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CHAMPAGNAT

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Feature Articles:
Marcellin's House
General Santos City and The Evangelising School

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
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EDITORIAL:

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli¹ as a young fourteen-year-old seminarian commenced writing his journal in 1895 when he was a junior seminarian in Bergamo, Italy². He continued this practice for the remainder of his life. The journal helped Roncalli to stop and to reflect on his life, his relationship with his God and with his neighbour. Taking the words of Rumi³, who wrote centuries earlier, it is possible to suggest that the journal for Roncalli became “a place to retire to, a kind of cave, a retreat for the deep core of being.”⁴

In this the twenty-first century, many people are preoccupied with all of the ‘action’ that surrounds us in this the technological age. The mobile rings and many proud owners of their latest wiz-bang gadget answer the call as a matter of urgency irrespective of where they are and what they are doing; people ‘twitter and twat’ to their hearts content; and if you have travelled on a tram or a train it is common to hear a mobile conversation outlining the intimate details of what happened the night before and so on. While such technology has its place, there is the real danger that we become so dependent on it, that we become ‘non-people’ as a consequence. While this may seem to be an exaggeration on my part, we need to keep in mind that we can become so preoccupied with communicating ‘technologically’ that in fact we lose the ability to communicate from a human perspective.

We can ‘die’ or ‘switch off’ to being able to listen to ourselves, to God and others because we are too busy ‘recharging’ or chasing new and more efficient technology. This is why many other people have always sought time to be alone, to reflect, to write or to draw with a pen or biro, to switch the mobile and computer off and to listen to God speaking to us in the silence. There is something very sacramental about this; it is a form of prayer.

Recently I was involved with a group of students undertaking courses in theology at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne. The unit that was being undertaken was on Benedictine Studies, and included a week of live-in study at the Holy Trinity Monastery at New Norcia in Western Australia. One of the tasks for the course was to write a four thousand word journal. The river, the sun, the breeze, the landscape, the silence of New Norcia were all important ingredients for the journal. And, yes, it could be hand-written! As the Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us in the first chapter, there is a time and place for everything. The contemplative monks and nuns have always known this: place, silence and space are important ‘tranquilizers’ even for us in a world that measures success by action, getting ahead, individualism, accumulation of material goods and so on.

The Irish Benedictine monk, Andrew Nugent, wrote a book titled “The Slow-Release Miracle: A Spirituality for a Lifetime” in 2006.⁵ Like Angelo Roncalli, Nugent’s life exemplifies a journey in the development of his spirituality where he first worked as a barrister and lived in Israel, Chicago and New York before joining the Benedictines. He suggests

that the slow-release miracle is the ongoing creative work of the Spirit in our lives wherein we come to truly exist. It is a life, which the Holy Spirit, without a computer or mobile telephone, progressively creates within us a profound attitude of soul; a commitment in love to God. The author points out that there will always be a need to celebrate God’s ‘age old beauty’ which, in the words of St Augustine, is ‘so old – and yet so new.’ The human spirit, unfolding over a lifetime, is a participation in God’s beauty, God’s work of art. A true artist who seeks to fathom the meaning of such beauty knows that time, space and solitude are needed. The beeping or buzzing or the singing of a certain football song on technological devices just have to be ignored if we seek an authentic communication with God and our neighbour.

The papers in this edition of the Champagnat Journal exemplify the fact that the writers, like Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli and Andrew Nugent, had to find ‘their cave’ to retreat to, to be alone, so that they could write clearly and

succinctly. The fruits of their contemplation and efforts, like those of Roncalli who as Pope John XXIII, called for *aggiornamento* in the Church, or of Andrew Nugent who enriches our lives with his writing, also have the potential to enhance the slow-release miracle of God’s creative work in us.

Br Tony Paterson
Editor

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

The Lavalla Magazine and the Champagnat Journal are published for all members of the Australian Marist Community. Current subscribers to the Champagnat Journal will notice the change in format this year. Those subscribers who took out subscriptions for the Champagnat Journal in 2012 please note that we will continue with your subscription as paid until the end of 2013. Any queries should be directed to: tony.paterson@marists.org.au

¹ Roncalli was elected Pope John XXIII in 1958. He was Pope from 1958 until 1963.

² Published as *Journal of a Soul* in 1964.

³ Rumi was Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic in the thirteenth-century.

⁴ Quotation from Barks, C. *The Soul of Rumi: A New Collection of ecstatic Poems*. San Francisco: Publishing. 2001. Page 15.

⁵ Monk from Glenstal Abbey in Ireland. Book published by Columba Press, Dublin.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, as the Archbishop of Perth was the principal concelebrant at the Eucharist held in St Mary's Cathedral in Perth to celebrate the Western Australian Marist Centenary on Saturday, 25th May 2013. The Marist Brothers have been working in Western Australia since 1913 when they first opened St Idelphonsus College in New Norcia. Archbishop Costelloe, who is a Salesian, kindly agreed to our request to reprint his Homily from the Mass. It is a good reflection on where we have been and where things are likely to go over the next centenary when we consider the work of religious orders in partnership with their lay co-workers.

Br Michael Green, is the National Director of Marist Schools Australia, and the Executive Director of Marist Ministries. Michael is based at the Marist Centre in Brunswick. He is a former Principal of the Marist schools in Parramatta and Cairns, and he is currently a member of the Provincial Council of the Marist Australian Province. His paper in this edition of the journal reflects on our Marist participation in the Church's *Year of Faith*.

Daniel Ang, is a Pastoral Planning Officer for the Diocese of Parramatta in Western Sydney. He has had wide experience teaching in the areas of ecclesiology and ministry in addition to his pastoral work in Parramatta and beyond. Daniel's paper was presented at the recent Australian Marist Primary Schools Colloquium earlier this year. It would be of interest to all staff members of the fifty-three Marist schools in Australia.

Br Roger Vallance and **Br Crispin Betita** present a paper on one very important Marist ministry in the Philippines. The paper outlines the work of the Marists in General Santos City who conduct the Marcellin House Project for at risk boys. Br Crispin is the Leader of the Project and a member of the flourishing East Asia Province. He has worked in the area of youth at risk for many years. Br Roger Vallance is a member of the Marist Australian Province stationed in Sydney. He has lectured at both Notre Dame University in Fremantle, and the Australian Catholic University in Sydney. Most recently he has been working in the Philippines as this paper outlines.

THANK YOU

Our sincere thanks to all of the contributors for this edition of the Champagnat Journal. Contributors fall into two categories: those who write specifically for this Journal, and those who give permission for their papers to be produced here.

ARCHBISHOP TIMOTHY COSTELLOE

Marist Centenary in Western Australia

When Marcellin Champagnat was summoned to the little village of Les Palais in 1816 to care for a young teenager who was dying, a boy whose name was Jean-Baptiste Montagne, he did what he could for him. He offered him the comfort of his presence both as a man who cared and as a priest who could help this young boy open his life to the God who was calling him home.

Afterwards, as Marcellin Champagnat reflected on this experience, he found himself thinking about all those other young people who were equally in need and who had no-one to look after them and he determined to do something about it: to respond in the best way he could.

The beginnings of Marcellin Champagnat's response to this realization of the needs of so many young people were small: an old house and two young men who had been captured by his dream. But the dream was more than that: it was a call from God, and when God calls, and people respond with courage and with faith, then the dream can become a reality in ways that no-one could have imagined.

As we celebrate the centenary of the presence of the Marist Brothers, of their associates and supporters and of their charism in Western Australia, what we are really celebrating is the ongoing presence and the ongoing realization of this dream of Marcellin Champagnat here in Western Australia. This presence has been and still is a very powerful sign of God's fidelity to those who respond to him in faith. For the last

one hundred years the gift of the charism and spirituality of St Marcellin Champagnat has enriched the lives of countless young people in our community. How many people there must be in Western Australia who can look back with extraordinary gratitude for their having had the family of Marcellin Champagnat as part of their lives!

Marcellin Champagnat's response to the plight of young Jean-Baptiste Montagne, and his persistence in the face of many difficulties in bringing his dream to realization, seem to me to be a reflection of one of the most striking qualities of Jesus himself. This is always the way with holy men and women. Through God's grace they are given a unique insight into the mystery of Jesus, and it is that insight which comes to expression in their lives and in their mission. This was certainly the case with Marcellin Champagnat. He became a living sign, a sacrament we might almost say, of the presence of Jesus among his people. Those who follow the way of Champagnat and are inspired by his spirituality are called to do and be the same.

As I think about Marcellin Champagnat and reflect on the face of Jesus of which he is a living sign, it is the compassion of Jesus which comes very much to my mind. When Jesus, for example, was once approached by a leper who was seeking a cure, the man with leprosy said to Jesus, "Lord, if you want to you can heal me." The response of Jesus is very clear. "Of course I want to" he said, "be cured." There

is a compassion in Jesus which means that he can do nothing but reach out to this man in need. It was the same impulse of compassion that moved St Marcellin Champagnat as he reflected on the needs of the young of his own time. How could he, a man of compassion, not reach out to them?

We encounter this compassion of Jesus in nearly every page of the gospel. Think of the woman caught in adultery. When everyone else is ready to condemn her and the scribes and Pharisees are only interested in her as a way of attacking Jesus, Jesus himself treats her with respect, with dignity and with compassion and says to her the very words she so desperately needs to hear: *I don't condemn you*. Or think of the hated Zacchaeus, despised by his own people because, they are convinced, he has not only conspired with the Roman oppressors by collecting taxes for them, but is quite possibly a thief and a swindler as well. Little man that he is he clambers up a tree like a child to catch a glimpse of Jesus. And Jesus, always on the alert for those who are rejected or ostracized, does what no-one could have expected. He honours this despised man by agreeing to come to his home for dinner. He reaches out to a man in need and offers him the very thing he is lacking: respect, dignity and self-worth. And as we know, this gesture of Jesus is absolutely transformative in Zacchaeus's life. This is what compassion can do for a person. Marcellin Champagnat understood this instinctively. Through his insight into the mystery of Jesus and through his imitation of him, he transformed the lives of so many, just as those who follow his way continue to do today.

We see the same thing happening with Simon Peter. When he is racked by guilt because of his three denials of any knowledge of Jesus at the time of Jesus' betrayal, Jesus himself after his resurrection offers Peter three opportunities for renewal and hope. "Peter, do you love me?" There is a compassion in Jesus who seems to know instinctively what each person needs if he or she is to be able to begin again – and Jesus, in his compassion, reaches

out to offer that very thing.

Our celebration today is, I believe, a sign of hope that you, the Marist Brothers and the Marist family you have gathered around you, will continue to be living signs of Jesus' compassion and practical response to people's deepest needs, and especially the needs of the young. You should be both proud of and confident in not just the value and relevance of your religious charism and spirituality, but in the power of God's Spirit who is the source of every charism and who continues to give life and energy to this particular expression of God's saving power and Christ's redeeming and healing love. Continue to believe that God wishes to be present in people's lives through your compassion, through your energy, through your generosity and through your courage. St Marcellin Champagnat encouraged you to walk in the Way of Mary. She is the one who, notwithstanding her doubts, her fears and her uncertainty, allowed herself to believe the words of the Angel Gabriel that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the power of God would cover her with its shadow. In that belief and in that hope she was able to say "yes" to God, and because of her "yes" the Word became flesh and lived among us. Walking in the way of Mary, as Marcellin Champagnat has encouraged you to do, allow yourselves to hear, in your own hearts, the same words: *The Holy Spirit is with you. The Power of God does cover you with its shadow*. Taking those words into your hearts say "yes" to God as Mary did. So will the Word of God, Jesus himself, be born in the lives of the people, especially the young, with whom and for whom you work. You will become, as Marcellin Champagnat was, signs and bearers of Christ's love, sacraments of his compassionate presence in the lives of those who most need him. In this way today will be for all of us not just a celebration of the past but an affirmation of our gratitude for the present and our hope for the future.

BR MICHAEL GREEN

Marists and the Year of Faith

Some pointers from our founding Marist spiritual intuitions

If ever there were a year that was tailor-made for Marists, this is it. The Year of Faith. This is our year. Nothing goes to the heart of Marist spirituality more than that which our founding generation called "the spirit of faith". It is opportune for us during this year to explore a little just how the first Marists understood this concept, something they saw to be of the essence of what it meant to be Marist.

The last two decades, since the milestone XIX General Chapter of the Marist Brothers in 1993, have seen the re-articulation of Marist life and ministry in ways that have not really occurred so comprehensively and strategically since the two decades of the 1850s and 1860s when the Institute attempted really for the first time to systematise in writing its distinctive way of life and its characteristic approach to the education and care of young people. Principally from the hand of Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, but with the explicit approbation formally and informally from the Brothers as a whole, there was a raft of documents published. Prominent among them were: *The Common Rules* (describing the Brothers' way of life), *The Teacher's Guide* (a practical guide for young teachers), *The Manual of Piety* (a kind of Marist catechism for novice-masters), *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat* (the second part of which was essentially a synopsis of the

ideal Marist), *Biographies de Quelques Frères* (a sequel to *The Life*, with short biographies of the first generation of Brothers, highlighting a quality in each that was distinctively Marist), *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* (an edited collection of Marcellin's instructions on Marist life, community living, and Christian education), *The Good Superior* (a leadership manual), and *Meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ* (a spiritual and theological work that reflected the Christocentric and intimate nature of our spirituality).

While there have been a number of rich Marist documents published since, especially those that followed the Second Vatican Council (for example, the texts from the Chapter of 1967-68 such as the *Marial Document*, the *Religious Life* document, and the ad experimentum *Constitutions*) and the Circulars of each of the Superiors General (especially those of Brother Basilio in re-defining contemporary religious life; and those of Brother Charles promoting solidarity in our mission and new forms of lay Marist life), it has been since 1993 that there has been a deliberate attempt at defining each of principal dimensions of Marist life and mission: *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, *A Vision for Marist Education Today* and *Water from the Rock*, *Marist Spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*. To these, although with

a different status, can be added two important reference documents: *Gathered Around the Same Table, the Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity* and *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth, Marist Youth Ministry*. These four books have sought to do exactly what those of the 1850s and 1860s also attempted: to put into words the spirituality, the purposes and priorities, and the characteristic ministerial style of the Marists, so that this could be more effectively understood, realised, and taught to the next generation. The mid-nineteenth century had seen an extraordinary expansion of the Marist project – a 650% increase in numbers alone during the twenty years of Brother François's Generalate. These new people who had never known Marcellin and the first generation, needed a literature and set of reference texts. They needed touchstones. This, of course, parallels our own time when the Marist project has experienced a similarly exponential growth, this time with the large numbers of Marist laity who have come to understand their place in Marist life and ministries. They, similarly, have needed a literature and a set of reference texts or touchstones. The writing and dissemination of such reference texts have been timely, and largely quite successful.

But it carries a danger. The risk is one of reductionism. Arguably this has nowhere been more evident than in the way the extensively used text *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* has been appropriated in the Marist world. Chapter 5 of this text has assumed a place in the collective Marist psyche that is way out of perspective from how it was intended. This is the section of the book that describes the five characteristics of Marist educating style: 'simplicity', 'family spirit', 'presence', 'love of work', and 'in the way of Mary'. While it is undeniably an affirmation of the authors' judgement that Marists around the world have so readily identified with these five traits, it was never the intention of the book to present the traits as synonymous with Marist-ness. Yet this is what has often occurred. They have been erroneously called the five "pillars"

of the Marist way by some – a term of quite dubious provenance. They are certainly not the pillars of the Marist-ness, only one way of describing its expression. There are other ways, not least the wonderful three-violet image of "simplicity", "modesty" and "humility" that comes from Marcellin himself. Other research studies and reference texts in different Marist Provinces and regions have employed different terms and combinations of terms to describe the essential qualities of Marist education and Marist spirituality. All of them have validity. Some of them identify three characteristics, some five or six, some up to twelve.¹

Chapter 5 of *In the Footsteps* has, in fact, been de-contextualised. Within the schema of the book, the five qualities are clearly five characteristics of the way by which a deeper purpose is being pursued: that of evangelisation. The place of Marcellin Champagnat (as a master in the way of the Gospel of Jesus), the understanding of Marists' being in partnership as Brothers and Lay (and as members of the

¹ See for example: Ryan, G. *A Guide for the Marist Educator* (1989) Rome: Marist Brothers; Marco *Educativo Marista: El Carácter Propio en el Desarrollo Curricular* (1992) Madrid: Delegación Nacional de Educación; McMahon, J.R. (1993) *Educational Vision: A Marist Perspective* (1993) Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted within the University of London Institute of Education; *Texte de référence de l'éducation mariste* (1997) St Chamond: Frères Maristes, Commission provinciale d'animation pédagogique; Green, M.C. *The Charismatic Culture of Marist Schools in the Province of Sydney* (1997) Unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted in the University of Sydney; *Water from the Rock, Marist Spirituality flowing in the Tradition of Marcellin Champagnat* (2008) Marist Brothers: Rome; *The Marist Mission in Higher Education* (2010) Rome: Institute of the Marist Brothers. UMBRASIL: Missão, Visão e Valores no Educativa Marista (2010). Green, M.C. *Marist Education: its present reality and future possibilities* (2011) Course text for post-graduate programme in Vision, Mission and Principles of Marist Education. PUC Curitiba, Brazil. Pemble, P. *Measuring Charism: Assessing the Characteristics of Marist Charism in Australian Marist Schools* (2012) Unpublished Master of Theology thesis submitted in KUL Belgium.

Church present in the word), the significance of the young especially the most neglected (as the focus of their work), and the essential twin attitude of audacity and hope, all serve the purpose of "sowing the Good News". The heart of the text is more accurately Chapter 4, where this is named. This is the essential "what" The rest describes the who, the how, and the where.

To some extent this also occurred back in the 1850s and 1860s. For example, *The Teacher's Guide*, which became a standard Marist teaching training manual for decades, was also something of a reductionist explanation of the Marist way. It concentrated on the practical expression of how a Marist Brother should teach and should interact with young people. And it worked: generations of Brothers were well trained with it, and could cite chapter-and-verse of its prescriptions. There is great practical wisdom in the book – much of which is as relevant and applicable to day as when it was written. But to understand *The Teacher's Guide*, just as to understand Chapter 5 of *In the Footsteps* or the other publications and studies that describe Marist characteristics, it is necessary to dig more deeply. It is necessary to go beyond the label "Marist" and indeed beyond the character of Marcellin Champagnat, as inspirational as he may be. It is necessary to find Christ and his Gospel. If this essentially spiritual encounter is not at the heart of any Marist educational enterprise, then it runs the risk of being a secular straw man.

Brother François, the protégé of Marcellin and his first successor, would never have made this mistake. Marist education for François was not about a distinctive style or particular way of teaching and interacting with young people – but about the essence of what it meant to share in God's mission. And the only way to approach an appreciation of this was to have a "spirit of faith", which he understood as a disposition and vision that came from a profound and ongoing encounter with the living Christ. The major piece of writing of his Generalate – a four stage Circular published

over several years – was addressed to this sole topic. It is a Circular that preceded all texts of the 1850s and 1860s, but perhaps became somewhat overtaken by them, and lost as a result. There was and is something in the Marist psyche that tunes very readily into the practical and the inspirational, so the latter set of books may have captured more of the collective imagination. François was, in his personality and preoccupations, quite different from the Founder. He did not have the gregarious, can-do, expansive dispositions of Marcellin. He was more reserved, had a taste for scholarship, exuded less charisma. People did not warm to him so easily.² Yet, it was him who the Brothers chose as their leader. What was it that they saw in him – such a different character from the man he was to succeed – that they wanted him to be the one to lead them in carrying on Marcellin's project?

The answer is perhaps the depth and the mystical quality of his faith. This was what aligned him with Marcellin. It was in this that he most resembled the Founder. Both of them shared a spirituality that was Christocentric, mystical, affective and pervasive, but also self-consciously apostolic. Those five traits defined him and the way he saw the essence of Marist life and ministry. Let us examine some aspects of his Circular for a better window into this, and therefore into our founding Marist

² In his typically frank style, Brother Avit in his *Annales d'Institut* pulls no punches: *The majority wondered how the Congregation could work with those who from now on were going to direct it. Their dedication was not doubted, but their inexperience was a cause of fear. Although he was highly esteemed by everyone, Brother François did not have the character, the initiative, the energy, and the liveliness of Father Champagnat. He didn't possess the hearts, and didn't dominate the wills like the deceased [Founder] did. His coldness was not liked, slow and solemn in his directives. He was thought meticulous, attaching at times too much importance to little mistakes, hardly accepting excuses and being too hard in observances. His two assistants were capable but they too didn't have experience in government. These reflections preoccupied people and made them worry. The Fathers, the local Ecclesiastics, and benefactors had the same thoughts.*

spiritual intuitions.

One of the most striking things about this Circular to a modern Marist reader is that there is absolutely no mention of Marcellin, and even little reference to Mary. And this in a work that self-consciously attempts to describe what is most at the heart of being Marist! To emphasise the significance of this, it is important to know just what a central place both Marcellin and Mary played in François's personal and spiritual life. They were huge for him – from the time he was a small boy. They were defining in who he became. Yet, we come to the single most important work that he understood himself to be writing, and he leaves them out. Why? The answer to that reveals something marvellously balanced and healthy about the way that Marcellin guided the spiritual path of François. There was no personality cult involved, nor any confusion of the place of Mary in the scheme of things (as a model of the life of faith for us). Compare this to some other religious or quasi-religious movements that you may know. The spirituality in which François was formed by Marcellin was one that was unambiguously centred on the person and abiding presence of the risen Christ. This is key. Today we can readily – and indeed importantly – speak of our Marian way as Marists, and of the inspirational figure of Marcellin for us, but if we are not anchored in Jesus Christ, then we are not Marist in the way Marcellin envisaged.

A feature of his four-part Circular is the extent to which François cites Scripture. It is replete with Biblical references, reflecting an extensive knowledge of Scripture and making a statement in itself of the way he was formed by Marcellin. At one point he refers to “assiduous reading of the Word of God and meditating on it” as one of the four means for preserving a spirit of faith. (The other three were: a spirit of prayer, frequent participation in the Eucharist, and the holy exercise of the presence of God.)

Let us spend our meditations in searching and penetrating [the teachings of Christ], appropriating them, and making them, as

it were, a part of ourselves, as if they had been written for us alone. It is thus that the thoughts of Jesus will become our thoughts, that our judgements will conform to those of the Divine Master ... we shall truly enter upon the life of Faith, the life of the Son of God himself. *I live now, no not I, but Christ lives in me*, thinks, judges, loves, hates, and does all in me (Gal.2:20).

The reference to Galatians 2:20 is pivotal for François's understanding of the spirit of faith. We will return to this, but let us first look at some of the other Scriptural references that François uses and extracts from the Circular to see what they reveal about the spirituality he is promoting.

The first part of the Circular deals with the need to develop a spirit of faith, or “life of faith”, which he describes as “the very spirit and character of our small Congregation”:

The Spirit of the Little Brothers of Mary, their distinctive characteristic, must be of humility and simplicity ... after the example of the Blessed Virgin, their Mother and their Model ... Nothing but the light of Faith can make us understand the excellence of those virtues which the world distains ... nothing but a lively Faith in the words and example of Jesus Christ ... [only] Faith can dissipate the illusions of vain glory, prevent false calculations of pride, and show us that true glory ... is found only in humility, simplicity and modesty.

... In the absence of this living and acting Faith, we would be like a person deprived of food, scarcely able to move, without strength or courage to do good, without help or defence against sin, without fervour or constancy ...

For François this meant being caught up in a whole attitude to life that was essentially spiritual; it was about the transformative influence of the Gospel on one's life:

It is ... to think, to speak and to act according to the Gospel ... It does not simply mean some pious practice ... but to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Faith is how to understand properly these words of our Saviour: *Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself, take*

up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23). ... It is the conforming of our thoughts, our judgements, and our actions with the thoughts, judgements and actions of our Lord

that [the Gospel] becomes the rule of our thoughts, our judgements, and our actions; and the principle or motive-power of our whole lives.

The life of faith for François was a life of discipleship, of ever-increasing alignment with Christ. He quotes extensively from the New Testament, for example:

Lk.9:23 Then he said to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Rom.8:29 Those he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ

Heb.12:2 Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith

Heb.10:38 The just one lives by faith

Col.1:9-10 we do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God.

But more than this, it was embracing Christ and being embraced by Christ. This verse from Acts was a favourite: *For in him we live, and move, and have our being* (17:28). And from Romans: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith* (15:13)

In the second and third parts of the Circular, François develops his understanding of the life of faith, its benefits and its foundations.

The practice of virtue and the religious vocation cannot be a matter of mere taste and sentiment which will last no longer than exterior impulse ... Oh, my dear Brothers, how important it is for us, given the fickleness of human things, and the interior tempests which nature and the devil constantly raise in our

hearts, to hold fast to the immutable rock of Faith

The great rule to follow in the exercise of the Spirit of Faith is to practise it always and on all occasions ... [to] show everywhere that we are the children of Faith and disciples of Jesus Christ.

His relationship with God was a natural and an affective one, obviously cultivated through a lifetime's prayer and intimacy with the Lord:

Quiet and peaceful in his hands, like a child in the arms of its mother, we shall abstain from all anxiety which could only trouble and disturb our soul.

Later in life, after he had resigned as Superior General and retired to The Hermitage as its Director, François began the practice of giving Sunday evening conferences to the community. An extract from one of those reveals a man whose life with the Lord had become as natural as breathing:

A religious must be essentially a man of prayer. Prayer, through long practice, should become his usual occupation, as familiar as breathing, his native element, his food, his life. He is called upon to pray at the beginning and end of community exercises; prayer is with him while he eats and while he studies, it awakens with him, and sits as it were by his bed, follows him even in his moments of relaxation, and is mingled like a divine perfume with each one of the tasks which the rule sets out for him during the day.

So it is not enough for us to pray once in a while, or even often, during the day. Prayer must become part of our very being, become incorporated into us, take root in us, become mingled so to speak with our very flesh and blood, so that like the psalmist, our heart and our body may tremble with love when we think of the living God. (Ps.86)

Testimonies collected after his death, show us a genuine mystic:

At the priest's communion, his face began to light up. When he returned to his place after receiving communion, his face was almost transfigured.

In his garden he said his rosary constantly, without ever raising his eyes.

Thirty years before, in drafting the Circular on the Spirit of Faith, he was already well on this mystical journey, as this sample of Scriptural references from Sections 2 and 3 attest:

Deut.34:10 [Moses] saw the invisible face of God and lived

Ps. 119:105 [Faith in God is] a map for our feet and a light to our paths

1 Pt 2:9 Called out of darkness and raised into the marvellous light of God

Rom.8:18 The sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory yet to be revealed to us

Mt.10:30 The very hairs of your head are all numbered

Mk. 9:24 Lord I believe, help my unbelief

Ps 39:6 I am as nothing before you

Sir.11:14 Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches—all are from the Lord.

1 Cor.3:16 You know that you are the temple of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit

Gal.6:14 [to] glory in nothing save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to them, and they to the world.

Rom.8:29 ... must be conformable to the image of Jesus Christ

Prov.15:15 A good heart is a continual feast

Ph.4:7 The peace of God passes all understanding

John 17 passim May they be one as the Father and Son are one, may they be completely one.

Lk.17:21 The kingdom of heaven is within you

Gal.4:19 Christ will be formed in us

2 Cor 5 [We shall live in Christ and by his Spirit]

He is caught up in the Divine mystery in the core of his being. Lest we begin to think, however, that this was some kind of self-indulgent or private spiritual trip for François,

the Circular assures us strongly of his apostolic perspective. Each of the four sections addresses the twin purposes of the Christian life: the growth in holiness of the disciple, and then the sharing of the Good News with others – in the case of his readers, with the young. The second part of each section is given over to what a life of faith should mean in the practical reality of teaching and schooling:

It is also the Spirit of Faith which will inspire and sustain our zeal for the children, by representing them to us as members of Jesus Christ, as temples of the Holy Spirit, as sacred deposits which God has entrusted to us ... This will guide us in our dealings with them, and will induce us to have an equal love for all, to pay more attention to the most ignorant, and to have a particular preference for the poor, since the represent more tangibly Jesus Christ humble and poor for love of us.

The first object of our vocation is ... our own sanctification. If we don't secure this first, we shall never attain the second, which is the sanctification of our neighbour ... But how can this be without the Spirit of Faith.

As teaching religious we must teach the Faith to our students, to lead them to know and to love Jesus Christ: to pray, to frequent the Mass and the Sacraments; to inspire them with a horror of sin and the love of virtue; to have them know the price of their soul; to teach them detachment from visible things that pass away, and have them look for and hope for the invisible things of eternity, the end of our Faith

Children will soon perceive if the things of Faith do not hold the first place in our affections and estimation.

A Brother, if he be a man of faith and holiness ... will never tire of teaching his children the great principles of salvation

The fourth and final section of the Circular amplifies what it means for François to live in faith, and to develop this spiritual gift. It is the most Christocentric of the four sections, and carries some of the more powerful pieces of Scripture.

Heb.12:2 [Jesus Christ] the author and finisher of faith

Jn.1:9 [The Word] the true light which enlightens everyone comes into the world

Ps.119:34 Give me understanding to keep your law, to observe it with all my heart

Lk. 8:5 Lord, increase our faith

Mk.9:24 Lord, I believe, help my unbelief

1 Tim. 4:13-15 Until I arrive, attend to reading ... Meditate on these things, be absorbed in them,

Lk.24:32 Was not our heart burning within us as he opened the Scriptures for us.

Ps.119:32 I will run the way of your commandments, for you will enlarge my heart

Ps.119:111, 103, 127, 18,34, 125 Your words are my heritage forever, the joy of my heart they are.

How sweet to me are your promises to my palate, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

For I love your command, more than the finest gold.

Open my eyes that I may consider the wonders of your law.

Give me understanding that I may search your law and keep it with all my heart.

I am your servant; give me understanding that I may know your decrees.

1 Cor.2:2 I resolved to know nothing but Christ Jesus, and him crucified.

Gal.2:20 I live now, no not I, but Christ lives in me

Acts 5:41 We rejoice when we are judged worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus

Gal.6:16 We glory in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

Phil.3:8 I count everything as dung, if only I can have Christ and have a place in him

Jn.6:56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I in him

Jn.6:57 Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me

Heb.12:29 Our God is a consuming fire

Heb.12:12 Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith [be all in all to us].

Worthy of particular highlight is François's dwelling on the concept in Galatians (2:20 and 4:19) that Christ lives in us, is formed in us. He returns to this point several times, and it is clear that it is something that overwhelms him. The possibility that we can be "conformable to Christ", that we can live as Christ, that we can be taken up in Christ, is the single strongest point he develops in the Circular. This is what he sees to be at the heart of the kind of spirituality that should define the Marist, what he learned from Marcellin.

The Spirit of Prayer and the Spirit of Faith ... are one and the same thing. A person of prayer will ever be a person of Faith ... The great source of the Spirit of Faith is Jesus Christ. The great secret to acquire, preserve, and perfect this virtue within us consists in approaching nearer to Jesus Christ ... Our chief occupation in prayer, therefore, should be the study of Christ.

Oh! If once we had entered deeply into the heart of Jesus and tasted a little of his ardent love, we should know by experience what it is to have the Spirit of Faith, to live the life of Faith ... and all the things of the world we reject as filth and rubbish to gain Jesus Christ and possess him alone ... I recommend this meditation, in a special way, to each and all of you

And he concludes:

Let the life of Jesus Christ ... be the rule of our own life; let the sentiments of Jesus Christ be our sentiments; let his affections become our affections; let all our actions have no other principle than his will, no other end than his glory, let them be performed in him, for him, with him, and according to him, in order that, in life and in death, in time and in eternity,

Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our Faith, be all in all to us. Amen!

Similar to our own experience, François found himself in a world dealing with an alternate world view, often rather aggressively pushed one. Perhaps it was even more keenly felt by him because in the mindset of many of his generation, the rationalism of the Enlightenment had led to Revolution, the effects of which were seen to be catastrophic for the Church. They interpreted this as the Devil at work, tearing away at the fabric of good Christian society. For us – despite some militant “new atheism” – the experience is probably somewhat more subtle. In the West – at least in our Catholic tradition – we do not tend to see ourselves pitched in perilous battle against the secularism and relativism that characterise our world. Neither are we given to the dualism of François, dichotomising the “spirit of the world” from the “spirit of faith”. Vatican II radically turned that perspective inside out for the Church, and challenged us to see ourselves at the heart of the world. We may see ourselves to have a more incarnational view of God’s presence in the world than did

François. But are we accurate in that? In fact, François was theologically quite in tune with Vatican II thinking – and he could have only received most of that insight from Marcellin – in coming to feel and be captured by the Divine at the core of his own humanity. He was the mystic, someone who was graced to sense God’s presence in time and place, flesh and blood, and to be transformed by that.

A “Year of Faith”? François would no doubt have welcomed that, as would have Marcellin, but they would urge us to make it a “Life of Faith”.

DANIEL ANG

The Evangelising School: Educating In and for Communion

In 2012, I travelled throughout the Diocese of Parramatta, which encompasses the Western suburbs of Sydney, and spoke with some 2,000 people about their hopes and aspirations for our Church. The role of our Catholic schools in the faith of our children was high on the agenda. What became apparent is that the rationale and expected outcomes of Catholic schools in regards to religion is anything but a settled question. Is the Catholic school genuinely responsible for the spiritual lives of our children and to what extent? As participation in Catholic parishes continues to decline, how does this position schools as centres of evangelisation for young people and their families? What responsibility lies with school families themselves for the faith of the young, named as they are by the Church as the primary educators and nurturers of baptismal faith?¹ Then there are the increasing numbers of non-Catholic students in our schools. What impact should this phenomenon have, if any, on our goals and self-understanding as Catholic schools, as avowedly Catholic institutions? One suspects that in the face of such questions and the variety of views that surround them that many Catholics, both the loosely affiliated and the deeply committed, are ambivalent about the school as a centre of faith and evangelisation.

Indeed, it would be fair to suggest that for some observers the Catholic faith and schools appear a ‘forced fit’, partners that would be better off going their separate ways; still others argue that the divorce has already taken place – schools have left the faith or the faith has left our schools – and we are now left to bicker about the children.

While such a fatalistic reaction is easy, even tempting, demanding little effort or commitment to change, it is as deficient as the ‘spotless sunshine’ of the optimist – both attitudes are too certain of the outcome. The social and cultural context in which we live and teach has changed, irrevocably, and not always in a positive direction. However, the proper Christian response to changing circumstance is hope, recognising the past and present moment do not exhaust all possibilities and that all times and cultures can yet encounter Christ as the path of life. In that spirit, I would like to share a few comments on Catholic schools as centres of evangelisation in the twenty-first century. In particular, I bear in mind our many lay teachers who increasingly shape our Catholic schools once dominated by religious brothers and sisters, and their significant influence in the lives of not only students but school families and indeed colleagues within the learning community. What I hope to raise in this paper are the communal and personal responsibilities that the task of evangelisation surfaces for our schools, now more than ever in the life of the Catholic Church.

¹ Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* 3. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

THE YEAR OF FAITH AND 'THE NEW EVANGELISATION'

In October 2012, Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated a Year of Faith to bring the task of evangelisation to the fore. Commemorating fifty years since the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), the pontiff invited the universal Church to reflect anew on the meaning of faith and the mission that flows from faith – the mission to proclaim the Risen Jesus “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Pope Benedict and his predecessor, John Paul II, spoke often of ‘a new evangelisation’ that sought to be realised, including within our Catholic school communities which share the joys and demands of faith. To what does this term, ‘the new evangelisation,’ refer and what claim does it make on the life of our Catholic school communities?

While it is anticipated that Pope Francis will soon issue an encyclical on this very subject, we can already detect something of its meaning in the writings of previous popes, including Blessed John Paul II. In 1990, the polish pontiff remarked that the Church directs its missionary activity to basically three situations:

...peoples, human groups, socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known... Then there are Christian communities which have adequate and solid ecclesial structures, are fervent in faith and life... Finally, there exists an intermediate situation, often in countries of ancient Christian tradition, but at times also in younger Churches, where entire groups of the baptised have lost the living sense of the faith or even no longer recognise themselves as members of the Church, leading an existence which is far from Christ and from his Gospel. In this case there is a need for a ‘new evangelisation’ or a ‘re-evangelisation.’²

In this text, we find three groups identified and hence three distinct, though inseparable, expressions of the Church’s mission:

- the mission *ad gentes*, meaning the first proclamation of Christ to non-Christian

persons and peoples, those who have not heard the Gospel;

- evangelisation as a regular activity of the church, directed at even practicing and fervent Catholics (take a country like the Philippines for example where Catholicism is strong yet, ongoing conversion to Jesus remains a never ending task; and
- ‘the new evangelisation,’ which entails outreach to baptised Catholics who have become distant from the faith.

The ‘new evangelisation’ appears to be directed specifically toward this third group, this ‘in between’ or intermediate group of people who have indeed heard the Gospel, and so are *not* new to its announcement, but who nevertheless do not participate actively or regularly in the Church’s life. That is, we could not yet describe this last group of Catholics as intentional disciples of Jesus. By ‘the new evangelisation,’ John Paul II sought to direct the Church toward missionary outreach in traditionally Christian nations to whom the Gospel is known but whose faith nevertheless lacks fervour and genuine witness in life. As the New Testament reminds us, not all those who encounter Jesus find him convincing or compelling as the face of God.

Perhaps all three groups named above contain some truth for us here in Australia but it is particularly the third group that resonates strongly with our experience. Consider the fact that only 13.8% of all Catholics participate in the primary sacramental event of the community to which they belong, that is, weekly Eucharist. It would also be fair to suggest that this third group represents many of our school families and even teachers – baptised Catholics who no longer feel close to the Church, whose practice is perhaps occasional rather than continuous, and who have become distant from their faith. Australia has certainly been recognised on an official basis as one of those nations where Christian faith has played an integral part in the development of our culture, law and society and yet remains today on the sidelines rather than at the heart of the nation.

This is certainly a form of suffering which, I would say, fits into our time in history, and in which we generally see that the so-called ‘great’ Churches seem to be dying. This is true particularly in Australia, also in Europe, but not so much in the United States.³

Approximately 31% of all U.S. Catholics attend Mass each week and, while low, is still more than twice the participation rate here in Australia. If our Catholic schools are to become centres of a new evangelisation, reaching out to school families, students and staff with the vitality of the Gospel, then we need to acknowledge, with candour, the challenges that face us at this time, both within the Church and in the wider culture. If we can name some of the challenges for faith today we can then begin to work towards responses as school communities who are called to express the Gospel by their life, proclamation and mission.

CHALLENGES AND PROMISE

Of course, the most glaring challenge for ‘a new evangelisation,’ a renewed outreach to others in faith, whether in the school or the parish, is the sexual abuse crisis which has undermined the credibility of the Church not only in Australia but around the world. In an address delivered in Glasgow, Cardinal George Pell noted with realism, “It does not need to be said that this [the sexual abuse crisis] is the most important and powerful barrier to the New Evangelisation.”⁴

In the light of terrible crimes committed by some clergy and maladministration on the part of some bishops and religious orders, many Catholics, including our school families, can feel less than inclined to engage with the larger Church or ‘institutional church’ as it is often

put. Thus, the divide between what happens in the school and the wider Church can seem unbridgeable, even desirable in the wake of the false witness of a few. The Australian theologian Richard Lennan comments on this situation,

It is surely undeniable... that in its structures of authority that the church today seems to be for many people not simply ‘other,’ but alien. It is in its ordained leaders and their actions and decrees that the church seems particularly unattractive: prone to intolerance, authoritarian attitudes, and, most shockingly and tragically of all, even to abusive and corrupt behaviours. As a result it is common for Catholics to group such features together as the expression of the ‘institutional church,’ which tends to mean the church that I do not like and would not want to be a part of. It is, perhaps, a particular temptation for those in schools to think that way: our school community tries to live by Gospel values and to give students a positive experience of discipleship, but it is not our job to promote, to defend, or even to accept a connection with the ‘institutional church.’⁵

Lennan goes on to suggest that the practical upshot of this situation is the neat division between the school and the Church expressed in the claim that “our kids are good kids even if they don’t go to Mass.”⁶

While not denying the reality and scandal of abuse, it is important to underline, for one, that such crimes and violations of trust do not represent a fulfilment of the Church’s nature or mission as Christ’s body but the gravest contradiction of it, an utter rejection and betrayal of the Gospel which the Church has been entrusted to proclaim from generation to generation. It should also be recalled that such abuse does not represent the total sum of the Church’s life. The Church has always done and will continue to do good in the Australian community. Many people still meet Christ in our Church’s life and are supported by our parishes and schools, as well as by the Church’s

² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 33. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

³ Benedict XVI, “Address to the Diocesan Clergy of Aosta: On Critical Issues in the Life of the Church.” Available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050725_diocesi-aosta_en.html. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

⁴ George Cardinal Pell, “Address at St Andrew’s Conference,” available at <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/418/18>. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

⁵ Richard Lennan, “Holiness, ‘Otherness’ and the Catholic School,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 82/4 (2005): 404.

⁶ Ibid., 405.

many works of charity, especially in welfare, health and aged care.

Forgetfulness of this ‘bigger picture’ in the midst of the current crisis can lead to Catholic school families and even teachers to turn away from the wider Church and its worshipping life or to remain silent on, or disengage from, its social advocacy on important issues (e.g. prolife issues). However, it is precisely the engagement of everyday Catholics ‘from below’ in the liturgy and the active mission of the Church that is needed now more than ever. In the long-term effort to restore credible witness to the house of God, our schools are critical in fostering future generations of Catholic believers who are not only well-informed, intelligent and critical thinkers but also holy men and women, disciples who bring life to faith and faith to life. The Second Vatican Council well describes this potential of the Catholic school:

...its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and humanity is illumined by faith.⁷

While some Catholics have not lived this faith well, it does not render the Gospel any less integral to the human flourishing of our young people, the formation of their whole person and, indeed, the building up, through them, of what has been described as “a civilisation of love.”⁸

School communities and teachers are well placed to bring about this new creation for it is they who face, firsthand, the array of issues

that impact on our social fabric. This includes alarming rates of suicide among young people, brought on by depression, family crises and social isolation. One needs only consider the double-edged nature of social media, available to those even in their early years. While these social networks have enabled forms of global connection never available or experienced in other ages, they have also opened the prospect of real-world isolation, the Facebook phenomenon of ‘knowing lots of people but having few friends,’ and the loss of intimate friendships to the perils of online exhibitionism. Then, there is the ever present reality of marital and family breakdown that impacts the lives of the young, the sexualisation of adolescents, particularly girls, and the cult of a dehumanising materialism in which people have never had more but remain deeply and even dangerously unfulfilled.

In the midst of this fragmentation, which reveals a crisis in the idea of the human itself, Catholic schools stand to manifest before the wider community and before its own eyes the true meaning of the human person and the nature of authentic relationship. Grounded in the life of the Trinity, the divine unity of diverse persons, our schools can stand beside the family as a space of communion, characterised by mutual recognition and self-giving love, nowhere more so than in the primary school where young people are being socialised and grafted into concrete relationships with others, both their peers and the adults whom they trust. The stark reality is that for some of our young people the school community may provide a deeper experience of communion and unconditional love than the home, and these children can indeed be more valued here than in the marketplace where they are often regarded only for their status as consumers.

By educating in and for communion, Catholic schools can also serve as an evangelising centre for entire families who may never darken the door of a church or have any other experience of the Catholic faith beyond the walls of the school grounds. As I have proposed elsewhere, it is especially schools such as those of the

Marists, filled with charism, an awareness of God’s Spirit manifest in human history, that can bring together the Church and the world. Marist schools can accomplish this by mediating or serving as a bridge between the traditional, mainstream Church and the lives of students and parents who may *not* be connected to parish or regular practice. As the theologian David Ranson has observed, religious institutes including the Marists are, in a sense, both ‘Church’ and ‘beyond Church,’ working at the margins with those who may never feel comfortable within the ordinary life and structures of the Church.⁹ On this note, a Marist school principal once remarked that while some of his school families did not identify strongly as ‘Catholic’ they certainly felt ‘Marist.’ Such a sentiment points to the way in which schools can mediate the meaning of Catholic faith and a sense of belonging to a contemporary culture that remains hungry for a narrative by which to live and a community in which to live it.

THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISATION

While affirming all that our Catholic schools promise and already bring about through their care and nurturance of the young, our theme of evangelisation also presents forward challenges for each and all of us who represent the Church, whether we are conscious of this ecclesial witness or otherwise. The new evangelisation is not a phase or moment but the perennial mission of all the Catholic faithful, a deep and abiding responsibility to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). In terms of its practice, it has been my experience that among the first responses of schools, as it is for parishes and dioceses as well, is to create appropriate structures to support that goal. This is to be commended. The establishment of committees for evangelisation, dedicated personnel as well as practical resources remind us that *wanting* to evangelise is never enough. We have to be *organised* to do so and reveal the power of evangelisation as something other than a Platonic dream. The Great Commission given

to us by the Gospel, to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 29:18), should shape all of who we are as Catholic communities, including our structures, budgets, professional development, and the organisation and priorities of our time.

However, it must also be said that evangelisation should not be approached as yet another task of the school community, squeezed in between existing commitments, for such an approach inevitably leads to a rather bureaucratic response to the Church’s mission of outreach. Boxes are ticked and prayers are said, usually before and after meetings, but the deepest meaning of evangelisation can be missed, as a continuing conversion to the Gospel in all aspects of school and professional life. Of course, it is proper for schools and school systems to set benchmarks, to define goals and measures of evangelising activity, but these of themselves cannot ensure fruit without a conversion of heart on the part of teachers and school leaders.

While recognising the importance of structures in coordinating efforts and marshalling resources, the risk is that ‘evangelisation’ comes to be understood by the school community as the responsibility of one person, one group or one department rather than the entire body of students, teachers and parents that form the school community. The adult educator Jane Regan points out that it may be better to speak of the *evangelising* school or parish, noting,

When we use the [noun] evangelisation, there is the temptation to set it out as another activity the parish [or school] does – catechesis, liturgy, pastoral care, and evangelisation... Using the [verb] *evangelising* strengthens the commitment that who we are as Church – our mission and identity – is rooted in engaging in all activities through the lens of evangelisation.¹⁰

Thus, for the evangelising school, the school sports day is not unconnected to the human flourishing which the Gospel promotes, social

⁷ *Gravissimum Educationis* 8.

⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, “Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith” 19. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

⁹ David Ranson, “Religious Life into the Future,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 85/4 (2008): 456–463.

¹⁰ Jane Regan, *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 23–4.

justice activities are not simply about good citizenship but involve recognising the dignity of others, and ourselves, made in the one image of God, and that the 'faith of the school' does not simply refer us to the school motto or point backwards to its origins but also points forwards to its aspiration, its witness of Gospel values as an ecclesial community, and its future commitment to ongoing conversion. The evangelising school will therefore relate all that it is and does to the *evangelion*, the Good News of the Gospel, which comes to us not only as a gift but an invitation to renewal, even change.

CONVERSION FOR EACH AND ALL

Ultimately, all discussion of evangelisation is self-implicating in that it presses us to consider the quality of our own discipleship and the extent to which *we* manifest the holiness that we seek to awaken in others. As Pope Paul VI points out, "The Church is an evangeliser, but she begins by being evangelised herself."¹¹ By this statement, the pontiff recognised that we can only share what we ourselves have received into our life, that our own passion for, or else disinterest in, evangelisation reflects the extent to which we have been convinced by the person and message of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. The fruits that this self-conversion yields for others are manifold, as Paul VI would note, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."¹² It is the quality of our Christian discipleship that is the most powerful form of evangelisation that we can offer students, their families and our colleagues, leaving an imprint in the experience and memories of others that can last a lifetime and shape their own discipleship, experience and perception of the Church.

¹¹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 15. Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html. Accessed 1 May, 2013.

¹² Paul VI, "Address to the Members of the *Consilium de Laici*" (2 October 1974): AAS 66 (1974), 568.

Of course, conversion is never an easy business and demands of us an unvarnished reflection on any gap between who we profess to be as Catholic teachers, and as school communities, and who we really are. It could be suggested that too many of us are admirers of holiness but not enough of us seek to possess it for ourselves. The startling gift and project of 'the new evangelisation' is this – to realise that 'we are the Church we are waiting for.'

In Season Four of the American political drama, the *West Wing*, a young man, Sam Seaborn, is running for a seat in the United States Congress. He returns backstage after an exuberant political rally organised to garner votes and complains to his campaign manager, "I'm preaching to the choir. You had me out there preaching to the choir. Why?!" The campaign manager replies with calm, "Because that's how you get them to sing." So it is for the Church – the first who need to hear the call of the new evangelisation are ourselves, those of us closest to the mission of our Church as it is lived in our parish and school communities. The depth of our listening to this call will express itself in the strength of our commitment to proclaim the Gospel to the young people in our care.

CONCLUSION

Our Catholic schools bear enormous potential as centres of evangelisation, bridging the gap between the traditional Church and those not embedded in parish or regular practice. The new evangelisation calls us to attend especially to those baptised Catholics among us who have lost a living sense of the beauty, goodness and truth of our faith, who no longer recognise the Gospel as the way of life. While structures and committees are a necessary part of this important work, the task of evangelisation ultimately demands something of each of us, our ongoing conversion and willingness to receive the Gospel as the heart of our identity and mission as Catholic disciples and the heart of our life and calling as Catholic schools.

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PBL in the News



BR ROGER VALLANCE AND BR CRISPIN BETITA

Marcellin's House in Katangawan, General Santos City, Mindanao

Marist charism in action caring for poor youth.

ABSTRACT

This article explores one Marist initiative in Mindanao, the southern island of the Philippines. Marcellin House is a work of the Brothers and lay colleagues that offers care, education and support for children: homeless, those on the street, and others at-risk. While briefly tracing the history of Marcellin House, the article describes the wide types of support that this Marist work offers children. The leader of Marcellin House, Br Crispin Betita speaks in a recorded interview, and that interview forms the basis of this article.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this brief article is to offer some insight into a Marist work in the Philippines. I (Roger) had the opportunity to work in Mindanao in January and early February 2013, after an earlier visit in January to April 2009. This article recounts, through an interview structure, some of my own exploration of this wonderful work of the Brothers with at-risk boys. The article briefly recounts a short history of the Marcellin House project, then offers an edited transcript of an interview between the authors, before concluding with some reflections on the Marcellin House project today in Mindanao.

On 27th February 2013 a group celebrated the 22nd year of foundation of Marcellin

House. Marcellin House is a work of the Marist Brothers, East Asia Province. Lagao is a suburb of General Santos city in south Mindanao, Philippines, and Katangawan is an outer village of Lagao. Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines, and until recently was essentially agricultural. In more recent times, large scale forestry has cleared much coast land for farming purposes, and also resulted in widespread degradation of soils. General Santos city has become the home port of the Philippines blue water tuna fishing fleet.

The Marist Brothers have had a presence in General Santos City (GenSan) since 1953 when the Brothers opened a school, Notre Dame at Dadiangas¹. That school grew from elementary grades (primary classes) to the full basic education (K to 12) and then to a College and University. The Brothers now administer Notre Dame at Dadiangas University, (NDDU) which has two feeder schools at Lagao and Espina, both suburbs of GenSan. Since 1985 Lago has also been the place of the Province administration and initial formation with the Philippines' aspirancy and postulancy programmes based in Lagao.

¹ <http://www.nddu.edu.ph/history.php>

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

The area around General Santos is nationally known as the Soccsargen. This area is bordered by the Muslim dominated ARMM regions to the west of south Mindanao, and Davao and its hinterland of Davao Oriental to the east of Mindanao. The east of south Mindanao is frequently subjected to typhoons, for example Typhoon Bopha, known locally as Typhoon Pablo, in December 2012 which resulted in the loss of over 1000 lives². While Davao has considerable industrial activity, the main industries around GenSan are agricultural and those based around the fishing port.

Prior to the Second World War, the local area was principally cultivated by indigenous tribes people. Soon after Philippines' independence from America on 4th July 1946, more Filipino settlers began to arrive in increasing numbers seeking land and a livelihood outside crowded

² BBC World News Asia, 16 December 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20745450>

Luzon, the main, northern island of the Philippines. Today, the area around GenSan is home to three quarters of a million people³.

The text that follows is an edited conversation between the two authors. The prefix 'C:' denotes that Crispin is the speaker, 'R:' refers to Roger. The conversation was digitally audio taped and transcribed, a full version is available from the first author. All text not prefaced with either 'C:' or 'R:' is the responsibility of the first author (Roger) unless otherwise noted.

THE MARCELLIN PROJECT

Marcellin's House is the name of a group of homes for boys from the region around GenSan. The rationale for the initial foundation stands as relevant today as ever.

Marcellin House was established as an urgent and concrete response to the growing number of street children in Gen. Santos City. These children learn to survive in the streets. More often than

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Santos

Figure 1: Location of General Santos city in south Mindanao, Philippines*



Philippines in the South Pacific

General Santos city in south Mindanao

Katangawan is about 8km away from General Santos city.

*Accessed from Google Maps <http://maps.google.com.au/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>
"General Santos City, Soccsargen, Philippines"

not, they are malnourished, unhealthy and exposed to the dangers inherent to street life. Many have prematurely lost their childhood and have been plunged mostly through no fault of their own, into the rough street culture of recklessness, where they can become victims of child exploitation or criminal activities. (Marcellin House, 2012)

The children of Marcellin House are those who have been living on the streets, those abused and/or disconnected from their families, those who have been exploited either physically or economically, and others avoiding difficult circumstances. Due to the rapid change in society and the socio economics of the GenSan area, the number of boys needing Marcellin House has been increasing in recent years.

BRIEF HISTORY

C: During the 150th anniversary of our founder, and this was in 1989, the Brothers in the Philippine sector had a meeting, and one of the things that we discussed is, "What would Marcellin do if he landed on the airport today, at the local airport, and he came to Mindanao? What do you think he would do?" And in our community, General Santos area, we said, "Maybe he would do what he did in La Valla, taking poor children into care even as the early Brothers had very little" (cf. Furet, 1856, p.72).

The first attempts used a classroom in Notre Dame University. That was one classroom then.

C: I said, "Why don't we open a room closest to the gate? Why don't we open that room and have the children come in at night?" So, our project was "Safe At Night". That was the only thing we wanted. They come in. They can watch TV. They can wash off. We can feed them. Sleep-over night. But safe at night. Then, in the morning, we arrange the classroom ready for class, out they go. That's all that we wanted then. That's how we started. But then when I went to the Department of Social Welfare and I mentioned to them the project, the one in-charge said, "Brother, do you know how many street children there are in the city?" So, I said "About 50?" She looks at me with a smile. I can remember that smile. She said, "Hey, Brother,

there are 500 on our list and we don't know how many others are not on this list. Do you want all of them to come to your place at night?" So, we needed to think a bit more clearly!

C: Then, about a week or so later, Social Welfare called up and said, "Well, hey, we're going around the city this evening to pick up children on the streets. Do you want to help?" I said, "Sure. We'd like to volunteer." So, we got volunteers from the high school students, college and teachers, faculty. We got vehicles, only to discover that what they wanted was vehicles. [laughter] Anyway, we had all our vehicles out there. We went to the Department of Social Welfare, planning who goes where, what... 1 o'clock in the morning, we took off to different parts of the city. We got 67 kids sleeping or walking or whatever. So, one of the high school students went to the radio station, he announced and called the names of the parents and so on, "Please pick up your children" and so on and so forth. Parents came, relatives came. After a good lecture from the Department of Social Welfare, they were released except 10 kids whose parents never came.

C: So, the one in-charge of the Department of Social Welfare said, "Well, Brother. You said you wanted a project?" "Yeah, we would like to help, yeah." "Oh, here are 10. They are yours." Just like that, "They're yours." I said "What?" "They're yours. Take them." Well, I had to make a decision right then and there. So I said, "Okay. I'll take them." So, we had to look for a house. They looked for a house. We found one. Supplied them with... Borrowed everything, from bed and beddings to eating utensils to everything, soap, water, toothbrush, whatever. And we rushed things out. So, we had 10 boys. So, we had volunteers also from among the students who stayed there overnight with the kids and made sure that they're okay.

It soon became clear that the first house was not really well set up for caring for the children in the desired manner. The need was always for more space. After several locations, Marcellin House is now established in Katangawan just outside General Santos city.

MARCELLIN HOUSE TODAY

C: We have five separate houses. And we're repairing one, we're renovating one to make it a sixth house. And we have [as of February 2013] 46 boys.

C: Each house has a house parent and we make sure that the boys range in ages from small to about 18. We try to simulate what a family should be. So, we have small kids and big kids, all mixed up. But they run the house like what would a normal family do with regards to the children. So, they take care of their own house and the repair work has to be done by them. They do gardening. They plant their own vegetables. Some don't, but anyway, [chuckle] that's part of the house's decision. They cook their own rice, although the main food comes from the main kitchen. But rice, everybody has to learn how to cook rice, not the electric thing. What would you do when you're in the woods? Or you're out in the barrio and there's none of those modern things. We try to maintain the survival thing as much as possible, "Will they survive anywhere they are placed?" So, they have to learn how to cook rice. Many of them raise chickens and ducks. We had chicken this morning in one house. [chuckle] So, at the other houses it was like, 'Hey, they have chicken over there, we don't have any over here!' [chuckle]

R: How do you select the house parents?

C: Well, the house parents, we have to hire them really. But as much as possible, we would like to get somebody who has a college degree because in the evenings, they have to help them out with their homeworks. So, they have to have a little bit more knowledge than the kids. So, we hire them and we have to pay for their salaries and so on, but we have a training procedure where they go through some kind of training and screening, of course. They have to read our child protection policy manual and then sign that one. And then they have to get an NBI or a Police Clearance to make sure that they haven't had no crimes or whatever, they're cleared of that. So, they stay with us. They work mostly in the afternoons, after classes, up

to the early morning when... Up to the next day when the kids go to school. So, the rest of the day, they are free. But in the evenings, when the kids come in from school, all throughout, until the kids leave for school the next day, that's where most of the attention... Most of the work they do is at that time. Last night I received a text message, "Brother, so-and-so is not here in the house. I wonder if he's in your house?" "No, he's not in our house. You better check the other houses".

There are no fences at Marcellin House. The gates to the compound are open, and children are free to leave for school and work as and when they need to. Children are also expected to keep house parents informed as to their activities – just like in any other family.

R: So, the question I'm dying to ask you is "Where does the funding come from?" How do you survive?

C: That's the good thing. I just told the kids this morning, "For one thing, we don't have any money in the bank of our own. And also, we don't have any endowment, trust fund, something like that where we can get the interest." It's just we have an expression in the Philippines, "*Kapal mukha*", thick-skinned, where you just keep on asking, writing letters, asking for donations. This year, we have a funding agency that is helping us from Belgium, but they will end up this year. But for next year, we already have on line, another funding agency. The most expensive thing is the food because it's a daily thing. That's the biggest expense that we have.

R: And the school fees, presumably?

C: The school fees, for college kids, yes. But the school fees for college kids is taken care of already by a friend in Manila... Secretary of Finance, who was a former Marist boy, and who was my student in Marikina. So, he has a friend and that friend is taking care of all the college tuition fee because that's the most expensive. The high school and the elementary tuition, we have individual donors who would say, "I'll support one boy. I'll support half of his tuition. I'll support..." "They're not as expensive as the college.

C: Tuition fee for an elementary boy is 10 pesos⁴ a day. So, 300...

R: Three hundred days?

C: We include the whole year, so that the amount daily would be much smaller. So, it's 10 pesos a day for the whole year. Okay, So, about 3,500 pesos. For high school, it's a little bit higher than that. But what we ask for is about 20 pesos a day for high school.

R: And do you get funding from the government, from the city, from Social Welfare?

C: We used to get funding from the government when they had their kids over there. Many of the barangays⁵ here, when they have problems with the kids, they come to us. So, I tell them, "Well, how about the food bill?" Three barangays are helping us. They're sending... They're giving us big amounts. One barangay for one child gave us 40,000. So, I said, "Wow!" Then we had one boy, whom we would not accept because he is into drugs. So, we said, "Detox him first before we accept him." So, we brought him to the *Dangpanan*, it's a drug rehab centre, and Marcellin is paying half of the cost, so that when he's ready there, then we take him in. But for now, detox him first.

C: We accept all kinds of kids except those who are drug-related because we are not experts of that.

R: How else do you make ends meet? I had a little tour of the bakery, and I saw a truck...

C: Yes, yes. It was Caltex... In the Philippines, it's called Caltex, the gas company, but worldwide, it's Chevron. Actually, they came over and said, "What can we do to help you?" I said, "Well, yeah?" I said, "Well, can you support... Can you send kids to school?" They said, "Sure." So, the first year, that was that. Then the second year, they came over and said, "Hey, We're helping Don Bosco, the Don Bosco priests over there with their street kids, and we have provided funds for them to learn how to bake. Would you want that?" I said, "Well,

why not? Sure." "So, can you write a proposal?" So, I went to Don Bosco, got information and made a proposal. Sure enough, they came. They came and they set up the bakery, they funded for training of the kids to bake and so on. So, that's how we started the bakery. Although we have moved the bakery from here, we have moved the main bakery down town now. So, in Marcellin House we make doughnuts every day and all our own bread.

C: Then what happened is, Caltex then came and said, "Hey, the main office is looking for projects, would you write a proposal?" So, we did write a proposal and sure enough, our technical program started because of Chevron. So, we had welding, plumbing, building, wiring and stuff like that, and which they funded for a long, long time. In fact, it won CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) for Asia. So, Chevron presented that as their project⁶, and we won, they won. But the President of Caltex here in the Philippines, he's from the US, he said, "Actually, you did all the work, we just gave you the money." [chuckle]

C: The bakery provides funds, especially for the transportation funds for the kids to and from school. And allowances for the kids who go to school. And some skills for those kids who are doing the baking. We have a master baker, but most of the time he sits down and he lets the kids do the work, which is good.

R: I saw a truck labelled *'Agua Marcelino'*.

C: Yes, Marcellin Water! I had a friend in Manila, who said, "Why don't we run a water station?" I said, "What is that? I don't think we can get into that." So, he said, "Come on, come on. Let's visit." So, I visited the guy and, the guy said, "Okay, Brother. I will open things for you. I will help you. We'll set it up for you. Don't worry about the cost." So, he set up the water station. We were the first one in GenSan to have a water station. We're really the first

⁶ <http://www.caltex.com/ph/news-community/community-partnerships/>

⁷ A 'water station' provides clean, filtered water usually in 25 litre plastic containers that then dispense water on demand from a stand or drinking fountain.

ones. So, it was good business. But then, copycats came around and before you know it, it's all over. So, the income just dropped.

C: But then it still helps out about five college kids for transportation money, allowances, and so on. Not tuition. Tuition is too big. But it sends them to school, they come, but on condition that they help out. In other words, this will support you for your transportation, for whatever needs you have, but you have to be the ones running the show. So, they're running the show.

C: So, they're doing everything, from the processing, the selling, the delivery, the recording. They do everything. So, I just get the report every night, I get a report from them. So, water station, they deliver the water, they get customers, and so on. They do all the work.

C: The mobile library, that used to be a project that we had because there were so many kids out of school, but they couldn't get into a residential care centre because the family needs money the children earned. So, they have to work things out. So, we had what we call the 'Ahead Program'. The Ahead Program is approved by the Department of Education, so it allowed kids to go to school on modules. They have modules, they come in once a week or we go to their places, to the barangay. Once a week they come. The modules are given. They take the exam. So, it's like independent learning.

C: So, we had that program for five years. So, wherever there was a need for the vehicle to come for libraries so that kids can use it or for presentations on... For tapes, so, we had that available. But since then, the Department of Education came up with an ALS program, Alternative Learning Centre System, which is very, very similar. And they have all the funds. So, I said, "Okay, we move back." But before they came in, we had this going on in many mountain groups up near Dole, up in the mountain with the B'laan, and so on, so, we had a lot of that going on. But then we moved out, withdrew. So, it's in standby right now. You know what I'm thinking of? I was thinking of turning that mobile library into a food truck, move around and other kids who

are... Get more kids who need help. "Okay, can you drive? Drive. Can you sell? Sell. Okay. Go around where there is an occasion, where there are activities, move the truck over there, open it up, and then sell whatever food you can sell."

R: Marcellin House, and you, seem to be involved in many areas: child protection, juvenile offenders, social justice groups....

C: Well, the Foundation is involved in anything that has to do with children below 18. Anything that has to do with them, we get into the picture. We focus ourselves for that group. We do not focus on like families or whatever and stuff like that, but our main foci are our children. So, one of the difficulties we found out are the children involved in the justice system. When they get in, they get into real trouble. So, we have had more than 60 kids who have had cases in court, whom the judge has placed in our place, a total of about 60 over the years. So, we have taken care of them. Some of the cases were dismissed, others were remanded, or their stay at Marcellin was counted as a part of their sentence. But for many of the kids, it became an opportunity for them to get out of a vicious cycle that they are in. Should they stay out there, where they can't find an opportunity except maybe stealing or criminality, then they would continue to become criminals, or should they stay in jail for a simple theft, whose sentence, whose penalty would be maybe one month or two months in jail, but because of the justice system being very, very slow, they may spend two or three, four, five years in jail for a simple thing? So, that's one of the things that we wanted to do, is make the justice system more fair to the kids and get them out of the situation. If they stay in jail, then they would learn more because the other adults, the other people in jail would teach them more criminal "procedures", [chuckle] if you want to call it that way.

C: So, we were involved in that in the sense of helping them out. It was a difficult situation, but we organized the Juvenile Justice Network for the city of General Santos, and it's the only one in the whole Philippines. So, we organized

⁴ At the time of writing, February 2013, the Filipino peso was 42 to the Australian dollar.

⁵ The barangay is a local unit of government, equivalent to a village or small town council.

it, where the members are the courts, the Prosecutor's Office, the Public Attorney's Office, the Police, the jail people, the social work department, all of these government agencies, and each barangay chairman are supposed to be there, we have a meeting every month. No matter what happens, we never miss a month without any meetings. The last Friday of the month, they start a meeting for that. We may get reports, we get situations that they encounter in dealing with children, and we try to be as preventive as possible.

C: Prevent things to happen, like we had to train the policemen on how to handle children. We had to give them manuals produced by the police themselves in Manila, but they never had a copy down here, so I had to make efforts to get the copies from Manila and I provided each precinct with... Each station with a copy. Stuff like that. Discussed problems, discussed difficulties, sometimes get into fights, but at least, we do all of this to protect the children. So, every month, we do that. Another thing that I'm involved with is the Department of Interior and Local Government, they tap me, the Prosecutor's Office... Anyway, there are five of us. We go around checking on the Katarungan Pambarangay. It's the Barangay Justice System. Any conflicts that is not criminal in nature, whose penalty is less than one year maybe, it doesn't go to the regular course, it goes to the barangay.

C: So, we went around for each barangay last week, that's why I wasn't here for lunch... Each barangay, we check how they are doing with their system, what are they doing with children's cases and abuse of women and children, abuse of... So, we have made a dent in their system because we have showed them what is supposed to be done and what is not supposed to be done. So, I got involved in that. Particularly, I look at the cases of children that come into their hands. In many cases, we say, "Hey, this case, you should not have handled this. You should have given it to the regular courts." Or "This case over here, okay that's..." "So, we get involved in the justice

system because of our concern for that. I'm also in the Local Council for the Protection of Children. I was assigned there by the mayor. The difficulty with that is I'm a thorn of their side. [chuckle] Oh, gee! Because here's the law, what are we doing? The law says, "You should have a youth home." "Where is the youth home?" "Oh, we don't have funds for that." "Where is the youth home? The law says you must have a youth home." "Eh, I said, "We don't have funds for that." Let me check now. The next line says, "One percent of the IRA, Internal Revenue Allotment, one percent of the Internal Revenue Allotment is supposed to go to this group, the LCPC".

C: So, I think they are saying we made a mistake in inviting him to our council.. [chuckle] But I'm still pushing it. Every time there's a meeting, "Where is our youth home? Where is the program?" One guy was stupid enough to tell me, "Well, we build roads in the barangay. The children use it, therefore, that's part of the 1%." [chuckle] How stupid can you get? How stupid? [laughter] They rationalize things so that they say that we're using more than 1%. Well, anyway...

R: And you yourself are involved with training various groups. You've been working with groups of policemen and so on?

C: Yes, we have trained policemen, we have trained Barangay people, we have trained social workers. And at the very start, about 2005, we were getting funding from UNICEF to train these people. We were getting funding from Consuelo Foundation to train these people. A lot of training has been done. The difficulty is, it's not the same persons there all the time. Like the policemen, they get trained, also in charge of investigation. Shifting, they're moved to another job. Then there's a new guy there who doesn't know anything about the handling of children. So, now what? Or even with social workers, they move, they... Barangay captains or Barangay people, they get booted out. They're not re-elected so much. And it's a new set... "Oh, my goodness." So, we are forever training, which is a lot of money.

R: And you've got quite a group of people around you, who does that training?

C: No, it's not me alone. At Marcellin, there's particularly two people, myself and Fely, the Juvenile Justice Coordinator, who are concentrated on the training and who deal with all of these agencies. Then we have another organization whom we are tapping, but the difficulty is that sometimes the Department of Social Welfare will depend so much on us that they sit down on their backsides and they... "Oh, let them do the training." It's supposed to be their job.

C: Well, for the sake of the kids, that's okay. Let's do it. And many policemen have been very, very cooperative, very, very helpful. In fact, the one... The kid I mentioned, whom we have put in the detox centre that we're paying for, it was a policewoman who has been trained and really wants the kid out of trouble, 'cause he's been all over the city and I don't think there's any police station in the city that has not caught him. [chuckle]

C: We have good relations with the police and particularly... Well, it's not only because of all the work we're doing with children, particularly because the former Mayor, three or four Mayors ago, he assigned me to what we know as the PLEB, People's Law Enforcement Board. Each city is supposed to have a People's Law Enforcement Board. It is a Board where ordinary citizens can bring up complaints against policemen. So, I'm the Chairman of the PLEB. [laughter] So any citizen who will bring up a complaint against policemen, we run it like an investigating board. So, the policeman is there, the complainant is over there. "Who are your witnesses? What you have to say? Give us affidavits. Give us proof." Then we'll make a decision. And the Board has dismissed policemen. They have suspended policemen. They have reprimanded policemen.

C: So, many of the kids also know that. So, whenever they are caught by the policeman, they say "I'm with Marcellin," even though they're not. So, they get away with things. [chuckle] They'd go, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, don't touch me."

[laughter] It's funny. It's funny. Anyway, some kids are smart. So, anyway. But it doesn't hamper our work. So, I told the policemen, "Please don't allow anybody to say that they are with me" because we are an independent body and we make decisions according to the affidavits or what we hear from witnesses, and so on. "And it's not only me", I said, "There are five of us. The five of us will make a decision. So, don't think that I control this group of people. I'm just one vote." When it comes to... After discussion, we vote. I'm just one vote.

R: Crispin, I've been making a list of all the things you are doing and involved in. I'm tired. Where do you get the energy?

[laughter]

C: Well, "What would Marcellin do?" I said when we started. "What would Marcellin do when kids are in trouble?" A lot of the kids get into trouble. And many times, they get into trouble because the government system doesn't work for them. They don't. Most of the time, the government system, the people involved in the government agencies will say, "Oh, let them go." For example, they will say, they grab a kid or you hear them on TV, "Oh, he's a child. He will be released anyway. So, let him go."

C: So, instead of doing that, instead of... They're not supposed to release them. They're supposed to have intervention and diversion programs and checking up with the parents, having the kids report to them on a regular basis, follow up the children. But it takes a lot of time. So, they say, "Ah, let them go." So, they just neglect. So, the kids think wrongly, "Oh, I'm under-aged. Therefore, they can't put me in jail. Therefore, I can do other things." But that's not supposed to be that way. But because of the, we call them 'tamad', laziness or just 'couldn't care less', they just, they don't follow what is set up there. So, we end up with a system that doesn't really help. So, I find my role as reminding them about, "Where is the system? Where is the system that you're supposed to have?" So is it, "Oh, you can do it, Brother." "You are doing it over there. But how about you? The kids outside. What are you doing?" Well, anyway.

GRADUATING FROM MARCELLIN

R: Cris, tell me about some of the ex-students. The boys who've gone through Marist House

C: One of them is a nurse in London. Many of them have jobs and many of them are abroad now. Three are in Japan. They're earning quite a lot. Many have regular jobs here who would have ended otherwise on the opposite side of the law, if they'd survived at all.

Let me see now... One of the first ones went to Manila. He worked with a big company in terms of car repair, vehicle repair. He's back now here. He's set up his own car repair shop, air conditioning, repair of vehicles and so on. He's doing well. Our chef, our cook... Our cook had been charged [laughter] when he was a kid. So, the judge put him with us. So, he finished. He used to complain about the food. And now, we've discovered that he's a good cook. He worked outside for a while. Then we hired him. Now, the kids are complaining about his cooking. [laughter]

C: Anyway, two of our drivers..... Two of our drivers are our own kids who are doing well. They're driver-mechanics. I just met a group who came in this afternoon, they came in their bikes to play basketball with the kids. All of them are working. Two of them are working as chefs in that hotel there on the highway, City Suites. They're working as chefs over there. What else... Others, we haven't had contact with them, but the most important thing is that we have turned around and changed their lives from one direction to a different direction. So, we hope it continues. What we wanted to do was change the vicious of cycle they would have ended up, because if no opportunities were given to them, then the next generation, their own children, maybe would have ended the same way.

R: Today, as I have visited, I was very impressed with the way the boys shared and they were very comfortable in the place.

C: Okay, okay. We made sure that it is not treated as a prison now, as a detention centre or whatever, rehabilitation centre. In fact, we've been calling it an academy. Marcellin Academy,

that's what we say. Although, I had to go to the Department of the Education to explain that it is not an academy or an educational institution, but we're using the word academy just to remove that negative connotation. 'Cause if you say "Boys' Town", if you say 'Rehab Centre' or whatever, already it has a negative implication. So, it's an academy and we call the kids 'students'. So, we make it more positive. So, they're all students, which is true. They all go to school, but not necessarily over there. They go outside... they do technical trades. Quite a lot of good jobs right now, plenty. Like one of them a welder, and one of the small engine repairer, he's working now with a motorcycle shop. So, he tipped us off, he said, "Hey, there's a repossessed motorcycle over here. Any of your kids are interested?" So, I mentioned to the kids, "Sure." Not the kids... I mean those who have finished, the ex-students. So, I mentioned it to them. Sure enough, he grabbed the opportunity and he got it at a very good price, a repossessed motorcycle. Stuff like that. Some kids are not successful. We cannot be 100%, but at least the majority are... Their lives have been turned around.

Future Developments of Marcellin House

R: Well, how does Marcellin House to develop or improve?

C: The needs. The needs are for... How do you say it, to put the gentle art into, with the children? The art of music, the art of dance, the art of appreciating art, is one of our most difficult things, that one, to... How do you say, gentle-ize? No, no to make them more... the gentle art of information; music and art, yeah, that's right. That's where we are weak actually.

C: For most of them, you cannot depend on their own family to give them the family values. It's impossible. So, we have to do it ourselves so that when they grow up and they have their families, they don't do the same things that happened to them. But what they have learned, maybe they can apply to their own families, which many of them are doing. Like the two drivers we have. They're married. They have their own families right now. Oh, they're doing very well with their kids.

R: Yeah. That is such a really warm and positive thing to say.

C: That's true, that's true. I'm very happy for them, because they bring their kids around and they call me 'granddad', 'lolo' in our dialect. 'Hey, Lolo Brother, [chuckle] Lolo Brother'.

R: Cris, I wanted to ask you about a sign (Figure 2) I saw up on the wall there last Sunday, the Marist Way? I recognize the five terms but you've got sentences that describe each of those terms that are unfamiliar to me.

C: I got them from Australia. Actually, what Australia had is, 'Love of work - Moving from a job to a genuine vocation'. I just added 'chores' because in the houses, they have to do chores, they have to clean up. We don't have enough janitors around. So, the kids do... They mow. They're the ones in charge of mowing the whole property.

C: So, they have the machines. So, the kids do that. So, it's just a chore. But I want them to value work. Well, it's tough sometimes for many of them, but anyway... To value work and to be able to learn how to discipline themselves by concentrating on the work' (Estaún, 2007, p.35).

R: Well, for kids who have lived on the street, that sense of being responsible for something, to complete something, must be a big learning for some of those kids.

C: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We have one boy, he's really very, very responsible for anything. He's doing more than enough. His brother is in jail. His elder brother is somewhere else. But, boy, this kid is unbelievable in terms of going to school, in terms of work, in terms of responsibility. He raised his own pig. So, he

made an agreement with a neighbour and got the pig, put it in a... He made a pen for them and he raised... He earned 4,000 pesos, on his own. So, great! So, I gave him as an example, 'Look, if you really work very hard, you can earn your own money over here.' But then, I was joking around with him. 'Where did you get the food? You got it from the kitchen, right?' [laughter]

R: That's initiative.

C: The 'Marist Way' (Fig. 2) I just changed a few words, and then... I actually liked it because it's a new way of expressing... It's a different way of expressing the charism of Marcellin. Like for example, it says here... "An unpretentious, down to earth way of working with young people and, regardless where they are at", we say, "We accept all kids and we're following the gospel where the apostles said, 'We are keeping the children away from Christ and Christ said, 'let the children come.' " So, we have that, "Let the children come" and our policy is we accept all, except for drug-related. Anybody who needs help, we come. And if they bring them over to us, we try to help."

C: The most difficult thing actually is looking for the funds. A lot of the teachers in the Brothers' schools are contributing. So, we get funds from Cotabato, we get funds from Kidapawan, Marbel or here. They make promissory notes. What do they call it? "Please deduct so much from my salary every pay day..."

C: But the main thing is the food. My God, that's expensive. It's a daily thing, that's why.

Daily, daily, daily. But the vegetable stands and the fish stands nearby, they know us already. So, every time, we don't have any... The

Figure 2: Marist Way

OUR MARIST WAY

Our Marist way provides us with a distinctive way of working with disadvantaged youth.

It is best demonstrated through the Marist qualities:

- **Presence** – to be really present with a young person, regardless of where they are at.
- **Simplicity** – an unpretentious, down to earth way of working with young people.
- **Family Spirit** – offering genuine warmth, hospitality and a sense of belonging.
- **Love of Work** – moving from chores, technical skills and job to a sense of genuine vocation.
- **In the Way of Mary** – offering our young people nurturance and hope.

funds are not available, we tell them 'Utang, utang this'. 'Can we take them on IOU?' 'Okay. Sure, sure, sure. Pay it when you can.' So, that's what happens. So, the money comes, 'Hey, how much do we owe you?' They understand what we're doing. They understand.

C: What other challenges? The difficulty that I fear is with the system. The organizational thing where, 'You cannot do this unless it has to go this way or that way'. It's so institutionalized that you forget that the kids cannot be institutionalized. If they need help right now, the heck with all of this... So, that's what I'm really afraid of. Once it's so institutionalized...

C: So, maybe the job description, I should put, 'The Brother in-charge should be allowed to make decisions, [chuckle] in cases where he feels it's necessary'. Oh, well, anyway, that's part of it. When we started as a one-man show, I was the only one there. Then we started hiring people, and it became bigger and bigger. That's what, the danger of institutionalizing...

R: Do you see a time in the future where it might not be a Brother running...

C: Yes. I can see it. The one in-charge here, the one next to me right now, the coordinator of the Juvenile Justice, she's very effective. I was hoping somebody whom we trained before from the very beginning, but he moved over to the University in Marbel. Now, I heard he's moving into the Department of Education. So, I was talking to him about coming back and more or less, help me run the show. So, he's thinking about it but he would be a good man for that.

C: But anyway, we'll see what happens. He wants to be accepted into the Department of Education. We have another, an ex-seminarian whom we were training also. Now, he's head of the school in the Department of Education. [laughter] So, we train people so that they're good enough to move out of us. Oh, yeah. We train people for others. [laughter]

R: Cris, thank you very much for your time.

C: Ah, okay. No problem. No problem.

REFLECTION

Marcellin lived in times of social turmoil, when the structures of society were not working as they should. The Brothers who started this work for homeless and at-risk boys in GenSan were in the tradition of Marcellin himself. Br Frederick writes:

... in the great compassion that actuated him (Marcellin), he was always open. In the sphere of education, the care of poor orphans was of particular concern, the Brothers taking over the management of three orphanages during Champagnat's lifetime (McMahon, 1988, p.131).

Champagnat's care for poor children is well documented (Furet, 1856, pp.507; 512-513) and extended beyond regular schooling. In a similar manner to Marcellin before them, the Brothers in Mindanao made decisions to care for the least favoured children. We are reminded of Champagnat's desire to be first at Crib, Cross and Altar where we meet and serve those who are poor, at-risk, and hungry for bread, justice and peace (Estaún, 2007, p.29).

In the description of the houses and the place of work within Marcellin's House, there is a clear reflection of Champagnat's love and valuing of work (Estaún, 2007, p.35). From its beginning, Marcellin House was designed to offer a type of family experience to the boys, just as Champagnat lived with those early Brothers (Furet, 1856, pp.74-75), whose family spirit formed the Marist Way. The contributions that the boys make in the bakery, water delivery, gardening and chicken raising echo the early experiences that formed the spirit of the early Marists, and is a practical demonstration of the 'love of work' that is the Marist Way. The Marist ideal of simplicity as both a spirituality and as a relationship to the goods of this world (Estaún, 2007, pp.33-35) is evident in the structure and running of Marcellin House.

Just as the table that Champagnat built and around which the early Brothers gathered (Estaún, 2007, p.56), so too the houses that are called Marcellin creates its family under the care of house-parents, in the company of other

CONCLUSION

Marcellin House is one example of Marist charism in action. By no means is Marcellin House the only embodiment of Marist charism in Philippines – and Crispin would never claim it so. Marcellin House is an example of what Brothers and laity can do and are doing, working together to breathe Champagnat's dream into the lives of poor and at-risk children. Marcellin House has its success, and at times its failures, and continues to offer, in the name of Champagnat hope and the Marist Way as an option for those who might accept that call.

My (Roger's) experience of Marcellin house in Lagao affected me deeply. This experience evoked in me a very strong realisation that the spirit to which we are called, that spirit expressed in the recent publication "Water from the Rock" (Estaún, 2007) is alive, well and being abundantly lived.

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(Footnotes)

young people. The bonds that this family living create endure, as Crispin recounts that former students remain connected, supportive and involved in Marcellin House. Children coming from very different, and often less-than-ideal, circumstances, volunteer house parents and carers, Brothers and supporters create a family that provides for the needs of these young people: not just educational and housing needs, but those needs of the human spirit.

Today, Marcellin House is expanding to meet growing needs. Br Crispin's time as director is coming to an end, or at least is not too far off. Lay people of talent and generous spirit are already shouldering much of the load and sharing administration as well as being, most vitally, house-parents to the mix of boys who share Marcellin House. Benefactors both nearby and afar, who know the work of the Brothers in Mindanao, make important contributions.

Like many Marist works, the needs and calls on resources always seem greater than what can be counted. Yet, this work, of which Champagnat must be very proud, continues to make contributions to the lives of many at-risk boys. Marcellin House touches, through its wide programs, the lives of many people, not just those resident in Katangawan. Through its programs of social justice, advocacy for youth, and training in youth justice for police and local council officials, Marcellin House represents young people in conflict with the justice system. Marcellin House offers education and then employment for young people as they make their start in the world.

It may be that this article has sparked some interest in this Marist work or similar works? If you would like to follow the activities of Marcellin House in Lagao you can access their website <http://www.marcellin.org.ph/>. You might like to contribute to this work1 or explore means of supporting this Marist work. Marcellin House is open to volunteers, and would welcome such enquiries, as well as material support.

