



IMAGINING OUR FUTURE AS CHAMPAGNAT EDUCATORS

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On 11th November 1871 Brother Ludovic Laboureyas arrived at St Genis-Laval, having been called from his teaching duties in Dundee, Scotland, to become Director of the first Marist Brothers school in Australia. For several days he busied himself around the General House with briefings and practical preparations for an expedition to a city which must have seemed at the end of the world to the young Frenchman. Before the 28 year-old returned to London to join his three even younger confreres and board ship, he did something quite significant.

Setting his preparations aside, Brother Ludovic travelled down to *l'Hermitage* near Lavalla. Here he visited and prayed at the tomb of Marcellin Champagnat, and slept in his bed. He met with the old Brother François and finally made his own pilgrimage to pray at the Shrine at Fourvière.¹ The episode, small in itself, tells us much. We can only guess at the thoughts that would have occupied him and the emotions that would have gripped him as he walked the corridors and grounds of *l'Hermitage*, but it does not take too much imagination to see him earnestly absorbing as much as he could of the spirit, the person, of the Founder. He would have spoken with Brothers who had lived with Champagnat, heard their stories, laughed at their reminiscences, and been inspired by their lives. It was clearly important to Brother Ludovic that he imbibe and make his own the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, taking it into the very marrow of his bones.

That seed of Marcellin Champagnat's charism brought to this country by Brother Ludovic in 1872 fell on fertile ground. Its first century was marked by its taking firm root, growing strongly, and flowering brilliantly. Particularly in the Province of Sydney, it was a growth arguably matched nowhere else in the Marist world during those decades.

The Marist Brothers' presence in this country has seen the expansive development of schools known for their vitality, their educational merit, their broad achievements, their family spirit, and for their closeness to the people they have served. They have been fine schools.

The rapidity and depth of the changes of the last two decades have threatened this position of strength and the schools now find themselves at a crossroads. Unless those involved in Marist education recognise the impact of those changes and reassess some of their fundamental understandings about the animation and leadership of their schools, they risk the gradual dilution of the schools' special character and a loss of their charism. And they do not enjoy the luxury of much time to make that reassessment.

Lessons from the last decade

The 'effective schools' movement has dominated much of the educational literature since the mid-1980s. Sparked by the 1983 U.S. report *A Nation at Risk*² and fuelled by a plethora of research studies, books, pilot projects and governmental reports, the search has been on for the recipe for that utopian school and all-inclusive curriculum. It has been a movement which has affected all parts of the Western world, not least Australia. Brother Marcellin Flynn's books are good local examples with which we are familiar.³

Not surprisingly, the movement has had more than a few charlatans and wagon-jumpers: gurus offering attractive but simplistic answers, and wolves in sheep's coats pushing pet policies which often enough only mask underlying political or economic agenda. The best literature, however, has been both insightful and inspiring. It has sought not to propose quick-fix or shallow solutions, but to describe best practice — to identify those places that sit very comfortably with the label "a good school."

Preceding the effective schools literature by several years and paralleling it to the present day has been another movement which has much affected its direction: the so-called 'excellence movement'. Although the term has been much flaunted — and often debased — in educational circles, the origin of this latter movement was not in educational dissatisfaction but rather in the business world. Three seminal works published in the early 1980s have given impetus and direction to libraries of further work which has dwarfed the educational literature. The books were Ouchi's *Theory Z*, Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*, and Deal and Kennedy's *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*.⁴

Although the original, largely anecdotal research of these three books has been much qualified, nuanced and polished in the decade since, the central conclusion has only been confirmed: *the essential and pivotal factor in any successful organisation is its culture*.

The single, unambiguous message from both business and educational research may come as no surprise to those who have taught in Marist Brothers schools. It is something of which our Marist headmasters usually have had an intuitive understanding: the very best schools have strong, coherent and cohesive cultures, not necessarily well articulated, but nonetheless emanating from a shared collective vision and reinforced by consistent practices and rich traditions.

It is an understanding of the origin and nature of the cultures of our Marist schools, and a consequent acknowledgement of what is necessary to create, maintain and enhance these cultures, that will ensure the continued strength of our schools and allow young people to be served by a tradition of teaching begun by Marcellin Champagnat.

Culture: Its Nature and Importance

Depending on the academic orientation in which they are situated, commentators focus on different aspects of culture. Since much of the educational commentary on culture has been influenced by anthropology, the emphases in the literature have been mostly on features such as shared values and beliefs, myths and legends, sagas and heroes, symbols and rituals, customary practices and traditions, icons and sacred sites, and so on. Psychology and sociology bring other emphases such as cultural networks, tribal mentalities, and power relationships.

Marcellin Flynn, after a search of the whole range of understandings, identified a four-point model of understanding culture in the Australian Catholic school.⁵ He considered school culture according to:

- Core beliefs and values
- Expressive symbols
- Traditions
- Patterns of behaviour

At the risk of over-simplification, perhaps the most accessible and attractive definition, and one favoured by Flynn to some extent, is that offered by Deal and Kennedy — organisational culture for them was simply "the way we do things around here."⁶ Although in many ways intangible and elusive, culture is nonetheless a most influential factor in a school. After their survey of 62 of the most successful U.S. companies, Peters and Waterman's final conclusion was that an organisation's culture was the single most powerful ingredient in the recipes of success.⁷ They also were surprised to hear that stories and

company folklore — a very important part of culture — usually revolved around just a few central themes.

Educational writers have given an increasingly important place to culture, and more particularly cultural leadership by school administrators, when defining effective schools. In identifying the difference between “competence” and “excellence” in schools, Sergiovanni saw “symbolic leadership” and “cultural leadership” as the highest forms of leadership that a principal could give. He proposed a five level hierarchy of school leadership:

- *Technical leadership* — efficient general organisation
- *Human leadership* — prudent and sensitive human resource management
- *Educational leadership* — provision of effective educational programmes
(The existence of these three ensured *competence*)
- *Symbolic leadership* — a principal who signals what is important, gives vision, communicates deep purposes, and leads beyond the nuts-and-bolts efficiency
- *Cultural leadership* — a principal who spends time articulating the vision, socialises others into this vision, and develops systems, symbols and rituals to reinforce it.
(These latter two dimensions were necessary for *excellence*).⁸

Administrators of Marist schools have always been interested in developing good schools, excellent schools. It would not take much delving into the most repeated stories and most honoured heroes in this Province to discover the prevalence of the visionaries, the builders, the men with high expectations of success and skill at developing coherent and cohesive school cultures. We have been quite fortunate historically in the Sydney Province to have had school leaders who have exercised a high degree of symbolic and cultural leadership, along with the other dimensions of leadership — the technical, human and educational. The fortunes of our schools have risen and fallen with the degree to which successive headmasters have been able to do that, and they have had many more years of rise than fall. The challenge for the present generation of Marist leaders is to look at providing a similarly high degree of cultural leadership in quite changed circumstances, the biggest single change being the fact that now between ninety-five and one hundred percent of the staff is lay rather than Marist Brothers.

Growth of Marist culture: both intuitive and automatic

Strong culture has always been a feature of the schools of this Province and our best headmasters have had an intuitive understanding of its importance, as all good leaders do. Besides the happy fortune of having talented leaders, there has been another and more important reason underpinning the strength and distinctiveness of Marist education as we have come to understand it in this Province. An insight into this can be gained by a simple understanding of “Marist education” as “what Marist educators do.”

For most of this century Marist educators have been Marist Brothers. And these men became Marist Brothers usually during the formative years of their adolescence and early adulthood, at the very time when they were developing their own identities and self-perceptions, and clarifying their basic life values and beliefs. At this time they were taught and influenced by other Marist Brothers who had in turn had the same formative experiences at the hands of other Marist Brothers, indeed in a direct and not-so-long line back to Marcellin Champagnat. It was a quite insular and extraordinarily strong, consistent, and self-reinforcing process. There was consequently no need to articulate or expound a theory of Marist education: it was learnt naturally and reinforced powerfully, by all the classic cultural mechanisms — heroes, stories, myths, customs, rituals, accepted practices, dress,

sacred sites, cultural networks, tribal/family language, bonds and loyalty. Marist education was what Marist Brothers did. And they learnt how to do it from other Marist Brothers with whom they lived, worked, played and prayed. What they did as Marist educators was an extension of who they were and how they saw themselves.

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to describe the features of the style of education which developed, but it would be useful to outline some of the central aspects of it. Part of the folklore of this Province is the story of the opening of the Brothers first school, in the fairly rough suburb of The Rocks. In a couple of months, an unruly, impious and illiterate band of young urchins was transformed to such an extent that Bishop Quinn remarked, "Devils had been changed into angels or wolves into lambs."⁹ It was not a "miracle" as claimed by Bishop Quinn, but the effect of the distinctive style of education that the Marist Brothers brought to the school. Brother Ludovic's own pen picks up some of the essence of it:

All the people here are astonished at the freedom between the Brothers and pupils, at the affection, so plain to see with which these friendly children surround us. You cannot go along the streets without seeing them running up to take our hands, receive a word or two and a smile. When they are leaving school of an afternoon, all the passers-by stop to see them march past in twos in silence from the school to George Street.¹⁰

A present day Marist teacher would immediately recognise the familiar mix of love of children and belief in them, the non-fearful and down-to-earth relationships, the good humour, as well as the strong expectations of student conduct, and the pride in the school. They are but a few of the aspects of a distinctively Marist approach to the education of the young which have been with us from the beginning, and it is refreshing to re-discover their presence in the early Brothers. Although there is no definitive synopsis of Marist education, most of the following items would be likely included. Its main features, of course, come directly from Champagnat and have found expression in an Australian context.

- ***Priority on the nature and quality of relationships.***

Champagnat's golden rule of the prerequisite need to love children and love them equally, and his emphasis on a family spirit, are central to Marist education. This has meant that the quality relationships among all members of a school, both staff and students, has been paramount in Marist schools. The schools have attempted to be warm and friendly places, where people relate to each other in unpretentious, down-to-earth ways and where hospitality has been promoted. Until quite recently, the Brothers' community and their monastery were the focus of staff life in most schools.

- ***Zeal and hard work***

Although unfashionable in some quarters, there has been no apology for simple, unglamorous, hard work and unstinting generosity on the part of teachers in Marist schools.

- ***Primary place and value of spiritual formation***

To bring the young to a deeper knowledge and love of God, to form them as "good Christians and good citizens,"¹¹ was the *raison d'être* of Champagnat's schools and has been reflected in the place of prayer and liturgy, the resource allocation, the curriculum, and the other religious emphases of Marist schools in this country. This is done with a particular place given to Mary, "our Good Mother", as inspiration and guide.

- ***Bias towards those most in need***

A bias of time, talent and resources, and a genuine affection, has been shown towards those students who are least advantaged materially, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.¹²

- ***Holistic education***

The bringing into harmony of faith, culture and life was in Champagnat's schools from the beginning.¹³ In this country, our schools have always had vital extra curricular programmes which have sought to educate students in and through their own forms of cultural expression from sport to music to youth groups. Marist Brothers have always been close to the people they have served and sought to share the people's ordinary lives and pursuits.

- ***Effective pedagogy***

From the time of Champagnat's borrowing of the teaching method of de La Salle,¹⁴ Marist Brothers have always been innovative, and open to good and new teaching ideas from any source. They have maintained Champagnat's emphasis on the mastery of the craft of classroom teaching and sound knowledge of subject matter. They have seen "calm and tranquil" schools as important. They have stressed the importance of good example and a "pedagogy of presence,"¹⁵ actively seeking opportunities to be physically with students and spend time with them, influencing them by their presence and the easy, natural manner of their relationships in and out of the classroom.

- ***Daring and confidence***

A certain daring and ambition, born partly of the youth of many of the headmasters and staffs over the years, have characterised the Brothers from the time of their arrival in Australia. They have been big-picture thinkers and confident planners.

Each of the above features could be exemplified many times over by the rich collection of stories, legends and heroes that form the folklore and collective psyche of this Province and the individual schools within it. The culture of the schools has been strong because the members of the culture, Marist Brothers, have been so thoroughly infused with it, defined by it and inspired by it.

But it has depended on Marist Brothers.

The last to discover water is the fish

Despite its strength and centrality, the Brothers have not really defined their schools or their success in terms of culture, or cultural leadership. They have thought their expertise came from the lower levels of leadership: the technical, the human and the educational. So they readily accepted invitations to such places as John Therry High at Ambarvale and Trinity at Beenleigh, where the planned arrangements were that the Brothers would be engaged by a local CEO to establish a school, set it on its feet, and then leave. Without wishing to be simplistic about the Brothers' difficult, sensitive and often heart-wrenching decisions surrounding rationalisation, it would be fair to suggest that the same sort of thinking was a factor in their earliest attempts at rationalisation: if a school was ticking along nicely, then it might be opportune for the Brothers to consider withdrawing or leaving only a minimal presence. They missed the point. The schools were not good primarily because they ran efficiently, or obtained good results, or uniforms were worn well, or football games were won — important though each of these things may have been in itself. In Sergiovanni's scheme,¹⁶ these are all necessary for *competence*, but the Brothers took the schools further

than that. Through their cultural leadership they animated them with a Marist charism. They have been good at that, not because they themselves have necessarily been anything exceptional, but because their charism has been something extraordinary, that given them by Champagnat. What they have *not* been good at is passing on this charism to lay people in their schools.

Because for the Brothers themselves the process of enculturation was not a conscious process, but an informal and unstated one, they have been slow to recognise its significance. Like the fish in its water, the role of the culture has only been noticed when it has begun to dry up.

The future of our schools is lay. Their proud past has been founded on people infused with and enthused by a charismatic culture; their future will be guaranteed only by people similarly enculturated. The process of the lay people's socialisation into the culture, however, will necessarily be fundamentally different from the process undergone by the Marist Brothers.

The Brothers must now realise that they have an obligation to explore how to pass on that culture. They should never again leave a school simply because it seems to be running smoothly, or because they do not have sufficient numbers of Brothers, without first engaging in exhaustive discernment with, and formation of, the people who will carry on its leadership and animation. This is a process that takes years. Albeit unwittingly, and certainly without malice, the Brothers may have been guilty of ripping the heart out of places in which they have served, simply because they have been its heart. They have been an integral part of the plans, dreams, and lives of a community for decades, and they have departed, leaving the school and school community somehow to maintain on their own the school's special character and charism which they love but really do not understand.

Thus, the Brothers have a poor record of withdrawal of schools largely because they have misunderstood its dynamic and significance. There has been little serious formation of lay teachers, not as school administrators, but as Marist educators infused with Champagnat's charism. Positions in schools have been surrendered reluctantly, only as Brothers become unavailable to take them, and there has been little more than a hit and miss attempt to empower people to carry on with the recipe for success that the schools have historically enjoyed.

We believe in an incarnational God, a God who pitches his tent in our midst and whom we engage in our ordinary lives. We discover and respond to the gospel in human living, in culture and its ordinary manifestations. Indeed, the gospel needs a cultural context, even a sub-cultural context, to take flesh and be real for us. So, too, with Catholic schools. They are most effective and really advantaged when they operate within one of the charismatic teaching cultures of the Church. The 1970s-1980s discussion in this Province on the difference between a "Catholic school" and a "Marist school" could well be re-visited in this light.¹⁷

Challenges to Marist schools in the next decade

There are two challenges to the strong culture of our schools and therefore their effectiveness. Neither threat is loudly trumpeted or indeed very obvious, but each could weaken and dilute our schools to a point where Champagnat's charism would be little more than words and statues. In some individual schools, it might be argued that this has already occurred. Both processes are well in progress right across the Province, subtly but surely loosening the cultural fabric that up until now we have taken for granted. The first challenge

is the increasing bureaucratisation of Catholic education; the second is the changed make-up of our schools' staff.

i. Bureaucratisation

Catholic schools, especially but not exclusively those in diocesan systems, have witnessed a massive increase in the bureaucracy that manages them over the last fifteen to twenty years. The growth of Catholic Education Offices, an increase in accountability to government, and to some extent the increased politicisation of curriculum, have combined to tend to homogenise schools towards a bland commonality, reducing their autonomy and fitting them into nicely balanced schemes and systems. The most sceptical would see it as emasculation by stealth. Most particularly, the increasingly intrusive, hierarchical and bureaucratic functioning of Catholic Education Offices might be identified.

The findings of Peters and Waterman¹⁸ on the qualities of the best companies provide a telling contrast to the current direction of educational management. Very briefly, the eight central qualities they found in the most successful organisations and the contributive factors necessary for strong culture were:

- *a bias for action* and experimentation
- *closeness to the customer*, and sensitivity/responsiveness to local situations
- *autonomy*, with entrepreneurs and risk-takers encouraged
- *people valued*: rank and file treated as the primary source of quality
- *hands-on/value-driven*: management by walking around
- *sticking to the knitting*: not diversifying services or involvement beyond tested expertise
- *simple form/lean staff*: few people at the top, very slim management and minimal red tape
- *simultaneous loose-tight management*: very decentralised and devolved on everything except a few core values about which they were fanatical.

They found in these sort of organisations the most important things were not bottom lines, five-year projections, strategic planning, balanced books, efficient debt-servicing, and functional buildings. Of paramount importance were the values of the organisation, and the nurturing of transformational leaders — rather than managers — who would become its heroes. Whereas *managers* were the professionals, the dispassionate analysts, the facilitators, the referees, and the rationalists, *leaders* on the other hand were the enthusiasts, the cheerleaders, the dramatists, the motivators, the builders, the poets, the coaches, the visionaries. Organisations need competent managers, but should be trusted with the reins. Leaders are the ones who build, consolidate and enhance culture, and culture is the source of strength.¹⁹

Our Province has been fortunate to have had leaders imbued with Champagnat's charismatic culture, and the type of stories which we relish retelling tend to honour the Champagnat-like qualities that these men have embodied. Whereas strong cultures nourish the leaders, risk-takers, builders, mould-breakers, innovators, even what Deal and Kennedy call the "outlaws," bureaucracies do not understand them at all and are even threatened by them.

A related issue is the relationship between the school and the diocese. The history of the relationships between the Brothers and local diocesan and parochial authorities in this country is colourful chronicle. Although never seeking to be disrespectful towards legitimate ecclesiastical authority nor attempting in any way to work in competition with a local Church, the Order has nonetheless been never ready to surrender its independence of operation. It has sought to serve the Church by providing good schools and ministering to

families in them in its own way. This independence, insisted by Champagnat from his very first dealings with local civil and church leaders, has ensured the Institute's ability to exercise its charism and conduct its schools according to its preferred manner. Like Mary McKillop's Sisters of St Joseph, and most of the great teaching orders of the Church, the Marists have not been diocesan-based. A practical consequence of this has been the right of appointment and the right of withdrawal of Brothers —who were all or most of the school staff — and, usually, local management of finances. One of the effects of the growth of payroll and personnel management by Catholic Education Offices and the schools' dependence on government funding channelled through these Offices has been a significant diminishing of this autonomy. Although clichéd, it is pertinent to ponder the degree of truth in the saying "He who pays the piper calls the tune." The increasing extent to which our schools are inextricably meshed into the workings of diocesan bureaucracies is a situation that is unlikely to assist the enhancement and exercise of a Marist charism.

ii. Changed staff make-up

It is hardly news that the make-up of the staff of our schools has been transformed in the last twenty-five years from almost all religious to almost entirely lay. What has been less apparent is that this transition has occurred smoothly enough only at the lower levels of school functioning — at the level of competence: the technical, the human and the educational. It has happened less well, however, at the symbolic level and rather poorly at the cultural level. But it is at this last level that the heart of the school beats. Although our staff are more highly qualified than at any time in the history of our schools, competent people, many of them graduates of Catholic tertiary institutions, their pre-service and in-service education has rarely touched the deep dimensions of formation that were central to the religious teachers that went before them.

If we consider the situation in this Province, the urgency of the problem might become clearer. The average age of the Brothers is currently 55 years; just three or four years ago it was 49. Because of the skewed nature of the curve, and the ages of Brothers who seem to be leaving the Order, it is likely that it will only be several years before the average age of the Brothers is well over 60. The presence of the Brothers in some schools will last no longer than the term of the current principal.²⁰ The ability of the Brothers to provide the cultural leadership of our schools is diminishing and doing so at an alarming rate, particularly when it is remembered that from the time of Champagnat and certainly through the life of this Province, school leadership has more often than not fallen to the young; to Brothers in their thirties and forties.²¹ Youthful confidence, enthusiasm and daring are dimensions of our charism. If Champagnat's charism is to survive and grow in Marist schools in this country in the twenty-first century, it will not be the Brothers who foster and lead it. It is doubtful that many people in our schools have really grasped the implications of that.

The history of religious movements in the Church reveals that after a period of initial growth and then stabilisation, one of three things happen. The first is they die out, and this is the fate of most. The second is that they survive minimally. The third is that they revitalise, by reading the signs of the times and adapting to changed circumstances.²² One of the most emergent signs of the times is the Church's evolving understanding of ministry and lay involvement in it. In his opening address to the XIX General Chapter, Brother Charles Howard, highlighted this very point as did the capitulants in their Message to the Brothers at the conclusion of the Chapter.²³ The historic presence of lay people at the Chapter points the way of the future. In the final documents of the Chapter, Brother Charles reminded us that the charism of a religious order does not belong exclusively to that order; it is intended for the Church and belongs to the Church.

We are the inheritors of the charism of Marcellin and, to some extent its guardians, but it is a joy and responsibility to be able to share this gift and, as I have often said, lay people will reveal new facets of the charism to us as they become familiar with it and live it more fully. It is not a one-sided sharing.²⁴

The challenge is one to partnership or, to use the theme of the General Chapter, to co-responsibility. If there have been two messages that have come from the *Sharing Our Call* programme that has been run over the last twelve months, they have been first that lay people in our Schools are veritably hungry to learn about and internalise the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, and second that they want to engage in genuine, not token, partnership in the administration and governance of our schools.

The challenge to partnership can be considered to have three dimensions:

- a sharing of family and culture
- a sharing of power and responsibility
- a sharing of spirituality

The first is the very human level at which culture finds its most visible expression: the stories and sagas; the family secrets; the knowing of people and forming of networks; the jargon, cant and even gossip; the sacred sites; the official literature and less formal publications, and so on. The custodial or proprietorial approach the Brothers have had to their culture has often enough been quite exclusive in its treatment of lay people at even this most basic level. This has not been a conscious or deliberately dismissive action, but the effect of it has been to deny the potential future animators of Marist schools access to some of the basic ingredients of enculturation.

The second level, the genuine sharing of power and responsibility, has also been one which the Brothers have engaged in reluctantly and only as necessary. In terms of a school, there would still be many Brothers who might concede that it is okay for a lay teacher to run the Mathematics Department, or be Bursar, or coach the First Grade team (again grudgingly surrendered!), but certainly not to run or, even more, to govern the school. And if these positions have been given, particularly in our Order-owned schools, it has been more of a case of “working *for* the Brothers” rather than a “working *with*” them. Unless co-responsibility is taken proactively rather than reactively, Champagnat’s charism will not be very deeply owned by lay people and the culture of our schools will ultimately die. On the Brothers’ part, it is essential for them to recognise that they are already in partnership, involved in the lives of people. They have, for example, little moral authority to discern the future of their involvement in a school independent of the lay people with whom they work, or to present a local school community with a *fait accompli* on the Brothers’ future involvement.

The third and most fundamental level is the sharing of spirituality. At its essence, Champagnat’s charism is a particular and distinctive response to the Gospel of Jesus, after the manner of Mary.²⁵ His response is one which generations of educators and students have found so attractive that they have imitated it. It must be our most fundamental purpose to have the people who animate our Schools committed to Champagnat’s response to the Gospel in the context of their own lives.

Schools will always be animated by some particular members of staff. Schools have what are colloquially termed their “shakers and movers,” those who have the greatest impact in the staff room, those who are the best teachers, those that have the strongest influence over the students outside the classroom, those who carry the most weight, and engender the most respect. If these people are animating the school in ways out of sympathy with a

Champagnat charism then the coherence and cohesive culture of the School will be diluted, and the distinctiveness of a Marist school will dissipate.

Developing new self-perceptions

With the challenge to lead the Brothers to share their charism comes an equally significant challenge for lay people to accept and develop their sense of co-responsibility for it. Possibly because it has been fostered so inadequately, many a lay person's self-perception as a co-equal and co-responsible minister of the Gospel has been slow in developing. In many quarters, including among the lay teachers of our schools, serious "religion" is perceived to be the domain of the men in white soutanes. Even further from their self-perception is their role as a Marist educator, an inheritor of and contributor to the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. A short account of the following three recent incidents may serve to exemplify this point.

- When the Brothers indicated they would not be appointing another Brother as Principal at Mosman this year, a strong request came from the school community for a retired Brother who might sit in the office or at least be seen around the school one or two days a week. In this way, it was thought the Marist presence might be maintained. After seventy years at the school, and three or four generations of students, there was little or no self-perception among the staff that *they* were the Marist presence, that *they* were the Marist educators.
- At this year's Australian Marist Basketball Carnival, a coach of one of the schools who had a lay principal, lamented that his school was not really much of a Marist school any more because there were no Brothers teaching there. A couple of old Brothers often came over from the monastery to morning tea so there was a "nice link" with the past, but the boys were missing out on the "great Marist education" he himself had received.
- A Brother visiting Maitland just a few weeks ago ran into two ladies who were mothers of students at the time of the Brothers' withdrawal ten years ago. "When are you guys coming back?" was the strongly posed question. It came just days after the campus coordinator of the former Marist Brothers' site had put in a request for a statue of Marcellin Champagnat for the school grounds, in an attempt to enhance the traditions, and therefore the culture, of the school.

Culture and identity, particularly when they are as charismatic and dynamic as Champagnat's, do not come from old Brothers in the corner or statues in the yard. It is something of an indictment, or at least it is quite sad, that the Brothers during their long tenure in each of these schools had not developed the self-perception of the staff beyond this level of cultural understanding. Although they find something inherently attractive about Marist education, something they desperately want to preserve in their school, the staff is at a loss on how to do it.

How to do it is to introduce them to Marcellin Champagnat.

It would be a flawed process simply to offer teachers a treatise on Marist education or present them with the features of Marist education listed above, and expect them to learn and implement it. While not denying the valid place of intellectual understanding of and assent to Marist education, the dynamics of cultural transmission are not essentially cerebral. It needs to be caught before it is taught.

For almost two centuries, young teachers and students have been attracted to and inspired by Marcellin Champagnat's charismatic response to the Gospel to the extent that they have self-consciously imitated it. The experience of *Sharing Our Call* tells us he remains just as attractive and inspiring to the present generation of teachers. What is important for them is to KNOW THE STORY OF CHAMPAGNAT. This is our most powerful story. Once they hear the story, the rest is likely to follow, as it has for generations of Marist Brothers: they will aspire to love children, be down-to-earth, hard-working, faith-filled, optimistic, daring, competent teachers, and to all the other qualities that characterise a follower of Champagnat. The future of "Marist education" is then secured by people who think of themselves as "Marist educators," as people fired with and responsible for the charism of Marcellin Champagnat.

Interestingly, the American Jesuits are talking less these days about "Jesuit Education" and more about "Ignatian Education."²⁶ Faced with the same challenges as have been outlined above, they have seen it important to introduce their lay colleagues to Ignatius and allow them to respond to Ignatius in their own way. It will be the same for us. The next chapter in the story of Marist education, if it is to be written, will be done so by lay people as they respond to Marcellin Champagnat. These people, particularly the women, will give new insights into what Marist education means in the Australian context.

Challenges and recommendations

The major challenge for our schools is for them to be served by support structures and administrative arrangements that recognise, first, the pivotal role of Marist culture and, second, the challenges to maintaining and developing that culture. The aim is to develop schools with strong, Champagnat-inspired cultures. This is not because a Marist culture is seen as an end in itself but because it brings with it a rich tradition of insightful and effective means to the education of young people, which will lead them to a deeper knowledge and love of God and allow them to incarnate the gospel in their ordinary lives. It is for this reason that it is essential for us to reclaim and enhance the notion of a "Marist School."

At a practical level, several recommendations are put forward as a focus for discussion and development:

1. Staff formation

Given that the *pre-service* preparation of Marist educators is necessarily limited, an emphasis needs be placed on various strategies for education and formation of practising staff into the culture of Champagnat's schools. Whole-staff development is necessary but probably limited to one staff day per year, Masses, prayers, and dissemination of articles. Other strategies might include:

- the systematic continuation of *Sharing Our Call*, with "Stage 2" and "Stage 3" components added;
- regionally based seminars or courses;
- regionally-based orientation days for new and beginning teachers;
- longer courses and sabbatical programmes for key members of staff.

2. Cultural artefacts and rituals

The place of statues, pictures, symbols, newsletter inclusions, celebratory days, mission statements, letterheads, and so on, are not to be underestimated. Although not of the essence of the culture or the charism, they help to make it explicit and to re-inforce it.

3. An Association of Teachers

This is a central recommendation. It is important that all teachers in a Marist school have an accessible and effective means of belonging to the cultural network of Marist educators. A professional association is a common and time-tested arrangement through which this is likely to happen. It would be envisaged that the great majority of staff in a Marist school would feel attracted to join such an association and participate in its activities, including conferences. It would be an association of educators dedicated to promoting the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. It might be province-based, Australian or Australasian wide, or even more encompassing.

It would be hoped that through this a growing number of teachers would develop a self-perception as Champagnat educators, and would consequently see themselves spending all or most of their teaching careers within Marist schools.

4. A Journal

The two most popular means by which an association achieves its purposes are conferences and journals. A high-quality journal, published perhaps quarterly, would give the proposed association a useful tool by which to further its ends. It is envisaged that it would be a "news and views" journal in magazine style, keeping people in touch with each other as well as providing a forum for people to publish and discuss their attempts to discern the meaning of Marcellin Champagnat for today's Australian Marist schools. It would also be a means of advertising vacant positions, particularly those in middle management, and therefore promote the movement of staff among the schools.

5. Administrative Committee and Secretariat

A network of schools requires some coordination. If partnership and co-responsibility with lay people are taken seriously, then the model of province administration of schools needs to be reconsidered, particularly with the inclusion of lay people into such coordination.

It is proposed that a largely part-time committee be established to coordinate the activity of the schools with particular reference to:

- the promotion of the Marist character of the school
- monitoring the general needs and directions of schools
- support for the leadership teams in the schools
- recommendations regarding the appointments of school leaders
- facilitation and nurturing of the career paths of individual teachers within the schools, both lay and religious

It is further proposed that the Marist Brothers Order may undertake responsibility for a school, irrespective of whether or not there are any Brothers in it at any given time. This is a natural consequence of the foregoing discussion. Indeed, it is envisaged that most Marist schools would be entirely lay before too long. That is, the network of Marist schools would increase; once a school is established as a Marist enterprise then it would always remain so.

6. Terms of Engagement

From the time of Marcellin Champagnat, the Marist Brothers have made a point of negotiating unambiguously with local civil and church authorities to ensure they have the suitable arrangements to educate in their preferred manner. This has provided a certain autonomy of operation which has allowed them to live and work according to their charism. One of the challenges of the present time is to protect the strength of the school's Marist culture in the face of increasing bureaucratisation of CEOs, homogenisation of Catholic schools, increasingly diocesan-oriented schools, and growing governmental influence. It is timely, therefore, to draw up a statement of the preferred standard mode of operation of a Marist school. The terms of engagement for both new and existing schools could then be negotiated or re-negotiated with diocesan authorities from a firmer basis.

Particularly where there may be no Marist Brothers in a school, some safeguards for preserving and developing the charism of the school need to be put in place.

The following items/areas would therefore seem important to include in such a statement:

- terms of engagement being made only between the Marist Brothers and the local bishop;
- the Province's right to appoint the principal and assistant principal(s) — following appropriate application and interview procedures — of any school under Marist administration;
- the Province's right to appoint and/or veto the chair of any governing or advisory council of the school;
- the local principal's right to engage and dismiss all staff and appoint all other promotional positions, again in accordance with customary application procedures and industrial guidelines;
- the local principal's right to determine enrolment policy, and enrol and exclude all students, in accordance with civil requirements and safeguards;
- the local principal's right to determine school fee arrangements and concessions for families;
- the local school's right to determine curriculum, within governmental requirements;
- a sufficient degree of financial and industrial autonomy, as judged appropriate in a given situation.

The purpose of these recommendations, taken together, is to create a situation where, in the particular circumstances of the Australian Catholic education scene of the 1990s and 2000s, Champagnat-style leaders and educators can be nurtured, a situation where they can exercise the distinctive style of educational endeavour which comes from their charism. They aim to develop circumstances through which an extraordinarily effective teaching charism of the Church can find revitalised expression in a rapidly changing context. They are recommendations made, however, with the same reservations and qualifications that the first plans for Australian Marist education were made in 1871: after long discernment the General Council chose the wise, older and English Brother Ezekiel to take charge of the new mission. He died. The new and daunting challenge fell to the young, inexperienced and French Brother Ludovic. "Man proposes, God disposes" was the response of a diffident Brother Ludovic.²⁷ The mission flourished. It reminds us, if Champagnat people need reminding, that it is God's will that will prevail. And it prods us, consistent with the way that Champagnat followed without exception, to place any plans and decisions firmly in God's hands; without prayer we are unlikely learn the mind of God or discover the will of his Spirit.

The future

So what might be imagined as a desired future of schools in the Marist Brothers' tradition? Consider this image of our future:

A growing network of schools

explicitly dedicated to the teaching traditions inspired by Marcellin Champagnat;
serving the gospel, the local Church and community;
by leading people to be good Christians and good citizens;
through educating them in strong Marist cultures.

The schools are staffed by men and women

who are disposed by preference to the Marist teaching charism
and see themselves as Marist educators;

most of whom are members of a professional association dedicated to promoting the Champagnat tradition of education;
 and committed to this charism in their personal and professional lives
 and to contributing towards the continual enriching of that charism;
 who are supported by that association's journal;
 who are nourished by a range of professional development activities and courses;
 who see the significant part of the careers being spent in Marist schools;
 some of whom are also Marist Brothers or members of the Champagnat Movement.

The schools

have clear arrangements with the dioceses in which they operate
 and are supported by the authorities of those dioceses to exercise their charism
 and develop their culture;
 are supported by provincial administrative structures which appoints the leaders of schools, monitors their development and direction, and facilitates career paths of Marist educators within them.

¹Doyle, A (1972) *The Story of the Marist Brothers in Australia 1872-1972* Sydney: The Marist Brothers of the Schools, pp.29-31.

²National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) *A Nation at Risk* Washington DC: Government Printing Office

³Flynn, M (1985) *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools* Sydney: St Paul's; ——— (1993) *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools 1972-1993* Sydney: St Paul's

⁴Ouchi, W (1981) *Theory Z* Reading MA: Addison-Wesley; Deal, TE & Kennedy AA (1982) *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* Reading MA: Addison-Wesley; Peters TJ & Waterman, RH (1982) *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* New York: Harper & Row

⁵Flynn (1993) op.cit.

⁶Deal & Kennedy, op.cit, pp.2ff. See also Bower, M (1966) *The Will To Manage* New York: MacGraw-Hill.

⁷Peters & Waterman, op.cit., p.319, 324-5. See Also Beare, H (1987) Metaphors About Schools: the Principal as Cultural Leader, in Simpkins WS, Thomas AR, Thomas EB (eds.) *The Principal and Change: The Australian Experience* Armidale: UNE

⁸Sergiovanni TJ (1987) *The Principalship: A Reflective Practical Perspective* Boston: Allyn & Bacon Inc. See also Owens, R (1987) *Organizational Behaviour in Education* Englewood Cliffs CA: Prentice-Hall

⁹Doyle, op.cit., pp52-55.

¹⁰Br Ludovic to Fr Poupinel, Dec. 1872, in ibid., p.154

¹¹*Constitutions of the Marist Brothers of the Schools* (1986), #81, 86

¹²Ibid., #80; Marist Brothers (1990) *Pastoral Plan of the Marist Brothers Province of Sydney*, Sydney: Marist Publishing, p.5

¹³Ibid., #87

¹⁴McMahon, J (1993) *Educational Vision: A Marist Perspective*. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation submitted in the University of London, p.143. See also Bergeret, M (1992) *The Marist Teaching Tradition*. Unpublished paper presented to the First European Congress on Marist Education (Barcelona, Spain, 11-15 May), p.65.; Zind, P (1991) *Bx. M. Champagnat: son œuvre scolaire dans son contexte historique*. Rome: Les Frères Maristes, pp.350-352.

¹⁵*Constitutions*, #81

¹⁶Sergiovanni, op.cit.

¹⁷Three papers by Brother Ray Mulvogue are instructive on the evolving thinking of the Province during the 1980s on this issue: *The Catholic School and the Marist Apostolate* (1983); *The School Apostolate* (1986), both submissions to the Provincial Council; and *A Principal's Reflections on the Marist School* (1990), presented to the Marist Principals' Conference. It could be argued that the Province did not give clear assent to the

distinctive nature of Marist schools because the Marist culture still remained strong in them and was not really recognised until it began to dissipate.

¹⁸ Peters & Waterman, op.cit.

¹⁹ Ibid. See also Burns, JM (1978) *Leadership* New York: Harper & Row, who introduced the concept of "transformational leadership"; and Deal and Kennedy, op.cit.,

²⁰ Projections prepared for the Ministry Commission of the Marist Brothers Province of Sydney, 1991-92.

²¹ Even as late as 1975 the average age of Marist secondary principals was only 40 and primary principals 37. In 1994 it is 51 for secondary principals and 49 for primary. (Figures supplied by Br Ray Mulvogue). Even some of the largest Marist enterprises such as St Joseph's College & Marist College Ashgrove have had few Headmasters outside their forties or thirties.

²² McMahon, op.cit, Ch.2

²³ Howard, C (1994) *Opening Address of the XIX General Chapter* . Unpublished paper presented in Rome, October 1993.

²⁴ Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools (1994) *Brothers in Solidarity: Documents of the XIX General Chapter* Rome: Marist Brothers, p.45

²⁵ *Pastoral Plan*, p.5

²⁶ McMahon, op.cit, p.104

²⁷ Brother Ludovic, *Annales de la Mission d'Australie*, in Doyle, op.cit, p.27