries, where lay Marists are being given the responsibility of carrying that ministry forward. However, in all of these cases there is not a sense of 'take over from' or 'dispensing with' the Brothers. Rather, there is a deep sense of privilege within lay Marists as they join the *collaborative effort* to confront the challenges. The Brothers continue to devote effort and resources to providing ongoing formation for all those who have active leadership in Marist ministries, so that the core Marist values are always being lived as the tradition is carried

forward. The Marist charism lived through the Brothers, which has Mary as its foundation and is built around the passion and life of Marcellin, is carried forward by *all those* who wish to make God visible, and Jesus known and loved, in this context. It 'orientates' us, as a Marist community today and a living tradition yesterday and tomorrow.

GENERATING NEW LAY LEADERSHIP

An interesting point in all this is where lay Marist leaders in the future will emerge from. Most people who identify as 'lay Marists' have been drawn into this deep story through personal connection with a Brother, or Brothers. They have been openly encouraged, supported, mentored and accompanied by Brothers in such a way that they have found themselves almost unconsciously immersed in the tradition, mission and community that is Marist. If the number of Brothers who are actively involved in ministry continues to diminish in this part of the globe, such a relationship will cease to be the main catalyst for people on their Marist journey. The 'newness' then includes the fact that what has been the main stimulus and purpose for people to begin and sustain their journey as lay Marists, will no longer be greatly in evidence. Who or what will fill this void? I suspect that personal involvement and immersion in the life of a Marist ministry, the second most common 'catalyst' for Marist journey, will be crucial. Alongside this will be to continue to build on the rich and varied formation opportunities and experiences that are currently available across Australia through the Marist Mission and Life Team and other Marist ministries.

In terms of a 'communion of people in the charism of Champagnat' a helpful term moving forward is *shared Marist life*. The 'shared' aspect of this is Marists, Brothers and Lay. It is finding what is common to our 'Maristness', and nurturing, living and celebrating this together. It is not saying that the life of a Marist Brother and that of a Lay Marist are the same, because they are not. But it does dare to say that Lay Marists can be just as passionate and committed to the mission as the Marist Brothers who have had carriage of it for nearly 200 years. It also says that Lay Marists are choosing a Marial face of church to express their faith. One of the many questions of this communion of people in the future relates to how community is structured and experienced. In thirty years, if you were to be inviting someone to join those who are a 'communion of people in the charism of Champagnat', what would you be inviting them to? Where would you be inviting them to? Why would they come?

In this time of change and transition, there is a need for *radical reflection*. This has something to do with thinking from within the square, but with no attachments to the lines that make up the square. It has something to do with trusting that whatever emerges in the years ahead, it will uphold the cornerstones of the rich and deep story that is the living tradition of the Marist Brothers. It has something to do with believing that together we will continue to find ways that 'orientate' us to the gospel message and the building of God's kingdom here and now. *Radical reflection* will not lead us to simply tweak what has always been, in order to minimise pain and disruption. Rather, it will lead us to embrace the chaos and unknown of change and newness. It is in this sense that we can use the word 'birth' to describe the new epoch for the Marist charism. At a birth, there is mess, pain, vulnerability, angst, effort, force.....but with only one focus: to bring new life into the world we know.

We Marists need to be creative in the new ways we connect people together, the means with which we communicate and the methods used to inspire people to action. What if the disciples had never gone to Jesus with the problem of the crowd and not enough food at Bethsaida? What if the Canaanite woman had not provoked Jesus with her remarks about the dogs eating the scraps? What if Mary had not bothered to confront Jesus with the problem of there being no wine at Cana? Jesus responds in each case. For God's action to be seen in the world, the hard challenges need to be put squarely to us, so that we can draw on our reserves in responding.

Mobilising the goodwill, generosity and faith of the Marist laity is crucial to the vitality and viability of the Marist charism. We Marists need to be bold and daring in our willingness to challenge each other. We Marists need to critique our lives and be models of living with simplicity, with great joy and gratitude for how the Marist charism nurtures our faith. We Marists need to pray with each other and with others, in a way that places prayer at the centre of all else we do. Shared Marist life needs to be part of a community that lives a model of church where spirituality, mission and community are in continual interplay. In the future, we need more 'doing together' that mobilises our passion and energy - taking us somewhere whilst bringing others with us. When Marist laity are judged in years to come, we will be valued because of what we do, rather than by what we say.

ALAN PARKER

Champagnat Marists in Transition

Today a growing community of lay people from the New Zealand Province (New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Kiribati) feels drawn to the spirituality and mission inherent in the charism of St Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of Marist schools. These people wish to see the charism renewed and alive in young people's lives, especially in their place of learning. They are drawn to a lay Marist vocation often expressed in their ministries in and around former Marist schools, but not exclusively. These are the people, along with Brothers of a like mind, who make up the group one could call 'Champagnat Marists in Transition'.

Looking back to Marist life in New Zealand in the Twentieth Century there was a time of growth for the Marist Brothers' schools and communities, particularly in the middle decades. The Brothers brought the charism to life through their lives consecrated to God primarily in active school ministry. Lay Marists have reflected on that goodness and, while they cannot fully mirror what the Brothers did, through their complementary vocation as discerning Lay Marists they work today with a needy student body similar to the one the brothers once served.

Since the 1990's several factors have encouraged and developed the vocation, spirituality and mission of lay Marists, contributing to the reclaiming of founding charisms:

- the Vatican Council's emphasis on the laity as involved participants in the ministry of the Church;
- the canonisation of Marcellin Champagnat that gifted him and his inspiration to the Church as a whole rather than just to the members of the Institute he founded;
- the diminishing number of brothers who in the past were a tangible embodiment of the Marist spirit, traditions, values and apostolate;

- an increased emphasis placed by proprietors on the importance of founding charisms in schools;
- the requirement of school appraisers to evaluate the effective implementation and practice of charisms in schools;
- the formation of lay people in the charism;
- the willingness of the brothers to ‘widen their tent’ to include lay Marists; and
- the resourcing of brothers and lay Marists, primarily by the brothers, to promote Champagnat pedagogy, spirituality and the lay Marist vocation.

In envisaging the future, the term ‘Champagnat Marists in Transition’ draws on the basic thinking of a worldwide social movement: ‘Transition Initiatives’. *Transition Initiatives* works at the local level, forming ‘Transition Towns’ to increase the ability of communities to withstand crisis and handle change. They do this by proactively creating a positive vision of their communities in a world with less cheap, abundant energy, changing climate, and a changed social, environmental and economic context. Their focus is on creating the world they would like to see for themselves and future generations. They are ‘looking beyond the current era of reliance on steadily depleting resources to a period when *communities will be using their creative energies* to fill the gap created by the increasing scarcity of resources which are presently taken for granted’. (Samuel 2011).

Similarly, *Champagnat Marists in Transition* (brothers and lay) seek to strengthen, and apply to new challenges, the spirit the brothers once brought in force to communities. Champagnat Marists in Transition are dedicated to bringing people together to explore how – as communities – they can respond to the spiritual, theological and educational challenges arising from the materialistic and secular values permeating all parts of society. Where the brothers themselves become less of a presence it is incumbent on the Champagnat Marists in Transition to respond to the demands that arise. Of necessity they move from an apostolate led by the brothers to a leadership by the whole Marist family – that is, Brothers and laity in partnership made up of all Champagnat Marists, hence ‘widening the tent’.

DIALOGUE AND INITIATIVE

Those who support the concept of Champagnat Marists in Transition look primarily at the issues confronting the Christian education of youth, and

they witness change happening. They look at the big picture, not waiting for change but planning long-term for it. What are the elements which are going to have an impact on the future? What are the big drivers for change in the Champagnat Marist world? Open, honest and meaningful dialogue is vital amongst the committed as Champagnat Marists rely more on one another. Dialogue, in this situation, 'is conversation with a centre, not sides, no particular agendas but the core. It is not a conversation, argument or consultation. Dialogue allows self expression to the centre sustaining genuine sharing'. (Samuel)

The traditional network for the charism in a number of countries, including New Zealand, can no longer carry the responsibility for the charism alone. Hence, for Champagnat Marists in Transition, the issue is to evolve from a Brother-centred charism to a charism centred in the 'baptised person'. (This concept aligns with the first bullet point above.) In this phase Champagnat Marists in Transition seek to utilise 'the less' – i.e., the brothers – that is available to achieve the needs they 'all' share. Brothers and lay need each other to effectively develop initiatives during this time of transition.

Historically lay people have been dependent upon the brothers for the ideas as to what the mission was, which ministries to apply in the mission and how they would be applied and resourced. In simple terms the lay people *supported* the brothers' mission. Champagnat Marists in Transition *take responsibility* for the mission and ponder local possibilities to keep the charism alive. Such developments are evident within the New Zealand Province in the recent formation of fledgling lay Marist or Champagnat Marist groups in Kiribati, Wellington, Fiji and Auckland. It is also seen in the determination of school communities, formerly operated by the Marist Brothers, to remain Marist in spirit and action. Instances include St John's, St Bernard's, Chanel, Hato Petera and Verdon Colleges. These communities are building their lay Marist numbers as most of them have no brother available to work in the Marist mission with them.

The demands confronting communities of Champagnat Marists in Transition, a growing number of which are becoming lay only, are such that they identify their Marist needs and plan strategically at the local level. They know that there is no 'cavalry' coming. Hence in the local organisational structure resilience is a major requirement, i.e. a need to have sustainable, committed numbers who support the mission into the future. As a local group they work to be very clear about their vision

and their mission, constantly discerning their needs for spiritual and community sustenance. This approach is a reality for the groups named in the previous paragraph. Three of the four lay/Champagnat Marist groups have adopted as a demonstration of solidarity the same statement of *Vision and Mission*, one which is deeply Champagnat Marist. It is no longer about being organisation-centred alone but rather finding a way to collaborate and cooperate, enabling more local expression as the local group responds and adapts to its ever-changing world. The meeting point is at the charism.

While the Marist Brothers continue with a strong central organisation, the lay side of the partnership in the charism may not follow suit as it adapts to and reflects the ways and experiences of the times. The lay will need to respond flexibly with their distinct forms of organisational structures and ministries in tune with the demands the secular world places on their daily lives.

On this journey, Champagnat Marists in Transition assume the following:

- the charism of St Marcellin is one for the baptised person and not the brothers alone;
- marcellin leads them to Jesus through Mary;
- life with a smaller number of active Marist Brothers is inevitable, and it is better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise;
- schools and communities are not as well equipped as they were in the era of strong communities of Brothers to weather the growth of material and secular values;
- they have to act collectively and to act now;
- by discerning and acting with the collective genius of those around them to creatively and proactively design their changing expression of the charism, they can build ways of living that are more connected, more enriching and which recognise and support the spiritual needs of their times.

Champagnat Marists in Transition, as a movement, can be a catalyst for the formation of local communities. It is not an end in itself. It may be 'the weed in the crack which will allow a plant to grow in the space in the future' (Samuel 2011). It is about principles, such as 'imagining the future educational opportunity for children and young people to come to know and love Jesus Christ'.

Speaking of the communities that have embraced the ‘Transition Towns’ concept Samuel (2011) affirms that ‘they do not look for anyone to blame or anyone to save them, but believe their communities have within themselves the innovation and ingenuity to create positive solutions to the converging crises of our time.’ Likewise, Champagnat Marists in Transition believe in initiating and supporting local responses at any level and from anyone – and aim to weave them together into a coordinated action plan for advancing towards an outward looking and contemporary expression of the charism. The present is extremely challenging as lay Marists minister within communities which have strong secular influences. These influences reflect values which frequently clash with Champagnat Marist values. In building local resilience, they will be able to collectively respond to whatever the future may bring in a calm, positive and creative way. By living within their local means, they will rekindle community spirit and a sense of collaborative success, belonging to and sharing in a world that is alive, active, just and truly Catholic and Champagnat Marist.

ENDNOTE

The writer has drawn on views expressed in an April 2011 interview on New Zealand National Radio by James Samuel, a New Zealand authority on Transition Towns.

In this time of change and transition in Marist life
radical reflection will not lead us to simply tweak what has
always been, in order to minimise pain and disruption.
Rather, it will lead us to embrace the chaos and
unknown of change and newness.

Joe McCarthy, Leader: Lay Marists, Melbourne



NEVILLE SOLOMON

The Statue of 'Our Good Mother'

*Let us be silent that we may hear
the whispers of the gods.*

(Ralph Waldo Emerson).

In September 2010 the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, Brother Emili Turú, delivered a discourse¹ at the inauguration of the renovated Hermitage, St Chamond, France. The building originated from 1824 when the founder of the Brothers, Saint Marcellin Champagnat, constructed a monastery on the site known as Our Lady of the Hermitage.

The refurbished structure is an act of faith symbolising new ways of thinking, being and acting in the Institute and signalling a determination to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of the charism and mission which originated with Saint Marcellin Champagnat. The Superior General regards the renovation as an invitation to live ‘with greater intensity this rich Marial heritage of our charism and our tradition, and make it present with greater force’. It is an invitation to rediscover all that Mary signifies and the place she occupies in the lives of Marists everywhere. The Mother of Jesus is found in our expression of Church, communities, charism, identity, spirituality and mission. Appreciation of our rich Marial heritage can be assisted by exploring the origins of certain images of Mary associated with Saint Marcellin Champagnat and linked in particular with the building known as Our Lady of the Hermitage.

Whilst we may refer to the renovated building itself as a sign, an icon of an authentic Marist apostolic spirituality, the Hermitage houses a particular image of Mary called ‘Our Good Mother’ (in French, *Notre Bonne Mère*), which was one of Saint Marcellin’s personal favourites. It continues to inspire many, has had a major impact on the Brothers who spend time at the Hermitage, and increasingly among Marist laity who visit. This particular image is but one of many found in France, so what makes it special for Marists? Why, in developing a new and renovated Hermitage, do we need to reflect on and study the origins and development of this particular image of Mary? What possible relevance can the statue have in assisting a prophetic stance and a new way of being Church? Why did Saint Marcellin cherish it?

Brother Agustin Carazo, at one time Procurator General for the Marist Brothers in Rome, studied the statue of Our Good Mother, a plaster work of about 75 centimetres. It apparently figured in the chapel in the woods during the construction of the Hermitage in 1824 and before that at La Valla in the bedroom of Saint Marcellin. Brother Agustin found the statue (now housed in the chapel used by the General Council) in 1982 in the Rome archives. A second statue had always remained at the Hermitage. In an article entitled *La Bonne Mère et La Vierge du Vœu - Reflections on*

an Iconographic Tradition, noted Marist French historian Brother André Lanfrey², surmises that the Hermitage statue is by the same craftsman and from the same period as the one in Rome. What is its origin?

ORIGIN OF THE STATUE

I translate sections of the article by Lanfrey to give us the sense of this Marist icon.:

...the original is a statue in marble, about one metre 60 centimetres tall, today found in the chapel of St. Marguerite, one of a number of chapels around the interior of the Cathedral of Rouen in Normandy. The stone on which the statue rests is engraved with the words 'Nostra clemens, accipe vota'. (In contemporary English that may be something like 'Loving Mother, hear our prayer'.) This inscription confirms the traditional name given the statue as '*La Vierge du Vœu*' (The Virgin of the Vow.) Nevertheless, it is the second statue to carry that title: an earlier one, lost to us today, had been erected following the plague of 1637. The replacement for the earlier statue was sculpted by Felix Lecomte, and offered in 1775 by Cardinal Rochefoucauld to the cathedral in Rouen. It is distinguished from others of Mary and the child Jesus by something original: Jesus has the index finger of his right hand in his mouth. Jesus appears like any child, content in his mother's arms, sucking his index finger. Most who view the statue remark on that particular characteristic.

The Dictionary of Artists of the French school in the 19th century states that Felix Lecomte was born in Paris in 1737 and died in 1817. In 1764 he won a sculpture prize and in 1771 he was received into the Academy of Painters and Sculptors. He had also been a teacher at the Academy and a member of the Academy of Fine Arts. His statue of the Virgin, and another, a bas relief of the three Marys weeping before the dead Christ, housed in the Cathedral at Rouen, count among his major works.

Despite all the changes over time Lecomte seems to have been inspired by one longstanding tradition and kept the one major characteristic: the child Jesus, in the arms of his mother, is sucking his index finger.

Another icon of the same region, that of the Virgin of Valmont, a statue in ivory about 41 centimetres high from the end of the 15th century, was kept in the abbey of Valmont until the revolution of 1789. It is now found in the Museum of the Antiquities in Rouen. The commentary about this statue is very interesting.

‘The Virgin has her face towards her son who is lying in her two arms. She is dressed in a long robe with a pattern around the edges. Her dress is seemingly inspired by the style of dress of the 15th century. She has around her shoulders a cape which is tied with two cords with tassels and falls softly in voluminous layers. Her long hair falls down her back. The child... is enveloped in a linen cloth from which his naked body emerges. The sad expression of the Virgin, whose melancholy gaze resting on her son suggests her knowledge of his future, is a reflection of 15th century thinking about the Christ. The child has two fingers in his mouth, a way of connecting the world of ordinary people and that of God, giving the human and familiar a divine sense.’

HUMAN AND DIVINE

From this tradition is born the work of Lecomte. And for us it signifies the message of Incarnation and Redemption, the intermingling of the human and the divine at one and the same time. One can trace this Normandy tradition in statuary back to 1357 when Francois Le Tourneur gave a statue of Our Lady to the cathedral of Rouen. It was replaced by another in 1637 after the plague and then by that of Lecomte in the period between 1773 and 1778. Within this tradition in Normandy one can find a ‘Virgin of the Vow’ dating from 1777, now in Dieppe, a copy of Lecomte’s work. Then there is another copy dated 1857 in ivory also in the Dieppe museum. Others are in wood, some in clay. Many copies can be found based on his original style, all with Jesus in the arms of his mother. Usually the child is not sucking his index finger, although the parish of Saint Louis de Monferrand near Bordeaux does have a copy faithful to Lecomte about the same height as the original. However, despite the differences, all emphasise the sense of a child in his mother’s arms with his own arms either outstretched as a welcome or with a sign of blessing or sucking his finger.

Mary’s clothing is somewhat ordinary in the sense that she is not dressed as a Queen, princess or a member of the nobility. She does not

wear a crown. She looks human. Together with her Son she is reflecting the sense of Colossians 1: 15³: Jesus is the human face of God. Secondly, the statue reflects a relationship quite real between the mother and the son - an affective and total trust. This sense of the importance of the 'Our Good Mother' statue for Saint Marcellin is further reflected in a letter to Bishop Pompallier in Oceania. Marcellin writes:

'Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son within her arms or in her heart.' (Letter to Bishop Pompallier, 27 May 1838. Letter no. 94.) The letter may well have been written to Bishop Pompallier in the very room where the statue rested. Pompallier had previously lived in community at the Hermitage with Marcellin and the Brothers and would have known of the statue. That same theme was later embellished by a Superior General, Br Seán Sammon, who wrote a circular entitled *In Her Arms or in Her Heart* - complemented by two sub-titles: *Mary our Good Mother* and *Mary, our Source of Renewal*. In his circular Br Seán highlighted the mystery of the Incarnation as being at the heart of Saint Marcellin's spirituality. The founder focused often on that intimate relationship displayed in the statue between Mary and Jesus but only to ensure that 'it was Jesus and not Mary who was the final destination of his journey of faith.' ('In her arms or in her heart', p.42.). Br Seán goes on to state that, 'Absent from Marcellin's dealings with the mother of Jesus is any trace of embarrassment. The closer he feels to her, the more she is present to him as a living person. Eventually a relationship between two people constituted his devotion to her; she became his confidante.' (p 41.)

Prayerful reflection and meditation on the statue of 'Our Good Mother' is essential for those who wish to better comprehend this profound insight of the founder, for without it the true Marial nature of the Institute remains unrecognised. The temptation then would be to highlight other Marial images, however worthy, but miss the dimension which Saint Marcellin relied on so heavily. In that same sense, if the founder's insight is overlooked and the 'Our Good Mother' image hidden away, then the Marial sense of the Hermitage as Mary's work is likewise unrecognised and the house is exactly that - no more than a building constructed by a well meaning priest in 1824.

It appears that the current Superior General had that same sense of the house of Mary and all that implies when he wrote that the renovated Hermitage is a sign, an icon of a Church-communion, a Church with a Marial face. Pope John-Paul II reiterated the same understanding in his exhortation to the delegates from the Marist Sisters, Marist Missionary

Sisters, Marist Brothers and Marist Fathers at the 2001 General Chapters audience: 'It is up to you to manifest, in an original and specific way, the presence of Mary in the life of the Church and in the life of mankind.' That original and specific way is expressed very concisely and distinctly in the statue of Our Good Mother. It is always about relationship and it always helps to lead us to Jesus. It is all about how God makes himself present in the world.

Lecomte doesn't speak of any copies of his statue being made. But copies exist, that in Rome and that at the Hermitage, and there are plenty of others. Perhaps he didn't mention the copies because of their inferior artistic quality, perhaps because the inventory at the time was incomplete, perhaps because no one has identified the links between the original of Lecomte and those persons who created the copies. Yet another explanation is that the statues were associated with private devotions, a possibility which makes authorship difficult to determine. Interest today in the statue and the copies is increasing, so perhaps we can learn more in the future. Lanfrey writes that he has seen one of the statues in the Trappist monastery at Chimay in Belgium. It too has its origins in Normandy. Another exists in the church at Ars-sur-Formans. It came there with the arrival of that town's new priest in 1818, the celebrated saint, Jean-Marie Vianney. That image has a gold veil and red clothing and is a particular object of veneration in the town. Another exists in the church of St Christopher-la-Grotte in the Savoy, donated, according to tradition, by the monastery of Grande Chartreuse close by. There is another at the Grande Chartreuse itself, another at Our Lady of Laus, a sanctuary in the southern alps region, another in a convent in Burgundy, another at Dardilly, the birthplace of Saint Jean-Marie Vianney.

DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS

According to Lanfrey, quite soon after the revolution an industry developed in statuary to counteract the iconoclasm of the revolutionary period, motivated especially by a realisation of how much religious art had been destroyed or dispersed. Finding a statue by Lecomte and copying it was an easy way to help restore the sense of continuity with the 18th century and, naturally enough, the religious sensibilities before the revolution of 1789 to 1815. However, interest soon turned from that style of image to new forms. For example, the Curé of Ars, Jean-Marie Vianney, replaced his copy with a much larger and grander statue representing the Immaculate Conception, a woman alone with her hands outstretched.

Running from the 15th to the 19th century, however, is the tradition of a statue we know as 'Our Good Mother.' Apparently it is without a specific religious message, *except that of a silent child, the silent word of God*, with his finger or fingers in his mouth. It recalls the text of Philippians 2: 6-11, 'Jesus becoming as men are, emptied himself...being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself.' (RSV Catholic edition 1991.) Carazo offers another text, that of Psalm 131: *'but I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.'* (NRSV Catholic edition. 1991.)

Whatever the diverse explanations or the more theological or sentimental interpretations, this image of the child and his mother has an impact in many places. For Marists, it has an important place in explaining our spirituality in simple ways and in ways easily communicated to others. As stated in *Water from the Rock*⁴: 'This intimate relationship helped shape the Marial dimension of our spirituality. In our tradition, the phrase 'Ordinary Resource' has come to encapsulate our constant reliance on Mary. The motto attributed to Champagnat by his biographer: *All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus*, captures this close relationship between the Son and the Mother and our founder's attitude of confidence in Mary, which we are invited to live.' (N25.)

In this sense too the renovated Hermitage becomes a place where that relationship can be lived out in community as an example of a new way for our time of being Marist, taking the best of our traditions and applying them to today's circumstances. Our Good Mother still has her place. She and her Son are still able to reach out to all who pass by. They are always able to teach us something by their constant, silent presence in the house. They are still able to change hearts and attitudes. Br Seán Sammon asked us in his circular whether in our day to day lives there are signs of Mary ever present in our person, in our prayer, as we act and interact with others. (p51.) What will we answer?

ENDNOTES

- 1 See article by *Brother Emili Turú* in the previous (Spring 2011) edition pages 37 - 43.
- 2 The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to André Lanfrey FMS, historian, researcher, teacher and Co-ordinator of the International Patrimony Commission of the Marist Brothers.
- 3 'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.'
- 4 Estaún, A.M. ed. (2007). *Water from the Rock – Marist Spirituality*. Rome: Marist Brothers.

GERARD McLARNEY

A Marian Approach to Islam

Reflections in Religious Education

The Blessed Virgin Mary has played an integral role in the development of Christianity. As the first to accept the gospel message, the mother of God holds a unique position in the panorama of salvation history. Her wholehearted acquiescence to the will of the Lord, as St. Irenaeus famously remarked, is ‘the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race’. Her influence continues today. One facet of this influence, recently called to mind by Pope Benedict XVI, is the Blessed Mother’s tutelage. The school of Mary allows us to contemplate how Christ ‘is present and acts in the world and in our life’ (2011). Learning from the school of Mary, it can also be added, not only forms us in the Christian faith but can also inform us about other faiths. That is to say, Mary can add a richness that would be otherwise missing in interreligious dialogue, particularly with Islam.

The purpose of this article is twofold. It contrasts the presentation of Mary in the Qur’an with Sacred Scripture and Tradition, highlighting recurring similarities as well as sincere tensions. Particular attention is given to the intercanonical differences between the Gospel of Luke and Surahs 3 and 19 of the Qur’an which tell of Mary’s birth, her seclusion, the Annunciation, and the Nativity of Jesus. Second, it argues that a Marian perspective on Islam provides a tangible entry into Islamic thought for Catholics, particularly in the field of religious education. It can achieve such an outcome by facilitating understanding of Islam’s thought structure, including beliefs about the Muhammad—while also deepening students’ appreciation of the Blessed Virgin and Jesus Christ in Catholicism.

INTENT AND SCOPE

To be clear, the intent of such an investigation is not a generic or relativistic formulation of a theology of world religions. Nor is it a synthesis of Christian and Islamic perspectives on the Virgin Mary, as if the lowest common denominator of the faiths could garner new insight. A 'one-size fits all' approach often leads to collapsing the uniqueness of respective systems of belief (Lane, 2006), and ultimately to undermining genuine dialogue by vanquishing all hopes of attaining the truth (Benedict XVI, 2004). The assessment given in the following pages is undertaken from a specifically Catholic perspective, and assumes that Catholic belief accommodates critical and thoughtful analysis of other religions. Our scope is also limited; an exhaustive overview of Mary in the Qur'an and Islamic commentary is not attempted here (see McAuliffe, 1981; Smith and Haddad, 1989). Rather, it simply highlights areas of interest for Catholics regarding Mary in Islam and in basic Islamic belief. These, in turn, may serve as points for reflective discussion when introducing Islam to Catholic students.

There are also several dangers at hand when comparing and contrasting a revered figure across two traditions. First, it can lead to a Christian simplification of Islam and the Qur'anic Mary. For instance, it would be misleading, particularly in a religious education context, to leave the impression that these are simply two accounts of the same story. While the Qur'an often refers to Biblical figures closer investigation quickly reveals the similarities can be minimal and have divergent rhetorical and theological aims. To take an example, a comparison of the accounts of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:4b-3:24; cf. Sirach 25:24; Rom. 5:18) with Adam and his wife in the Qur'an (Q. 2: 29-38, 7:11-27, 15: 26-45, 20: 115-123 and 38: 71-85), indicates substantial discrepancies regarding the nature, consequence, and means of rectifying their sin. Second, the present exercise is not an apologetic endeavour seeking to bolster Catholic claims by appealing to Qur'anic witness. Islamic belief in Mary's sinlessness (*isma*), her 'immaculate' conception (Q. 3:35-6), and even Jesus' messiahship for that matter (Q. 3:45; 4:157, 172; 5:17, 72, 75; 9:31), discussed below, do not bear the same theological significance in Islam as they do in Christianity.

Despite these potential drawbacks, Islamic references to Mary afford us the chance both to reinforce Catholic belief and raise an awareness of how another faith tradition makes appeals to her. Jaroslav Pelikan, the author of *Mary Through the Centuries*, states 'One of the most profound

and most persistent roles of the Virgin Mary in history has been her function as a bridge builder to other traditions, other cultures, and other religions' (1996, p. 67). Thus if Mary offers a bridge for further dialogue it would be doing ourselves a disservice if we were to overlook this unique opportunity for further engagement and understanding of another faith.

MARY AND ISLAM: AN OVERVIEW OF CORE ISLAMIC DOCTRINE

Prior to delving further into the Qur'anic Mary, however, a few brief, preliminary words to contextualize Islam and the Qur'an are required. Though commonly associated with the Middle East, Islam is considered a Western religion. Tracing its roots from Judaism and Christianity, this Abrahamic faith enjoys a membership of over 1 billion people throughout the world (Esposito, 2011). The word Islam itself simply denotes submission, and Muslims profess their faith by declaring the *Shahadah*, 'There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger' (Troll, 2011). Islam professes that it is through Muhammad that Allah revealed the text of the Qur'an. Muhammad was orphaned at an early age and made his living as a merchant in Mecca. This city was an import trading hub as well as religious centre housing a popular polytheistic shrine, the Ka'aba (Greenstein, Hotz and Kaltner, 2007). According to Muslim belief the prophet, around the age of 40, experienced revelations from the angel Gabriel. These revelations spanned the course of 23 years. Though illiterate, he memorised these revelations and they were compiled shortly after his death into the Qur'an.

The Qur'an itself is as central to Islam as Christ is to Christianity. The word Qur'an is derived from the Arabic word, *qara-a*, 'to read' or 'to recite'. The book contains 114 chapters or Surahs. With 6200 verses it is about four-fifths the length of the New Testament (Jomier, 2002). This written collection of Muhammad's revelations was compiled again under the caliph Utman (644-56), about 20 years after Muhammad's death and 40 years after the beginning of Islam. This period of time before completion is comparable to the 30 or 40 years following Jesus' death elapsing before the Synoptic Gospels were completed (Jomier, 2002). Mainstream Muslims hold that the word of the Qur'an is the very word of God. Similar to the Christian belief that Jesus pre-existed his incarnation on earth, Islam holds that the Qur'an pre-existed its revelation. Indeed, the Qur'an presents itself in continuity with the Torah and the Gospels, and 'people of the book' is the appellation it gives to Jews and Christians.

Muslims, however, are discouraged from reading the Bible. According to Islam, the Torah and Gospels were originally authentic revelations but became corrupted or distorted by Jews and Christians. The Qur'an, by contrast, is seen as the definitive and perfect revelation from God (Q: 13:39; 43:2-4).

Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an is not organized in cohesive and chronological narrative passages, but is arranged, more or less, from the longest Surah to the shortest. Narrative passages, moreover, are sporadic and tend to contain minimal detail. It is assumed the reader is familiar with or has access to the details behind the persons, places, and events discussed. Biblical figures referred to are mostly from the Old Testament. Of all the people in the Qur'an, the name of Moses is mentioned most, 169 times, Abraham is second, 69 times, with 43 references Noah comes third, and the fourth is Mary, 34 times (Muhammad, 1999). Muhammad, by contrast, is only mentioned by name 4 times in the Qur'an (Smith and Haddad, 1986). Notably, Mary is the only woman mentioned by name, and the 19th of the 114 surahs is named after her.

MARY IN THE QUR'AN: AN OVERVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES

The primary reason for the rather frequent mention of Mary's name (*Maryam*) in the Qur'an stems from being the mother of Jesus (*Isa*). He is often called, Jesus, son of Mary—perhaps with the intent to underscore his humanity and deny his divinity (Leirvik, 2010). Her association with Jesus accounts for the high frequency of her name in the Qur'an. In fact, there are only five passages of import regarding Mary herself. Three references are made in passing in passages connected to a broader argument or rhetorical exhortation. These include:

1. Q. 4:171 which refers to Mary as the Mother of Jesus who bears a messenger created by Allah at the command of his word. This verse in particular is addressed to the 'People of the Book' and is concerned primarily with admonishing Christians for making unfounded claims about Jesus or the threeness of God.
2. Q. 21:91 follows a number of verses recalling the past benevolence of Allah to various individuals such as Zachariah (*Zakariya*) and John (*Yahya*). Q. 21:91 specifically highlights Mary's chastity prior to Allah breathing his spirit into her in order to bring about Jesus' birth.
3. Q. 66:12 upholds Mary as a devout servant of the Lord, who accepted his words and scripture. The previous verses involve an

exhortation to those who believe and the apocalyptic dangers for those who do not. In this pericope Mary stands in contradistinction to the unfaithfulness demonstrated by the wives of Noah and Lot (Q. 66:10). It also reiterates that Mary was chaste, but adds her chastity was guarded by her father, named Imran in the Qur'an. The same verse also states that Allah breathed his spirit into the body of Mary.

Though brief these three references yield valuable information regarding the Qur'anic interpretation of Mary. Jesus' birth comes about via divine intervention; Mary is a chaste virgin prior to the Spirit of God being breathed into her; she is also a devout disciple of the Lord, submissive to his word - as such, she is a model for Muslims. These claims regarding Mary are largely consonant with Christian belief in the virgin birth and Mary's special status amongst believers (cf. Luke 1:38, 48). However, there is also evidence of tensions. The Christological and Trinitarian polemic within the texts notwithstanding, the name of Mary's father is a notable discrepancy in relation to Christian tradition. Imran is Arabic for Amran. Amran is mentioned in the Bible, but as the father of Moses, Aaron and Mariam (Exodus 6:20). This may be an example of the Qur'an confusing or conflating two biblical characters - Mary and Mariam (Wensinck, 2006). It also raises the issue of how familiar Muhammad was with Christian doctrine. Notably, Mary the mother of Jesus is elsewhere referred to as the sister of Aaron (Q. 19:29). Other passages, Q. 4:169, 5:79, and especially 5:116, assume the Trinity consists of Allah, Jesus, and Mary. Commentators have attempted to explain this erroneous attribution in a number of ways. One solution put forth by Western scholars is that the early Muslim community came to this assumption due to a heretical Christian sect in Arabia, the Collyridians, who espoused the divinity of Mary (Wensinck, 2006); another is that the attribution may simply be a misreading of the Christian practice and doctrine.

Two other references to Mary, the most developed in the Qur'an, are narrative sketches, Q. 3:33-47 and Q. 19:16-35. Both are, in essence, annunciation scenes. The first also outlines the circumstances of Mary's own birth, and the second adds detail regarding Jesus' delivery and tells of the suspicions later cast upon her chastity by her own people.

Surah 3:33-47 begins with an account of Mary's birth. Verses 3:35-36 depict the mother of Mary praying to Allah that the child in her 'womb will be dedicated to [Allah's] service'. After the birth the mother prays

that Mary be placed ‘under [Allah’s] protection from Satan, the cursed one’. Thus, she is specially set apart while still in the womb and after her birth she is divinely protected from harm. The text mentions her secluded upbringing under the care of Zachariah, (3.37-41) one of the very few New Testament characters, other than Jesus and Mary, mentioned by name in the Qur’an (Kaltner, 1999). Zachariah is depicted as the protector of Mary and brings her food only to find Allah has provided for her already. Mary is chosen by God ‘above the women of the world’ (3.42); she is later visited by an Angel who forecasts that, despite ‘no man [having] touched’ her (3.47) she will have a son who will be the Messiah.

Surah 19:16-35 recounts Jesus’ annunciation and birth. It commences with an unnamed angelic messenger and his dialogue with Mary (16-22). The brief conversation, with strong echoes of Luke 1:28-38, concludes with Mary conceiving Jesus and her retreat to a remote area (cf. Luke 1:39—although no mention is made of Elizabeth nor the Judean visitation). The remainder of this Marian narrative (Q. 19:23-35) provides details not found in the Bible. It moves directly to Jesus’ birth, albeit the Qur’anic nativity scene takes place under a palm-tree, with Mary laboring in pain alone (19:23). A divine voice instructs her to shake the tree to secure figs for nourishment and to take a vow of silence (19:25-26); after an undisclosed amount of time Mary returns to her people, who meet her and the child in her arms (19:27-28). True to her vow, she does not converse although the child Jesus, miraculously, begins to speak, announcing his prophethood (19:30) and blessed status (19:31). The narrative concludes by the narrator noting how these details about Jesus’ early life are vainly disputed by the ‘sects.’ It further adds that Allah is unfit to bear a son (19:35).

Much can be said of these two excerpts. Perhaps the most striking is the account of Mary’s birth as it appears to support the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Catholic Christians may be inclined to make the analogy between Mary’s unique birth in the Qur’an and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which holds that Mary was born without original sin. Kaltner (1999) notes very few Muslims would accept such an idea, and O’Connor (1958) argues that any notions of an Islamic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception would be unfounded since the concept of original sin is not part of the Islamic tradition. Adam and his partner, notably, do eat forbidden fruit, from the ‘Tree of Eternity’ (Q. 20.120), in the garden but the situation has significant differences from the Biblical account. Adam’s wife, who is unnamed, is not tempted

by the serpent alone; no serpent is present, but rather the figure Satan (*Iblis*)—who is motivated to tempt the man because of God’s favor upon him (Q: 2:30-34). Both Adam and his wife transgress together and no distinction is made as to who is more culpable. Further, no excuses are made by the couple who immediately admit their fault, saying ‘O Lord we have harmed ourselves’ (Q. 7:23) and are reconciled with God. They leave the Garden of Eden, but are not cursed and maintain their original mortal stature. It can be noted, nonetheless, that according to Islamic tradition each newborn is ‘touched’ by Satan. The only exception to this is Jesus. Thus humanity is not without some insufficiency. That said, there is no ontological consequence to the disobedience in the garden as suggested in Genesis (cf. Gen 3:14-19). As one scholar notes, Adam, as the first prophet, is the ‘epitome of the reconciliation between God and humankind’ despite his disobedience (Calderini, 1998). One of the Eden narratives concludes with the assurance that ‘guidance’ will later be sent to humanity (Q. 2:38)—undoubtedly guidance which is understood to culminate in Muhammad.

The birth of Jesus under the palm-tree, with Joseph conspicuously absent, and the ensuing miraculous speech of the Holy Child are highly discrepant with Christian orthodoxy. Some of these Qur’anic assertions, however, are more readily understood when compared with apocryphal gospels such as the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Nativity of Mary* (Wensinck, 2006). It appears portions of these apocryphal accounts were known in 7th century Arabia and incorporated into Islamic belief. It is also likely that the Qur’an is attempting to offer competing details about Jesus’ birth in order to place itself as a decisive and true account of his life (Lybarger, 2000).

MARY IN THE QUR’AN: SOME REFLECTIONS

What is the function of Mary in the Qur’an? A number of answers have been proffered. The line of reasoning that she serves to bolster subtextual metaphors which shift the male-centredness of Qur’anic prophecy toward a more ambiguous, transgendered image (Lybarger, 2000), is unconvincing. Though Mary is the only woman explicitly named, it is not clear that her prominence is an attempt to provide gender balance to Qur’anic prophets—though she receives the Spirit of Allah and his word, she does not fit the role of a prophet in the Qur’an; a consensus of both classic and modern Islamic commentators alike deny that she

can be considered a prophet (Smith and Haddad, 1989). Others have linked her to Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad (Thurkill, 2007). The two are seen as the most revered among women (O'Connor, 1958)—and there is plausibility in the suggestion that Mary's presence bolsters Fatima's stature. For our purposes, it can be underscored that the Qur'anic Mary, if anything, is presented first and foremost as a model Muslim. She receives God's word and submits to his will. Second, her prominent role in the Qur'an, as in the Bible, is intimately linked to her son, Jesus. The Qur'an, however, accentuates this relationship in order to stress Jesus' humanity, the Bible his other-worldly and divine origins. Third, being declared sinless is not a novel condition in Islamic thought. Each prophet is considered sinless, and according to Islam, there have been 124,000 such prophets (Campo, 2009)! Fourth, perhaps the most fruitful approach regarding Mary and Islam, is to juxtapose the Blessed Virgin as known in Scripture and Tradition with Muhammad as understood in Islam.

Notably, Muslims see the prophet in many ways as Mary is viewed in Catholicism. For Muslims, he was not an ordinary person, but 'blessed' among men (cf. Luke 1:48). He was the bearer of the word of God, whereas Mary bore the Word of God. One was unlettered and the other youthfully innocent. Both were pure and undefiled vehicles through which God would reveal his message—a message understood to be revealed, in both cases, through the Angel Gabriel (Muhammad, 1999). In short, there is a profound spiritual and even metaphysical parallel being drawn between Muhammad as a vehicle for the Qur'anic revelation and Mary as the bearer of Jesus Christ (Stoddart, 1982).

UNDERSTANDING THESE TEXTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The common appeal to Mary can simultaneously accentuate fundamental differences between the two faiths. Study of Mary in the Qur'an is valuable in a Religious Education context in that it invites Christians to further reflection on the meaning of sin, salvation history and, ultimately, Christ. For one, it enables educators to move beyond a straightforward enumeration of basic Islamic belief such as the five pillars of Islam or Qur'anic theology. An analysis of the Qur'anic Mary provides the chance to move beyond the rudimentary and allows Islam to open up profound existential questions for Christian students and teachers: Why do we need a saviour? What are we saved from? Why would God choose Mary to be conceived without sin? How is Mary integral to our salvation, and how might we reflect once again upon Mary's prophetic statement that all

generations will call her blessed (Luke 1:48)? What, in turn, is so crucial about Jesus in our faith? These questions, germane to Religious Education in general, readily arise when a Marian juxtaposition is in place.

Second, such an approach equips Catholic students to reflect further on the Islamic view of Christianity, and a Catholic view of Islam. Muslims are often at an advantage when it comes to understanding Christian belief claims, as a theology of Christianity is inherent in Islam. The reverse, however, is not true; there is no ‘built-in’ theology of Islam in Catholicism and Christians are very often surprised to learn familiar figures of their faith play prominent roles in another. This glimpse of Mary in the Qur’an, however, may be of assistance, particularly for Catholic students who are confronted with Islamic doctrine for the first time. Reflective questions can be raised such as: If Islam argues for a new and definitive revelation, the Qur’an, why would it make sense, consciously or not, to create parallels between the Virgin Mary and Muhammad. Similarly, why is it logical for Islam to present the Qur’an in an analogous fashion to Jesus himself? Further, if we were to mitigate the need for a saviour, why would it be fitting to have Adam and Eve reconciling immediately after sinning, or forego Jesus dying on the cross (as held by Islam, Q: 4:157). What does this say about different starting points and presumptions between the two faiths? Students may also be asked to consider what purpose does it serve Islam to borrow from the Christian tradition—in this case, with particular focus on Mary’s virginity, her sinlessness and acquiescence to the Lord? While answers may vary, the current of such discussion is one which draws students to the essential contours of Islam and its revelatory claims. It both confronts and challenges students to revisit, with renewed appreciation, the fundamentals of their faith.

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Christ has no body now on earth but ours,
no voice, no hands, no feet but ours.
His helping hands are ours,
ours his tireless feet,
ours his welcoming voice,
for we are Christ doing good in the world this day.

After Teresa of Avila.

SHANE REID

Three Stories, One Mission

Like many Marist pilgrims before me, I recently paid homage to that famous table which is believed to have been built by Marcellin Champagnat himself and which is a tangible symbol of our current Marist theme of being ‘gathered around the same table’. Staff who work in Marist schools around the world still metaphorically sit at this table with our own stories and experiences to share and place alongside the global and historic Marist story. It also resonates with the history of the slain Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero whose homeland my fellow pilgrims and I were also fortunate and humbled to visit. Perhaps audaciously I attempt in this article to relate to the missions of Champagnat and Romero one aspect of my own work in a Marist context in Australia.

The article is a condensed version of a more substantial written reflection that linked three seemingly disparate stories. They cover the globe and the past three centuries, joining the indigenous ‘Australian Dreamtime’ to revolutionary France and to modern day El Salvador. The article relates some of my personal responses, an educator from rural Australia, as I became a pilgrim, walking first in Champagnat’s footsteps and then visiting the home of Oscar Romero in El Salvador. I found myself challenged to ponder in depth the influence of these two inspiring figures in the history of the Catholic Church. Hopefully the article offers a subtle argument for the necessity of spiritual reflection and nourishment in the professional development of staff in Catholic education.

I have drawn some inspiration from a comment by the current Superior General Br. Emili Turú. As he and I sat amidst a small clutch of my fellow pilgrims over dinner at the General House in Rome, my memory is of his registering immediate disagreement with a proposition that came up in conversation. We Australian educators, so it was affirmed, could have difficulty in seeing the pragmatic value of our own mission when compared with that of our Marist colleagues working amongst the ‘real

poor' in other parts of the world. Emili quickly frowned and shook his head at this appraisal, remarking that he didn't envy us our mission. Defining our challenge he spoke of the pressing need to address the spiritual and cultural poverty of western adolescents.

A DIFFERENT ROCK FACE

Springing immediately to my mind, and remaining a subject for ongoing reflection during the remainder of the pilgrimage, was a unique project that I was involved with as the director of our college choir. For me as a pilgrim it carried echoes of both Champagnat and Romero. The project was generating a surprising amount of fervour and passion from my students as we worked at creating an original piece of music based on a local aboriginal dreamtime creation story. This project had deliberate and potent but not overt religious education praxis. Champagnat laboured to redress the lack of religious education and consequent social and cultural deprivation among the marginalised youth of rural France. Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador, railed powerfully and ceaselessly against government sanctioned violence and oppression endured by the people under his care. His strongly voiced condemnation of government action inevitably made him a modern day martyr, his violent and untimely death in 1980 perpetrated by assassins as he was offering Mass. While substantially different in scope, form and circumstance from the endeavours of Champagnat and Romero, and while paling in comparison with the breadth and impact of their mission, our project was cut from similar philosophical cloth. It was an enterprise that awakened cultural sensitivity and empathy for the marginalised Australian aboriginals amongst my students.

The stories of Champagnat that one becomes familiar with have a certain 'Boys own adventure' style to them. You hear of the chipping away at the mountainous rock face to build L'Hermitage, the single minded, faith-driven determination that led to his being lost in mountainous terrain in a blizzard, and the 'miracle' following the Memorare in the snow. To see these sites as a pilgrim certainly brings an extra dimension of appreciation of this robust and somewhat unrefined man. It is difficult, however, to reconstruct this pragmatic model in our modern world. Our struggles contrast sharply with the rural physicality required of Champagnat and his early brothers. As pilgrims we rugged up to face the oppressively cold winter as we visited the small town of Lavalla, the site of the first school that Champagnat founded. We were grateful to return to

a heated bus, not an option in the early nineteenth century. Marcellin put himself on the frontline in his mission 'to make Jesus known and loved' as he strove to counter the religious and cultural deprivation around him. It is a different rock face that the modern Marist is presented with. Yet it was the essence of this model that was a guiding force in shaping our own project, ultimately leading to 'Gunnai Dreaming'.

In early 2008 our college choir formed an enduring professional partnership with two local indigenous language teachers. This partnership was formed emblematically and also practically through a student common to both groups. The 'project', as we called our work, initially saw the translation of a number of Taizé chants into the reclaimed and revived language of the Gunnai, our local indigenous community. As a culmination of the project the eminent Australian composer, Mark Clement Pollard, was commissioned to compose 'Gunnai Dreaming'.

There was a sense of caution, even apprehension, which I carried throughout our work. In its early stages the project, like much to do with Australian indigenous issues, seemed to polarise people on ideological grounds. My main concern had to do with sensitively dealing with the 'duty of care' issues it raised for me as a teacher in my relationship with Hollie, one of the few indigenous students in our College. I had more questions than answers – was I potentially exposing her to even more 'awkward visibility' among her peers based on her heritage? Despite Hollie's presence and leadership among us, was our project a cynical 'bastardisation' of a culture and language that was not ours? Or worse, a cynical public relations exercise for the College? Alternatively, was the partnership something with the potential to bring positive benefits to both parties?

I became envious of the seeming simplicity of needs that Champagnat and even Romero dealt with. This project certainly had grand designs to challenge our students to grow in their social awareness and empathy. In theory, it was exactly the type of project that addressed the cultural and spiritual poverty that Emili highlighted. Yet at times it felt tokenistic and even opportunistic, particularly when compared with the breadth of Champagnat's work, and the urgency of Romero's.

UNJUSTIFIED CONCERNS

My initial meetings with the indigenous language staff saw me nervous. My ignorance had me second guessing even how to approach any sort

of discussion. Should I use the term aboriginal, koori, indigenous or something else? My understanding of aboriginal culture, as for many not overly familiar with it, has been shaped and gilded by a largely conservative and agenda-driven media and community. Sadly, negative connotations and associations were apparent even within my friends and extended family. I found myself becoming hypersensitive about even the most innocuous comment made about the collaboration. Bigotry and ignorance seemed to be everywhere I looked and listened. I became a lightning rod, ever sensitive and aware of comments that began with 'Of course it's a good idea to do something like this for the aboriginals, but most of them...' or 'They really bring a lot of their problems on themselves you know...' or that old chestnut 'I'm not racist, but...'. The toxic repetition of 'them' and 'they' seemed to be a constant theme. It is against this insidious and disheartening backdrop that the aboriginal language staff do their work. For me, they are not unlike Champagnat, planting seeds that will one day flower. Trust between both parties needed to be built.

In retrospect, most of these concerns were in the long term baseless. The piece 'Gunnai Dreaming' was received with an overwhelmingly positive response from the aboriginal community. Relationships that began with professionally curt conversations punctuated by awkward silences ended as firm friendships that involved warm hugs and discussions about family members.

The political climate for this partnership is fertile. For every preconceived, ignorant, misguided attitude that I encountered regarding the state of our indigenous community, there were many who were quite enchanted by what we were trying to do. Some early guidance came from Lynne Solomon-Dent, our translator and consultant, one of the very few custodians of the Gunnai language. Lynne teaches all of the aboriginal students across the state of Victoria who study an indigenous language as a part of their senior curriculum. Hollie is included in this group. We were in good hands with Lynne's stewardship of the project. Before composer Mark Pollard joined our small working group, Lynne and I began with the task of translating some of the choir's existing repertoire, chants from the Taizé community, into the Gunnai language. 'Jesus, remember me' became 'Jesus, Galamdah Ngoi' and 'Stay with me' became 'Nowan tackan'. In setting these translations to music for our students, I assiduously rewrote each one, note by note, part by part, rhythmic alteration by rhythmic alteration.

In a preface to these adaptations, I gave credit to Lynne with the words: ‘These chants have been translated by Lynne Solomon-Dent from the original Taizé text. The language used is the recovered language of the Gunnai people’. I was gently asked to make an alteration. While the first part of the acknowledgement was fine, Lynne preferred ‘reclaimed and revived’ in the place of ‘recovered’. I recalled this moment as I stood with my fellow pilgrims in the chapel of Divine Providence in San Salvador, the site of Archbishop Oscar Romero’s assassination. The power of the written and spoken word was paramount in our project; the affirmative ownership of ‘reclaimed and revived’ has the Gunnai people seizing back their stolen and lost culture. For Romero, his words had a similar power. His words were the most devastating and perhaps only weapon that he had.

It was and remains inspiring to see the work being done by Lynne and her team as they ‘reclaim and revive’ their language. Our College reflects our regional character in that a functional vocational attitude permeates the undergirding philosophy of how our curriculum is presented to students and parents and, in some cases, how it is written. Student counselling about subject selection, curriculum meetings and broader staff meetings all reflect this pragmatic somewhat reactive bias. As a music teacher, the work that I do is largely counter cultural to our students and the wider society. This makes it fragile, but in my view just as essential.

RECIPROCAL BENEFIT

It is rare in our community that ‘learning for the sake of learning’ is given any thought. Our college, while more cognisant of holistic learning than some, is still imbued with the pragmatic realities of our community. It makes music education challenging, it makes religious education very difficult. Singing Schubert’s German Mass in our choir, playing Charles Mingus in our Jazz Ensemble, and Percy Grainger in our Concert Band are experiences that do not offer a superficial pathway to the types of skills needed in a blue collar workforce. The benefits are intangible and holistic. It is for this reason that our Music Department was the ideal ‘Trojan Horse’ to carry the ‘Gunnai Dreaming’ project, immersing our students in another type of counter cultural education. Noel Pearson argues the significance of the reviving work that Lynne and others like her do:

...they [indigenous languages] are inherently valuable as part of the country’s rich heritage. These languages constitute the

identity of its custodians, and these are the primary words with which the Australian land and seascape have been named and described. These languages are intimately related to the nature and spirit of the country that all Australians now call home.¹

What we were to gain from this project was obvious and significant. The cultural education, hopefully in a way that would engender a sense of social awareness, was clear. But what of the reciprocal benefit? What did we have to offer in return? Speaking to the Aboriginal community in Alice Springs in 1986, Pope John Paul II found a spiritual connection between Christian faith and a dreamtime culture:

For thousands of years you have lived in this land and fashioned a culture that endures to this day. And during all this time the Spirit of God has been with you. Your 'Dreaming', which influences your lives so strongly that, no matter what happens, you remain forever people of your culture, is your only way of touching the mystery of God's Spirit in you and in creation. You must keep your striving for God and hold on to it in your lives... Some of the stories from your Dreamtime legends speak powerfully of the great mysteries of human life, its frailty, its need for help, its closeness to spiritual powers and the value of the human person. They are not unlike some of the great inspired lessons from the people among whom Jesus himself was born. It is wonderful to see how people, as they accept the Gospel of Jesus, find points of agreement between their own traditions and those of Jesus and his people... And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.²

I certainly wasn't bold enough to see ours as an evangelisation project, but it was comforting to find the words of John Paul II articulating a shared commonality between two seemingly disparate cultures.

Wider awareness about our work saw us receive some special performance opportunities. First we were invited to sing at the Victorian Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne during a special service honouring the role of indigenous servicemen in our many conflicts. The performance

offered our choir the first chance to sing in the reclaimed language for an indigenous audience. We received a powerful response, one that was to become familiar. A poignant silence followed our singing, and many of those present including community elders approached the students in an emotive and tearful state to offer their gratitude. We gave the premiere of our commissioned work, Mark Pollard's 'Gunnai Dreaming', at a special performance at the 2009 Parliament of World Religions held in Melbourne. It was already a highly charged performance given that it was a world premiere of a new work by a major composer. But the silence and then prolonged and sustained applause left our choir and this conductor quite humbled. While the choir regularly and rightly receives significant commendation for the standard of its performances, this was something different. It was an emotionally charged response to the language being sung. We were later invited to 'warm the stage' for the acclaimed aboriginal singer/songwriter Kutcha Edwards. A new influx of students who had not been a part of the earlier performances had joined the choir and had the chance to perform 'Gunnai Dreaming' for the first time. This performance is one that had perhaps the most potency for our students as the audience was made of up primarily of indigenous people from our own community, the Gunnai people. We were singing their story, in their language, for them. It was a special opportunity that left us feeling that our work had some positive purpose; for months afterwards many of the students spoke of what a privilege it had been.

A REAL DEEPENING

In the middle of 2009 at the height of our 'Gunnai Dreaming' project, the Catholic Diocese of Sale welcomed Christopher Prowse as its eighth bishop. He came with a formidable reputation for his understanding of indigenous affairs; in the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference he is a member of the Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. I was able to draw much from a statement he made in recognition of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's Sunday in 2010. It was a statement that received mixed reactions from the local media and community because of its provocative challenge to all within his diocese and his frank dismissal of certain shallow practices currently used to recognise indigenous Australians. Prowse said:

I call for a real deepening of our friendship with the First Australians and a rejection of superficial tokenism. Superficial

gestures of friendship ought give way to real changes of attitudes deep within Australian hearts... All Australians ought develop friendships with Aborigines. In true friendship real dialogue happens and effective listening takes place.³

At first I found Bishop Prowse's statement quite confronting. What would he make of our project? Our work could be viewed at a surface level as superficial and tokenistic. In the early stages of our work, the project built a momentum of its own that didn't allow for a great deal of the kind of reflection that may have brought some doubts about the appropriateness of what we were doing. Indigenous culture is something that I knew so little about. I was conscious of this, and consequently of the potential for any number of faux pas to be inadvertently committed.

In hindsight, the sheer velocity of the project was advantageous. We didn't have the opportunity to form answers to any potential challenges based on perceived cultural proclivities. In any event, no challenges came. I like to think that our work was an example of exactly what Bishop Prowse was arguing for. I can attest personally that it has been a very real example of the aspirational aspects of Prowse's manifesto. Friendships have been forged, awareness raised, attitudes challenged and much has been learned by all who have walked in solidarity together to see the project realised. Any fears that what we were working on could be construed as an example of the 'superficial tokenism' that Prowse challenged quickly evaporated, mainly because of the consistent support that the Gunnai elders and community offered us. Also the project was conceived in the very dialogue and listening that he advocated.

Bishop Prowse visited our college in late 2010 to officially open a new library and student study centre. It was as part of the liturgy for this event that he heard our piece 'Gunnai Dreaming' for the first time, as well as some of the translated Taizé chants. I was relieved to have him declare his support and admiration of our project in his homily no less, but also in a private discussion afterwards.

HEALING THE HURT

A common discussion amongst our group of pilgrims, particularly towards the end of our time together, was about how we could make tangible some of what we had learned when we returned to our schools. For me, in addition, it was a question of how I could even begin to repay the spiritual investment that my College had made in me. Leaving aside

the question of personal spiritual growth, the pilgrimage opportunity was professional largesse of the highest order. I had the opportunity to travel with principals and other significant leaders in Australian Catholic Education. I had seen the worldwide reach of the Marist network and had conversations with global figures charged with keeping the charism of Marcellin Champagnat alive, and through this making Jesus known and loved on a very broad canvas. The network that I experienced stretched from France to Guatemala, to the hills of San Salvador and to our own College in country Australia. Br. Emili's challenge to me and to us was essentially to identify the needs in our own communities as Champagnat and Romero had done in theirs. In recognizing and responding to such needs, they became the face and the hands of God in their own lands.

In El Salvador, making Jesus known and loved proved fatal for Romero; knowing and loving Jesus was the central tenet of Champagnat's educational philosophy. There is perhaps no greater social challenge for Christians in Australia than helping to acknowledge and heal the historical and contemporary hurt of the indigenous people of our country. The students in my choir may still come face to face with ignorance-fuelled bigotry amongst their friends and families, but I doubt many will concur with these views. I learned in El Salvador that the road to Jesus' love is perhaps easier to find when you live in a world of poverty, violence, ignorance and oppression. In such circumstances you are perhaps more likely to look for that road. The challenges my students face may be different, but I remember basing a presentation to the college around the idea that my students were just like the ones we visited. A Marist school is a Marist school; we felt immediately at home and at ease in the schools we visited. Confronting the spiritual apathy of some of my students may be difficult, but I am conscious from my work that it is not an insurmountable challenge. Fortunately, the pilgrimage has given me enough energy to keep looking for new ways to do this.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Noel Pearson. *Up from the Mission: Selected writings* (Melbourne, VIC: Black Inc., 2009), p.346.
- 2 Pope John Paul II, 1986, *Alice Springs Address*, Vatican Library, accessed 20th of April, 2011, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19861129_aborigeni-alice-springs-australia_en.html>
- 3 Bishop Christopher Prowse, 2009, *N.A.T.S.I.C.C. Statement*, Catholic Diocese of Sale, accessed 20th of April, 2011, <<http://www.sale.catholic.org.au/bishop-prowse/statements.html>>

MARCEL PÈRE

Light Amid The Encircling Gloom

Spirituality and the Older Brother

On arriving at Genval twelve years ago, I believed that spirituality was a way of living based on a spiritual vision of life. I have since become aware that spirituality is also a way of dying. I have discovered that the meaning given to one's life, the values to which one adheres, as well as the transcendence which links us to God, permit religious to define themselves spiritually, and this by adopting a positive approach to the ageing process and by calmly preparing for death. It is this evolution in my thinking which I would like to share with you.

It is the spiritual element that gives us our driving force and provides a perspective in our lives. In addition to individual piety and community participation in prayer, I believe that today the spirituality of a brother who is elderly or affected by illness finds expression in his relationship with the community. And so, the cup of coffee taken together, appreciation of the environment, the exchange of an instant of happiness, the gratitude summed up in gesture, the humorous look or the wink are signs of a deep spirituality. When brothers express their gratitude, joy, when their eyes light up at the memory of their teachers, their confrères, their former students, their friends or families, this provides evidence of the new meaning they have given their lives. Confronted with ageing or sickness, the response of the elderly brother may be similar to the one many experience after the closing of a school: on one side powerlessness, and on the other, the search for culprits. He is called on to accept the reality of the situation or risk becoming embittered. Once he passes this stage, once the person or patient masters the mourning, his outlook on life becomes more balanced.

Grieving of this kind is sometimes a painful thing to live through, the more so if it is multiplied: separation from his apostolate, his community, his friends, his former pupils, the death of family members Once this period of revolt and grieving is overcome, the Brother accepts his new limitations while maintaining to the maximum his dignity and independence. So he senses a new lease of life, whether he be aged, handicapped, ill, bedridden, even if his days are numbered.

In the light of this rather long introduction, it is not difficult to see the road I have had to walk. Leaving behind the vigour and activity of previous years, a tempo of life I loved, and a routine I embraced, I have had to learn to keep silent, to accept, to listen, to be present, to pray with and for ... to control demonstrations of enthusiasm, of distress, and at the same time to have far fewer free weekends, days off or holidays! To create and manage a quality environment I have needed to get used to a new category of confrère, and accustom myself to rising very early (contrary to well-established personal preference!). Living with ageing Brothers brought me down to earth as I encountered the inertia of some with no will to change, and the failure of certain initiatives. That was my 'desert', and I could not allow my feelings to be seen for fear of having others affected by my disappointments! I preserved my equanimity principally through association with a team of professional carers, through high quality training sessions that I undertook, and through periods away from work when I forced myself to take the occasional holiday. From then on it was plain sailing. I was happy. I had found my vocation as a carer. I felt equipped to aid my brothers on the painful path of having to enter a rest home or a nursing home, a way paved with uncertainty, denial, aggression, bargaining, depression. I could accompany others in their experience of progressive dementia, their difficulty in speaking, listening to their fantasies.

Walking alongside these men is like getting used to the dark of night, it takes time to see one's way. I could suffer with those who suffered, spend hours assisting brothers on their last journey. I could look positively at my personal life, my relationships, and stay optimistic, I could surpass myself. But above all, I was free to listen, to listen time and again, night and day. To restore hope to colleagues for whom I felt great empathy, to speak of how the sun rises each morning, recall the good memories, restore faith in a God who loves us. For a religious to develop psychologically and spiritually, I am convinced he has need, like everyone else, of a quality

environment as regards personal hygiene, dressing, the orderliness of his room. As well he needs green plants, flowers, music, movement. This requires investment, but above all it calls for 'self investment'.

On occasions doubt overcomes me as I encounter instances of the harshness of life, its injustice and our weakness, when I no longer know how to cope, or what to do. At those times God takes me by the hand, he invites me to deep prayer, he helps me say: 'Into your hands, Father, I entrust everything'. It is the same prayer I recite with and for the Brother whose eyes I am going to close in a moment. A gesture which sheds light on my own life.

Roads across the plains, routes through the mountains, tracks where you long for a horizon of hope, ways which generate new strength when effort seems unavailing, these are the paths I willingly tread for, quite simply, I have made them my life.

God of Peace,

your wish for all of us is humble repentance,
not remorse that distresses mind and heart,
but repentance that is like an upsurge of trust
leading us to place our faults
before you, our Saviour.
Then, as we experience your continuing pardon,
little by little we find again
true peace of heart.

From a Sunday Mass Leaflet, Regional France

JOÃO CARLOS DO PRADO
AND RICARDO TESCAROLO

Catholic Higher Education in Brazil

A Brief Background to Marist Participation

It was in 1500 that King Manuel I of Portugal, seeking to establish a colonial empire in India, sent to the lands of the East a fleet of 13 ships. Under the command of the navigator Pedro Alvares Cabral the ships were manned by a crew totaling 1,200, and included in their complement eight Franciscan friars and nine secular priests. The fleet sailed from Portugal on March 9th that year. Instead of taking the originally planned route around Africa (newly opened by Vasco da Gama) it sailed far into the western Atlantic Ocean. On April 21st land was sighted. As it was at first thought to be an island it was given the name, *Island of Vera Cruz*. When it became evident that the new land was in fact a continent, it was named *Terra de Santa Cruz*. Finally it became known as Brazil, a name derived from *Brazilwood* (*Caesalpiniaechinata*), a commercially valuable species of tree found in almost all the coasts of the new land, and used in the production of a reddish 'ink' commonly used to dye fabrics. Soon after the discovery, Pedro Alvarez Cabral left for India, taking the Franciscan friars with him. Necessarily therefore the involvement of the church in education in the early years was limited. That situation prevailed until the arrival of the Jesuits in 1549, following the appointment of the first Governor-General of the new colony.

The Society of Jesus had been approved by Pope Paul III less than a decade earlier. Although education was not originally part of the order's apostolate as conceived by the founder, St. Ignatius Loyola, he had soon

become convinced of its importance and effectiveness for many areas of Jesuit activity. In Brazil the Portuguese system of union of church and state had been adopted from the earliest days. Strongly supported by the king the church was given the responsibility for education. In this context the Jesuits founded several schools, believing that education would prove the most successful means of promoting their missionary and catechetical activities with the natives.

By the middle of the 1570s the Jesuits had established four schools: Bahia (Salvador), Pernambuco (Olinda), São Paulo, which was the birthplace of today's major metropolis, and Rio de Janeiro. At that time the population in contact with civilization had reached 60,000 people, including whites, mestizos, converted indigenous people and African slaves. Besides these major initiatives, the Jesuits founded elementary schools in the villages to promote literacy among the children of the indigenous people. During this period, members of other religious orders such as the Carmelites, Franciscans and Benedictines, settled in Brazil. While fewer in number and working in more limited areas than the Jesuits, they engaged in regular education activities.

In the mid-eighteenth century, between the years 1755 and 1777, the Marquis of Pombal, Minister and Secretary of State for the King of Portugal, began a campaign against the Society of Jesus, aiming to expel it from Portugal and Brazil. As a result, in 1759 the congregation's assets were seized and the Jesuits were expelled. With the exile of the Jesuits and the confiscation of all its works, the colonial education system collapsed. To compensate for the absence of the Society of Jesus, other religious orders operating in Brazil became involved, however precariously, in the tasks of teaching. The Marquis of Pombal promoted a reform aiming to unify the curriculum and making the education system both national and secular. However, mainly due to the lack of adequate preparation of available teachers, public education weakened and gradually fell into decline. Nevertheless the Church remained committed to the mission of education in Brazil, increasingly responding to the most urgent needs by making use of secular priests – many of whom had been educated at the University of Coimbra – as well as lay teachers appointed by the government. At the same time, seminaries and communities of clerics accepted lay students who wanted to study without necessarily intending to enter the priesthood.

NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

In 1808, the Portuguese royal family and the court moved to Brazil, fleeing from the armies of Napoleon. He had decreed a 'Continental Blockade' to weaken the enemy England, and had ordered European countries not to trade in British products. The Portuguese fleet, with the Portuguese royal entourage and fifteen thousand people in fifteen vessels, arrived in Brazil on February 18th, 1808, landing in Bahia and then moving to Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro became the provisional capital of the Portuguese Empire, thereby securing significant investment for several areas of the colony. In this period higher education was initiated in Brazil through the creation in Bahia, on 18th February 1808, of a College of Medicine (the 'College-Medical-Surgical') and, on 23rd February of the same year, a degree course in Economics.

With the transfer of the capital to Rio de Janeiro, it was necessary to train professionals to provide the various services required for the governance of the Empire. Thus began a period of important initiatives in education, though concentrated only in the capital Rio de Janeiro and in Bahia. Starting in 1812, higher education courses in agriculture, chemistry and technical drafting and design were created, adding to the courses already mentioned in medicine and economics. However, similar vigorous development did not extend to the levels of elementary and secondary education. The contribution of school education to the maintenance of the colonial social structure was dependent on episodic and isolated private initiatives, mainly Catholic schools.

In February 1821, due to political turbulence in both Portugal and Brazil, Portuguese troops mutinied and demanded the return of King John VI to Portugal. To avoid a civil war, he embarked for Lisbon on 22nd April, appointing his son, Prince Dom Pedro de Braganza, to govern as regent. Subsequently the prince refused to obey an ultimatum to return to Portugal and, on September 7th 1822, proclaimed Brazil's independence from Portugal's power. He declared himself Emperor of Brazil as Dom Pedro I and remained in power until his abdication in April 1831, leaving as heir his five-year old son. The political scene then changed, power passing to the liberals, who sought to strengthen local authorities, weakening the centralisation imposed by Dom Pedro I. On 6th August 1834 approval was given to a provision transferring to the provincial assemblies the power to regulate elementary and secondary education, and to the national administration the control of higher

education. This decentralization, along with legislation that abolished the absolute hegemony of the Government over national education, changed the course of education in Brazil. Private – and especially religious – education was given a major boost. During this period, two law colleges were founded: the first in the Convent of San Francisco in Olinda on 1st March 1828, and the second in the Monastery of São Bento in São Paulo on 15th May of the same year. Both had a decisive impact on higher education in Brazil.

Restored by Pope Pius VI in 1814, the Society of Jesus returned to Brazil in 1845. In the following years, the number of new school openings increased, especially those conducted by religious orders. In the late 1880s, the Brazilian monarchy suffered deep and permanent crisis, ending with the proclamation of a Republic. On 15th November 1889 Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, with the support of republicans, signed a manifesto that proclaimed a republic in Brazil, installing an interim government. Three days later, the imperial family left for Europe. For its population of about 15 million people these events heralded the inauguration of the Brazilian Republic.

With the establishment of the republican regime and the consequent end of the patronage regime, the relationship between Church and State changed radically, with major repercussions for the autonomy of the Church and, consequently, for education. One result was a substantial growth in the number of religious orders, most of which were especially dedicated to the apostolate of education. When the Republic was proclaimed the Jesuits, Benedictines, Lazarists, Salesians and Franciscans had been long engaged in education. From 1889 they were followed by numerous other congregations.

PROGRESS DESPITE POLITICAL UNREST

The republican Constitution established a secular system of public education. This fact initially represented a problem for the Church, which considered education to be a vital tool of evangelisation. Nevertheless confessional schools that could not count on any state grant began to multiply, providing education and christian formation for children and young people. These schools constituted an attractive option to the poor quality of public education. Accordingly, by 1930 seventy-five per cent of secondary schools were Catholic. In that year, following another political crisis, the military installed Getulio Dorneles Vargas

as president, initiating a period of fascist dictatorship which lasted until 1945. In the forty years of separation from the State, the Church had built an extensive network of organisations and had developed an influential leadership conscious of social issues in the country. The foundation of the Association of Catholic Education in Brazil is one impressive example. Several Catholic institutions of higher education had been created, pre-eminent among them the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and the São Paulo University, both of which were elevated to pontifical status in 1947.

Significant political unrest in the two decades following 1945 led to the imposition by the military of authoritarian regimes that lasted until 1985 when the nation returned to civilian rule. Living conditions for a substantial fraction of the population were desperate during and beyond this period. By the 1990s more than one in four Brazilians were surviving on less than one dollar a day. With the election as president of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva conditions began to improve. Notable among legislative provisions for education approved over the last fifty years are the 1967 introduction of compulsory schooling for children between the ages of seven and fourteen, and the 1996 approval of new guidelines and bases for national education. The latter ‘magna carta’ stipulated that public resources would be allocated to public schools, and might also be allocated to catholic and other christian bodies as well as to non-profit organizations supporting school and higher education.

SITUATION TODAY

From the perspective of catholic education there was a number of important initiatives during the last fifty years. The Vatican Council’s Declaration on *Christian Education of Youth* was published in 1965, and there were key statements on education emanating from the Latin American Episcopal Conferences in 1968, 1979, 1992 and 2007. Today the National Association of Catholic Education of Brazil (ANEC) with representation from all levels – kindergarten, elementary, secondary and higher education – is affiliated to the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). School education is widely available and is accessed by a substantial and growing fraction of the population. However, higher education provision is far short of demand catering for only 12.1 per cent of the 18 – 24 age group, almost three-quarters of these in private institutions such as the Catholic universities.

In response to this situation the Lula government introduced a 'University for All Program' (PROUNI) under which low-income high school students can gain scholarships to undertake higher education courses in participating private institutions. Such institutions, which currently include all the catholic universities, are granted particular tax exemptions. Over the six years since its inception PROUNI has awarded scholarships to 863,000 students, 67 per cent being full scholarships. In Catholic universities, 10 per cent of students benefit from PROUNI scholarships, while a number of others receive scholarships from philanthropic bodies.

To further address the issue of quality of national education, Congress is at present analysing, discussing and negotiating a proposal for a National Education Plan (PNE) for the period 2011 to 2020. It aims to provide major guidelines for public education policies in the country. Submitted by the Ministry of Education towards the end of 2010 the draft plan has created intense debate among educational leaders, including many from Catholic institutions of education which have suggested a number of amendments to members of the National Congress. However, the effect of the plan on the catholic system of education is not yet clear.

Nowadays we face a society in which change is fast, comprehensive and profound. Transformation will be evident in the form, structure and critical elements of many aspects of human life. It is crucial that the Catholic school has a thorough understanding and appreciation of how to concentrate its energies in updated, persuasive and above all effective ways. Simple adaptation is not sufficient. What is needed is missionary zeal to respond wholeheartedly to the fundamental duty of evangelisation: engaging with people in the real circumstances of their lives so that they receive the gift of salvation (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Brasília: Cadernos AEC Brazil, August 1998, p. 3-4). Such are the ideals underlying the commitment of Catholic education in Brazil today.

MARIST INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Many Marist higher education institutions found their genesis in the need to prepare the Brothers for their educational mission. The tradition originated early in the history of the institute. It was in 1882, in Saint-Genis Laval, that the former Superior General, Br. Nestor, started a graduate course in pedagogical training for the Brothers. Several Marist houses of formation likewise evolved into institutions of higher education. In

many areas the mission of the Institute dictated this kind of development. Striving to help students integrate their development in faith with personal ethics and a sense of social justice, the Brothers have aimed at providing an ever broader context for promoting dialogue between faith and contemporary thought. A necessary application of these ideals lies in practical measures to implement high academic standards of teaching and research, contributing to social and cultural progress and providing professional and personal training for future leaders (*In the Footsteps of Champagnat*, n. 156, p. 54).

An active Marist presence in the university sector is therefore seen as a necessary complement to the work in elementary and high schools. This Marist participation has three major qualities corresponding to the primary concerns of three parties: higher education itself, the Church and the Institute. First, the nature of the involvement is authentically post-secondary, respectful of the characteristics that are distinctive of higher education. Then it must be catholic, faithful to the christian message and to the Church's teaching on education in general and on higher education in particular. Finally, it must be truly Marist, so that it makes apparent the singular form of education inspired by Champagnat. Thus, 'the Marist institution of higher education can be both a lighthouse providing guidance, and a source of support for the Catholic community and the Marist family. In a special way it contributes to further the development of the primary and secondary school sectors in our Marist apostolate' (*Marist Mission in Higher Education*, p. 52).

The first university established in Brazil by the Marist Brothers was the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). Beginning with the Faculty of Political Science and Economics (1931), it progressively added the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters (1940), the School of Social Service (1945), and the Faculty of Law (1947). These agencies of higher education officially formed the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul on November 9, 1948, receiving from Pope Pius XII the title 'Pontifical' on November 1, 1950. With a current enrolment of 30,000 students, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul offers 45 undergraduate, 23 master and 19 doctoral (PhD) degree courses.

The Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), based in Curitiba (capital of Paraná State), was the result of the union of several colleges and schools connected to the Catholic Church. It was founded

on March 14, 1959, officially recognised on May 17, 1960, and on August 6, 1965 was elevated by the Holy See to pontifical status. It has been conducted by the Marist Brothers since 1973. Today the university offers over 60 undergraduate courses, 14 master degree courses and 9 doctoral (PhD) degree courses for a total of 32,000 students.

The Catholic College of Ceara began in 2004 and offers five undergraduate and five graduate (*lato sensu*) specialisation courses in TV Journalism, Fashion (Textile Design, Fashion Marketing, Creation and Development of Fashion Products), Event Management, and Dance Education.

The Marist College of Recife was officially established in November 2002. It currently has five undergraduate and three graduate (*lato sensu*) specialisation courses.

The Union of Education and Culture of Brasilia - UBEC (integrating agencies previously directed separately by the Marists, the De La Salle Brothers, Stigmatine Priests, Salesian Priests, and Salesian Sisters), is now responsible for the Catholic University of Brasilia (UCB), University Centre of East Minas Gerais (UNIL), and the Catholic University of Tocantins (FACT).

Today the Marist presence in education in Brazil is substantial. Besides institutions of higher education, the Marist entity comprises 26,000 members - Brothers and lay people - providing education for 200,000 children and young people. In total, over 350,000 people benefit from 74 early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools, 109 Solidarity Centres¹, and five hospitals. In addition three publishing houses and thirteen media units reach many more.

What impact does all this Marist activity have on Brazilian society? Speaking in April 2010 to representatives of the Marist International Network of Institutions of Higher Education, Br. Emili Turú, Superior General, pertinently quoted Albert Schweitzer: *A way of helping the young in their lack of experience... is to encourage them to strengthen and develop the ideals that are dormant in their hearts. Nothing obliges them to sacrifice (the enthusiasm and trust they have for the good and for virtue). The vital lesson adults need to be able to transmit to the young is not 'reality will sweep away your ideals' but rather 'let your ideals become strong internally and be held so deeply that nothing will ever be able to take them away'.* It is our wish and our prayer that this message will be at the core of the contribution that Marists bring to the education of the young in our society.

ENDNOTE

- 1 In Brazil Solidarity Centres work in partnership with national trade unions to improve the capability of local leaders to combat child labour, and to promote the participation in industrial negotiation of women, youth, racial minorities, foreign workers, and similar underrepresented groups. They are also engaged in advocating for public policy designed to lessen disadvantage.

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Catholic social thought is beginning to stress the priority of virtue ethics over an excessive reliance on rules and regulations – though the latter have a necessary role.

But rules imposed by government can create a moral desert, where the question 'What is the right thing to do?' is replaced by 'How far can you go?' or even 'How do we avoid being caught?' That leads to results just as ethically empty, and ultimately just as perilous to the common good, as a purely profit-based economic system where the only question is 'How do we make money out of this?'

The Tablet 16 July 2011.

MARY BYRNE HOFFMANN

The Media Ministry

Faith Formation in the 21st Century: Part Two

The following article is Part Two of a series on faith formation in a digital media age. In the previous article, The Media Pilgrimage (Spring 2011), catechists and religious educators were encouraged to 'explore the relatively unknown landscape of spiritual transformation and faith formation' in the 21st century in order to encounter God in the multimedia stories of our time. In this second article, the reader is presented with the tools of a spiritual pedagogy that will enable them to become 'media ministers' – the new storytellers of the 21st century. I have included a description of a media-based religion course, 'Discernment: The Journey of the Soul' that I created for senior high school students. This course uses multimedia resources to interpret the gospel message as it leads students through a rite of passage from adolescence to early adulthood. As part of the experiential approach, the students are invited to emulate the spiritual journey on an optional pilgrimage to Ireland.

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

T.S. Eliot

Since the beginning of time, we have stumbled upon God in the stories that we tell one another to explain the mysteries of life. The sacred scriptures of many religious traditions abound in spellbinding tales of the heights to which we ascend and the depths to which we fall depending on our connection or disconnection to God. Stories of creation and destruction, good and evil, suffering and redemption, death and life

thread through time and across cultures attesting to the perils of the fragile human condition graced by love or disgraced by fear. Whether we gathered around tribal fires, listened to sermons on mountaintops, gleaned the life of Jesus from stained glass windows, read Paul's passion in a printed bible or now sit in darkened theatres riveted to the multisensory storytelling of cinema, we tell stories of hope and despair for the same reasons: We are roaming the nooks and crannies of mystery in search of answers. What we pursue is the riddle of our origin, our purpose, our destiny and the Source of this tremendous human longing for communion that nothing on earth can ever seem to satisfy. The grand themes of our narratives have not altered throughout time.

What has changed is the way that we tell stories. As the tools of storytelling evolved from oral communication to the written word to the printed word to electronic mass media, our perception of reality was transformed on every level. How we tell our stories seems to have a direct correlation to our changing sense of self, others and God. The advanced technology of storytelling mirrors the evolution of the human soul. With every shift in the means of our communication, there has been a parallel movement in the development of spirituality and culture.

The printing press democratised the story by putting it down in written words for all to read. The Gospel slipped out of the hands of the clergy - the storytellers of the Christian faith for almost 1500 years - and landed into the laps and the minds of the congregation. Revelation was no longer a restricted rapport between God and the elect. Anyone who could read could get in on the enlightenment (which by the way was precisely the consciousness that finally led to The Enlightenment in the 18th century). And, indeed, they did. Not long after the first bibles rolled off the Gutenberg press, a full scale rebellion against the perceived abuses of church power and hierarchy was underway in Europe. When faith in the church began to crumble, the authority of reason - the linear thinking associated with the logic and certainty of the fixed printed word - rose to the occasion. The wise elders of the oral age were replaced by the new storytellers of the print age - knowledgeable scholars, well-versed preachers and eventually the scientists of proof.

But it was not the death knell for faith. Indeed, the church soon realized that the printed word was a powerful tool for evangelisation. Thus, both the Catechism and the Catholic school system were born. More importantly perhaps, the shift from orality to print changed the paradigm

of the human-divine conversation by engaging the intellect of the faithful and challenging us to participate more fully with both our affective faith and our cognitive minds. That seeming paradox between head and heart engaged our imagination, and in so doing, deepened our spiritual sense of what it means to be human and what it means to be God.

Since the dawn of the digital media age, our concept of who we are in relation to ourselves, one another and God has been undergoing another radical change. Once again, as in the early decades of the print age, the grim reapers of human fate are predicting the end of human imagination. But we only have to look to where we have come from to know that this is once again a moment of great opportunity to engage the heart, minds and souls of the faithful. The multisensory media is an occasion of grace that engages all our senses providing a fuller experience of our humanity and thereby also the experience of Divinity in our midst.

THE CHALLENGE

For the catechist, the experiential nature and emotive affect of mass media, with its millions of images, has hurled us off the terra firma of dogmatic certainty into the uncharted waters of visual and sensory relativity. As a result, we are undergoing a gradual but determined transformation in our perception of reality. The human consciousness of the media age hungers not for the assurance of facts but for the abundance of experiences. As catechists, we teach from a faith perspective that assumes that doctrine dictates meaning. Our children live in a multiplex universe where audience negotiates meaning.

The rebellion against doctrine is creating a disparity between how we tell (as teachers) and how we hear (as students) our sacred stories. Can those of us who learned by the book teach those who want to throw away the book? How does the catechist communicate the Gospel message to an audience that craves meaning over message?

One of the common myths associated with the media culture is that young people, and their elders for that matter, just want to be entertained; that our desire for meaning is really a 'feel good' narcissistic palliative to deal with the harsh demands of the 'real world'. But a 2008 poll of American Catholics conducted by the Pew Charitable Trust in the USA came up with another more enlightening and ultimately more useful conclusion. They found that 32% of Catholics leave the church as soon as they are able to make that decision independent of parental consent. A further finding indicates that 78% of the people walking out

the door are between the ages of 15-23. According to Pew, the reason for the exodus of our youth and young adults is a failure to engage their sense of belonging, community, and meaning. Somewhere along the line, the church disconnected from the 'connected' generations. And so, the question arises: How do we engage the imagination of our youth?

THE TASK

The easy answer is that we speak the students' language (media) so that they can hear our common language (faith). And that would, for the most part, be the right answer. It makes sense. Jesus of course knew that. That is why he spoke in parables, the storytelling 'tool/technology' of his times. But he added an ounce of vision and prophecy to the mix. He changed the punch line to change the perspective. Like the followers who were confounded by the twist to the story lines of their familiar stories, we are likewise caught off guard at the changing plot lines of our own narratives in the digital culture of the 21st century.

Our task as media ministers, the new missionaries to the digital natives of the media landscape, is to place the Gospel in the context of culture so that Gospel forms connective tissue to reality. This means using a wide range of visual and digital resources including the Internet to make the message compelling and relevant. As a case in point - and a movement out of the theoretical and into praxis - I would like to share the spiritual pedagogy of a course that I have created for senior high school students.

SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGY

The course, *Discernment: A Journey of the Soul*, is a media-based rite of passage course that moves the students through the depths of their inner spiritual lives into the complexities of the outer material world as informed young adults of faith. By using multimedia resources, the course references the language of the digital culture, as well as the foundations of faith, to provide a balanced approach. There is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the material. Rather, the course models and encourages an holistic approach that attends to both character development and faith formation as necessary and complementary components of a healthy individual.

In essence, the course leads the students on a 21st century pilgrimage through the media landscape into the hopes and dreams of students as they look backward to where they have come from and then forward to where they are going in preparation for adult life. It is a time of discernment when they will make the choices to become the persons that they are born

to be; to live into the fullness of being in these times. As such, it is a sacred moment in their lives laden with possibilities for deep transformation. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the inner movements of their spirit through this rite of passage by fully engaging the body, mind and soul of each student.

The spirituality of the course revolves around the concept of sacred journey. At the heart of every young person's story is the desire to understand their unique personhood and to walk their own particular path in life. This impulse towards selfhood requires that teens be given the time and space to make an appointment with themselves to go on a journey within. For it is indeed universal wisdom that the way to full participation with the physical world is through deep engagement with the spiritual world. It is the responsibility of the teacher to awaken the imagination of students to embark on the journey, to provoke their attention and awareness along the way, and to send them off with the necessary tools. Therefore, the concept of 'journey' is the contextual metaphor for an experiential understanding of discernment in this course. In addition to scripture and media, the course integrates prayer, meditation, reflection, art, music, movement, and class projects into the exploration of spiritual disciplines, life skills, and personal values and beliefs needed for the journey. The dual approach of experiential activities and academic material allows students to use multiple intelligences to enter, and participate confidently in, the discernment process.

The Discernment curriculum is as much a ritual that provokes spiritual imagination as it is a course that provides religious education. To this end, the variety of methods and texts allows for the breadth and depth of learning experiences consistent with young peoples' world-wide web perspective. The classroom is, at times, a laboratory of self-discovery, a theatre of self-expression, a canvas of self-realisation. Most importantly, the classroom is a sacred space as the students move into an intrinsic understanding of themselves as the beloved in a 'wired' world that holds the possibility for both connection and disconnection, for relationship and alienation.

In fact, this is one of the key distinctions of their discernment process. The richness and vastness of the uncharted, interconnected, online environment presents both obstacles and opportunities for our youth to find and lose themselves, reach out and shut down (if not isolate), to tune in and tune out reality (and that includes God!). It is only by bringing the

culture and the technology into the classroom that we can teach students how to make the right decisions to navigate both the limitations and the possibilities of growing up in the 21st century.

The international futurist, Jean Houston, once commented that the world had changed more since 1995 than it had in the last 4,000 years. 1995, if you recall, was the year that the Internet went public. What seemed like hyperbole at the time now seems like an understatement in light of the resulting seismic shifts in all areas of our life. Certainly, as teachers and educators we are discerning the abyss between the way we teach and the way students learn. The 'stand and deliver' lecture is going the way of the dinosaur. In its place, is a more project-oriented, inquiry-based approach to teaching. This is best formulated in the pithy instruction that our role is no longer 'the sage on the stage'. We are now 'the guides on the side'.

And move over we must as any spiritual director knows who has guided someone through the discernment process. The faith formation process is all about discovering one's story. In fact, the core energy of this course resides in the power of the story. When we tell the stories - whether from scripture or mythology or our daily lives - we break open some truth about the essence of being human in relationship to ourselves, to one another, and to God. To be in the presence of a story is to awaken to the universal truths of our existence. And in so doing, we are broken open to the saving graces of compassion, continuity and mystery in the world around us even at its most horrific.

THE MISSION

Therefore, there is no greater mission for the catechist or the religious educator than to awaken students to their own stories and then to give those individual stories meaning within the context of the stories of our times, in the language of our times, within the context of our faith tradition. The primary text is the texture of the lives of the students as they plumb the depths of their souls to discover their stories and the treasures that lie within. The narrative guides are the stories from sacred scripture, media and related readings.

THE COURSE

The following course outline is intended to provide you with a template for designing a multimedia, project-based, inquiry-centered religious studies curriculum. It is important to reiterate that this curriculum is a media-based religion course that marries faith and culture. This underlying

partnership is as important as the contents of the curriculum.

The Discernment curriculum is divided into four modules that represent graded stages of both spiritual and psychological development. Each stage is associated with a correlating value and a spiritual discipline that needs to be internalised and ritualised before moving into the next stage. These stages are cyclical in nature and parallel the non-linear learning of the image-based media culture. The movement of the course is for the student to reach into the richness of his/her spiritual life in order to reach out and serve the world. What we learn in class is the ritual--the cycle of becoming; what we do in life is live it, practise it, succeed at it, fail at it, begin again, and go deeper into our own mystery every time we journey the circuit. This course provides the students with the tools and the spirituality to take that journey over and over again. As such, the course is a testimony to human endurance and steadfastness and, most certainly, hope.

The Modules/Correlating Values/Spiritual Discipline:

Module #1: Finding Yourself/Connection/Acceptance

Module #2: Forgiving Yourself/Character/Forgiveness

Module #3: Forgetting Yourself/Compassion/Surrender

Module #4: Imagining Your World/Community/Service

Within each module there are certain basic components that can shape any 21st century, collaborative curriculum regardless of the subject matter or age level you teach:

1. Begin with a question that will provoke the intellectual curiosity and spiritual imagination of your students.
2. Provide a focus for independent, teacher-facilitated inquiry.
3. Place the inquiry process within a spiritual context.
4. Determine the topics to be covered within each module.
5. Select the stories – print or media or told by you – that will enhance all of the above.
6. Design multimedia projects that will allow students to probe and then demonstrate what they know, what they need to know, and what they have learned about each topic in the module.

All of this comes together in a sample of the first module.

Module I: Finding Yourself: (Initial weeks of the school year)

Connection: Exploring the inner world of the Spirit

Question: Am I a human being on a spiritual journey or a spiritual being on a human journey?

Focus: Self-Discovery

Education

Spiritual Context: The core focus of the course (to transition into adulthood as whole human beings fully engaged and responsive to both the spiritual and physical realms) begins with an exploration of the spirit world. Through a reading of scripture, viewing of related media, and diverse range of reflective activities and integrative projects, students learn that at the heart of spirituality is the human-divine story and, at the heart of their own story, a yearning for something greater than themselves.

Spiritual Discipline: Acceptance

Topics:

The Question

The Spiritual World

The Journey

The Call

Stories:

Media: Boundin'; The Wizard of Oz; Something the Lord Made; It's a Wonderful Life

Text: Creating a Christian Lifestyle

Novel: The Alchemist

Projects:

Mystery Timeline

Pilgrimage Brochure

Question Collage

One-Act Play on the Hero/Heroine's Journey

IRELAND PILGRIMAGE (OPTIONAL)

Throughout time, pilgrims have embarked on physical journeys to holy places to seek a spiritual encounter with God. Pilgrimage is at the heart of the Christian tradition and consequently also at the heart of the senior religion course where students embark on a rite of passage to discover the meaning and the purpose of their lives. The Ireland Pilgrimage invites students into a deepening experience of the journey metaphor through a parallel journey to Ireland. To journey through Ireland's sacred sites is to discover the sacred spaces within us. In the lives of Irish women and men – saints, scholars and mystics - who heard God's call in their soul, the students begin to hear the echoes of their own unique callings to make a difference in their world.

As we go through the year, other topics are addressed including relationships and service. At the end of the first semester, the students

embark on a two-month mentor project in which each student seeks out a 'wise elder' of their own choosing to guide them through the transition from high school to college or career. At the conclusion of the second semester, the students form small production groups to create, film and edit a short video on making a difference in the world that awaits them.

THE MARIST CONNECTION

The energy and inspiration to create this course was fueled to a great extent by the privilege of teaching in a Marist School. My desire to awaken the consciousness of students through a course that attends to the spiritual formation and religious education of students living in a mass media culture complements the fundamental holistic Marist pedagogy. The Golden Rule of Marist education, 'to educate children, one must love them well, and love them all equally', allows for a curriculum that combines affective and cognitive teaching and learning. But more importantly, in nurturing the whole child, the directive to love the child infers the cultivation of a classroom environment where students are loved into loving themselves.

As an addendum to the course description, I have included the following observations on how the course specifically addresses the Marist charism.

Spiritual

1. The spiritual formation aspect of the course allows a personal experience of Holy Mystery by providing students with a holistic (mind, body and soul) experience of seeking, knowing and loving themselves as they are loved. Priority is placed on each person's feeling known and loved, and being accepted not only for what he or she is but also for what they can become. (Michael Green FMS. 1997. *Charismatic Culture: Encountering the Gospel in Marist Schools.*)
2. The transformative energy of the discernment process moves students through a spiritual rite of passage (finding yourself, forgiving yourself, forgetting yourself and imaging your world) integral to the determination of one's calling to be, to do and to make a difference. The threefold understanding of call in this curriculum – to be, to do, to make a difference – corresponds to the threefold nature of call implicit in the Marist spiritual pedagogy (as presented at Sharing our Call): the call to holiness, career, and lifestyle.

Pedagogical

1. The emphasis on the students' stories as the primary text for the course corresponds to the developmental need for autonomy among senior level students and their desire to learn through and from the experience of their own lives. In classes of religious education, we focus on the students and not just the content. "We talk to them and let them talk", seeking to help them discover values on which to base their lives' (Marist Brothers, *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, 1998. #146).
2. The diversity of cognitive and affective learning modalities in the curriculum enhances academic performance and confidence by affirming the multiple intelligences profile of an equally diverse student body, and by nurturing the boundless creative expression from which one's 'gladness can meet the world's needs' (Buechner). Our style of educating is based on a vision that is truly holistic (*Footsteps*, #97)
3. The core metaphor for the course, rite of passage, provides students with a transformative ritual no longer available in our culture but integral to the healthy transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. Without the guidance of this ritual and the learning of attendant skills and spiritual disciplines, many teens move into antisocial rather than prosocial behavior.
We accompany adolescents in their coming to personal identity and balance; their acceptance of their own gifts and limitations; relating in new ways to others, friends and family members; finding their place in the world; growing beyond childish images of God. (*Footsteps* #88)

Cultural

1. As a media-based curriculum, the Discernment course uses the iconic language of popular culture as a dominant text for reflecting on and deconstructing the value-laden messages of mass media in order to imbue students with the critical thinking and viewing skills necessary to navigate the 21st century. We seek to immerse ourselves in the lives of the young. Our instinct is to engage the world of the young by going out to meet them in their own space and through their own culture. (*Footsteps*. # 100)
2. In a culture where media is gospel, this course invites students to find the Gospel in media by using film, television and information

technology to continue telling the stories of the ongoing human-divine relationship.

We give special emphasis to educating our students in modern means of communication such as the print media, television, films and information technology. We develop their ability to not only participate fully in modern society but also to see the ways in which they are being influenced for good and ill by such media. (*Footsteps*. # 138)

We live in complex times of transition. There are tremendous opportunities to evangelise through the gift of digital media. There is also great potential for abuse and harm. Unfortunately, the distinctions between blessings and curses are not always apparent. But has this not always been the way of the world (Genesis 12: 1-4)? And, as Jesus embodied in his humanity, is not the world the way to the Way? To all our misgivings and hesitations comes the prophetic counsel of Marcellin Champagnat. Ask yourself, as he perhaps often challenged his own hesitation: ‘What are the signs of our times?’

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LUIS CARLOS GUTIÉRREZ BLANCO¹

Challenges Confronting Education in Latin America

Catholic and Marist Perspectives

Latin America encompasses a diverse group of countries from Mexico to Argentina, including the Caribbean Islands. Its ethnic population is a composite of cultures, including indigenous inhabitants and descendants of Africans and Europeans. Its Pre-Colombian roots can be identified in features derived from the Mayans, the Aztecs and the Incas. Parts of the population have ancestry resulting from the combination of European migrants - mostly from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany - with people of African descent long settled in the Caribbean and in the shores of Central and South America. Like its population, the Latin American educational system resembles a mosaic. The needs of its young population and its socio-cultural complexity combine to present Latin America with a formidable challenge.

The Catholic education system in Latin America began with the arrival of the missionaries who established parochial schools, learning centres and universities over extensive regions. A noteworthy feature is the speed with which institutions of higher education were founded. Examples are the Santo Tomás University in Santo Domingo, Dominican República (1538), San Marcos University in Lima, Perú (1551) and the Mexican University in Mexico, also in 1551. While school and post-school education was available during the Spanish period, it was restricted to elite groups in the main urban centres. Exceptions were found in such special cases as the Jesuit missions of Paraguay. Nevertheless, *'from these beginnings and after many generations, the new Creole culture in the continent served as a catalyst for the transition from colony to independence'* (Rodriguez Cruz, 1973)

In its long history in the region catholic education has focused on the real needs of the people; accordingly it has embraced pre-school, primary, secondary-high school, university and distance education. Such a broad education program caters for a wide range of social sectors. Coming on the scene in more recent times the Marist presence in Latin America is likewise extensive. Marist schools are established in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela. In several countries, the Marists have been active for over one hundred years. For example, Colombia saw its first foundation in 1889, Brazil in 1897, México in 1899, Argentina and Chile in 1911, and Cuba in 1903 (the mission being interrupted by the 1963 revolution).

Like Catholic education generally, the story of Marist education extends from basic services for the under-privileged to provisions for the various other sectors in society. School education is the most widespread and diversified activity, ranging from large education centres to city-fringe and rural schools. Technical institutes are dedicated to offering short vocational courses to provide school students with a smooth integration into the work force. Non-formal educational activities have a social work dimension providing needy communities with support services additional to basic education. Brazil, where the Marist presence is particularly strong, offers many examples of these levels of activity. Distance education programs, some available on radio or television, are implemented in collaboration with other organisations and focus on basic literacy. Finally there are the universities which have developed at different rates, encouraged by the various national governments. Included in the network of higher education institutions are the Marist universities of Brazil, Argentine, Mexico and Perú. They aim to have young people study in a truly Marial context.

CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Broadly speaking, during recent decades the majority of the Latin American countries have made steady efforts to improve their educational systems at all levels. They have concentrated on increasing investment in education, the consolidation of competency-based curriculum, implementation of international systems, and improving educational standards. These measures have produced a substantial change in the education landscape,

leading to increased participation at all levels of schooling. Positive findings in the 2006 Latin American Education Report (PREAL) highlighted a rise in the numbers of beginning students at elementary and secondary levels as well as increasing participation through to the end of high school. National education standards have been drawn up and publicised by the relevant national bodies. Literacy tests have been developed at different levels according to the perceived needs of each country. Progress has been made in the administration and management of schools, and resources have been devoted to promoting active awareness of international issues in education. Growth and improvement have resulted from the combined efforts of governments, private enterprise and the Catholic education network. Further support has come from heightened social awareness of the importance of education in a globalised world and of its role as a stabilising factor in society.

Let us turn now to the consideration of some crucial issues impacting on education in Latin America.

ALLEVIATING POVERTY, PROMOTING FREEDOM AND HOPE

One goal of Latin American education is to provide people with tools to overcome disadvantage. In striving to achieve this goal many educators are characterised by their clear commitment to working in remote communities and in difficult conditions. As a result, a number of young people have benefited from an education that equips them to overcome the causes of social marginalisation. The great Latin American educator Paulo Freire outlined a framework for confronting the social reality of people who are oppressed, segregated and forgotten, envisaging for them a passage from oppression to joyful hope. He expressed his conviction about education this way: 'This is how I have always understood God – a presence in History fostering in the world the kind of transformation that would restore their human dignity to the weak and the exploited.' (Freire, 1997 p.115). Similarly, Champagnat's faith and compassion prompted his response to Montagne, demonstrating qualities which were to be a basis for the Institute he founded. In turn, the Marist spirit has strongly influenced how Catholic education has accepted the challenge made explicit by the 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: 'We cannot conceive a life in Christ without the dynamics of total liberation, humanisation, reconciliation and social integration' (Documento de Aparecida 2007, CEM 5 142:53). In an under-developed continent, where growth and improvement can lead to

constant friction with the poor and the marginalised, education is both an opportunity to overcome the cause and a means to break the cycle of disadvantage.

From their earliest days in Latin America Marists were keenly aware of this fact. In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the 1968 Medellín Episcopal Conference in Columbia, Marist educational thinking was channelled even more strongly into developing projects and activities in relation to both formal and informal education.. A number of significant factors emerged as the ideal of a link between education and liberation was more clearly formulated. Among these factors were liberation theology, new developments in religious life, a sense of global solidarity, a number of political conflicts, martyrdom of many members of the Church, and greater clarity about the prophetic role of the Church. Solidarity and critical thinking marked renewed attitudes towards education. In accordance with the spirit of Church teaching Marists today continue to explore ways in which education can be an effective force in improving the lot of the deprived and the underprivileged.

With the aim of overcoming poverty new lines of action in Catholic and Marist education include gender equity (UNESCO, Sep 2007), the right of access to education in both urban and rural areas (SITEAL, 2007), ethnic and cultural equity (SITEAL, 2007), the integration of student with disabilities, democratisation, liberation ecology, and ecological sustainability. Reflection on matters such as these has given additional momentum to Marist efforts to develop formal and informal teaching structures that foster critical approaches to cultural and political change.

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

‘From the first stages of evangelisation, the Catholic Church, driven by fidelity to the Spirit of Christ, has been a tireless advocate for the indigenous people, and a protector against abuse of their cultural values’ (Documentro de Santo Domingo, 1992, #4). These words find historical support in such notable fighters from the early days of evangelisation as Fryer Juan del Valle, Cordoba, the Dominican friars Montesinos and Las Casas, as well as institutions like our Vitoria School. Nevertheless, acceptance of cultural equality had to wait a long time before being accepted by Latin American society. In the late 1960s, Catholic educators were urged to review the degree of their openness as exemplified by the ways in which they addressed needs arising from the diversity and

plurality of Latin American cultures (*Documentos finales de Medellín* 1968, IV, 3). The Conference asked for flexible forms of teaching designed to foster self-reliance through training that equipped people to use their own resources and energies in creative and original ways to develop their distinctive cultures. Especially in the case of indigenous people, cultural values are to be respected while constructive dialogue with other cultural groups is promoted. (Medellín 1968, IV, #3). Marist responses to this summons include the establishment of specialised Centres for indigenous and Afro-Latin American communities in regions such as the Mexican Tarahumara, Guatemala, Ecuador, northern Argentina and the Brazilian Amazon region. In fact, much of the Latin American education system is now characterised by multicultural and intercultural core curriculum frameworks buttressed by specialised professional development and in-service support programs for teachers. (PREAL, 2006).

The period of the late 20th to early 21st C saw a profound revision of educational thinking about cultural identity. Countries such as Guatemala, Mexico and Bolivia have developed in their curricula intersecting themes sensitive to and appreciative of the values and dignity of their Indigenous peoples and inclusive of vocational training related to their cultures. The Catholic Education System has worked with others in defending cultural rights and in contributing to the promotion of a sensitive awareness of them. Such intercultural action has fostered thinking about emerging situations such as juvenile and rural cultures, challenges in urban attitudes and behaviours, relations with ways of life outside one's own region, and effects of the substantial emigration of recent decades.

Still, considerable reflection about teaching strategies is required if there are to be substantial and enriching outcomes with the potential to respond appropriately to the current needs of those we aim to support. Among other initiatives, presently outlined by the American Marists, is the creation of a regional 'Youth Observatory' managed and directed by specially trained Central American young people and dedicated to promoting culture-related activities and to generating opportunities for social and vocational education. Such a development will help our youth accommodate the various cultural changes impacting on their lives.

QUALITY EDUCATION – A RIGHT FOR ALL

Improving the quality in education is a complex and formidable task in the region. Let us consider some general information:

1. Recent regional studies indicate that the Latin American students'

performance is low and fails to reach minimum targets in Maths, Reading and Science (PREAL 2009; cfr. LLECE 2007). Urban students perform better than rural ones. Boys are better in Maths and Science, while girls are better in Reading (Poggi 2010). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PIP) shows results below the OECD average. Important internal factors identified in this assessment were the level of curriculum development within the schools and the time devoted to teaching (Poggi 2010).

2. There is a strong correlation between student results and a country's Gross Domestic Product (Poggi, 2010)
3. Research done in Latin America has highlighted several items worth noting.
 - a) There is a direct link between learning achievement and the social-economic and cultural milieu of students (SERCE 2010). The relationship is positive when the home environment is good. It is negative when schooling is temporarily interrupted or even terminated because of the practice of child labour – a very common occurrence in Latin America, especially with marginalised sectors such as minority or indigenous groups.
 - b) Student performance and internal school factors are related. An institutional culture favourable to change and innovation, a healthy school climate, dynamic leadership, satisfied and committed teachers, these are all positive factors.
 - c) Participation in pre-school is strongly associated with the successful completion of schooling.
4. Poggi (2010; 19) arrived at an important conclusion: 'Social and educational inequalities are related to the socio-economic divide that characterises the school environment, i.e. children and young people of similar backgrounds attend comparable socio-cultural establishments. As a result there is little diversity within the schools.'

The main thrust of this brief analysis throws up a critical challenge: quality education must be actively pursued on all fronts for it is the crucial factor in overcoming the major impediment to regional progress, namely poverty. This right is not limited to particular schools, nor is it a purely pragmatic response. It is primarily a principle of social justice, finding its ethical roots in the dignity of children and youth. The Aparecida Document called for 'quality education (that is) the right of all our young people, male and female, without distinction' (2007 p. 329).

Quality in education is dependent on the efficient use of resources. We know that a genuine commitment to education will produce an improvement in levels of achievement. Compared with other parts of the world Latin America lags behind. Although sound measures have been implemented and there has been some improvement, resources must be increased to bridge the gap. Supervisory procedures, performance measures and motivational practices all need to be implemented and progressively improved. However, in these regards, generally speaking, the public, independent and Catholic systems, are not suitably resourced. Attributing responsibility for getting results and strengthening the viability of projects that are designed to invigorate the schools and their local areas are matters for urgent action. However, in a more competitive environment, it is important to emphasise that Catholic and Marist education become reliable, quality places for students aiming to improve their performance. Because of the comprehensive nature of the education offered in our various schools and university centres, Marist education is a leader in Latin America. Our reputation for vigour and love of work, together with constant renewal in our establishments and our teaching processes, has strengthened the general appreciation of our 'know-how' in education. Through these qualities, we have fulfilled what has been asked of us: 'The Church must promote quality formal and informal education for all, especially for the poorest'. (Aparecida, 2007, #334)

As examples of our efforts in this connection mention could be made of some Marist initiatives designed to improve quality of education:

- Measuring the effectiveness of learning through professional standardised achievement and psycho-pedagogical tests. These have been developed in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Central America including Mexico. Now we have moved towards the co-ordination of this work.
- Similarly, through continental administration and management training meetings, we have taken steps to progress the internal processes of the Provinces and the search for joint solutions.
- The development of the Marist Educational Project in Brazil in 2010, conducted by the three Provinces and the Amazon district, has helped to create a common educational horizon.
- In Central America undergraduate university courses for experienced and beginning teachers, school counsellors and administrators have helped to improve self-image, commitment and performance.

- Partnerships among universities in Chile and Argentina have strengthened the training and professional support for educational leaders.
- In different Provinces we have developed manuals for staff competency profiles.
- New measures are being implemented in relation to IQ testing, marketing and institutional profiles.
- Some Provinces have trialled assessment measures in relation to teaching, administration, evangelisation, pastoral care and counselling.

In Marist Latin America, we believe that quality is essentially comprehensive, seeing progressive learning as dependent on a harmonious integration of concepts, processes and attitudes. The personal, community, professional, social, spiritual and environmental dimensions of an individual are developed through multi-faceted experiences. We see both school and university as providing opportunities for lively interaction through which recognition of the basic rights of the young can evolve in accord with individual differences, diverse learning styles and personal capabilities.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EDUCATION

Community interaction: An emphasis on community rather than on the individual is one of the dominant characteristics of Latin American culture. This quality strongly supports our efforts to foster the 'family spirit' inherent in the Marist charisma. It is one of the features distinguishing our educational activities and fostering mutual understanding among our schools. Pedagogically, this is evidenced by close rapport, brotherly sentiment, as well as interest in and care for colleagues. Such 'fraternal pedagogy' is not only an internal element, but extends to the external community. In transforming the social and cultural environment in which it functions the new Latin American school is a source of positive thinking and constructive involvement.

Innovation: Progressive implementation of research findings, access to new sources of information such as the internet and television, and increased opportunities for the professional development of teachers, all these are leading to more innovative educational practice. Despite prevailing deficiencies an observer will find in Marist schools many instances of the active participation of children and youth in a stream of curriculum initiatives relevant to concerns of the day.

Growth of Democracy: The Latin American democracies are still young. Therefore to consolidate new social systems, popular education must promote awareness, judgement and involvement. According to Margarita Poggi (2010), the established democracies must increasingly demonstrate what she calls 'qualitative democratisation'. Latin America has made significant progress in reaching out to substantial communities within the general population and in weakening the barriers that isolate them ('equalising democratisation'). But it must also take action to reveal the deep-seated factors fuelling the segregation practices that hinder access to a learning society.

New Leadership: Thinking about educational leadership is also evolving strongly in the region. Theories and models from other places have exerted a positive influence. But there is also a new emphasis on recognising those aspects of educational leadership that are inherent in Latin American cultures and are founded on shared cultural roots, a sense of community, new expressions of relationships, aspirations to service and the sense of mutual support. From a Marist perspective the leadership we strive for as teachers and administrators could be described as 'fraternal'. It is expressed in the building up of community, evangelisation, care for the weakest, openness to innovation and change, the promotion of ethical principles that foster real change, and acceptance of the transcendent dimension to life. These guiding principles influence many of the educators in the schools and universities of our region. For their part, Marist establishments have made special efforts to enhance leadership skills and qualities through training and development programs in a range of areas, through improving the level of professional qualifications, and by setting up a framework for the career of teaching in terms of ongoing professional development. Such measures have brought good results. There remains for us an additional and important challenge, namely the level of lay commitment to and involvement in Marist life and spirituality. This will prove a key element in the continuation of the Marist Mission into the future.

The Gospel Message: The Fourth Latin American General Episcopal Conference asked how the response to the situation of people today could be made appropriate, penetrating, authentic and profound without amending or changing the essential gospel message. How permeate the mind and heart of the culture that we seek to evangelise? How speak compellingly of God in a world experiencing an encroaching tide of secularism? (Santo Domingo, 1992, # 10) In Latin America, we are actively striving for more

effective ways of encouraging a renewed appreciation of the basic goal of 'making Jesus Christ better known'. We are evaluating teaching content and methodology, modes of instruction, practical experiences and in-depth studies. Above all, how can the Christian message be presented in a meaningful way to societies having such a diversity of religious beliefs.

New Modes of Organisation: Since the 70s, Catholic and Marist Schools have followed one or the other of two models for developing management and organisation: 'Centralised' or 'Institutional'. Training programs for educational leaders and international Marist management have been important in throwing fresh light on basic elements in school administration. The Marists in Chile, for example, have designed an *integrated* organisation model, whereas Central America has targeted 14 areas of *institutional* development.

International Networks: Changes in the composition of Provinces and the activity of the Marist regions have generated a growing number of international initiatives and networking projects. For the Church in Latin America the relevant body is the CIEE Inter-American Confederation of Catholic Education (CIEC). The Marists over recent years have established networks linking the countries of America. Currently there is the Spirituality network and the Solidarity network. As well we are organizing the Network of Schools Management Training.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Latin America is a region rich in potential because of its young population as well as the innovative spirit characterising the Marist Mission. The concept of a '*New Land*', with which the 21st General Chapter confronts us, demands a critical re-thinking of the most rewarding road Marist education might take. Significant elements in our thinking could include some of the following:

- a) The social groups we should aim to work with, their living conditions, their qualities, the new character of young people, their needs, the style of schooling that would accommodate them;
- b) Action to help reduce the social and cultural marginalisation of many children and youths in the region.
- c) The potential of schools in local communities to help promote small but significant changes in living conditions;
- d) A new assessment of the Marist charism, and in particular its transmission to a new generation of lay people responsible for bringing new vigour to the Marist mission;

- e) A view of the curriculum as a force for promoting an appreciation of human dignity and of cultural values.
- f) Strengthening awareness of practical measures for the defence and protection of children and young people;
- g) Means of contributing most effectively to the transformation of education in Latin America.
- h) Ways to foster educational innovation.
- i) Facilitating intercultural relations and international networks.
- j) Fashioning new leadership capacity in Marist education.

Vision and hope - these guide us in serving the children and youths of our region. Champagnat's passion is our strength, driving us to do our best in the development of new generations of citizens and Christians in Latin America.

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From the Document of the XXI General Chapter of the Marist Brothers

God's love urges us to conversion, to re-discover the heart of our respective vocations.... The world thirsts for authentic witnesses, people who risk their lives in order that the Good News is announced to everyone.

'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!' (Mk 1:15)... God has asked us to go out into a new land. Little and weak that we are we've asked: 'How can this come about at this stage of our history?' But our hopes have been buoyed by recalling Marcellin's favourite psalm: 'If the Lord does not build the house those who work on it labour in vain.' We realise that no matter how small we are, God is standing tall beside us. It is in our weakness that we experience God's tender embrace and strength.

Information and Guidelines

Champagnat is a peer reviewed quarterly publication. It is intended for readers who are engaged or actively interested in school and/or post-school education, especially but not exclusively in Marist contexts. In the first instance, therefore, it addresses the range of today's Lay and Religious Marists, specifically all who are involved in Marist education as teachers, animators of Marist communities, members of MSA teams, school principals, assistant principals, supervisors, boarding directors, directors of faith and mission, support staff and auxiliary bodies.

The aim of the journal is to help promote a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and values of Christ and of the diverse ways in which Marists can bring the graced intuitions of Marcellin Champagnat to the work of Christian education of today's youth.

Accordingly the journal is a forum for writings on things Marist, on broader topics in areas such as education, theology, and philosophy, and on ways in which modern studies of these kinds relate to Marist life and mission.

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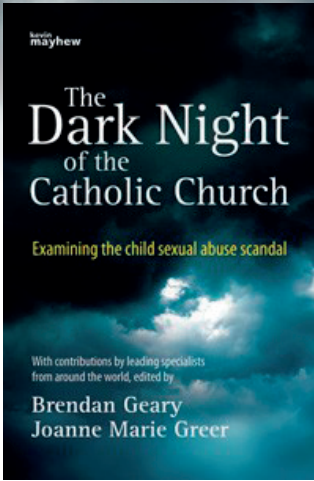
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