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AN INTERNATIONAL MARIST JOURNAL OF CHARISM IN EDUCATION

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Mary as Companion, Inspiration and Support

Lúcio Gomes Dantas

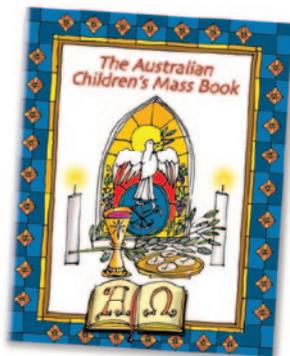
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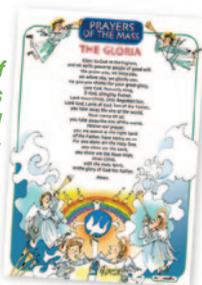
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Champagnat

An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education

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Spring 2011

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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...*



A Model for Each of Us

MARY, the mother of Jesus, went to visit her cousin Elizabeth when she knew Elizabeth was pregnant. We're told the journey was an onerous one. Mary had some news to tell Elizabeth - that an angel had told her she was to become the mother of Jesus. One can only imagine the conversations and emotions shared during that encounter in the hills.

Some time ago, Lee McKenzie wrote an article in this Journal about an occasional meeting with Mary in a contemporary supermarket. It captured our imaginations about a seemingly normal, everyday occurrence. It challenged us to think about how we meet and relate with anonymous people in public places.

The nature of meetings and encounters continues to evolve. Our world is fast becoming more networked through modern social media, where we need to learn and assimilate. We are also beginning to realise that for these forms of communication to be of benefit, they must enhance our face to face meetings, rather than replace them in our daily lives. Christianity invites us

to contribute to our world. Yet how do we do this? Dom Helder Camara said famously *'When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality.'* Our networked world encourages dreaming together, even internationally. For Mary and Elizabeth their network had taken on new dimensions. They were both to become mothers, one the mother of the Messiah.

Images play an important role in our lives, in nurturing our relationships, our networks. They can engage us more deeply in significant events, help us focus on places we have visited and deepen our love of the people in our lives. Images engage us in realities.

In Brazil, Marists are celebrating their Marial Year with the reception of a new statue of 'Our Lady of the New Land'. In a prayerful climate they sing: *'Blessed is the one who comes ... bringing the peace of the Lord!'* In Portugal recently, 3000 youth found the 'peace of the Lord' by making a pilgrimage to Fatima. Mary attracts us in diverse ways. Some of us identify with and admire her, others simply let her take us to God.

It is clear, Mary was such a well rounded person that there is something about her for each of us. She was honest, simple, unpretentious, gracious, tough, patient, sturdy and at times, lonely and hurt. As a woman of faith, she was never daunted. Perhaps we can try to

Introduction

name the characteristic of Mary that touches us. It may be a matter of our personality, of our character, or of our particular way of living. Whatever characteristic enables us to be more fully alive, then that is the one for us.

John McMahon

In This Issue

As THIS Spring edition will reach schools and other subscribers shortly before Assumption Day, the patronal feast of the Marist Brothers, it has a strong focus on the Blessed Mother. Perspectives on Mary as Companion, Inspiration and Support come from the Generalate in Rome, the Marists in Brazil, in the USA, and in Australia.

The second part of a thoughtful and sensitive tribute to the outstanding Marist, Ronald Fogarty, is among other articles. In a typically modest way he made a substantial contribution to strengthening and guiding Religious Life in the decades following Vatican 2. It seems that comprehensive details of this mission are destined to go unrecorded. What we do have is an insight into the spiritual thinking in his declining years of a man of great accomplishments. Especially for those

who live with aged people, the article is calculated in part to stimulate a more sympathetic understanding of their frame of mind.

Other articles include a sequel to the assessment of World Youth Day that appeared in the Winter edition. This second article suggests how we might appreciate the significance of such spectacular events in the context of the modern Church. We also have an account of the historical context and current action in relation to the resurgent laity in the ministry of the Church.

A widely experienced and talented teacher from a U.S. Catholic High School examines how catechesis in a multi-media world can connect with today's students. Also in the Education section there is a description and assessment of restorative practices being increasingly implemented in our schools.

We conclude with reviews of two books from John Garratt Publishing that may well be of significant interest. The first (Friendly Guide to Jesus) has direct relevance to Religious Education classes, the second (Our Fathers) provides some insight into how today's hardworking priests view aspects of their ministry. The attention of R.E. teachers of younger pupils is drawn to the book highlighted on the inside front cover.

*We would like to advise **subscribers** that they can now request as a pdf a copy of any article from the Winter and the Spring 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*

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Contributors

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GREG BENNETT

Jesus – Shepherd and Gate

(Reproduced below are the Speaking Notes of a homily given on the Fourth Sunday of Easter by Father Greg Bennet, Parish Priest of St. Bede's Parish, in the Melbourne suburb of North Balwyn.)

'You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.'

Lord Jesus, You shepherd us from all harm.

Christ Jesus, You call us by name to follow you.

Lord Jesus, You are shepherd who leads to salvation.

THIS WEEK I joined our Principal, Annette Broadfoot, during the interviews for the prospective Prep. Students¹ for 2012. It was a delightful experience, listening to parents as they explained why they seek a Catholic school for their children. I enjoyed observing how the different little boys and girls entered the office – some walked in very confidently – some walked in holding the hand of mum or dad – some came in as if they owned the place, one little girl even went and sat in Annette's chair!

I observed and listened very carefully to the whole experience. I admired Annette's approach to engaging with the little children – some again who responded with ease – some a little shyly – some who did not want to speak at all until they had summed up what was going on.

However the voice of the parent, the voice of the one they knew, put them at ease, reassured, cajoled and encouraged the children to feel safe. The voice of love is more than the words which fall from the lips; the voice of love speaks to the deepest recesses of our being. The voice of love can lead us to trust, to hope, to belief, to new insight and to see possibility beyond our imagining.

In the midst of our lives we hear the voice of another – the voice of Jesus. The voice which echoes within. John uses a wonderful and evocative image to engage a people in ancient Palestine who understood the life of a shepherd. Unlike our Australian context where farmers have thousands of sheep, the shepherd in the ancient world had a small flock – they were his livelihood – they provided wool, milk and food. The sheep grazed on the open hillside during the night and then were locked up in a pen with other sheep belonging to other shepherds. One shepherd acted as gatekeeper/guard as the others rested – to keep the animals safe from thieves and prey. In the morning, each shepherd would come and his voice would summon his sheep for the day ahead. For as Jesus says, ‘they never follow a stranger but run away from him; they do not recognise the voice of strangers.’

This rich image reminds us of the intimate relationship which is formed between the shepherd and sheep – it does not happen overnight. The sheep know the call of the shepherd and they respond. A good shepherd is contrasted with those who come to steal, destroy and harass the sheep that do not belong to them.

The early Johannine community, as it struggled to emancipate itself from the control of the synagogue and establish its own identity, went through a period of great confusion. There were many voices calling to the ‘sheep’. The early Christians were emerging as a community centred upon the Good Shepherd – lives centred in Jesus.

Jesus says he is both the shepherd AND the gate. If the sheep are to flourish they need to go in and out of the gate of the yard. They cannot stay within the ‘yard’ for they will perish from hunger, and they cannot stay out at night for they shall risk their lives. So daily the sheep have to come and go through the gate, which ensures both protection and growth.

Jesus is indicating that only through vital and continual communion with himself will members of the community find life and grow. It is in this sense he ‘has come so that they may have life to the full’ and will lead them to green pastures.

He is the gate and the shepherd who leads us to life. He is the voice which summons us, but we need to know his sound.

In our lives there are a multitude of voices clamouring for our attention; voices which suggest how we should look, what we should wear, how we should behave. The loudest and the strongest are not always the voices which lead to life. Often these voices try to control us. In the end their tempting lure does not bring life, but often dissatisfaction. Jesus invites

us to attune our ear to the sound of his call – a call which invites us to compassion, mercy, justice, empathy, hope and love. It is not a voice which scares us into flight, but a voice which invites us to discovery.

The challenge for many of us is to find time to be still enough to listen to God. We live in a world which bombards us with noise and images. Silence is uncomfortable. Listening is almost deafening. Silence is an activity or prayer.

The Good Shepherd's voice promises life, but we need to hear him speak. Other voices too will demand our attention, but so often these will not lead to fullness of life, only brief encounters with life that do not endure. As we enter the week ahead, perhaps we might see what it is like to stop for a few minutes. No agenda. No words. No KPIs – just yourself and God.

Andrew, my brother and Nella his wife, have a beautiful new baby boy, Jack. I watched and saw Nella whispering into his little ear – soothing him. I thought this is how God is with us – a Good Shepherd who holds and cares for his sheep; a Shepherd whose voice leads us in this life and a voice that will call our name and we shall not want! ■

*Silence is letting what there is, be what it is,
and in that sense is profoundly to do with God.*

*When we experience moments where there is nothing we can say or do
that would not intrude on the integrity and beauty of what is before us,
that is a silence that takes us into God.*

– Archbishop Rowan Williams

ENDNOTES

- 1 In the State of Victoria the Prep(aratory) class is for children aged about 5 years and precedes the six years of Primary schooling





ANN BILLARD AND BRENDAN GEARY

Mary the Elder

ALL OF US probably have a favourite image of Mary. It may be the very influential picture of the Immaculate Conception that we are familiar with. Or it could be the young girl first becoming aware of the invitation to become mother of the Messiah, perhaps the image painted by Fra Angelico. Or maybe it is a statue of the Virgin with the child Jesus looking lovingly at his mother, or outwards to the world? Perhaps we think of Mary at Cana, or at Calvary. These images are a profound part of our spiritual lives and our religious identity. We could ask ourselves what the dominant image of Mary is in our congregation or our part of the world: Mary of the Annunciation, Mary of the Visitation, Mary at the birth of Jesus, or Mary grieving with the other women and St. John at Calvary. We might ask ourselves: 'Where do I find myself in the story of Mary's life?'

We ask this question because we recently came across the image of 'Mary the Elder'. Joe Aspell, an American Marianist Brother, created a sculpture of 'Mary Seat of Wisdom' for a parish in California. We were both struck by the quiet dignity of Mary in her elder years, pondering the mystery of her life: the dramatic changes that happened to her as a result of her 'Fiat', watching Jesus grow, observing Him during his years of active ministry, his death and resurrection. Or is she remembering the first Pentecost, when she experienced the outpouring of the Spirit with the apostles, or watching the growth of the early church? Perhaps she is reflecting on the painful break with Judaism, the rejection from the synagogue, the suffering of early Christians and the development of a new church order with its own values, rules and understandings, particularly new understandings of the place of women in this new faith community.

MARY AS A MODEL FOR ELDERS

These thoughts are appropriate for someone who has lived a long life and who has seen early promise ripen through years of work and responsibility

to the elder years of mentoring and accompanying a new generation. David Fleming S.M., former Superior General of the Marianists, writes of this sculpture, 'Perhaps we imagine that this sculpture depicts Mary in a moment of rest during the momentous early years of the post-Pentecostal Church. Her role, it seems to suggest, is less to preach or organise, than to serve as a point of reference for the young Church, to transmit to those around her the wisdom and the sense of the presence of her Son that she had learned over the years'.

Joe Aspell, the sculptor, wrote the following comments about his work of art:

In Mary, the older woman, we see reflected our own lives. Her life was not protected. No longer the girl of the Annunciation, she is seen here as having lived through the same contradictions that our lives face, especially the lives of millions of the world's poor. In the Gospels she is homeless at the time of her child's birth. She becomes a refugee and must flee her own country to become a foreigner in a strange land and culture. Beyond these hardships, like us, she too experienced a crisis of faith. It was the contradiction of outliving her child. And it was also the contradiction that everything her culture had led her to believe did not happen – this was not what was supposed to happen to the Messiah. At that moment she had to take her faith and make it more than what others said. She had to make it her own. She came through that, and this is the person we see at Pentecost.

Many people in parishes, as well as members of religious congregations in the developed world, are in their elder years. They will have seen the years of promise after the Vatican Council, with its enthusiasm, energy, and changes as well as the differences in terms of membership, participation of young people, and the transformation of Catholic culture of the last four decades. There have undoubtedly been many positive things that have happened in the church over the past forty years but, from another perspective, many of the things that were promised have not happened. This image of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, may be an appropriate image for elder parishioners and religious, as they continue to be faithful, with the benefit and the knowledge born of experience, but wait, with the quiet dignity of Mary in this sculpture, 'with joyful hope' for what lies ahead.

In the sculpture we see a woman who is open, *accueillante et disponible*, receptive, welcoming, accepting, open and 'disposed to be available' for the calls of this stage of her life.

Both of us (Ann as leader of a programme entitled *Transformative Ageing*, and Brendan as Provincial of a Province of men, many of whom are retired), are involved in helping religious to reflect on their life journey, to acknowledge the graced and good moments, accept and experience healing for the hurts, and integrate all of this as part of their life journey in retirement. Mary, Seat of Wisdom, could become a model for this kind of integration, which is an essential and appropriate task in the later years of life.

RELATING TO MARY AS ELDER RELIGIOUS

Returning to the initial question, 'Where do I find myself in the story of Mary's life?' Curiosity sent Ann off to ask some elder vowed religious the question. 'How do you relate to the younger Mary of the Gospels?' She also asked them, 'What is your favourite image of Mary?'

These elder religious sisters were quick with their responses. All of them informed her that 'Mary is timeless' and 'transcends age'. Mary modelled for all of them how to be a 'bearer of Christ' in trust and love. As one who journeyed with Christ from birth to death and resurrection, Mary experienced the phases of the soul's journey that we all experience as we age: The call, the search, struggle, breakthrough and mission (Moody & Carroll, 1997). The journey of ageing invites the soul to experience the different phases at different times. And when we reach that threshold in life, when we know that what seemed certain is changing - we experience a sense of crisis. Mary's experience in navigating the challenges of her life with Jesus becomes a source of consolation. In her journey, we see a young virgin become a mother and then emerge as the Seat of Wisdom for all of us.

Mary is one of us, beginning with her *call* at the annunciation, a favourite image of Mary for these elder religious. God has a way of getting our attention while we are engaged in the ordinary events of our lives. Sometimes it is an illness, a fall, the experience of retirement, or in prayer that one experiences a sense of tug within, or that inner voice speaks and, if we are attentive to God's movement, we notice. We notice and respond. At times we resist. At other times we respond in love and trust even when we have no guarantees or strategic plans to guide us. We are moved to complete our mission, the work of love we are here to do (Bankson, 2005). Beginning with the Annunciation, Mary responds to her call.

When one has a sense of call, of being moved forward, being asked to

let go of what is, the person will begin *to search* for a way to be rooted anew when crossing the threshold to a different identity. One looks for a way to be effective. And one might ask, 'What could this be about? What does it mean?' Again we can go to Mary and see that she too wondered. Imagine what it must have been like for an unmarried teen to find herself pregnant in her time. And so she travels to the home of an elder relative for support and counsel. Another favourite image of elder religious is the encounter of Mary with Elizabeth. Here the elder can see that Mary respects the older adult. In this encounter, the elder also learns through Mary's actions, the elder has a new role, mentoring the young.

The spiritual journey is rooted in *struggle* and Mary was no exception. Mary as a young unmarried pregnant teen certainly had her issues to deal with after saying 'yes' to her call. And the reality of her 'yes' was brought home to her by Simeon, an elder, when he met her in the temple and told her: 'A sword will pierce your own heart' (Luke 2:35). In the struggle phase of their own spiritual journeys, the elder religious often look to Mary for consolation and guidance. They see her as a source of strength, as one who has been there in the midst of pain and suffering throughout her life with Christ. They see her as the contemplative they desire to be, one who stands in awe and wonder from the beginning of Christ's life to being at the foot of the cross of her Son, pondering all in her heart. Mary provides the way for all of us to allow Christ's love to touch our pain, suffering, and loss. As one elder religious commented, 'Mary understands us humans. Given her own journey, she understands the struggle and is tolerant of our weakness. Mary becomes the mediator as one is challenged in this phase to remember that God loves us and forgives us all over again every day'.

BREAKTHROUGH

After a long struggle, in the moment of surrender to God's call, one experiences a *breakthrough* moment. Here one knows a new freedom and a new happiness. As that young unmarried teen, Mary gives us a taste of what this might be like when we're moving away from growing up to growing into God in our ageing. One of the most poignant of breakthrough moments in Mary's young life was her response to Elizabeth's greeting when she spontaneously responds with her Magnificat, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord' (Luke 1:46). There seems to be a joy and delight in her response to Elizabeth. The struggle with what has been happening in her life has been lifted - at least for the moment. Older adults recognize that here, in this moment, Mary has changed. So it is in

the life of the elder religious. When they experience the grace of surrender to God's call of ageing, they re-discover a new joy and wonder and delight in life again. There is new meaning and purpose to their life. In coming to know a new freedom and happiness, the elder becomes the 'Keeper of the Meaning' (Vaillant, 2002) for the community. Their own inner elder now has emerged. Life is now authored by the spirit of God within them, not by those around them. They speak with new authority as Mary did at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:5); when she told the servers, 'Do as he tells you'. This is another favourite bible story of elder religious. They recognize Mary's self-possession and confidence, a trait of the healthy spiritual elder.

One of the components of a call from God is that it is never just for the person's well-being. A call from God is always for others. If one is called, then one has been chosen for a specific *mission*. Mission is the reason for being. Mary was chosen to be the mother of God. In her humble 'yes', when she said 'Be it done according to thy Word' Mary simply and humbly accepted the will of God in a great act of faith. In saying 'yes' she modelled for all of us what it means to say 'yes' to God's call. She said 'yes' and did what we are all called to do, be bearers of Christ in the world. She did this in the ordinary events of her life as we are challenged to do. In saying 'yes' she allowed love to enter the world through her. Mary teaches us that life offers lessons to be learned. How we respond is a choice.

MARY SEAT OF WISDOM

In Mary's life, the elder recognizes a woman who has not only learned her life lessons but also shows us how to live out the call to be the bearer of Christ in today's world. As she journeyed with Christ, and then provided the stability and quiet strength of a wisdom figure to the apostles of the early church, Mary lived the pain and struggle we all experience. Despite Mary's youth, the elder religious women who were surveyed had no difficulty relating to her as the Seat of Wisdom.

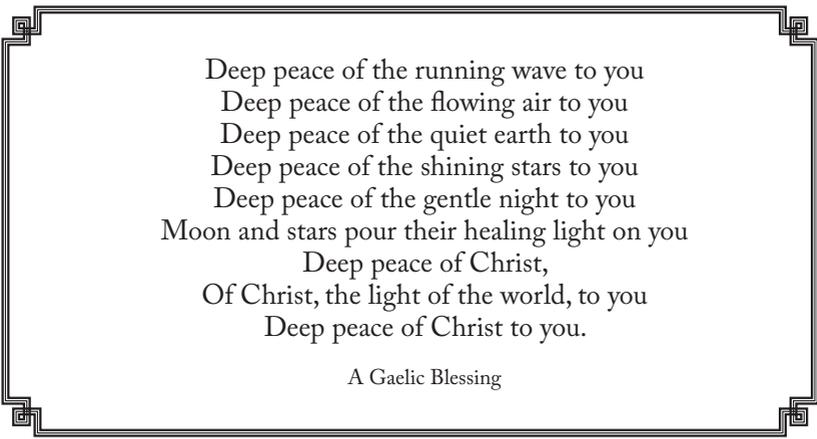
Because a call is always for others, relationships are critical in order for this new call to come to fullness. All of the elder religious surveyed commented on their own long, personal relationship with Mary. Mary is not just a character in a bible story. She is and has been an integral part of their lives. And so Mary has been part of their own spiritual journey of ageing from the beginning. As they reclaim parts of their own story, they are able to relate to Mary's journey with Christ. And in that experience Mary transcends time and age.

More than ever our world needs people of wisdom. It needs people committed to the spiritual journey. The wisdom the world needs will not be found on TV or in the newspapers. Trusting the God of surprises when He breaks into the journey, older adults can find in Mary, Seat of Wisdom, the wisdom in which they seek to live and age gracefully.

The image of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, may be an image that can help us to look to Mary as a model of how to continue growing in our elder years. Mary of the Annunciation continues to challenge us to say 'yes'. Mary of the Visitation invites us to 'Go in haste to new lands' (Marist Brothers, XXI General Chapter) and Mary of Calvary continues to invite us to live and try to understand the mystery of suffering and loss. But it is especially Mary, the gracious elder, who may best offer the older members of our provinces, parishes and communities a model for spiritual growth and renewal in a way that is particularly appropriate for this stage of their life journey. ■

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Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the gentle night to you
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
Deep peace of Christ,
Of Christ, the light of the world, to you
Deep peace of Christ to you.

A Gaelic Blessing

RICHARD RYMARZ

Community and Transcendence:

Two Keys to Understanding World Youth Day

World Youth Day (WYD) is a significant institutional development in the contemporary Catholic Church. The Church remains in a transitional period marked by the disappearance and emergence of institutional structures. One major challenge is the capacity of the Church to nurture younger Catholics in the face of an increasingly dominant secular culture. WYD addresses the needs of religiously active youth by, amongst other things, providing them with experiences of being part of a moral community and of the transcendent element of religious life. Both of these are often lacking in the conventional lives of many younger Catholics. Encountering them at WYD helps provide religious plausibility.

'I can't wait for the next WYD. It's where I get a chance to feel the presence of God and share it with a community like me.'

THE QUOTE above from a World Youth Day participant sheds light on two of the reasons that WYD has become such a prominent feature of the contemporary Catholic landscape. In this paper I will argue that for many active Catholic youth two elements that are essential to nurturing and cultivating religious commitment, namely, an experience of transcendence and participation in a moral community of practice, are not readily available. WYD provides an opportunity for many younger Catholics to experience both of these reinforcers and, as such,

provides critical support for younger active Catholics.

The Catholic Church in the second decade of the third millennium is still very much in a transitional mode (Lonergan 1974; Rahner, 1974). In Australia, the post Tridentine, immigrant Church which experienced something of a high water mark immediately after World War II has fast receded (Rymarz, 2004). A new era ushered in by the Second Vatican Council has arrived. This new landscape has not, however, crystallised fully and in many ways is still undefined. In this paper I will propose WYD as one feature, perhaps unconscious, of a new Church configuration that has developed as a response to increasing secularisation in many countries such as Australia. For some younger Catholics WYD provides something that cannot be found in previously conventional vectors of religious socialisation.

THE SEARCH FOR MORAL COMMUNITIES

One feature of contemporary Catholicism that has greatly diminished in recent times is the capacity of the community to socialise, beyond a trivial level, the next generation of Catholics (D'Antonio et al.: Mason et al., 2007). The traditional triad of Church, family and school has broken down (Bourg, 2004). For decades there has been a movement of younger Catholics away from the Church toward a lifestyle and worldview that is similar to societal norms (Bouma 2007). The problem of arresting this trend, in the main, is daunting. An increasing number of young people, Catholics included, do not have experience, connection or memory of a strong and viable religious culture (Mason et al., 2007). The task of evangelising this group is a topic for another paper. The group that I wish to focus on comprises those younger Catholics who have some connection with the worshipping community and who can be called active or core (Rymarz and Graham, 2007). In theological language they understand something of the salvific reality of Christ. In a more sociological sense they are, to varying degrees, members of a functioning group and are what Pearce and Denton (2011) call religious abiders. Cultivation of this group has received surprisingly little attention. To be sure, they are not the dominate subpopulation amongst youth today but their numbers are not negligible (Fulton et al., 2000). And significantly for the discussion in this paper this subgroup of active Catholic youth are heavily overrepresented in the pilgrims who participate in WYD (Singleton, 2011). A very pertinent question becomes: what does the Church do to strengthen and nurture this group?

In the past religious socialisation had a strongly institutional and passive dimension. A key plank of this was involvement in moral communities (Campion, 1982). A moral community is one in which members share common values and beliefs (Hill, 2009; Small and Bowman, 2011). Importantly, the moral community is one that is quite formative because members feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to others in the group (Coleman and Hoffer, 1987). It can modulate behaviour in both positive and negative ways. For instance, a reason for participating in ritual action, such as going to Mass, is that it is a characteristic of a particular moral community. If this was not done then others members of the community would be let down. In a similar vein, social behaviour can be refined in light of group expectations. Being part of a moral community gives the person a sense of identity but it must be based on a high level of shared beliefs and values. The problem for many younger active Catholics today is that the moral communities that they are part of are not ones which nurture and cultivate religious belief (Smith and Denton, 2005; Smith and Snell, 2009). This is not a moral judgment, it is simply a reflection of the dominant cultural norms today. The question then becomes how do active Catholic youth get the nurturing and support that being part of a moral community can provide? The traditional parish may fall short in this regard as often it does not provide the support of like-minded young people (Wilkes, 2001). In a similar way, the school does provide a range of moral communities but these may not, in the main, sustain and nurture religious belief, culture and practice (Francis, 2002). Similarly families today are under increasing pressure to fulfil their role as formative moral communities, especially in the religious sphere. Rymarz (2009) remarked that many active Catholic families found it difficult to build up spiritual capital and often found themselves living out a day to day reality that was little different from other families in the culture. This was especially relevant in a surrounding culture which does not often directly counter strong religious commitment but simply marginalises it, encouraging a type of practical atheism (Solle, 1992). In this milieu the capacity of the family to act as a moral community is impaired.

Being part of such a moral community is not a type of social indoctrination. Rather it provides young people with the support they need to be able to make informed, personal religious judgments in a way which does not threaten them. Amongst Australian WYD pilgrims there is a disproportionate number of active Catholics (Mason, 2010).

This stands to reason, as those most likely to take part in a prolonged religious festival are those who have a predisposition to this type of activity (Rymarz, 2008C). Going to WYD, and the ongoing involvement in actual or cyber WYD inspired communities, provide for active Catholic youth the moral community that they find difficult to find in traditional areas. At WYD pilgrims can pray, go to Mass, listen to religious talks, ask question and sing hymns in a free and unencumbered way. This is not their experience, in general, in families, at schools or in parishes (Rymarz, 2008). This is what has been called the, “it’s not just me in Shepparton” phenomenon (Rymarz, 2008B). This describes the response of a WYD participant to the question of what she liked most about WYD. In her conventional life, in terms of religious fellowship, she felt isolated. The plausibility structures that give shape to religious meaning do not have a strong impact on her life

Key plausibility structures are family, schools, workplaces and community groups. It is within these structures that religion becomes plausible (Berger and Luckman 1967, 34). Vibrant religious communities are able to provide an ongoing explanation of the world, within the context of a believing community. Plausibility structures must be able to provide mechanisms for socialising the next generation. This includes a wide range of social practices, both within the family and the wider social network (Bruce 1984). There must be many opportunities for conversation within the community. Conversation here means occasions when the members of the community can rehearse over and over again what it means to be a part of that group. This involves a range of actions over a prolonged period of time. The important feature here is the actual capacity to live out what it means to be a member of that community (Bruce 1984). For many active younger Catholics this capacity is greatly limited.

The idea of conversation as a way of sustaining commitment has some overlap with the concept of social capital. If conversation is particularly rich, that is, if a person has had lots of experience rehearsing what it means to be a member of a particular community, they have almost certainly invested a large amount of time and emotional energy into the enterprise. This can be seen as a type of investment, an accumulating, bonding social capital (Baron, Field and Schuller 2000). If they leave the group or lessen their involvement this investment is lost or devalued. Many of the opportunities for conversation, to practise what it means to be a part of a religious community and to develop social capital, have disappeared in recent times.

Many Catholics, for example, have few ways to express their Catholic identity (Rymarz 2007). For identity to remain strong and to be correlated with high levels of commitment it must be actualised with behaviours that mark group affiliation (Strommen and Hardel 2000, 12–45). Participation in WYD gives many younger Catholics this opportunity.

EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCENDENCE

In a similar vein a feature of the religious lives of many active younger Catholics is a lack of engagement with the transcendent. The idea of religion as an access point to the divine and transcendent is a classical notion in social discourse (Durkheim, 1965). There are many aspects of the transcendent dimension of religion. One manifestation of the transcendent is found in parallel experiences of communal joy, something which is very common at WYD (Rymarz, 2007). Walker (2004, p. 201) pointed out that joy is the ‘fundamental trait of the Christian ethos’. Any group, certainly a religious community, flourishes when its members are joyful and feel that their needs are being addressed (Coalter, et al., 1996; Diun, 2008). Pastoral, supportive groups should aim to provide communal experiences that are affirming, positive, and joyful (Bibby, 1993). This type of affective affirmation, which is apart from cognitive development, is critical in nurturing mature adult faith. Collins (2001) develops the idea of collectively generated emotional energy to explain why some social movements are more successful than others in encouraging members to become more deeply involved. Put simply, groups that give members strong collective experiences of shared joy or strong reinforcing affective messages are more likely to attract new members and to retain existing ones. They do this by providing a chance for physical assembly, a focus of attention, and a shared experience of mutual concern (Goodwin et al., 2001). In these circumstances, a feeling of group solidarity develops which has some similarities with what Durkheim called collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1965, p. 34).

Religious groups, in enveloping secular cultures, need to emphasize what makes them distinctive. For contemporary Catholicism this is an especially urgent task. Greeley (2004, p.134) characterises the state of the Church in these terms: ‘Catholicism stripped of much of its beauty, its rainforest of metaphors denuded, in a manic and thoughtless effort to be just like everyone else’. A key aspect of religious distinctiveness is its ability to invoke the divine and transcendent. Religious groups need to articulate their access to a metaphysical narrative, one that enables the individual to ‘exchange

with the Gods' (Stark and Finke, 2000, p.91). This exchange addresses a powerful and perennial human need, namely, to be in some type of contact with the Divine. Dulles (1975, p.550) expresses this idea in Christian terms when he writes, '[people] are desperate for a vivifying contact with the eternal Spirit in whom all things begin and end, the God who can bring life even to the dead'. In contemporary culture, which is pressurised and where there are many competing voices, the metaphysical dimension of religion should be a prominent feature of religious groups. It is as if people have only a limited time to hear and see what is being offered. To continue the analogy they are also under no compulsion to join or become more involved. If the metaphysical narrative is presented credibly it can present an attractive rational alternative. To live in the pale of a divine benevolence is a powerful benefit. It provides the individual with a conduit between the sacred and profane world, a function that has long been identified as a key to understanding the religious impulse (Durkheim 1965). If a religious group is able to articulate a special relationship between believers and God then this puts it in a powerful exchange position. It may never appeal to the majority of people but it does have some intrinsic appeal.

For Catholics many of the institutions and social structures that help mediate between a sense of divine transcendence and daily life have disappeared (Greeley, 2000). By and large this has not been a deliberate or planned process, but once historically and anthropologically rooted practices disappear, it is very difficult to reinstate or replace them. Often all that can be done is to ruefully reflect on the process (Charron, 1990). WYD may represent a new structure which caters for those younger Catholics who, in many ways, are craving for an experience of the transcendent. To be sure, this is a fleeting experience, but this is one of the features of pilgrimage (Turner and Turner, 1978). The experience of pilgrimage places the individual into another reality, one that is not totally new but where often conventional experiences are energised and transformed. At WYD pilgrims experience liturgy, for instance, in a more affective way. This is, in part, pointing to the unique context of pilgrimage. They are in a new environment, they are with new people and their senses have become highly attuned due to the new reality they are experiencing. None of this should be seen, from a Catholic perspective, as a substituent for the more mundane discipline of regular worship in the home setting. It does, however, have the potential to transform the everyday experience by giving a strong recollection of what can be felt in the right moment and atmosphere.

Creation of these new structures is a contour of the evolving institutional face of Catholicism that continues to emerge in the post conciliar Church. This takes place in a wider context of some legitimate confusion about what were the important parts of the Tradition and how these should be passed on, and whether strong religious socialisation was necessary. The formative religious experiences of many younger Catholics have tended to be diffuse and idiosyncratic. A connection with the transcendent dimensions of Catholicism was often lacking. Barron (2004, p.3) used the term 'lost generation' to describe those Catholics who came to maturity in this milieu. He commented that a characteristic of this time was that 'the biblical and theological tended to be replaced by the political, the sociological, and, above all, the psychological' (Barron, 2004, p.17). Younger Catholics, such as those who attend WYD, find it difficult to easily recall formative experiences that marked their enculturation into their religious tradition. This can be contrasted with earlier generations who have a far stronger, even if not always positive, recollection of being raised Catholic (Rymarz, 2004). These experiences have been translated into a literary subgenre. Two examples of this subgenre are, 'The Devil's Playground', a semi autobiographical movie by director Fred Schepisi, and Ron Blair's one act play, 'The Christian Brothers'. It is unusual, by contrast, to find accounts that depict growing up Catholic in the 1970's or later.

The Catholic school, in the absence of other formative influences, became a critical factor in the religious socialisation of younger Catholics. Rymarz (2004) has identified a number of significant points that characterised the formative experience of younger, active Catholics in schools. Active Catholic youth, such as those who attend WYD, feel safe in Catholic schools. Their experience of them is positive. Catholic schools provide a welcoming environment for students (Fahy, 1992). Active Catholic students, on the whole, did not feel isolated and stigmatised because of their beliefs and practices. This may be partly explained by the difficulty in distinguishing their views from the views of other students. Active Catholic youth, on the whole, were not part of faith-based networks at either school or in the wider community. Their social circle seems to be similar to that of non-core Catholic youth. One of the most effective ways of nurturing faith commitment is the support of peers with whom they can share religious questions (Kadushin et al., 2000; Strahan, 1994). This type of networking could be encouraged in Catholic schools but for many active Catholic students it is not present. At WYD, in contrast, active Catholic

youth report less discomfort in expressing their distinctive religious views and opinions and in taking part in religious ceremonies and rituals.

In many Catholic schools religiously active youth can become a type of totem (Rymarz and Graham, 2006). If someone has to say the prayers of the faithful at class masses they are the ones chosen, if a person is needed to greet a visiting priest they are invited, if a 'spiritual' piece from a student is needed for the college newsletter they do the composing. None of this supports as such, but rather can lead to isolation. Take students such as these and put them in a pilgrim group at WYD and they could realize that there are others who are struggling with the same issues as they are and that they are not alone. Moreover, a bond of accountability may develop based on a profound sense of shared lives and experiences. WYD can, therefore, provide for something in the religious development of younger Catholics which is not readily available in conventional Church structures. It is unlikely that this was the conscious intention of those responsible for WYD but it has now become an institutional response that meets a clear need.

In a transitory form WYD provides active Catholic youth with what could be lacking in their experience of Catholic life. For instance, many of the previously mentioned challenges for Catholic schools in meeting the needs of active Catholic youth are addressed at WYD. This is not to say that WYD should be seen as a substitute for Catholic schools but it could provide a powerful augmentation and a platform to build a more inclusive model of pastoral care for active younger Catholics.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that religious communities such as the Catholic Church face significant challenges in contemporary secular culture. Many of these require severe analysis and response. However, one aspect of the life of the Church in contemporary culture receiving surprisingly little comment is how to nurture and sustain those younger Catholics who are already active, to some extent, in the faith community. The Church is in the midst of a shift in interior culture that marks a new embodiment of how to live the Christian life. One marker of this change is the emergence of new structures which address the perennial needs of the religiously active to have their faith strengthened and affirmed. This paper has argued that World Youth Day is one such emerging structure.

WYD provides participants with experiences of being a part of a religious moral community and also of the transcendent dimension of

religion. For many younger Catholics these experiences are not readily available in their conventional lives. To be sure, WYD is not for everyone. It does, however, provide a mechanism for affirming the religiously active. How this affirmation can serve a wider evangelistic intent is an area for further study and research. ■

(Key Words: *World Youth Day, younger Catholics, moral community, religious socialisation, transcendence*)

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LÚCIO GOMES DANTAS

Celebrating a Marian Year in Brazil¹

IN 2011, in a very special way, the Marists of Brazil - brothers, sisters, priests, lay men and women - are united in prayer, and committed to promote activities highlighting all that Mary represents in the Church. Such is the purpose of our Marian Year. Each of our assemblies during the Year is designed to be a gesture of commitment and gratitude to Mary, while Brazil will be shown the maternal face and the feminine heart of the Church in the light of evangelical ideals. The Marian Year is an initiative of the Marist Union of Brazil (UMBRASIL), coordinated by the Division of Consecrated Life and Laity of the *Marist Spirituality and Heritage Commission*. Planned by the 'Marian Year Working Group', the program began on 25 March and will continue until 8 December 2011.

Since the beginning of Christianity, Mary has played a central role in motivating individuals and communities who, touched by the message of Jesus, feel called to a new life. The Marist finds in Mary the *perfect model* of a disciple and follower of the Lord. Both as *disciple and missionary*², Mary inflames the Church with its mission to proclaim Jesus Christ and the Good News brought by Him. The Blessed Mother occupies a special place in the doctrine and liturgy of the Church that recognizes God's will as being fulfilled in her person and in the witness of her life. Her simple manner in freely fulfilling the will of the Father gives the people of God an everyday model. Under various forms and titles Mary is portrayed in a range of cultures as companion, inspiration and support for God's people as they confront the reality of life and strive for its transformation.

The founders of congregations that form the Marist family - Jean-Claude Colin, (Marist Fathers-1816); Marcellin Champagnat, (Marist Brothers-1817), Jeanne-Marie Chavoine, (Marist Sisters-1824) and Françoise Perroton (Marist Missionary Sisters - 1845) each found in the person of Mary the inspiration and model for the project that God

gave them. Nourished spiritually in devout families they were inspired by a loving and filial experience of Mary. For them the Mother of Jesus was the preferred path by which as individuals they might reach him and do his will. Furthermore, she also motivated them in due course to start the congregations of the Marist Fathers, Brothers and Sisters. They saw in Mary the model of commitment, giving and caring for the sons and daughters of God.

Throughout the XXI General Chapter of the Marist Brothers, held in Rome from September 8 to October 10, 2009, the extraordinary power of Mary again was present: 'Mary came in through the main door of the chapter room,' said the participants. That's right! Mary did not need to ask permission. The chapter room was her rightful place. As the First Superior of the Marist Institute, it also fell to her to lead the way to discerning God's will for the future of the Marist Institute. Mary did so very well, because God not only made clear what he expected of the Marists, he also confided to her the task of accompanying them on this demanding journey of conversion: 'With Mary, go swiftly to a new land,' is the call of the XXI General Chapter.

This call allows us to feel impelled by God to favour the birth of a new era for the Marist Charism and Mission. We are invited to welcome Jesus in his many guises, and to go on a missionary journey as pilgrims invigorated by the Spirit urging us to initiative, altruism and to prophecy. This invitation demands of us the inner willingness to undertake a journey of conversion, both personal and institutional, in the coming years.

Considerations of these kinds led UMBRASIL to conceive a Marian Year aimed at giving fresh vigour to the sense of Mary's presence in the lives of Brazilian Marists, and at accentuating further the Marian profile of the Church. In addition, inspired by Vatican II and in dialogue with the contemporary world, there was the goal of promoting a renewed vision of Mary, centred on Jesus Christ. Moreover, there was the strong desire, in communion with the Church, to encourage the cultivation of mysticism and spirituality in the areas of apostolic activity of the Marist Mission in Brazil.

What does God ask of us on the threshold of the bicentennial celebration of the founding of the Society of Mary (1816) and the Marist Brothers (1817)? No less than personal and institutional renewal³. The celebration of the Marian Year is an invitation to open our hearts to God. We must let ourselves be touched by the absence of the light and love of Christ from the lives of so many. We must discover the place⁴ and

meaning of Mary in our own lives. It is a great opportunity to *start a journey* of conversion. The new world begins with a new heart (cf. Ez 36, 26) in each Father, Brother, Sister and Lay Marist, called to reveal to the world, through their lives, the Church's Marian face.

MARY JOURNEYS IN HASTE

Our journey leads us to walk the path of faith with Mary, guide and companion. She, Our Good Mother, full of tenderness, full of mercy, a sign of contradiction and an example of courage, walks with us. She is our strength and source of inspiration. Going to new lands means leaving the familiar place and daring to explore other more needy communities of people still waiting to be found and loved. It means living a life firmly rooted in the Gospel, a life that draws on, challenges and fosters an ongoing and increasing vitality of the Marist charism in today's world.

The new land is the place where God invites us to discern and build. To do so we must take inspiration from the Visitation of Mary: get up and go quickly to the mountainous region (cf. Lk 1, 39). The mountains are where we find the poor and the lowly; the place of hope and of meeting with God. That's where Elizabeth is. That's where Mary pregnant with Jesus ventures in a hurry, without fear and with full confidence in the Lord. The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth is filled with joy. Upon hearing Mary's salutation, John the Baptist leaps within Elizabeth's womb (cf. Lk 1, 44). In the voice of Mary the voice of God is entwined. It is this voice that makes John leap with joy. This is also the joy of many children and young men and women who feel touched by God as they hear the voice of so many members of the Marist family, people 'pregnant' with Jesus, who agree to take risks as they reveal God's love and are themselves changed by Him.

IN SEARCH OF A NEW LAND

The Marian Year has both a *theme* and a *logo*. 'Mary in the heart of the Church' is the theme generating content, celebrations and experiences. The logo or catchword, 'With Mary to a New Land', encourages us to enter areas of mission where we have not previously been.

The theme of the Marian Year was inspired by the words of Emili Turú,⁵ Superior General of the Marist Brothers, at the close of the XXI General Chapter in 2009: 'It seems to me that sometimes, even without our realising it, simply by the way we act, by our choices and our form of fellowship, we show the Marian face of the church, which is what we really want'. *Mary in the heart of the Church* leads us to reflect on the

Mother of the Church. In the words of John Paul II: “This Marian profile is as fundamental and characteristic of the church as the apostolic and Petrine profile to which it is intimately linked – possibly more so.”⁶

By taking on the responsibility of being the Marian face of the Church, the Marist family is likewise attuned to the message of Pope John Paul II. At the General Chapters of its four Institutes, held in Rome in 2001 the Holy Father affirmed: “Today, you must manifest, in an original and specific way, the presence of the Virgin Mary in the life of the Church and of men ... Therefore, by turning to Mary with fidelity and courage, by letting yourselves be guided by her ... you will find new ways for the evangelisation of our time.”⁷

In relation to the motto – ‘With Mary, to a new land’ - the Pope’s message asks us, as disciples and missionaries in the Church, to involve ourselves in the daily living of the men and women of our time as we share their joys and sorrows.

In rounding off our reflections on this topic we must not forget that in the findings of the XXI General Chapter of the Marist Brothers, we discover a reliable indication of what ‘going with Mary to a new land’ means:

We are driven by God to go into a new land, to favour the birth of a new era for the Marist charism. We recognise that we must be ready for mobility, for detachment, and for taking on a journey of conversion both institutional and personal, over the next eight years. We travel this road with Mary, guide and companion. Her faith and submission to God encourage us in this pilgrimage. The ‘new land’ of an authentic renewal of the Institute requires a true change of heart. Conversion begins when we accept that the Lord’s call is directed to everyone in a very personal way, and when we begin to take concrete steps to answer it. I doubt very much that so important a collective challenge as ‘Go quickly, with Mary, to a new land’ can be answered without at the same time requiring of each of us a change, an inner journey.⁸

LOGO FOR THE MARIAN YEAR

Created by artist Sergio Ceron from Paraná, Brazil the logo of the Marian Year colourfully links key features of the Marist route into the New Land. *It is reproduced on the inside back cover of this edition of Champagnat to assist readers appreciate the following description:*

The *Blessed Mother* is the guide and companion of the pilgrimage. With her left hand she points up to her Son, Jesus Christ, purpose and centre of the journey, while with the right hand she shows the way to go.

Next to her is *Champagnat* in a listening pose, always united to Jesus through Mary, also on the journey, indicating along with Mary the direction to a New Land.

The *figure in purple* symbolises the individual at the stage of conversion, before starting to advance along the path. The purple colour denotes the moment of personal assessment, of 'self-abasing' within, signifying where God's will becomes clear, at the lowest point on the path.

The *figure in red* indicates that, having overcome the first difficulties on the path of conversion, the individual experiences Mary's protection while taking on her ways of thought and action.

The *cross* signifies the Church in the world accompanying the one who advances to a New Land.

Figures and characters in black depict the challenging reality of our time, speaking to us of the urgency for a new world that must be constructed and cared for. The smaller figure is the disadvantaged child, the larger figure symbolises neglected youth. They epitomise all those who wait to be found and loved.

The *parts in yellow* correspond to the changed reality: the New World and the New Land beginning to emerge, the kingdom. Yellow is a color full of joy and life, the New Land. The sun and the tree stand for the new world, signs of the Kingdom of God arising from the mission of the Marist disciples.

Finally, the *road* represents the path of conversion: M-shaped, it reminds us of *Mary*, the *Marist* and the *Mission*.

GO OUT FROM YOUR LAND (GENESIS 12, 1)

The success of the Marian Year will come about through the participation of each one of us: no effort, no investment can replace the personal and community involvement of individuals who love Mary, have trust in her

maternal support, and generously accept the call to action. National and local events with significant and substantial themes have been planned to give us fresh determination to better understand the person of Mary, to be motivated to make a place for her in our lives, and to rekindle the fervent desire to become more like her in following Jesus.

Among the national events, most notable are the celebrations around the Marian feasts such as: the Annunciation (March 25) - the opening of the Marian Year; Our Lady of Fourvière (July 23) - anniversary of the Society of Mary; the Assumption of Mary (August 15) - patronal feast of the Marist Brothers; the Holy Name of Mary (September 12) - patronal feast of the Society of Mary; and the Immaculate Conception of Mary (December 8) - closure of the Brazil Marian Year.



*FIGURE 1 – Our Lady of the New Land.
Source: UMBRASIL*

A special feature will be the ‘Symposium on Mariology’. With the theme ‘Heart of Mary in the Church’ and with the goal of furthering issues related to Mariology, this event will be held from 17 to 21 July 2011, at the Archdiocesan Marist College in Sao Paulo. It is open to brothers, fathers, sisters, students and lay people, educational communities, youth, educators, religious education coordinators, pastoral coordinators, religious congregations, members of the National Conference of Catholic

Bishops of Brazil and the Conference of the Religious of Brazil (CRB). At this event there will be the launch of a CD of previously unreleased Marian songs compiled by the Marists. The symposium will also include, as part of its programmed events, a pilgrimage to the shrine of Aparecida do Norte, São Paulo, Brazil.

Another equally important initiative is an extension course in Mariology by distance learning (LaD) conducted in partnership with the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). Open to those interested in opportunities for extending and deepening their study of the significance of Mary, this course will be developed in four modules: Mary in Scripture, Mary in Church History, the place of Mary in Christian worship, and Mary and the Marist charism and tradition. Furthermore, in the hours immediately preceding Assumption Day, we Marists will celebrate our patronal feast day, united in prayer as a form of reverence to Mary to whom we attribute everything we have achieved.

The provincial superiors were given, at the opening of the Marian Year, an image of Our Lady of the New Land (Figure 1), carved in wood by sacrum artist Conrad Moser, from a creation of Sergio Ceron. It was inspired by the invitation: *With Mary, go quickly to a new land*. The idea was conceived during the discussions which resulted in the whole Marian Year Project. In pilgrimage, the image will go through, and enter the main door of each Marist unit in Brazil.

Each Marist province, district or sector, is being strongly encouraged to use skill and creativity to organize projects, circuits or drives, as well as other forms of celebration that will encourage enthusiastic general participation.

IN OUR HANDS

God has loved us through all eternity; (...). The Blessed Virgin has planted us in her garden, she is careful that we lack for nothing.
- St. Marcellin Champagnat.⁹

This reminder from the depths of our Marist history invites us to have recourse to our caring Mother as we embark on a renewal of heart. It is certain that Mary will be with her children as they make their way along new paths, struggle with fresh difficulties, distinguish the specious from the true, and persevere in hope, ever aware of the Spirit who guides them. When Brother Emili Turú called everyone's attention to the mission identified by the XXI General Chapter, he recounted a story narrated by Elie Wiesel.¹⁰

A certain king heard that in his kingdom, there was a wise man, one who spoke all the languages in the world, understood the singing of birds, could interpret the appearance of the clouds and decipher their meaning. He also could read the thoughts of others. The king commanded that this gifted person be brought to the palace. The sage was presented before the king who asked him: Is it true that you know all languages? - Yes, Your Majesty. - Without difficulty you can listen to the singing of the birds and understand their song? - Yes, Your Majesty. - And is it true that you understand the language of the clouds? - Yes, Your Majesty. - It is also claimed that you know how to read the thoughts of others? - Yes, Your Majesty. - Then said the king: In my hands is a little bird, tell me is it alive or dead? The sage was afraid, realising that whatever he said, the bird might end up dead. He remained silent for a moment, then gazing at the king he finally replied: The answer, My Lord, is in your hands.¹¹

The story can be applied to our response to the summons to embrace new ways of thinking and acting. The answer to the call is in our hands. But it is in the depths of our hearts, attuned to the heart of Mary, that the right answer will be whispered. What is required of us as we set about revealing anew the Marian face of the Church? ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Text written by the *Marian Year Working Group* of the 'Area of Consecrated Life and Laity of UMBRASIL', area coordinated by Brother José Elias de Assis de Brito FMS. It has been revised and expanded by Brother Lúcio Gomes Dantas FMS, doctoral student in Education at the University of Brasília (UnB) and professor of Pedagogy at the Catholic University of Brasília (UCB).
- 2 CELAM (2008). Documento de Aparecida. Texto conclusivo da V Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-Americano e do Caribe. - 5. ed. - São Paulo: Paulinas, p. 123.
- 3 UMBRASIL(2009). Conclusões do XXI Capítulo Geral. Edição especial do documento. Brasília, p. 7-8.
- 4 Sammon, S. (2009). Em seus braços ou em seu coração. Maria, nossa Boa Mãe, Maria, nossa fonte de renovação. Circulares do Superior Geral dos Irmãos Maristas. Roma, p. 13.
- 5 Instituto dos Irmãos Maristas (2010). Atas do XXI Capítulo Geral. Roma: C.S.C. Gráfica, p. 212.

- 6 João Paulo II (1987). Aos cardeais e prelados da Cúria Romana recebidos para as felicitações de Natal - 22 de dezembro de 1987. Available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1987/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19871222_curia-romana_it.html. Access: 21 January 2011.
- 7 João Paulo II (2001). Discurso do Papa aos religiosos e religiosas dos Institutos da Família Marista – 17 de setembro de 2001. Available at: <http://www.champagnat.org/pt/206.php?caso=xxdocumentos>. Accessed: 22 Jan. 2011.
- 8 UMBRASIL (2009). Conclusões do XXI Capítulo Geral. Edição especial do documento. Brasília, p. 5; 19.
- 9 SIMAR (1997). Cartas de Marcelino J. B. Champagnat. Edição brasileira por ocasião da presença Marista no Brasil. São Paulo: SIMAR. Circular aos Irmãos, janeiro de 1828 (n. 10, p. 41).
- 10 Elie Wiesel, a Jew, survived the Nazi death camps. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.
- 11 Instituto dos Irmãos Maristas (2010). Atas do XXI Capítulo Geral. Roma: C.S.C. Gráfica, p. 220-221.

Perhaps the most important thing
we bring to another person
is the silence in us,
not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken
criticism or hard withdrawal.
But the sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest,
of acceptance of someone as they are.
We are all hungry for this other silence.
It is hard to find.
In its presence we can remember something
beyond the moment,
a strength on which to build a life.
Silence is a place of great power and healing.

Rachel Naomi Remen

EMILI TURÚ

Our Lady of the Hermitage

A Living Sign of a Prophetic and Marian Church

(Founded in 1817 the Marist Brothers barely survived their first five years. By 1824, however, although the youthful Brothers numbered only about 20, there were signs of more favourable conditions. The improved environment encouraged the Founder, Marcellin Champagnat, to purchase land on which to construct an appropriate centre-point for the expanded activities that he anticipated. While the poor quality of the site ensured that its purchase was relatively cheap, the Founder had to increase his already substantial debts in order to acquire it. In addition, to reduce costs as much as practicable, he led his Brothers in undertaking much of the labouring work associated with the project. Thus the first 'Mother House' of the Marist Brothers, known as Our Lady of the Hermitage (Notre Dame de l'Hermitage), was erected near St. Chamond in the Department of the Loire. Modified and extended over the years it underwent major restoration and renovation before a fresh inauguration on 22 September 2010. The article that follows is part of the address given on that occasion by Brother Emili Turú, Superior General.)

DEAR FRIENDS, 'When one dreams alone, it is only a dream; when one dreams with others, it is already the beginning of a reality; a shared utopia, the springboard of history'. So said the late Brazilian Bishop Helder Camara. And I am convinced that, like the construction of L'Hermitage by Fr. Champagnat, the renovated Hermitage we have before our eyes signifies an act of faith in the future. In the words of Victor Hugo, 'the future has many names: for the weak, it

cannot be grasped; for the fearful, it is the unknown; for the courageous, it is an opportunity and a chance'. We have dreamed of the Hermitage Project, but not as an idle fancy, still less as an illusion or a mirage. In our dreams of the future we progress towards a utopia that is inspired by creativity and imagination, and shaped by our vision, aspiration, hope and ideals. In brief, we want the Hermitage Project, newly born and just become a tangible reality, to be oriented towards the future, like a sign, a symbol, and an icon of our Marist life and mission, shared by Brothers and Laity, and open to the richness of peoples and cultures. This is not a matter of a nostalgic effort to cling to the past and create a museum to show the triumphs of times that have gone. The renovated Hermitage speaks to us, expresses to us the deep conviction that our charism and our mission are more relevant than ever, and that the Institute has a future full of hope. And it is for that reason that I would like to further develop what I mean in speaking of the renovated Hermitage as a sign and an icon for the future of our Marist life.

SIGN OF A CHURCH WITH A MARIAL FACE

The house of the Hermitage is certainly the House of Mary; it is the presence, inspiration and recourse to Mary which indelibly impregnate its walls. For St Marcellin, it was the protection of Mary which prevented any accidents during the construction. It was the singing of the *Salve Regina* which protected the house during the revolution of 1830. It was around the image of the Good Mother that important decisions were taken. And it was 'close to our Good Mother [that the first Brothers] grew steadily in the sense of brotherhood, of devotedness, and of self-renunciation in the service of one another'. (Const.49.)

In following the Founder's example, Br. François attributed to the maternal care of Mary the protection of the house from the dangerous inundations of the Gier. And the statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires is still there to remind us that it was she who obtained for us the legal recognition of the Institute. The renovated Hermitage is an invitation to live this rich Marial heritage of our charism and our tradition with greater intensity, and make it present with greater force. A short time before the last General Chapter, Br. Seán published his last circular in which he speaks of Mary as 'source of renewal'. During the chapter, the participants were conscious of Mary's presence; they said that she had entered the Chapter Hall through the main door.

This is an invitation to rediscover all that Mary signifies for us Marists, and the place she occupies in our lives, communities, charism, identity, spirituality and mission. We translate this reality by the expression 'Marial Church' or, in other terms, Marial Face of the Church, or Marial Principle of the Church. In doing this, we are responding to the invitation made to us by the Pope in his message to the four Marist branches: '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'. This is also the appeal launched by John Paul II in his 1996 Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*¹ to be 'brothers who cause a greater brotherhood to prevail in the Church', and the call of the General Chapter urging us to build a Church-communion taking hold of Mary's hand, journeying with her in haste. 'We live a new relationship between Brothers and Lay people, based on communion, searching together for a greater vitality of the Marist charism for our world'. And again: 'We believe that we are in the presence of a "Kairos", a chance to share and live with daring the Marist charism, forming together a prophetic and Marian Church'. (XXI General Chapter)

The renovated Hermitage becomes a living sign of this Church with a Marial face, especially through its resident community which welcomes and accompanies all the pilgrims, present and future. Brothers, Laity, Chaplain are a living nursery of this Church inspired by Mary, a prophetic sign of a brotherhood which, by the very fact of its international character, breaches the boundaries of language and culture. By its life and service, the community is already announcing 'in prophetic fashion, a new way of being Church, more communitarian, more participative, a family of brothers and sisters, each with his/her own proper charism'. (XIX General Chapter). This Marial icon of the 'new Hermitage' is also a challenge for all our communities and our educational works everywhere in our globalised world, a true crossroads of races, cultures and creeds. Inspired by Mary, and 'around the same table', we are called to be a sign: another way of being Church is possible.

AN APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY GIVING MEANING TO LIFE

It was at the Hermitage that Fr. Champagnat lived the greater part of his life; this is where his urn-reliquary is venerated; this is where Brother François and the first generations of Brothers gave shape and character to Marist life, spirituality and mission; this is where one finds the little cemetery in which their remains lie. All this speaks to us of the lived

experience of an apostolic spirituality which gave their lives meaning. For years we have tried to find the balance between action and contemplation, to integrate in our lives, in our day to day activities, the demands of our consecration and those of our community and our mission. To be contemplatives in action like Mary, like Marcellin and his first disciples, is for us a task we cannot avoid, a challenge as necessary as it is urgent if we want to safeguard our specific identities, whether brother, lay person or priest.

Let us look back, at the beginnings of the Hermitage:

- On one side, the Brothers working hard to build their house, dirtying their hands and loading heavy burdens on their shoulders; and, at the same time, these same Brothers gathering very early in the morning in the improvised chapel, celebrating Mass, singing to Mary, and astonishing the people on their way to work along the little road descending from La Valla to St Chamond.
- The Hermitage is described as a busy hive, where the Brothers give themselves to all sorts of manual work: the vegetable garden, the various trades useful to the house, the tending of stock... and, at the same time, these same Brothers passing hours in the main chapel or saying their rosaries as they walk along the paths.
- The Hermitage was a centre of formation; here the youngest took their first steps in learning to teach, and the more experienced came for refresher courses; between these walls, the Brothers allowed their hearts to be touched by the deep and paternal discourses of the Founder; but, at the same time, these same Brothers, under Fr. Champagnat's crook, burned with zeal for the mission. From this house the Brothers set out to take charge of the surrounding schools and offer poor children the benefits of an integral education. It was from here that the Founder, embracing all the dioceses in the world, sent out the first brothers to Oceania.

Here, my dear friends, is the icon of the Hermitage, the icon of an apostolic spirituality, centred on Jesus, inspired by Mary, open to the needs of our world, especially to the most neglected youth; a spirituality of discernment, shared in community.

St Marcellin knew how to discover the signs of God's presence in the solitude of the place, in the peace of silent contemplation; but also in the pastoral visits to the sick, like the young Montagne, or on his administrative errands in the very heart of Paris. In following in his footsteps, we want 'to see the world through the eyes of poor children and young people, and thus change our hearts and attitudes' (XXI General Chapter). The waters of the Gier, which continue to flow alongside the house, evoke the 'Water from the Rock',² springing up in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat. The document with this phrase as its title situates Marist apostolic spirituality in the place of preference it should have in the life of each of us as well as in the lives of those coming to know and love the Founder as did his first disciples so many years ago.

REDISCOVERING THE HEART OF OUR VOCATION

'Rediscovering the heart of our vocation.' With these words, the previous General Council, in the report presented to the Chapter, envisaged the new project for the Hermitage. And it added: 'In this time of general crisis which has profoundly affected us, the Institute finds the energy to carry out its mission, not without suffering, sometimes paying a heavy price, particularly on the personal level.' The original construction of the Hermitage, like its further development, constituted an enterprise strewn with difficulties and contradictions. But far more than that, it testified to the commitment of a group of men, guided by a clairvoyant leader, rooted in faith and with a vision of the future full of hope, who were capable of going against the current, of dreaming together of a better world for poor children and young people.

We are well acquainted with the criticism and opposition endured by Fr. Champagnat both at the time of the construction and later. The clergy of the period found it difficult to understand how a priest like Marcellin could work with his hands, thus neglecting 'priestly dignity'. He was judged presumptuous for embarking on so ambitious a project. The criticism came from people who knew him; to human ways of thinking, what Marcellin was undertaking at the Hermitage was crazy; he was accused of taking useless risks in committing himself to a project without the necessary means. Even those closest to Marcellin, his friends and his Brothers, made him suffer: there were desertions, conflicts, discouragement. Some months after the official inauguration, in August 1825, Champagnat had to take to his bed; he was exhausted, at the end of

his strength. The doctors were pessimistic; he was advised to make out his will... And it was in this context of suffering that Marcellin was to have the deepest experience of God's centrality in his life. The famous 'Nisi Dominus' becomes a recurrent theme. (*Unless it is the Lord who builds the house, the workers labour in vain.*)

Certainly the recent renovation of the Hermitage also had its problems to confront. Those closely involved would be able to tell us about them: schedules sometimes not respected, unexpected obstacles, negative comments, and indeed the scepticism of certain ones. But today's inauguration is proof that such adversities did not weaken the determination of those directing the project. The renovated Hermitage remains and will remain an icon, a living sign of the importance of assuming in our lives the reality of the Paschal mystery: to die in order to live. The last General Chapter reminds us of the call of Jesus: 'conversion of heart, which implies making a firm decision and being open to the grace of God, in order to be transformed by Him... God's love urges us to conversion and to rediscover the heart of our respective vocations'.

One would prefer things to be done another way, to our liking: that vocations flow in great numbers, that we recover the renown of old, that enthusiasm for our vocation be more evident... Today consecrated life continues to move against the current. And the icon of L'Hermitage reminds us that God has his own ways, his own thoughts. It is for us to set out on the road, with Mary, pilgrim of faith, and pursue our course of personal and institutional conversion. 'With Mary, go in haste to a new land!'

A SPIRIT OF UNIVERSALITY DARING AND CREATIVITY

Dear Brothers and friends, the physical renovation of the Hermitage is complete. It is a master work which brings us joy and inspires us to sing a hymn of thanksgiving. But we well know that it is only a stepping stone, a new stage open to a radiant future. Allowing us to advance towards this goal will be fidelity to the objectives which inspired this work, and openness to the signs of the times which present themselves. There is the great challenge.

L'Hermitage built by St Marcellin was not a work finished once and for all; in the course of 185 years of history, it has known many transformations, new buildings have been constructed, others converted. This house was a postulancy, novitiate, scholasticate, infirmary... Le Cèdre and Le Rocher are some fruits of this renovation. The Hermitage has

equally been a provincial house, a place of research, a youth centre and also - I would like to emphasise - a place of encounter between the Little Brothers of Champagnat and the Society of Mary; from the beginning, there have been Marist Fathers who have exercised their ministry here.

The Hermitage, a place for universal vocation, is also a centre in communion with the local Church, the diocese of Saint Étienne. Saint Marcellin is a saint of the whole Church, but he is equally a man of the country, a son of this region. May the renovated Hermitage be also a centre of radiation for the diocese, together with other already existing sanctuaries such as Notre-Dame de Valfleury, Notre-Dame de Bonson, Notre-Dame de Pitié and Le Rozey.

Dear Brothers and friends, we are walking with Mary towards the horizon of the year 2017, which will mark the bicentenary of the foundation of the Marist Brothers. May the renewed Hermitage remain faithful to the same spirit of universality, daring and creativity that animated Father Champagnat, the novices and the Brothers who began this enterprise.

My sincere and fraternal encouragement to the members of the international community of l'Hermitage who have taken up the challenge to welcome and guide the pilgrims who arrive, to create spiritual itineraries which help them become impregnated with the spirit of the Hermitage, not only those who can come personally, but also, thanks to modern means of communication, persons and groups who are geographically distant. It is possible! And it is a great service that we, the Marists of the five continents, confidently expect of this community.

May Mary, Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, bless us all;
may she bless this house. ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Post Synodal Exhortation of JP2 dated 25 March 1996: *On the consecrated life and its mission in the Church*.
- 2 Those who know well the story of Marcellin will recall that he built the Hermitage by hand with rock that he had hewn himself. The water from the Gier, a small river that runs through the Hermitage property, was an important second source of life to the early community. Using the same two images, 'Water from the Rock' gives Marcellin's Marist Apostolic Spirituality its central and rightful place in the lives of each of us and of all those who come to know and love him as did those early recruits of his so many years ago. (A.M. Estaún FMS)

JOEL HODGE

Mary – Servant of the Lord

Model of What We Can Be at Our Best

FOR MANY people, particularly when engaging in ecumenical dialogue, the question of the role and status of Mary in salvation history continues to be problematic. Recently, I was asked by a friend who teaches in a Catholic secondary school to help clarify for him (and others) the Catholic position on Mary, particularly its biblical foundations, and to address accusations that Catholics *worship* Mary. As many would know, Catholics do not worship Mary, though Mary has an exalted place in Catholic belief and piety. Why is this so? This essay examines the Catholic belief in Mary. In doing so, it will show how Mary exhibits a theology of grace and Christian anthropology which reveals what God's love means and how that love can be integrated into our lives as bearers of Christ in the world.

There are different ways of addressing the role of Mary, as reflections on Mary bring to light different facets of her vocation. Drasko Dizdar points it this way:

...Mary is the iconic embodiment of our simple created humanity as God always intended it to be. And everything that we say of Mary is then a kind of Christian anthropology, a way of thinking about what it means to be simply human. The feast of the *Theotokos* (she who bore God in her womb) is a celebration of our greatest vocation and most sublime act: incarnating God. This feast of the Mother of God celebrates what our faith realises: humanity was always intended for divinity. And just as Mary embodies that intentionality, so Christ embodies and realises that destiny: she is what we are at our best; he is what we are becoming beyond any best

of our own. She is *simply* human; he is *fully* human. 'Simple humanity' is what God chooses to bear God into the world so that the world itself may be transubstantiated into the real presence of God, when God becomes all in all, and we become one-with-God through Christ, who is God-with-us. This is the 'New' year that opens the womb of time giving birth to eternity. *Humanity is its mother; God is its father; Christ, our True Self, is its name.*¹

One of the important points that Dizdar is expressing is that Mary is what we were and are meant to be: carriers of God, who is incarnated in us. Mary is the exemplar of this truly human vocation because she actually carries God incarnate as a real human, Jesus. In contrast to humanity before her, Mary holds nothing back from God (in other words, she is not separated from God by sin). The profundity of this act is why Mary is important: she actually carries God in herself. To actually do this requires complete openness to God. To allow God into our lives, and actually into one's womb, requires full acceptance, which is expressed in Mary's words to the angel: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' (Luke 1:35). These words from St. Luke's Gospel form the biblical foundation for the historic veneration of Mary. They succinctly and beautifully express what God had always sought: the openness of humanity that would allow him to be one with them. Mary does what we were always meant to do, so that God could bring us into his life.

This openness on the part of Mary is not just a momentary acceptance but the expression of her whole way of being: constant and perpetual openness to God that is carried into the rearing and ministry of Christ. This is part of the meaning of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption: that Mary's *whole* life is given to God and taken up into God. Further, in reflecting on this mystery under the guidance of the Spirit, the Church saw that Mary's openness was not something she did on her own but was accomplished with God's help - under the initiative of God's grace. It is this same grace that we are given at baptism, to be freed from the original sin that separates us from God and to be open to receive God's love that will make us into bearers of Christ, like Mary.

In a fundamental way, the veneration of Mary is a veneration of God's love and grace in human life. It is God's grace that enables Mary to accept

her human vocation. It is God's grace that relates to humans through their freedom by asking us to accept God into human life. It is God's grace that brings God close to humans, and so, allows humans to be reconciled to God and each other through Christ. In the light of Mary's encounter with the angel and her bearing of Christ into the world, one of the remarkable features of God's grace can be seen: God relates with humans in surprising and gentle ways enabling and seeking our free acceptance, though his love can also be overwhelming and awe-inspiring. God's love gives humans their true freedom: in love, we are set free to be our true selves and accept relationship with others. Without this love, we can't be truly free: we withdraw into selfishness, hurt and resentment. Furthermore, humans can't make love on their own, at least not the perfect and inexhaustible love that never inflicts pain nor dissolves or wavers. Only divine love gives humans that perfect and infinite love which we yearn for and seek. The Virgin Birth and Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection show that humans can't and don't make the love that perfects them, but can only receive that love which makes them whole. Love is ultimately a gift that we pass on; and the most perfect gift of love can only come from the Creator who never wavers in love:

...the salvation of the world does not come from man and from his own power; man must let it be bestowed upon him, and he can only receive it as a pure gift. The virgin birth is not a lesson in asceticism nor does it belong directly to the doctrine of Jesus' Sonship; it is first and last theology of grace, a proclamation of how salvation comes to *us*: in the simplicity of acceptance, as the voluntary gift of the love that redeems the world. The idea of salvation through God's power alone is formulated magnificently in the Book of Isaiah in the passage which runs: 'Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord.' (Is 54.1; cf Gal 4.27; Rom 4.17-22). In Jesus, God has placed, in the midst of the barren, despairing mankind, a new beginning which is not a product of human history but a gift from above. Even every mere human being represents something unspeakably new, something more than the

sum of the chromosomes and the product of a certain environment, in fact a unique creature of God; but Jesus is the truly new, coming not from mankind's own resources but from the spirit of God. For this reason he is Adam for the second time (1 Cor 15.47)—a new incarnation begins with him. In contrast to all those chosen before him he not only *receives* the spirit of God; in his earthly existence he *is* only through the spirit and therefore he is the fulfilment of all prophets: he is the true prophet.²

Thus, the point of the Virgin Birth is not to give a commentary on Jesus' physical ancestry (like the gods in the ancient myths) but to show God's direct action in grace that starts and completes humanity's salvation. In other words, human beings are meant for life with God by becoming part of God's own inner life of love – love shared by the Father to Son in the Spirit. The first chapter of Luke's Gospel shows that it is God taking the initiative by his own power, intelligence and will to enable humans to be part of his life. God becomes incarnate in Mary through the direct action of the Spirit, not out of a mythical desire to assert power, but as a way to show that it is God's own desire for him to be a human. God *wants* to be a human being, so that humans can directly relate with him and become part of God's own life. It is not humanity going to God, seeking to reconcile the angry deity as in the ancient sacrificial religions.³ In fact, it is the opposite: the loving God seeking to appease an angry and lost humanity by becoming one of them.⁴ The whole movement of salvation history with Israel and climaxing in Christ is that God always takes the first step: to create us and then to relate with us in order to give his love to us, to save us and to bring us into his life.⁵ Even Mary herself is a gift of love: an example of the relationship between God and humanity at its best that is given to humanity and the Church for its benefit (cf. Jesus giving his mother to the beloved disciple at his death in Jn 19:25-27).

Furthermore, God *asks* Mary's permission to become part of her and part of humanity. God does not force himself on Mary, but seeks her free assent. Thus, Luke's Gospel shows that God does not need humanity to do or create anything, but Luke also shows that God chooses to incorporate humanity into his life, which means allowing humanity to choose to incorporate him into their life. Humanity can only do this with the assistance of God himself – through the help of love that enables our

freedom. In this light, the other interesting feature of God's relationship with Mary can be recognised: God relates with humanity through the humble and 'lowly' (Lk 1:52), not the great and powerful. Through the weak and lowly, God brings himself into the world and reconciles humanity to himself. The other part of the meaning of the Virgin Birth is that God's direct action of grace seeks out those downtrodden, victimised and open to his love. While the rich and powerful remain closed in selfishness, the weak are open to the grace of God's love that wishes to correct all injustice, 'lift up the lowly', and 'fill the hungry with good things' (Lk 1:52-3). Thus, made possible by God, a young virgin from a marginal place in Israel, with no social status and almost rejected by her husband, becomes the bearer of God in her lowliness and holiness.

Thus, Mary is not worshipped, because just like any human being, she *receives* the love of God. Mary always points back to the initiative and gentle power of God's grace that comes to its climax in Christ as the saviour, who *is* love itself from God.⁶ Mary is saved precisely because she carries Christ - the love of God incarnate - and is completely open to the Paschal Mystery that takes us into the life of God. Mary's openness ensures that she receives all the fruits of Christ's saving act on the Cross and in the Resurrection.

In venerating Mary, and in praying to her, we are reminded of that fundamental existential stance that Mary embodies: openness to and reception of God, which is the ground on which we are taken up into God through Christ. Mary and the saints remind us of how we should live - receptive to God - and become living bearers of Christ in the world. It is this openness - made possible by divine grace - that enables us to relate with God fully and become one with him through Christ. We pray to Mary as one who has already realised her destiny in Christ and is one with Christ, so much so that through her we can go to Christ. This is not a reflection on the power that Mary has, but the generous love of God in Christ that incorporates human beings into God's life as one with him. Because she is united to God, we can seek her help as a friend and mother who fully bears God's love in and through Christ.

This unity between God and humanity ultimately means that God hands himself over to humanity, and that humanity hands itself over to God. This extraordinary unity means that the will of God and humans is united in love. One of the concrete results of this unity of love is that

the intentions of God and those of human beings become one in love: so that we can pray to Mary (or any of the saints) as friends who are one with God and who are able to help us in our needs and petitions by their oneness with God, who can bestow on us any gift through Christ. Mary and the saints become human pathways to God through Christ because of their unity with God. Further, Mary and the saints have no power apart from God - God is the one who grants all prayers in love. However, the saints can help us see the many faces of God, and so can help us realise our different and real intentions through the particular vocation of a saint. Mary's vocation exemplifies the human vocation and destiny: to be bearers of Christ in the world through the humble reception of God's love.

The reception of God's grace and love in the life of Mary enables her participation in the life of Christ to the extent that she has been called 'co-redemprix'. Mary does not usurp the place of Christ. Christ is the sole saviour because he is God become man, who unites God's sacrificial love with humanity's, enabling humans to partake of divine love, and so, takes human beings into God. Mary imitates this sacrificial love fully by suffering alongside Christ - by accompanying his eschatological ministry from beginning (wedding feast at Cana) to end (the Cross). Mary 'treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart' (Lk 2:19), standing at the foot of the Cross and waiting on the Risen Lord at the service of God in Christ: 'Woman, here is your son'. (Jn 19:26). Mary was willing to obey the will of God, receive the grace to achieve it, and be given over to the Church (the beloved disciple) for the benefit of humankind. With God's grace, all humans are called to this humble openness and complete self-giving, in which Mary participates through Christ as centre and guide, for the benefit of all. ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Drasko Dizdar, (2008). *Sheer Grace: Living the Mystery of God*, Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, p. 138-9.
- 2 Ratzinger, Joseph (1990). *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, p. 210-11.
- 3 Ibid. pp. 214-5; J. Ratzinger, (2000). *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press p.28.
- 4 Alison, James. (2006). *Undergoing God: dispatches from the scene of a break-in*, UK: Darton, Longman & Todd, pp. 50-67.
- 5 Ratzinger, J. (1990) pp. 214-15.
- 6 Ratzinger, J. (1990)

EUGENE DWYER

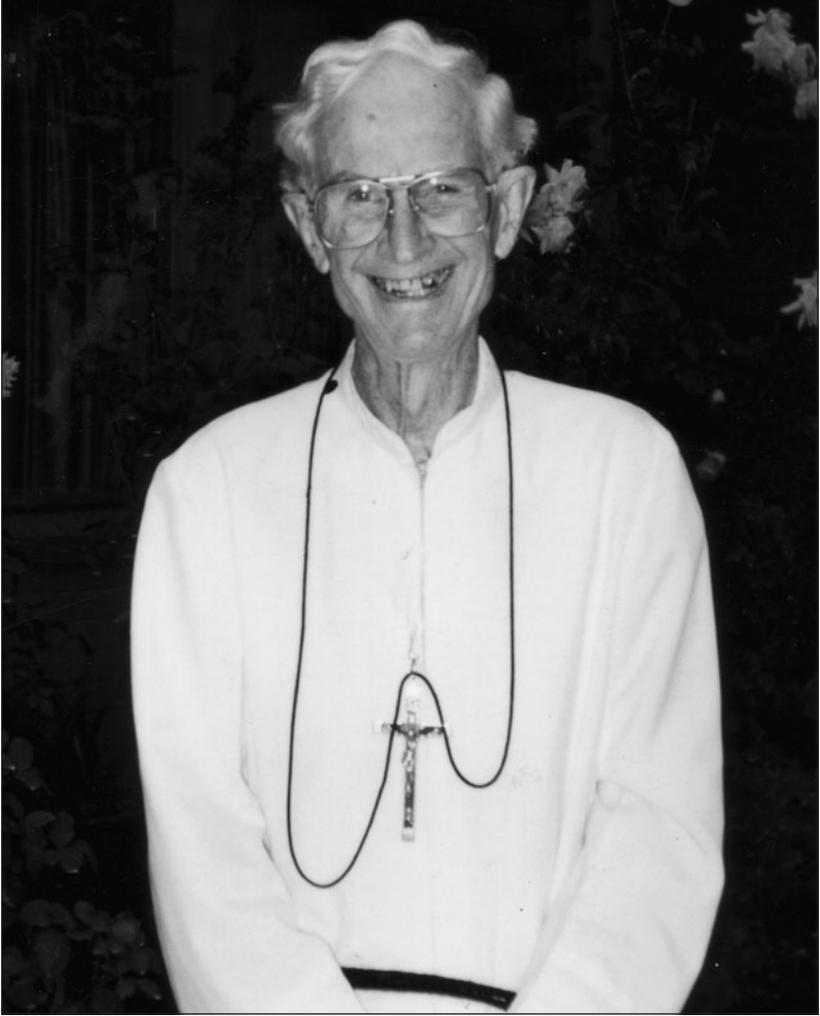
Luminous Mysteries: 'God's Greyhound'

Brother Ronald Fogarty FMS (1913 – 2009)
Part II

BROTHER Ronald's time at Dundas finished in 1965 when Brother Quentin Duffy (retiring Provincial of Sydney) took over—though only for a short time, since in 1966 Quentin was elected Vicar General to Rev. Brother Basilio Rueda by the 1966-67 General Chapter in Rome. Brother Kieran Geaney took over in late 1966. Ronnie had been awarded a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Scholarship to Chicago University; he started work in the School of Psychology in September 1965.

One of those who most influenced him there was Professor Carl Rogers who was famous—or infamous—for his 'person-centred' approach to counselling. According to the Provincial, Julian Casey, delivering a eulogy at Ronald's funeral service, Rogerian thought 'helped Ron to listen to himself, to become aware of his motivations and interior movements... With his usual dedication and self discipline, he set about acquiring this approach to counselling and eventually going further than Rogers...'¹

Lurking in the background of Ronald's mind since the early '50s was 'the Melbourne Scholasticate', since numbers in both the Macedon and Mittagong novitiates were on the increase, and Dundas would shortly be overcrowded. Long before Monash University was a reality, the Brothers had bought a 9 acre property in Normanby Road next to the proposed new university site at Clayton, and planning had begun. Parliament legislated for Monash's establishment only in 1958. 'Marist College' was complete by 1969, and opened on 7th November that year. It was a very beautiful building, said to combine 'traditional university college functions with an enclosed monastic concept, built around a cloistered quadrangle



comprising two wings, the chapel and the entrance'. Archbishop Knox spoke of it at the Opening as a great act of faith in the future. In 1970, there were 90 students, about half being Marist Scholastics, the rest male university students anxious to take advantage of the facilities provided.

Brother Ronald was just back from Chicago, and had been appointed 'Master of Marist College'—a University appointment—but he was **not** appointed Master of Scholastics, the position which he had held at Camberwell, Drummoyne and Dundas, and towards which his post-doctoral study was directed. This was the position that should have been his once his dream was fulfilled, and Marist College was finally opened! The position was however confided to Brother Ludovic Bourke,² who was also appointed Community Superior. Ronnie had been effectively debarred from formation work in the Scholasticate of his Province.

Perhaps one of the most tragic aspects of this decision was that it deprived the young Marists in formation at Clayton of the opportunity to be in contact with the very person best able to help and form them.³ For Ron this bitter blow caused a veritable ‘dark night of the soul.’ Not that the majority of Brothers at the time would have been keenly aware of events transpiring at Clayton, even less of the desolation it was occasioning him. His passage through this ‘school of suffering’ produced a resolution in which ‘our loss was the world’s gain’, since discernment of the Lord’s will for his future led him to choose an unusual—and perhaps foolhardy—apostolic field: that of consultancy and assistance to Religious (especially Contemplatives) who wished for help in responding to Vatican II’s call for renewal.

With this in mind, and with the support of the then Provincial, Br Brendan Feehan, he retained his position as Master of Marist College, his commitment to lecturing in Psychotherapy at Monash University, and his tutorials to 4th Year Honours and Doctoral students. He began, however, to focus his gaze on a much wider horizon. Such were the beginnings of an astonishingly productive global ministry which was to last from 1970 until about 2004. In that year he asked Brother Linus to help him re-organize his office and discard whatever was of no further use to him. From then on he would be in retirement at Templestowe.

There exists, as in all great men, a shadow side to the luminosity of Brother Ronald’s personality. Though I believe this to be a minor aspect of his character, and feel no call to expatiate on it, I think the realism of human nature demands that these concerns be registered; others may feel called to develop them further.

Some found Ron an overly strict disciplinarian in his early days as a teacher (the late ’30 and early ’40s); others found the régime he established at the Scholasticate overly constricting and uncondusive to their growth; a few also found him unpromising as a listening ear when delicate personal issues came to the fore. He often—though not always—became aware of these situations; he realized in some cases that they could not be resolved since matters of principle were at stake; in others he recognized in later life that people (young people in particular) could have been better helped by a more conciliatory or consultative approach, and he regretted profoundly that he was not able at the time to provide what was needed. Even the image of him as the ‘Greyhound’ was experienced by some as daunting, if not negative.

LISTENING COUNSELLING TEACHING

When he arrived in Chicago after 20 years of work in Formation and educational administration, he plunged with typical vigour and discipline into the new world of formal psychology. Carl Rogers had left Chicago University by the time Ron arrived, but his spirit—and techniques—lingered, and he occasionally returned for workshops and conferences. Ron found himself profoundly helped by the Rogerian ‘non-directive’ approach to counselling: he, like Rogers himself, found it congenial and complementary to the stern conscience and clear sense of duty he had inherited from his parents; he used it to educate his own empathy for the fellow pilgrims encountered along life’s way. This complementarity, however, was not always well understood.

For many, Rogerianism in the 60s-70s became a mere licence for libidinousness: the baby-boomers often morphed into a ‘me-generation’, anxious to be unburdened of conscience and moral scruples, and desperate to grasp what their parents could never have... it sufficed for some famous academic or pop-star to give the okay. For this reason Rogers is now more cautiously assessed⁴, and a number of good Christians would wonder how Rogerian techniques could ever be adopted by a Catholic psychologist, such as Brother Ronald. The miracle of Ron’s approach was that it respected the human integrity of his clients (and their communities), yet based itself on a strong sense of neo-orthodox respect for their originating charisms and wholesome traditions (often Benedictine or contemplative) upon which it was founded. Ron never ceased—even into his ’90s—from revising his lecture notes, case studies, and transparencies in order to express more richly this balance.

A penumbra likewise surrounds this final question: ‘Well, how successful was it?’ In other words, ‘did all of this agony of programmes, buildings, personnel, debates and discussions achieve the objective of providing an adequate and durable cadre of Australian Marist Brothers: one capable of continuing Champagnat’s mission of providing ‘good citizens and good Christians’ in the face of Enlightenment, and indeed postmodern culture?’ Such is the multiplicity of issues raised by this question, that it cannot be adequately addressed within the confines of the present article. Hopefully someone will be found to contribute more amply to it in the scope of a specialised study. For our present purposes it will be better to direct attention to the way in which Brother Ronald himself confronted the mysterious interplay of Providence and human planning in his own life—

which was to embrace another 44 years beyond the conclusion of his life as a Formator!

Ron was of course always a teacher. His classroom teaching lasted some 11 years, his teaching and formation at Scholasticate level some 16, and his listening-counselling- teaching ministry, 35 years! Clearly much needs to be said about this last, his best remembered, most enduring and most widespread contribution, yet it is the most difficult to quantify and describe. Perhaps the best synthetic view of this wonderful feat of availability is contained in Brother Julian's eulogy to which, once again, we turn:

Ron's approach was not something that could be conveyed in a seminar or two: he was dealing with something touching every aspect of Religious Life. He provided not only insights into consensus, dialogue, and discernment, but also a new perspective on affectivity and its relationship with the vow of Chastity. It was, he said, about learning to love well and to love grandly... He portrayed it as an adventure into self for the sake of others, as giving new dimension to life, breadth to relationships and freedom to the soul, and he used to point out that Jesus loved with his whole personality, affectivity, feelings, sensitivity.

In the turmoil about leadership in communities, Ronnie also gave new perspectives on the vow of Obedience, untangled it from authoritarianism, distanced it from individualism, and showed communities the importance of leadership with the consequent need to enable the leader to lead. Ronnie was there for the whole church, he worked with a group in the USA who were in schism, he was asked to come and assist some communities wracked by internal dissension, he was called upon to help elderly Sisters transferring to another abbey after 40 or more years in the one place. There was a whole host of different tasks and invitations. Some extremely difficult, some excruciatingly painful for him, but all entered into willingly and fully. He was not one to parachute in, provide some input and disappear over the horizon. No, he kept coming back. He worked with the same group on a fairly regular basis for years.

His effectiveness is also partly explained by the fact that he had lived through the challenge, desolation and conflict caused by renewal; he knew what it was to have considered views summarily dismissed; he understood about unrealistic expectations imposed upon him. He knew the pain of not being listened to. He understood what it was to be separated and feeling alone. He was indeed a wounded healer; but one with a prayerful, serene and even joyful heart who had integrated pain into his life. This gave a light and compassionate touch to his relationships and, with his welcoming smile, he helped many a good person find their way through a difficulty.

AFTERMATH OF VATICAN II

Vatican II had a profound effect on the Marist Brothers, as it did on all religious congregations. The 'Renewal' was rarely ignored, but by some pursued with reluctance and by others with fervid intensity. Ron was generally able, in the groups he worked with, to provide unusual sagacity: he combined ancientness of days and youthfulness of mind—he was, in fact, a model of generativity and wisdom.

Whilst still in Chicago, he was elected delegate to the Institute's post-Conciliar General Chapter which met in Rome for 2 months in 1966, and again in 1967. He had previously been involved with a survey done in the Melbourne Province (as in all Provinces) prior to that Chapter, which had given him a clearer idea of the issues to be faced in a world-wide Institute of (at the time) nearly 10,000 members.

After his accumulated experience in the Scholasticates of Camberwell, Drummoyne and Dundas, as well as the training gained in Chicago—to say nothing of acquaintance with the Church in the USA and of the Marists' own post-Conciliar General Chapter—he was equipped to be a religious-life consultant of rare wisdom.

Nonetheless, it was not primordially his accumulated experiences which formed him for this task, but rather the quality of person that he was—the strengths and virtues of his heart—which forged of him a truly 'wise' man.

Ron was possessed of a huge capacity for self-discipline; this was obvious from his earliest days as a teacher and academic. As the years passed, however, any vision of himself as a *Slave of Duty* was transcended. He became more aware as time went on of the gratuitous infinity of God's

love for him, and his indebtedness to the Lord for all he had received. Towards the end of his life, his Retreat Diaries⁵ become very explicit about this, and we see the beautiful progression he underwent as **gratitude** became increasingly the *leitmotif* of his spirituality. The mosaic of virtues which he had received and practised over nearly a century is multi-faceted. For the remainder of this article let us comment briefly on them.

First we remark that Ronnie had the *Signs of the Spirit* (from Gal 5:20) written on the inside cover of his Retreat Notes: 'Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Fidelity (Faithfulness), Gentleness (Courtesy), Self-Control (Discipline, Non-Reactive)': his notes refer often to these Signs, and there is no doubt he was endeavouring to live them.

MOSAIC OF VIRTUES

For many, **Self-Control** was Ronald's most obvious trait, after all he was 'the Greyhound'. He exercised (at least a walk, usually a run or jog) virtually every day of his adult life, until the fateful 2008 accident; he was then 94. Yet jogging and a meagre diet was the least of it! In early January 2004 he was in New Zealand feeling 'very fit and alert', thinking he 'could carry on for 1000 years!' Yet a few days later he was 'feeling down', which indicated he was 'not calling on the Holy Spirit'. It was a 'sad morning for him', wherein he had allowed the 'old response' to take hold of him, rather than to recognise it and then immediately act 'happy', 'confident', 'good', 'successful'. He wrote that his own instinctive response was 'so deep within me that it will take over within a second if I fail to take the *contrary action* immediately'. So, 'my present prayer is to thank God immediately for the grace to have done it... and to find my Black Wednesday, after its momentary pain, transformed into my Bright Wednesday.' He admits he is 'still learning to be a smart therapist [*instead of "controlling or explaining everything"*]. It has taken me 50 years to learn that'.

The 'Non-Reactive' adjective under 'Self-Control' seems to refer to the life-long struggle Ron had to overcome his tendency to 'react' to people who gave him trouble. This has relevance also to his quest for **gentleness**. At the age of 91 Ronnie had to continue the struggle for self-control in relation to matters 'like the tea-towels! and the washing-up!' He is still finding 'annoyance, hurt, revenge (vindictive)', within himself; still 'momentarily losing my bearings, playing "Poor me", or "it's not fair", being intolerant (things have got to be done my way), and precipitant.' He 'enjoys the pleasure of being and acting in another way, e.g. delight at being able to serve, being gracious and graceful, a smile on the face,

“no trouble at all”, caring for others and being courteous.’

He notes he ‘walked to Mass’, it took him an hour; ‘inside me I was playing the “poor, unfairly treated me!!!”’ He says this ‘has become a big thing for me... a way of complaining to “make **you** feel guilty”... [But] I can see that the Lord has let me see all this piteous nonsense, so that I can work on ridding myself of it, instead of the balanced picture [I aspire to]. Let me ask Him for the grace to arrive at it.’ You can see that Ronald’s self-control was more than mere spontaneity! And we can glimpse something of the ferocity of becoming ‘gentle’.

Ronnie sub-titles **Fidelity** as Faithfulness, for reasons of his own. He undoubtedly refers increasingly to the Lord’s faithfulness to him, but also presumably to the many times his own steadfastness has been tested in the crucible. Now in his ‘90s he recognises that ‘it behoves me to *prepare for death*—but I must do that without worrying’. He also perceives ‘things in myself which I must face up to, e.g. the danger, as I grow older, when poor hearing tends to isolate me... that would be *fatal*. I must stay alive and alert. I must not withdraw into my shell. I must not “play hurt, wounded, etc.”, not allow myself to wallow in self-pity.’ At one point he insists that ‘I am kidding myself that I am trustworthy!!!’ He could be very hard on himself!

He is discovering new dimensions in habits of prayer he has practised since his youth. He speaks of the excitement of starting ‘now (at 92)’ to read a few lines of the Gospel, then pausing to dwell on what he had read, pick up the response in his own heart. Once such significant feelings or desires have been elicited, ‘there will always be something worth getting up for in the morning...’

Ronnie’s **Goodness** and **Kindness** are proverbial. Never, however, did he put himself in the limelight, and never did he demand of others what he would not do himself. It was as a teacher that goodness most expressed itself in his life. He was always a teacher, and never stopped honing and improving his lectures and his skills of responsiveness. ‘But more than teach; he listened. He lectured for hours every day, yes, but then listened between conferences, during meals, through half the night working with one individual after another. He got to know them. He listened to their fears, their anger, their frustration, their desires to be a community again.’ The special form of his goodness and kindness was precisely his educated empathy for everyone, even for those he found difficult. He said in his 92nd year: ‘I am grasping things now that I’ve never grasped before. I am

overwhelmed by the things I need to grasp in myself'. The fact that the 'Lord has carried me all along to the place within myself where I've never thought possible before' was a motive of jubilation for him. Yet he continued to reflect deeply on his teaching in order to purge it of 'raggedness' and wordiness, and to improve the 'cultivation of its pronunciation, and ensure a more engaging proclamation in gesture'.

DEMANDS MADE ON HIMSELF

Patience is an interesting word: it comes from the Latin *patior* (meaning to 'suffer' more than simply to 'wait'); this in turn comes from the Greek *pathos* (meaning feeling, suffering, or brokenness). Ronnie knew all about this word. After his 'retirement' he found he had much more leisure; he fed the magpies, washed all the dishes for the staff at the Province Centre, played the piano at a set time, but was driven to an inner restlessness and anxiety by (as he said) 'not having anything to do'. He took on the reading of Philosophy and touched again the tenets and beliefs that underpinned his life. But it was a difficult time of adjustment. Some of the things he discovered needing attention in him were: 'my habit of being annoyed when somebody fails to turn up for an appointment. It's normal to "feel annoyed" but I also need to bear it graciously and not "act out" my disappointment by pouting or complaining... And especially as a teacher, I must be careful not to project something like "blame" or "bad humour" onto the members of the class. Do I do that "graciously"? I am afraid there lurks in me a certain "inferiority complex" that "I'm not very successful". I need to stop that by acting positively, having faith in others, in their ability to perform'. In one of his Christmas Retreats (2006-7) he contemplates the 'deceits of Satan' and the key points of his own vulnerability; he identified them as 'jealousy, high performance, scholarly, being a favourite, high qualifications (academic), the lustful eye, musician, HARSH DUTY (cf my Dad).'

Ronnie was seeing many things 'emerging in my own consciousness [including] the enormous spiritual development in the last year. I can hardly believe it. I believe too that the demands on me, keeping me alert and *stirred* has prevented my faster slipping into *Alzheimer's condition*. But I am painfully aware of the fact that my tendency to silence and withdrawal at home is NOT very healthy... We are "social animals" and need the others—to keep us alert and aware.' Two years later, during his 2006-7 Retreat, Ronnie refers to 'the place of the spiritual, or the place of suffering...' He says 'this contemplation is a stunner, not to be missed!'

He then copies out Heb 12:5-6 and 1 Cor 1:18-25, of which an excerpt follows:

For the Lord trains all the ones that he loves, and he punishes you that he acknowledges as his sons. Suffering is part of your training. God is treating you as his sons. As Scripture says: 'I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing all the learning of the learned.' Where are the philosophers now? Where are the scribes? Where are any of our thinkers? ...But to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's foolishness is stronger than human strength.

(Little did he know what was in store for him in a year or so!)

LAST MONTHS

One very windy evening in early 2008, Ronnie sallied forth for his usual evening walk. Unfortunately he was 'blown over by a puff of wind' on the return journey, and found himself face down in a concrete roadside drain near Tuscan Rise. Fortunately a young lady motorist in need of directions saw him, and drove him back to the Provincial House, from whence he was hospitalized and discovered to have major facial injuries, a broken nose, and two broken wrists.

Ronnie's struggle with *'pathos'* after his accident was indeed sad. He was in St Vincent's public hospital for a couple of weeks, then in St George's (Kew) rehabilitation unit. Here for the first time in 90+ years, he couldn't read, feared he would never play the piano again, or even write, could only move with the aid of a walker, and was also afflicted with mild incontinence—hence there was no realistic possibility of returning to his community home at Templestowe. When you went to visit him at St George's he was a mere shadow of his former self, often profoundly depressed, feeling abandoned, and quite dejected. His experiences of the nights spent there, often in total wakefulness, are better not remembered. He was accompanied by a number of faithful souls, many from Templestowe, and elsewhere. Fortunately Br Leo Kavanagh, his attentive carer, was able to find a place for him with Southern Cross Homes at Macleod. It was there that he spent his last 18 months, where he became contented and very well looked after. His room at the end of the corridor

was well frequented by visitors—though never as many as Ronnie would have liked! He had plenty of incoming mail, and people brought him lots of books which he avidly read, since he had no lasting eye damage. He also conducted daily revisitations of the ‘Twenties and Thirties’, having been given numerous CDs of his favourites, and a machine to play them (fairly loudly) most of the day. A couple of times a month, the Brothers would take him out to Templestowe, where he would enjoy morning tea (with community and staff) and then tickle the ivories. His conversation during the Macleod period was gracious and intelligent as ever, except that he had become quite forgetful about the stories he had only just told you!

After this accident there are, not surprisingly, few letters and no journal entries, though he was given to jotting things down on pieces of paper. Once established at Macleod, however, **Peace** and **Joy** returned to him after his long dark night.

Love and **gratitude** were undoubtedly the chief characteristics of his last years. His resolution for New Year’s Day 2003 had included: ‘after having put the drops in my eyes, adding not only my thanks for all the Lord has done for me down the years, but also for the ways in which he manifested himself during these days.’ Ron was ‘a man of prayer who always allocated time in his day for community prayer, spiritual reading, meditation, Lectio Divina and Eucharist.’ In earlier decades he had been totally faithful, however much motivated—as he only later discovered—through ‘Duty’; but towards the end it became a labour of love. A book he had been reading in 2003 influenced him enormously: Scott & Kimberly Hahn’s *Rome Sweet Home*.

At the end of 2006 he reports a Retreat contemplation: ‘This morning I experienced an unbelievable gratitude for my vocation to the Marist Brothers... [He added] what does matter is when it comes your turn to DIE. I am enormously GRATEFUL that I have stayed the distance (to 30th December 2006).’

One day, about 4 days before his death, he was very feverish, and spent many hours recounting an idea which was preoccupying him. It had its funny side, but in essence was a beautiful manifestation of the simple gratitude which infused him at the end. He would first ask you—with all delicacy and graciousness—if you would be able to assist him with an important task. Once assured of your collaboration, he would explain that he had put aside a store of bottles: whisky (Black Label), beer, gin, etc., plus mineral water and tap water—the actual contents could vary somewhat.

He wanted you to help with the distribution: the whisky was to go to Pam ('my first secretary'⁶), then the beer to Rex, the gin to some of the Nursing Staff, then the mineral water, and then the tap water to slightly less worthy recipients, but everybody was to get something! After you had heard him through, and promised to facilitate this distribution, you would have two or three minutes to broach other topics of your choice, then he would return relentlessly to the 'task', and repeat his request for assistance; the scenario might change in its detail, and he would muse somewhat on the recipients, the quantities, the why's and the wherefore's: but one thing was fixed—Pam was to get whisky and Rex, beer ... and everybody was to get something!

The last day of consciousness for Ronnie was Friday 11th December. There were a large number of visitors. In the evening, though a little obsessive, he was basically his courteous, gracious and grateful self. He wept a lot of tears that evening: looking back to the dark days of felt abandonment, but more especially to the consolations received and the active love of many friends and confrères. Inwardly, he was most grateful to Jesus and his Holy Spirit... he had been anointed a couple of times in the last weeks and felt intensely the presence of the Trinity.

On the last page of his Retreat Notes (1st January 2008) he had affixed a St Benedict reminder sticker, which he had annotated.⁷ The Latin words on the sticker with Ronald's accompanying note were:

My 95th Year

**EIUS IN OBITU NOSTRO
PRAESENTIA MUNIAMUR***

*I shall put St. Benedict
at the end of this year 1907
and at the beginning of 1908*

(*Translation: In the moment of our death, may his presence protect us.) ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Br Julian Casey, *Brother Ronald Fogarty FMS: Provincial's Eulogy* in Marist Newsletter 41 (February 2010) 22-28.
- 2 Brother Ludovic Bourke was a brilliant person who had gained Doctorates from the Lateran in Rome, and from Monash. Many would have experienced him as somewhat uncongenial and severe.

- 3 A large book would be needed to do justice to this sad chapter in our Province history: our main focus must remain Brother Ronald. Suffice it to say that that the lay students at Marist began to show signs of disaffection, and in addition the earlier vogue of students from across the State willingly choosing to reside in university colleges went into abeyance, thus rendering two Catholic colleges at Monash University (Mannix and Marist) a luxury which could not be sustained. In addition there were serious difficulties on the part of many of the Marist scholastics with the régime, and furthermore numbers did not continue at the levels anticipated. Towards the end of 1971, Brother Ludovic's mandate as Master of Scholastics was revoked, and Brother Desmond Crowe eventually took over. In 1978 the Marist Brothers returned the Marist College property to the University, and it now continues in use as Normanby College, a university conference centre. The Scholasticate was transferred to 76-80 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, where it continues. Brother Ronald was profoundly saddened to see his great hope for Marist College extinguished, but recognized that this was the only sensible course to take in the circumstances (cf correspondence from Br Desmond Crowe, 17 June 1977; replied to by Br Ronald from Tucson AZ, 28 June 1977).
- 4 An adequate account of the relevant issues is contained in Dr William Coulson's 'Story of a Repentant Psychologist', (online: www.ewtn.com/library/PRIESTS/COULSON.TXT).

Coulson was a fellow worker with Rogers, both being at WBSI (Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, La Jolla, CA) together. Also together they and 58 other 'therapists' launched themselves on the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters of Los Angeles in 1966-67, 'reforming' them through TFN ('Therapy for Normals') and encounter workshops planned to go for 3 years, but ceasing after two. Coulson says: 'They had some 60 schools when we started; at the end, they had one. There were some 560 nuns when we began. Within a year after our first interventions, 300 of them were petitioning Rome to get out of their vows. They did not want to be under anyone's authority, except the authority of their imperial inner selves.'

It is also worth noting that Coulson describes Rogers as 'a terrific human being' who could actually 'disappear for people and leave them in the presence of their consciences'. He says that they succeeded in 'creating a miniature utopian society, the encounter group. As long as Rogers [was] there it was okay... He kept people in line; he was a moral force. People did in fact consult their consciences and it looked like good things were happening.' Nonetheless, Rogers himself began to see quite quickly that something was going badly wrong '... because he really loved those women'. Coulson goes on to quote him in a tape that they made together in '76: 'I left there feeling, Well, I started this damned thing, and look where it's taking us; I don't even know where it's taking me. I don't have any idea what's going to happen next. And I woke up the next morning feeling so depressed, that I could hardly stand it. And I realized what was wrong.. Yes, I started this thing, and now look where it's carrying us. Where is it going to

carry us? And did I start something that is in some fundamental way mistaken, and will lead us off into paths that we will regret?' The problem, of course, was that the humanistic psychologists in general—let alone their younger clients—had no belief in original sin or human brokenness. Interestingly, Coulson refers to Abraham Maslow who, with Carl Rogers, is the co-founder of 'Third Force' or 'Humanistic Psychology': 'Maslow did warn us about this: Maslow believed in evil and we didn't. He said our problem was our total confusion about evil. (This is quoting from Maslow's journals, which came out too late to stop us. His journals came out in '79, and we had done our damage by then.)'

Coulson adds: 'We did similar programs for the Jesuits, for the Franciscans, for the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of Charity, and for the Mercy Sisters. We did dozens of Catholic religious organizations, because... in the excitement following Vatican II everybody wanted to update, everybody wanted to renew; and we offered a way for people to renew, without having to bother to study. We said, we'll help you look within...'

See also:

Paul Vitz (1977/2002): *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*. Wm B Eerdmans, pp 7-14 & passim.

Benedict Groeschel CFR (1990): *The Reform of Renewal*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press

Joseph Becker (1992): *The Reformed Jesuits: A History of Changes in the Jesuit Order During the Decade 1965-1975*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press

Maslow, A.H. (1979). *The Journals of Abraham Maslow*, (R.J.Lowry, Ed.) Monterey CA: Brooks/Cole

Mark E. Koltko-Rivera (2006). "Rediscovering the Later Version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Self-Transcendence and Opportunities for Theory, Research, and Unification" *Review of General Psychology*. Vol 10, No. 4, 302-317

- 5 Ron had the habit of doing a private retreat (usually at Templestowe) every year between Christmas and New Year, which he normally prepared and structured for himself according to an Ignatian model. He kept quite detailed retreat notes (in an A5 Insert Ring-binder marked "Strictly Private Please"*) but I suspect that most of his notes have been shredded; nonetheless pages numbered 95-180 remain in the current folder—the last entry would have been New Year's Day, 2008. He usually carried this folder with him on his journeys.

{* *The author has the permission of the Provincial, Br. Julian Casey, to draw on these notes for the purposes of this article.*}

- 6 Actually June Dickson was his first secretary (at Clayton then Templestowe), then Pam Gartland—Ronnie loved them both, and had conflated the two!
- 7 Note the uncharacteristic mistake Ron made on this occasion: "1907 and 1908" instead of "2007" and "2008". Perhaps earthly time was becoming irrelevant?



DESMOND CONNELLY

A Resurgent Laity in Church Ministry

ACCORDING to Benedict XVI they are not a problem, not an extra risk, but in fact gifts from the Lord, an essential part of the life of the Church. What are these gifts? They are the new ecclesial movements, many of them predominantly lay, living and spreading the gospel message in numerous parts of the world. Are they a transient feature of what will prove to be a relatively brief period in Church history? Are they powered by a situation that may also be comparatively short-lived: a dramatic decrease in the number of ordained clergy? Are they sustained in the main by Popes of the current era, a period with perhaps a limited life span. How did these movements come to deserve strong papal

approbation? Are they a clear manifestation of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church to a new understanding of the role and function of the laity?

Some details about just one of them may provide a persuasive answer. The key elements are a civil war in Mozambique, an oppressive Marxist regime, a fierce guerrilla movement, the unprecedented success of a group of ordinary people in bringing about a conciliatory meeting of warring parties. With no particular background in conflict resolution, the group worked patiently with both sides over four years to persuade them to consider ending the violence and division afflicting their country. Equally impressive, after the first meeting of the warring parties the group was asked to play a continuing role through 27 months of negotiations in 11 separate sessions. The meetings culminated in the 1992 comprehensive peace agreement that brought an end to Mozambique's war, and the beginning of democracy.

Mario Giro¹, one of the group who was involved throughout the long, patient process, explained that its effectiveness resulted in part from members being seen as living and working in the community while, fortified by communal prayer, they cared for the needy. Thus they earned the respect and trust of both sides in the civil conflict.

INSPIRED BY FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Giro's original acquaintance with this singularly successful group occurred when as a fifteen-year old new arrival at a high school he was invited by some fellow students to join them in a project to help the disadvantaged in the slums on the outskirts of Rome. The mission had been initiated in 1968 by an older student, Andrea Riccardi, and in the intervening five years had grown to a membership of some hundreds. Riccardi (1999) had called on the youth around him to draw inspiration for action from the lives of the first Christians and from the example of Francis of Assisi. Mario Giro willingly joined the band as they turned their energies to bringing assistance to the most deprived and marginalised. Throughout high school and university years, he and his friends, bound by prayer and by their social work, laboured to make a difference among deprived adolescents and young adults crowded into the poorest of the city's poor areas. They continued to live their normal lives, met for prayer every day, and demonstrated that ordinary people, coming from normal ways of life but determined to put the Gospel into practice, could help improve the lot of others.

Their movement came to be known as the Community of Sant'Egidio, named after the church where the group met regularly for prayer. Today Giro is its Director for International Affairs and has seen the Community spread to numerous cities in Italy, to nearly every country in Europe, and into Africa where, in a number of cases, as in Mozambique, it has made a strongly positive contribution to promoting the resolution of conflict between warring parties.

Giro underscores the fact that while the Community is part of the Church it was not born within it, being autonomous and with its distinct identity. Yet in their determination to live a more authentic life inspired by the Scriptures the members of the Community exhibit an enviable spirituality. For them the first 'work' of Sant'Egidio is prayer, both personal and communal. Moreover, in their mind, as Riccardi constantly affirmed, being disciples of Christ is synonymous with living and sharing the Gospel.

Wherever there is a community of Sant'Egidio, friendship and familiarity with the poor is a fundamental and daily commitment. In a world that promotes conflicts by raising barriers and emphasising cultural and national differences, the Community aims to be a concrete expression of communion and solidarity among brothers and sisters everywhere. Accordingly it is active in ecumenical activities, in dialogue with other religions and in support for all seeking refuge from conflict, oppression and poverty.

Finally, the Community is wholehearted in its service to peace, recognising that war gives birth to diverse forms of poverty, and conflict makes the defence of the most basic human rights impossible. Every year the Community organises in a different European city an international and interreligious meeting for Peace. Sant'Egidio is established in scores of countries and has tens of thousands of members. It has been singled out for numerous prestigious awards. For example, its founder, Andrea Riccardi received the 2009 International Charlemagne Prize recognising him as 'a Great European whose life has been at the service of his neighbour'.

NEW OR RENEWED?

The Community of Sant'Egidio is but one of the many diverse bodies falling within the category of what John Paul II described as 'ecclesial movements filled with missionary dynamism'. The Pontifical Council for the Laity invited to a 1983 meeting a group of more than twenty of the associations that had been established prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Early in June 2006 Benedict XVI had members of more than 100 ecclesial movements gather to meet with him in St. Peter's Square, many of them founded in the years following the Council. Porteous (2010) provides informative detail about a selection of over a dozen of more recent groups such as the Legion of Christ, Focolare, the Christian Life Movement, the Neocatechumenal Way and the Korean Khotonghae Community. Some of these associations were founded by priests or religious, others by lay people, some have only lay members, others follow a form of religious life, yet others have a membership comprising laity, male and female religious and priests. Variety is a hallmark, there is no one template for their development and operation.

Despite common perceptions (not limited to Australia) lay associations have a distinguished lineage in the Catholic Church. In this sense the descriptor 'new' might be more accurately replaced by 'renewed' when applied to modern ecclesial movements. The Roman craft organisations that lasted until about 1100 were originally religious confraternities. Founded in the 6thC the Benedictine Order was first composed predominantly of lay members. In the 13thC the Franciscan Third Order was founded by Francis of Assisi for lay people. In the second half of the 14thC Geert Groote, an ordained deacon, compellingly preached and taught the 'devotio moderna' (renewed piety) which in its emphasis on the incarnation and passion of Christ called on the faithful to find their way to God through Jesus. His message found institutional expression in the 'Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life', associations of laity and non-monastic priests committed to practising a disciplined evangelical spirituality within their normal way of life (Van Engen 2004, 2008). Their influence was evident through to the 16thC. Prominent from the mid-15thC through to the early 19thC were the 'Confraternities' (Terpstra, 2004). They so organised the devotional and charitable life of lay believers as to be the lay face of the Church, organising and operating what we would term social welfare. While consistently asserting lay autonomy they advocated renewal of the Church based on the works of physical and spiritual charity and on expanded devotional exercises centred on prayer and the sacraments.

Many of the religious orders founded in the 16thC began as confraternities and, once established, they used confraternities to support their charitable and mission outreach. Much of Catholic expansion outside Europe employed confraternities as agents of mission, charity,

and political and social control. Confraternities worked side by side with clerical missionaries in Japan, China, Mexico, as in Central, South and Latin America. As early as 1585, for example, Mexico City had close to 300 confraternities. Apparently justified criticism of some aspects of their operation was one reason why their influence in Europe had greatly waned by the end of the 18thC. However, they revived as devotional groups in the 19thC. but without the social and political influence of former times.

On occasions over the last 120 years or so the official Church has formally expressed support for somewhat similar associations of devout laity. In 1889 Leo XIII wrote approvingly of them as 'pious sodalities'. In 1947 Pius XII approved legislation² for *secular institutes*, that is, groups of devout lay people living and working in the world and not officially categorised as having entered a distinct state of life such as a religious congregation or the priesthood. More recently ecclesial movements brought a special 'apostolate' dimension to the concept. Prior to the late 1960s they were found principally in European countries. Nevertheless, some associations of these kinds gradually became familiar to many Catholics in Australia. The *Society of St. Vincent de Paul* is notable, being very visible both in most Catholic parishes and in the community generally. Many Australians are also aware of the *Legion of Mary* as a movement designed to engage lay people directly in the apostolic mission of the Church. In addition, among some Catholics there is superficial knowledge of *Opus Dei*. While this body certainly has active adherents, however, most who have heard about the organisation assume that it is at work in the Church in Australia without having *direct experience* of it.

BLOSSOMING OF LAY ASSOCIATIONS

In the decades following the Second Vatican Council, and in a number of different regions of the Catholic world, ecclesial movements have somehow acquired dramatically increased impetus. Arising from a fresh apostolic dynamism in the laity new groups have been born and have developed strongly, not only in Europe but also in the United States, in South American countries, and in a range of Asian countries including Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia. Very few are Australian in origin but a number have extended their area of apostolate to include this country. The Archdiocese of Sydney lists ten Communities as being active in its pastoral area. They include *Emmanuel*, *Focolare*, *the Neo-Catechumenal Way*, *the CLM* and *Schoenstatt*. Another – the *Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community*, founded in Australia by Father Ken Barker, has given birth

to an order of priests, the *Missionaries of God's Love MGL*. This Order achieved some prominence through one of its members, Father Chris Ryan, who accompanied the World Youth Day Cross through much of Australia in 2007-08.

The blossoming of lay associations committed to bringing renewed force and direction to the pastoral mission of the Church has often found its origins in charismatic lay people like Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte (Emmanuel), Luis Fernando Figari (Christian Life Movement-CLM), Jean Vanier (L'Arche) and Andrea Riccardi (Sant'Egidio). The movements devote their energies to being a prayerful presence in the world, alleviating the condition of those suffering forms of disadvantage or deprivation, and making the Gospel a living reality in the lives of people everywhere.

All of this went much further than a *re-emerging* laity. It was a repudiation of the implicit view of Church leadership that little could be expected of the lay vocation and mission. It trumpeted the universal call to holiness, making its own the catch-cry quoted in the first epistle of St. Peter: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' It dismissed the notion of a laity that should be no more than pious, supportive and docile. Equally it brushed aside the view of a lay apostolate organised, mandated and controlled by the clergy. It reclaimed as of right the oneness of mission conferred in baptism, along with its consequence of a fuller participation of the laity in the inner life of the Church. It truly heralded a *resurgent* laity.

CLERICAL ASCENDANCY

This has been a veritable revolution in thinking. The Second Vatican Council's references to direct participation of the laity in the apostolic mission of the Church may partly explain the vigour with which the concept has been implemented around the world over recent decades. But the development is at odds with deeply rooted clerical attitudes. These have three dimensions. For many centuries now *spirituality* has been seen as largely the preserve of ordained secular and religious clergy. With that spirituality came the responsibility and the prerogative of the *pastoral care* of souls. And those two factors resulted in the clergy seeing themselves (and being generally viewed) as having expertise in the central business of the Church, with *exclusive right* to exercise all its significant responsibilities. One outcome has been strong clerical dominance linked to the effective relegation of the laity to inferior and dependent status. It might be added that many lay people judge this to be the way things *should* be.

That situation developed early. Duffy (1997, chap. 3) is one of many church historians to have described the gradual entrenchment of clerical ascendancy. As early as the middle of the second century Christians were experiencing a need to identify particular elders (effectively bishops) to exercise authority over religious beliefs and practice. As the concept of a monarchic episcopate became an increasingly potent reality, Pope St. Gelasius I in the late fifth century declared that the powers by which the world was chiefly governed were twofold, 'the pontifical and the royal', and insisted controversially that 'in things of the spirit the pontifical power took precedence'. Tensions continued to the point where, in 1081, Gregory VII, 'one of the most energetic and determined men ever to occupy the See of Peter', dismissed his predecessor's acceptance of royal power: '...who can doubt that the priests of Christ are to be considered the fathers and the masters of kings and princes and all the faithful?'

The evolution of monasticism³ through the centuries reflected the ever increasing assertion of clerical superiority evident in the Church as a whole. In earlier Christian history the popularity of the solitary monastic life was notable among the powerful expressions of spirituality among some of the laity. By the middle of the third century there were numerous examples of devout people withdrawing from the world in order to come closer to God through an ascetical life spent in relative seclusion. While this 'eremital monasticism' never completely died out, St. Pachomius in Egypt in the 4th C was chiefly responsible for largely replacing it with a way of life characterised by monks living a strictly regulated form of community life. It was a layman, Benedict of Norcia⁴ who more than a century later founded and ruled over twelve monasteries in the region of Subiaco, and subsequently over another at Monte Cassino. He thereby provided the pattern for a way of life that has earned him recognition in the Church as the Patriarch of Western Monasticism.

In Benedictine houses for almost five centuries following the death of the founder there was no distinction of rank between the clerical and the lay brethren. All were on an equal footing in the community, and at first comparatively few seem to have been advanced to the priesthood. From the middle of the eleventh century, however, various regulations were increasingly implemented to signal the subordinate status of monks who were not clerics. They had no stalls in choir and no vote in chapter; neither were they bound to the daily recitation of the breviary Office as were the choir monks. They were entrusted with the more menial work of

the monastery, and with all those duties that involved intercourse with the outside world. Activities of a clearly spiritual character were judged to be a special responsibility and a distinguishing feature of the ordained members.

The system spread rapidly to all branches of the Benedictines and was imitated by almost every other religious order. The late Friar John-Joseph Dolan OFM Conv. was a striking reminder of the secondary status long accorded within the monasteries to monks who were not priests. When he became an Assistant General in 2001 he was the first Religious Brother to join the Definitory (General Council) of the Order since the time of Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). At least until comparatively recently there was hardly a congregation that did not have a similar two-tier membership.

RECLAIMING ST. PAUL

Hagstrom (2010) finds the roots of this situation in the recognition over time of the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff as the successor of St. Peter. Priests were seen as linked to the Pontiff through the Bishops – the ‘successors of the other Apostles’ – to whom they were directly subordinate. From early in the 16th C the Protestant Reformation with its Pauline focus opposed this line of thought. Paul had envisaged the Church as the Body of Christ and was convinced that the ministry of the Gospel was a shared, collaborative endeavour, the many members having gifts differing according to the graces given to each member but all called to make an important contribution to ministry in the life of the Church. In reacting against Protestant dialectic the Roman Church moved further to becoming almost exclusively Petrine – accentuating the Papal office, the power of the sacraments, the key role of the hierarchy, the primacy of Rome in Christianity. In Hagstrom’s judgement it took nearly four hundred years for Catholicism to reclaim St. Paul along with his acceptance of how the laity can be called to formal ministry within the inner life of the church.

By putting a stamp of approval on the concept of a revived laity the Vatican Council, intentionally or otherwise, had questioned the concept of a dominant clergy. The first conciliar document (*The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*) began by affirming the chief aim of the Council to be the imparting of ‘an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful’. *The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* issued a universal call to holiness insisting that ‘all Christ’s faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives – and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness...’. This summons was

firmly grounded in the history of spirituality that demonstrates how 'the perfection of charity can be attained by any Christian in any state of life' (see *Preface* to Aumann, 1985). In the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* the Council went further, insisting that there are to be no purely passive members of the Body of Christ, that Baptism calls every one to fulfil the mission of Christ, and that in the baptismal call oneness of mission and diversity of ministry go hand in hand.

In the light of later developments the Council fathers can be seen as having had limited expectation of the subsequent upsurge in lay activism. Yet the references in Council documents to greater lay participation in a range of church endeavours quickly fuelled an explosion of lay involvement in the inner life of the church. While probably unanticipated by the Council the resulting vibrant expressions of lay pastoral ministry are now seen as having fostered the ongoing renewal of the church over the last forty years.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF LAY MINISTRY?

However, as can often be the case with many developments in the Church, the accelerating involvement of lay people in roles traditionally reserved for the clergy has outstripped accompanying formal theology. A number of attempts have been made to rectify this situation. For the 1987 Synod of Bishops John Paul II determined that the theme would be the call of the laity to participate directly in the apostolic mission of the Church. At the request of the Bishops the Pope subsequently wrote the Papal Exhortation *On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*. In that document the Pope threw a spotlight on Baptism as providing both foundation and justification for equality and common dignity among all members of the church. He called on all, without distinction of person or role, to embrace in practical ways the vocation and mission flowing from their baptism. Another notable contribution to determining a theological foundation for lay ecclesial ministry is a 2005 Statement by the United States Conference of Bishops titled *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. It was intended as a resource for those seeking to integrate ordained and lay ministries as they adapt Vatican Council teaching on the laity to respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations.

Crafting a theology of lay ministry, however, has proved an ongoing endeavour not without its tensions. The expansion of lay ministries is judged by some to have been excessive and to the detriment of an

appreciation of the appropriate secular mission of the laity. Yet others believe that while lay involvement has many positive dimensions it will prove to be a transient phase necessitated by a temporary shortage of clergy in the developed world. There is also the apprehension among some that, as was often successfully asserted in past centuries, the measure of autonomy enjoyed by the movements will leave them open to error and undermine the authority of bishops and priests. For yet other groups the character of modern ecclesial movements makes them a divisive influence in local parishes, seeming to distinguish between those who are 'simply lay Catholics' and the ones who are members of an ecclesial movement. In some places the acknowledgement of lay participation is linked to distinguishing two distinct *spheres* of church operation. Implicit in the distinction is an effective re-assertion of two *levels* of activity in the life and mission of the church: ministry *within the church* for the clergy, and apostolate *in the world* for the laity.

But the laity is not standing and waiting for such issues to be resolved. In great numbers lay people have long moved from the spectators' benches onto the playing arena. Responding to the baptismal call to holiness and to sharing their faith in both word and action they value their priests as 'first among equals' and see themselves as co-workers with them in the care of souls. In parishes of all kinds lay people are indispensable agents in the diversity of activities by which the local church reaches out to its community. While carrying out responsibilities at home, at work, in public service, they also attempt in practical ways to integrate their faith into all they do. Many have undertaken studies in Scripture and in Theology, equipping themselves for what they see as their vocation to Church ministry. They are catechists, educators, seminar leaders, bearers of the charity of Christ to the less fortunate, they are missionaries and they are evangelists. In the wider landscape ecclesial movements, independently or in partnership with religious congregations, are exploring resilient new forms of spirituality as they bring an electric new energy to Christian living and to involvement in the pastoral mission of the Church.

What does the future hold? Perhaps the many variables in the shifting scene make further innovation unpredictable. Many have a more positive view. In their minds the desire of John XXIII for a 'new Pentecost' is being realised as the Spirit intervenes to breathe fresh and vigorous life into the pastoral role and function of a resurgent laity in the modern church. ■

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The Berkley Center for Religious Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University) has a report on a lengthy discussion with Mario Giro held on 20 November 2008. It can be accessed at <http://gdc.georgetown.edu:3000/interviews/people/mario-giro>
- 2 *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, the associated *Motu Proprio Primo Feliciter* and the Instruction of the Congregation of Religious *Cum Sanctissimus*.
- 3 For an overview of monasticism in the East, the West, and in the Benedictine tradition see Aumann *op.cit.*. Also in this work (chap. 7) there is a description of the 'devotio moderna'.
- 4 Details about the evolution of Benedictine life can be accessed at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02443a.htm>

We stand looking forward to a century
which is full of promise and full of peril.

Human beings are confronting the questions of how to use wisely the
power that has been given to us through the discoveries of the last century.

We shall not be converted to the promise of the future by more
knowledge, but rather by an increase of loving reverence for life,
for the earth and for one another.

Richard Chartres – Anglican Bishop of London



MARY BYRNE HOFFMAN

The Media Pilgrimage

Faith Formation in the 21st Century

*The feeling remains that God is on the journey, too.
– St Teresa of Avila*

The article below comprises excerpts from the first part of a two-part series on faith formation in the 21st century informed by the author's day to day experience in the classroom. The article explores some of the spiritual foundations and challenges of the media culture.

EVERY September I walk to the podium in the front of the classroom and face the same audience. Sitting in undersized desks, the half-in, half-out bodies of 150 senior high school students mimic a similar level of ambivalent mental engagement. Newly and unhappily disconnected from their constant companions—the beloved iPod, the faithful cell phone, and the wonderful world of 24/7 web surfing—the rules and regulations of school have shorn them of all familiar landmarks.

I look at them, stuffed, suffocating, and adrift in mourning. How can I possibly compete with their world of constant stimulation and instant gratification? As if sensing my predicament, their bold stares lobby back the ultimatum of the expecting-to-be-utterly bored: Make my day.

Face to face after a long summer, those first few moments of the school year remind me once again of how different are the worlds of student and teacher. The generation gap that separates us is child's play compared to the culture gap that estranges us. It takes a deep breath and another look at all those expectant faces to remember the obvious: I am on a mission to another universe. Destination: Media Culture located in the Galaxy of Cyberspace.

(For the purposes of this article, 'media culture' refers to 21st-century popular culture dominated and defined by electronic visual and digital mass media. Examples of electronic visual media include television and film. Examples of electronic digital media include the Internet, Twitter, iPods, cell phones, video games, CDs, ebooks, and a growing array of interactive media.)

THE DIGITAL NATIVES

Undoubtedly you have come across some of the inhabitants of this universe. Talking out loud to invisible parties, oblivious to the world around them, in a state of perpetual distraction, they send and receive thousands of transmissions from remote locations via instruments held in their hands or plugged into their ears. Each of those transmissions carries messages that tell stories, transmit values, define lifestyles, and shape reality. Most of these messages—positive and negative, hidden and overt—are consumed

and created by our children and youth without any context or filtering by a teacher, preacher, or parent. Ironically, the technology that delivers this vast universe of unlimited interactive, interconnected information has also shrunk the interrelational world of its customers to a community of one. Relationship takes place in the isolated cubicles of remote communication via Facebook, instant messaging, and text messaging. Even more alarming is that information—not learning—is processed without the benefit of critical thinking and viewing skills. Welcome to the world of the digital natives!

THE MISSION

The question begs: What happens to faith formation in a culture where value messages are unfiltered by the moral lens of biblical tradition and spiritual wisdom? This is the dilemma that many religious educators and catechists face today as we struggle with a growing inability to connect with our ‘connected’ students. Dislocation is the source of their disengagement and our frustration. The youth today roam a universe dominated by images (media culture); most teachers are still grounded on a planet dominated by words (print culture). This cultural divide rears its ugly head in the middle of a failed lesson plan. We are teaching the critical thinking skills needed to function in the print culture. Our students are floundering in a digital deluge of images without the critical viewing skills to navigate the media culture. Both of us are falling into the abyss of non-communication and disconnection.

The solution is clear. As teachers and ministers, we have to bridge the chasm to create a learning environment that critiques, interprets, and integrates a culture that is rapidly changing the way that knowledge and information is delivered, received, processed and distributed. As educators who are charged with care of souls, we need to venture into this new universe on a three-fold mission:

1. To discover for ourselves the many pedagogical and spiritual possibilities that the media culture offers;
2. To develop the critical skills and moral compass necessary for the responsible and effective use of visual media (film, television programs) and digital resources (blogs, wikis, social networks, cell phones, podcasts, Google Docs) in our teaching methods; and
3. To teach those skills to our students, so they can understand how multi-media messages shape their values and worldview.

The first imperative of the mission is to immerse ourselves in the culture, the language and the spirituality of the digital natives. In a sense, the mystery of the Incarnation calls us to be ‘in this world’ (John 1: 10) by making a pilgrimage into the media culture to encounter what Karl Rahner calls ‘the Holy Mystery’. All pilgrims throughout time and religious traditions leave what is familiar for a road less travelled in order to find God. The media pilgrim is no different. The quest is to explore the relatively unknown landscape of spiritual transformation and faith formation in a digital media age. At the heart of this quest are questions that challenge the relevancy of ministry. Is media gospel? Is Gospel media? Are media and Gospel in competition for the hearts and souls of the 21st-century audience? Is there a conflict between the values formation of mass media and the spiritual formation of the Gospel? Is it possible to find God in the media? Is the Gospel relevant to the ‘digital’ generations? What is the role of the religious educator in the 21st century? Can we hear the voice and see the face of God in those who are made in the image of God even as they see themselves reflected in the images of the media culture?

THE MEDIA CULTURE

For the pilgrim searching for God in the media culture, here’s the good news: The life and times of Jesus the Christ that have captivated audiences for more than two thousand years continue to draw crowds today.’ The bad news is that the life and times of today’s number one hot celebrity trending on Twitter may be stealing the show. Is the Gospel a lone voice in the wilderness of tabloid morality? Or is something else happening here? Something inviting us beyond the gossipy sound bites and the provocative images to reconcile the world of media with the realm of the Spirit?

Faced with the facts, reconciliation may seem ambitious. On an ordinary night in American households, the television fare runs the gamut from desperate housewives to mad men, to cut-throat survivors. Switch over to cable and go from bad to worse: 24/7 newscasts peppered with lurid headlines, grown-ups ranting and raving with divisive commentary, x-rated stand-up comedy—and that’s just a few of the over seven hundred channels. Glued to their TV screens, mostly alone in their rooms, millions of youngsters prefer the vicarious thrill and sensation of the multi-media experience to the seemingly more passive and monolithic experience of listening to the Gospel in a church pew.

THE MEDIA GODS

Electronic mass media permeates every facet of our lives. That, in fact, is the nature of mass media. Ironically, it is also the role of religion. In the media landscape of the 21st century, the God who is 'everywhere' seems to have been preempted by the gods of mass media—Information, Consumerism, Gratification, Sensation—that are everywhere, all the time, no matter what. You can turn off the TV, but you cannot turn off the culture. It is there waiting for you wherever you are waiting—in the doctor's office, at the gas station pump, at bus stops, in airports. The list goes on. The television, the internet, the cell phone never go off.

Commercials, like all visual media, create a multi-sensory environment for the viewer. I call this an 'emotional field' because it immediately charges the viewer with an avalanche of sensations triggered by images, sound, music, and lighting. Several years ago, in the middle of the World Series, there was a very creative and effective promotional commercial for ESPN (24/7 sports network) playing on, of course, ESPN. The commercial opens with a simple but stark image: '4:32 a.m.' in white lettering against a black screen. Right away, the commercial evokes the emotional field of high anxiety in the middle of a sleepless night. A deep patriarchal voice rattles off a series of dark night questions along the line of 'Why am I here? Am I loved? Is there a God?' And then to the tune of 'Take Me out to the Ball Game' subtly shifting into Gregorian chant (a very unobtrusive but successful emotional prompt) the final question is posed: Did the New York Yankees beat the Minnesota Twins? Message: When it comes to the existential quandaries of baseball, ESPN is on call to answer the really important questions, unlike those annoying little soul-searching questions that keep you awake while God is sleeping on the job. The God who is everywhere has been usurped by the cable network that is everywhere. What is so remarkable about this commercial is that it uses primal spiritual yearnings and traditional religious music to sell a product. In other words, it co-opts religious values to seduce the audience without the audience even knowing that they have been seduced. That's great advertising but lousy theology!

THE CHALLENGE

ESPN is not alone in its use of religious symbolism and sentiment to lure potential viewers (consumers). Such tactics are regularly employed by advertisers to attract a customer base. And so, once again, the questions demand our attention: Whose values are they anyway? Are we losing our

audience? The easy response is to blame the media. The more difficult solution is to counter by telling our stories in the language of our time just as Jesus employed the language of his times. The charismatic preacher who spoke to the people two thousand years ago in parables used the storytelling medium of Palestinian culture. What would Jesus do today? Undoubtedly he would speak to us in today's language of the multi-media culture. Undoubtedly he is. The better question is: Are we listening?

Intrinsic to every pilgrimage is the spiritual art of listening. As we journey, we open ourselves to hear the voice of God's discernment directing us to our purpose. The challenge for the media pilgrim is fourfold:

1. To become critically aware of the role of mass media in values formation through the contemplative disciplines of listening to and observing media with an open mind and spirit;
2. To identify gospel values in media messages;
3. To build a bridge linking Gospel and media in our approach to faith formation so that our students can walk across it into the world as informed persons of faith; and
4. To become storytellers in the 21st century by speaking the language of our times, which means using the media to continue to tell the ongoing story of the human-divine relationship.

THE WAY

The media pilgrimage begins, as do all journeys, in the known world with who we are and where we are. In this case, it is as a religious educator in the 21st century that we set out to explore the reach of the Gospel into today's popular culture. According to the Catholic Church, the Gospel is sacred scripture that tells the story of the life and teaching of Jesus the Christ. That's the official definition according to the Catechism. But, we don't live by definitions alone. We also live by understandings that come from being alive, from finding our way through the human experience to a relationship with God. Jesus himself embodies and models this path in his humanity. When Thomas asks Jesus, 'How can we know the way?' Jesus replies, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:5-6). The Gospel is a way of life that speaks to a way of being in the world. It is not a set of directions. It is a map. Our task is to find the map, follow the path, and serve as guides along the way to the Way.

THE MAP

The Way of life prescribed by Jesus was like manna in the desert for the ‘great crowds that followed him’. In a poignant illustration of the rag-tag humanity that sought solace from Jesus, Matthew describes the multitudes as ‘the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics’ (Matt 4:24). We know from other Gospels that ‘the thousands of the multitudes’ (Luke 12:1) who flocked to see, hear, and touch Jesus during most of his ministry also included the sinner, the poor, the stranger, the women—all cast aside by society. Mesmerised by his message of inclusivity, the outcasts were welcomed back into their humanity through the compassionate humanity of Jesus the Christ. He forgave their sins, healed their wounds, called them to be disciples, sat with them, dined with them, and laughed with them. But most importantly, he dignified the marginalised by making them the heroes and heroines of his stories—the woman at the well, the tax collector, the publican, the possessed, the paralytic. Jesus restored their birthright as images of God by imaging them in stories. In seeing them in the light of his divine heart, he opened their hearts to another way of seeing themselves and God.

Stories are the language of the heart. Jesus told stories because he knew that they are doorways out of the small space of human misery into the much larger space of human possibility. Stories open up the ‘I’ to see the ‘we’ and as such are the connective tissue of relationships. By opening the heart, they bring us to another way of understanding ourselves, one another, and God. For the people who walked with Jesus two thousand years ago, stories were the healing balms rejoining the throngs who were disconnected from society into a community of the Spirit. For those early followers, as well as those who follow Jesus in the 21st century, the stories of the New Testament are the maps pointing us in the direction of the realm of God.

THE CLUES

Recently I asked about thirty students, all juniors in high school, to describe Jesus. Without exception, the students responded with images—Jesus in the manger, Jesus walking on water, Jesus calming the storm, Jesus on the cross, Jesus risen from the tomb. Asked when they formed these images, the students recalled the early years of elementary school when they learned about their faith through Bible stories. Over the years, their textbook knowledge of Jesus in high school did not change

this earlier visual experience of Jesus. Despite all the information about church teachings related to Jesus the Christ, their formative and enduring experience of Jesus resided not in the facts but in the images.

If stories are the maps, then images are the clues. If stories are the language of the heart, images are the language of the soul. Images speak to and open up the heart that desires God. In the words of Pedro Arrupé, SJ, 'Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way'. A person's first encounter with Jesus through the images of story is a lot like falling in love.

When two people first meet in that timeless place of intrigue and infatuation, their imagination is seized by a longing to move beyond themselves and connect with another human being. They look across the table at one another and begin to tell stories about their favorite places, their best friends, their funniest moments, about growing up, and falling down and getting back up again. As they tell stories, images form of this new person and invite an experience of the other that transcends all precaution and hesitation. The stranger is clothed with garments of desire. Likewise, as we listen to the stories that Jesus tells his followers, the images open our hearts to the experience of Jesus as a teacher, preacher, healer, and redeemer. We are radically changed at our core. We fall in love with Jesus not in a pious manner but out of a sense of familiarity that inspires awe and reverence. We are touched where he touches upon the mutuality of our shared humanity. This is called *metanoia*—a change of heart. It is the transforming spirit of the Gospels that allows us to see Jesus as the Divine Light who images the way to the Way.

This understanding of the power of gospel images is critical to faith formation in our time. Students today live in an image world of multi-sensory experience not dogma. Whereas most of us grew up in a world where love was conditioned by knowledge, in today's culture knowledge is inspired by love. Pierre Babin, in his book *The New Era of Religious Communication*, states this simply: 'It is not theology or the catechism, but an open heart that make Jesus lovable'. Or as Jesus says in Luke 12:35, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be'. The clues that lead us to the bridge connecting the two worlds of Gospel and media are found in the images of the gospel stories. The next step in the journey is to decipher and follow the clues.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. *Whose Values Are They Anyway?*

What is love? What does it mean to be 'awake' to life? Check out how a Super Bowl commercial and a scripture passage respond to the same questions.

- a. Watch the Diet Pepsi Max commercial on You Tube.

To view the commercial, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVYzxxgKXTY>.

- b. Now using the online Bible study site, Bible Study Tools, read the selected New Testament passages that address what it means to be 'awake'.

i. Go to www.biblestudytools.com

ii. Enter 'awake' in the search field.

iii. Choose 'New Testament' in the 'filter results' drop down menu.

iv. Click on the 'Search' button. This will bring up all references to 'awake' in the New Testament.

- c. Compare the two meanings of awake.

- d. Think about how the concept of love is used in this commercial.

How would you use this commercial in class to discuss the gospel meaning of love?

2. *In the Image of God*

Apply your observations in exercise #1 to a more extensive comparison of media and gospel value messages. Plan to spend at least thirty minutes to an hour watching commercials. You can sit in front of the television, or you can go check out your favorite commercials on YouTube (www.youtube.com). Look for commercials that use religious concepts (love, hope, compassion, forgiveness, faith, doubt, seeking) to sell a product. Take notes on what you watch and where you go on YouTube. You might be able to use your sightings in the classroom. ■

(For the above article Mary Byrne Hoffman drew from her recently published book: *Catechesis in a Multimedia World - Connecting to Today's Students*, copyright © 2011 Mary Byrne Hoffmann, Paulist Press, Inc., Mahwah, NJ. The material is reproduced by permission of Paulist Press, Inc. www.paulistpress.com.

Part 2 of the work will present practical approaches to integrate digital media into religious education.)

HARRY LENNOX¹

Opening the Way to a New Opportunity

Marist Youth Care and Restorative Practice

INCREASINGLY teachers are facing behavioural issues caused by growing pressures on children and by the breakdown of many support structures in society. Schools are becoming frustrated by the demands of balancing the pastoral with the academic (Harrison 2007). Part of the tapestry of being young is testing the limits, challenging authority, engaging in unhealthy behaviours. Vespa (2009) decries punitive responses to these situations, urging in their place the concept of restorative justice practice. ‘Restorative justice philosophy views misbehaviour in terms of how it has impacted upon relationships in the school community. Once the harm is acknowledged in a concrete way the process moves beyond harm to ask “how can this harm be repaired?” If schools are places of learning, where young people are encouraged to be independent and creative thinkers, are able to share their ideas and opinions, learn to accept the view of others, to be responsible and accountable for their learning, it stands to reason that the “punitive school” is being counter-productive in achieving these desired outcomes.’

Vespa is a former Co-ordinator of Restorative Justice Programs with Sydney-based Marist Youth Care (MYC)². Since 2002 Marist Youth Care has been working with school communities in 12-month programs designed to foster skills in managing challenging behaviours. The programs have as a primary principle that the respect and dignity of all parties involved must be respected. Guided by the motto: *It’s the getting up that counts*, MYC is committed to supporting schools in confronting problem behaviour through the development of relationships that promote a quality climate for learning.

HEALING THE DAMAGE

Espousing a 'restorative' philosophy Marist Youth Care provides schools with a framework of management, moving away from the traditional *punitive* response to unacceptable behaviour. While still providing limits and consequences, 'restorative practice' looks for ways to repair damaged relationships and improve existing relationships. According to Harrison, the programs are based on a whole-school commitment to six underlying principles: focus on relationships not rules; ensuring healing processes are in place to repair damaged relationships at all levels; discussion of behaviour in respectful language without attributing blame; identifying learning opportunities in mistakes and misbehaviour; acceptance that the truth cannot always be discovered and that fault may remain unclear; focus on the future.

Influenced by Aboriginal, Native American, and New Zealand's Maori tribal dispute resolution practices (Cowie, Hutson, Jennifer, & Myers, 2008) restorative justice was strongly promoted by Howard Zehr, the 'grandfather' of the movement. He saw it as a process to involve stakeholders in collectively identifying and addressing harms, needs and obligations arising from an offence, in order to heal and put things as right as possible (Zehr, 2002, p. 37). In the USA Ted Wachtel has been a key figure in applying to a range of disciplines and organisations the essence of restorative justice as used in the criminal system. Since 1977 he has worked to promulgate the notion that a common thread of thinking should underlie remedial work on human behaviour problems.

The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in how they act when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them. Wachtel is convinced that this hypothesis should undergird and inform theory, research and practice in education, counselling, criminal justice, social work and organizational management (<http://www.iirp.org/whatisrp.php>). His International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) includes *Safer Safer Schools* (see Mirsky and Wachtel eds. 2008). He was greatly influenced in one aspect of his thinking by Terry O'Connell, director of Real Justice Australia, whose work features in an article by Evan Ellis in the Winter 2011 edition of *Champagnat* (see pp. 91 et seq. *Shame Blame and Renewal*).

Marist Youth Care is far from a lone voice in promoting this philosophy. Restorative justice practices were implemented in London in 2000, and

the programs were evaluated for effectiveness in 2004. According to the findings of that evaluation, the introduction of restorative practices within the school environment in London was both beneficial and successful in reducing anti-social behaviour such as truancy, bullying and other violence in school settings (Cowie, Hutson, Jennifer, & Myers, 2008, p. 500) In Hong Kong many primary schools experienced a severe bullying problem. A study conducted by researchers from the City University of Hong Kong recommended that a combination of social and emotional learning and restorative practices be implemented to address this problem and heal the damage done by bullying (Wong, Lok, Lo, & Ma, 2008, p. 50-51). Researchers also noted that 'restorative practices seem to be compatible with Chinese culture in that they emphasise collective values and the restoration of interpersonal harmony.' In the United States, restorative justice has been implemented in schools in Wisconsin, California and Colorado, to name but a few examples among many (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

In Australia Catholic Education Offices such as those in Sydney and Melbourne have capitalised on the MYC initiatives and related international developments. They encourage schools to engage in a phased introduction of Restorative Practices in the context of a whole-school approach to student wellbeing. The explicit aim is to help young people to accept personal accountability, to be open to learning from conflict situations, and so develop greater sensitivity to the impact of their behaviour on others. Relevant 'Practices' require the participation of school leaders, teachers, and in some aspects parents. All are guided to an awareness of the range of different responses to forms of wrongdoing so that the way they react is a matter of conscious choice among options. Following Wachtel they recognise four major avenues open to them: First, there is a permissive approach characterised by low control and high support, a scarcity of limit-setting and an abundance of nurturing. Then there is the route of punishment or retribution, high in control, low in support. Third, unacceptable behaviour may be simply ignored; there is minimal limit-setting, no nurturing, effectively neglect. And finally there can be the restorative approach, employing both high control and high support, recognising and reinforcing the intrinsic worth of the wrongdoer while confronting and disapproving of the wrongdoing. The four avenues are briefly characterised as 'doing FOR', 'doing TO', 'NOT doing' and 'doing WITH' the student.

Translating the restorative approach into practical and effective action requires a variety of professional development programs. They focus on

key learnings and skills as well as on an appreciation of strategies with a twofold goal: constructively managing students who exhibit challenging behaviours and, at the same time, maintaining the respect and dignity of all parties. Marist Youth Care, for example, conducts workshops ranging in duration from 2 or 3 hours to a whole day, tailored for school communities generally, for staff in 'middle management' positions, for teachers in other leadership roles, and for parents.

EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS

How effective are these various measures? In 2002 Marist Youth Care put forward a proposal for a pilot program to evaluate a whole school approach to Restorative Practices. Three secondary schools were selected for the project to be directed by Marist Youth Care and the Catholic Education Office, Sydney in partnership. The Co-ordinator of the Restorative Justice Program and the three Principals then attended an international conference on Restorative Justice in the United States and immersed themselves in the philosophy and practices of the concept. A research study was designed, under the leadership of an independent education consultant, in order to measure how key stakeholders perceived the impact of Restorative Practices on school life (Harney 2005).

Marist Youth Care developed a range of strategies to support the three colleges as, under the active leadership of their respective Principals, they introduced Restorative Practices. The initial step was to provide training for all staff. The training sessions focused on the goals of Restorative Practice and specifically on skills development in a continuum of strategies comprising: Affective questions and statements, Reviewing language patterns, Inner/Outer Circle techniques, Collaborative Problem Solving, Processes for formal Restorative Meetings ('Conferencing'), Restorative mediation, Student Leadership Training, Parent Education.

Four groups were selected to participate in the research:

1. Students who had committed serious wrongdoing or had caused serious conflict;
2. Students who had been harmed by the serious wrongdoing or conflict;
3. Teachers directly involved with students who had committed serious wrongdoing or had caused serious conflict;
4. Parents/guardians whose son or daughter had committed serious wrongdoing or had caused serious conflict.

The researcher made three extended visits to the schools involved, one before the project started in Term 1, 2003, a second in Term 3, 2003 and a third intervention in Term 3, 2004. The impact of the formal introduction of restorative practices was measured over an 18 month period. All involved were interviewed individually and invited to complete a survey. Over the period Term 1, 2003 to Term 3, 2004 quantitative findings from the study across the three colleges showed achievements that by any measure were significant: absenteeism fell by 21%; detentions fell by 34%; suspensions out-of-school fell by 42%.

Qualitative findings were also positive. The researcher concluded that the interview and written feedback given by the four groups supported the overall perception of all four groups that there had been an improvement in the level of satisfaction with the process and outcomes in dealing with conflict and wrongdoing in the three colleges. The feedback indicated that there was growing support for Restorative Practices from all four groups in the three colleges. The teachers were learning Restorative Practices and learning not to omit steps in the application of these. Students involved in wrongdoing were beginning to trust the process, to be more honest about their behaviour and to feel that they were more effectively involved in taking responsibility for their behaviour. Those students harmed by wrongdoing felt they were part of the process and were not blamed for what happened. Parents of students involved in wrongdoing felt that they were part of the decision making process and were more supportive of decisions when they were made. Across all groups there was improved satisfaction with the process and outcomes in dealing with discipline and conflict situations. There seemed to be strong evidence that Restorative Practices could be a productive response to some very real needs in many schools.

Having surveyed the implementation of restorative practices in schools around the world Hicks (2008) reached a similar conclusion. When put into place as part of a whole-school program, she affirmed, restorative justice has established a solid track record of effectiveness in improving school climates, reducing conflict and enhancing the educational experience for all students. Nevertheless she voiced a *caveat*. For her, as for Howard Zehr, restorative justice is not a panacea, not a replacement for the legal system, nor a cure-all for school discipline problems. If that fact is kept in mind, school leaders, in her judgement, have abundant justification for looking to restorative practice as a proven method to create peaceful climates of learning excellence, teach ways to resolve conflicts without harming others, create social and emotional awareness and build strong relationships. ■

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The writer regrets that circumstances prevented him from drawing on the considered views of school personnel directly involved in the implementation of restorative principles. In the main the article comprises a selection from and collation of published material from various sources. They are acknowledged in the References section above.
- 2 Marist Youth Care can be contacted at PO Box 589 Seven Hills NSW 1730 Australia, Tel. +61 2 9672 920 Fax. +61 2 9672 9302 E. info@maristyc.com.au Web. www.maristyc.com.au

The voice of love is more than the words
which fall from the lips.
The voice of love speaks
to the deepest recesses of our being
The voice of love can lead us
to trust, to hope, to belief, to new insight
and to see possibility beyond our imagining.

Father Greg Bennett
Parish Priest – St. Bede’s North Balwyn, Victoria

Books

Friendly Guide to Jesus

Andrew Hamilton SJ (2010)
Mulgrave, Vic.: John Garratt
Publishing

48 pages. RP \$24.00
ISBN: 9 781920 721978

FRIENDLY Guides' are an initiative by John Garratt Publishing designed to provide easily accessible information on themes fundamental to understanding the Catholic faith. This new series is written and presented in the style of the highly successful *So You're Working for the Catholic Church* and its companion volumes. Some of Australia's foremost scholars and theologians have accepted the invitation to write at an introductory level in their fields of expertise and have produced texts which are clear, concise and readable.

Following the *Friendly Guide to the New Testament* (Moloney) and the *Friendly Guide to The Mass* (Doherty) the *Friendly Guide to Jesus* is the third in the series of Friendly Guides.

Written by Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ, who teaches theology and works

at Jesuit Communications, this very attractive little book has been described as exploring what mattered to Jesus and why he might matter to us. Not just who was he but who is he for us today. How can faith in Jesus help us to understand what really matters? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus - how can we live happily and well as Christians? It is a guide book in the search for meaning, incorporating story and art, maps, charts, scripture guides and information boxes.

Although written by a specialist theologian it is not a work for experts. Rather it focuses on aspects of faith in Jesus by drawing on events from the writer's experience in order to reflect more deeply on Gospel stories. The related colourful prints by Jan Hayes are designed to help the reader link the world of faith to the contemporary world. The book incorporates story and art, maps, charts, scripture guides and information boxes to explain in a text which is clear, concise and readable what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the world of today. This is not a book for a quick read, although it could

certainly be read through in a short span. It is designed to be read and maybe discussed in a reflective way that helps clarify the personal significance of the ideas it presents.

For whom is the book intended? The publisher states that it is for 'an introductory level readership'. Specifically this reviewer sees it making a valuable contribution in RCIA programs, in middle level high school R.E. classes, in Scripture study groups where members may have relatively modest acquaintance with the Gospels. And doubtless among many other groups and individuals. ■

H.D. Lennox

**Our Fathers:
What Australian Catholic
Priests really think about their
lives and their church.**

*Chris McGillion
and John O'Carroll (2011)
Mulgrave Vic.: John Garratt
Publishing
200 pages (pbk.) RP \$29.95
ISBN 9 781920 682262*

THE AUTHORS of this interesting work are on the staff of Charles Sturt University and have written on religious issues in a number of forums. The book is said to be a

'first ever' survey of beliefs and attitudes held by Australian Roman Catholic clergy in active ministry.

In fact a small proportion of those invited to participate were retired, and only about 30% of those to whom surveys were sent completed and returned them. The authors surmise why the response rate was relatively low, but professional researchers would accept that there is no reason in principle why the feedback provided would differ significantly from what would come from a response rate of 60% or 70%. One probably has to assume that the 542 actual respondents broadly matched the 1700 total population. The authors affirm that an important complement to the survey were interviews with more than fifty 'priests' chosen at random from across the country. It may be significant that eight of the fifty were retired or semi-retired, three were ex-priests, and seven were seminarians. It is arguable that a group so constituted may not have been best positioned to 'explore the nuances involved in the responses of the larger group'. Appendices at the back give plenty of detail about respondents and responses.

The survey instrument covered: Aspects of the life, work and expectations of the priesthood;

Views about doctrine and moral teaching, the Vatican, the bishops and the laity; The future; and 'Other' issues. Provision was made for one of four answers to each proposition: Agree, Disagree, Undecided, Not Answered. Space was provided to add comments. The authors record that a number of respondents expressed frustration at the limited range of responses provided for and complained that the format forced them to simplistic answers.

Nevertheless, there is quite a large proportion of matters on which a majority of the respondents provided the same response; likewise a substantial number of instances when a majority of respondents above age 60 and of those below age 60 were of much the same mind. Among matters attracting a very strong measure of agreement were the following:

- the priesthood is judged to be a fulfilling life;
- celibacy for priests should be optional;
- Vatican II made the church more relevant to people's lives;
- ultimately Catholics must be guided by their own conscience;
- the Vatican often fails to understand the Church in Australia.

While the authors provide an interesting discussion of the

responses to the different categories of propositions, many readers will find it even more instructive to study the analyses clearly set out in the detailed tables at the back of the book.

The degree to which the 'true thoughts of priests' as they are revealed in this book are likely to 'inform, shock and challenge' will probably vary from person to person. This reviewer found little that was particularly unexpected, but others could reach a different conclusion.

In any case, there is certainly a need for care when interpreting survey responses, especially when they come from an initial study. The conclusions are necessarily broad brush and subject to refinement and even correction after desirable follow-up studies. It is also pertinent to point out that responses reveal *a part* of the situation but often imply deeper issues justifying complementary studies.

While some readers may find in this book matters that surprise and concern them, others with the patience and the interest to examine the tables at the back may be struck by the degree to which the views of priests differ on many of the issues raised in the survey. ■

H.D. Lennox



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