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CHAMPAGNAT

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Inside:

- Vatican II: Does it still matter?
- “Hidden and Unknown” – a Marist insight for today

Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education
aims to assist its readers to integrate charism into education in a way that gives great life
and hope. Marists provide one example of this mission.

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Viewpoint...

The Mother of Jesus in my life...

I clearly remember, as a young teen, my mother telling me, that 'I wear my heart on my sleeve'. She told me that I need to make sure that my feelings weren't so obvious to everyone so as to be less vulnerable to those that could take advantage of this trait.

Now, as a mother myself, I feel that my heart is constantly outside of myself, vulnerable to the lives of my three children. When they were young and were hurt, either physically or emotionally, I would feel their hurt deeply. I assume most parents feel this way. As they are now adult children, making decisions for themselves, I feel that their choices affect me to my core, my heart. At times my heart can swell with pride and other times it can break with disappointment. The hard thing about being a mother to adult children is that you must let your children live their lives the way they choose.

Since becoming the Marist Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Sydney region, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, means so much more to me. The five Marist characteristics under-pin all our ministry work, so much so that they have become a personal guide for me. 'In the way of Mary' is a

personal favourite. In times of need, I find myself asking, 'what would Mary do'? Looking at the Gospels, Mary must have been frantic when 12-year-old Jesus was 'lost' in the temple. How did she feel to be told by him that she should have known he would have been in His Father's house? Did she feel the same way after Jesus appeared not to want to take direction from her at the wedding of Cana? Mary's deep love was truly evident at Calvary as she did not leave her son's side as he unfairly suffered an undignified and painful death.

Mary's love reflects the great love God has towards us. We are told this love knows no bounds and shows that we are always forgiven and loved beyond what we can comprehend. I question how God could love so deeply and so many people with such depth. I can only refer to my own heart as a mother. If the love I have for my 3 children means that I constantly forgive, support and 'hold' my children from afar, God's love for me and all humankind must be so much greater. My love for my children, has helped me to realise the great love God must have for me, so much so, I know wearing my heart on my sleeve isn't such a bad thing after all.

Jeni Miller

WISE MEN AND WOMEN...

Recently I read a book of reflections by Walter Brueggemann titled “A Gospel of Hope” (2018). In my time in Atlanta, Brueggemann was Professor of the Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary not far from Emory University where I was studying. Readers may remember his famous book “The Prophetic Imagination” first published in 1978 and recently was reprinted to celebrate its forty years of life-giving food for thought. I enrolled in Brueggemann’s course when I was at Emory and the weekly visit to Columbia was in itself a good education for me. First and foremost, it was ecumenical and I was fascinated and inspired by 1000 seminarians all seeking ordination in the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist traditions. I learnt a lot about their traditions, and was fascinated by the theology of Martin Luther King. Brueggemann was quite a task master, and I survived! One of his key statements was for one to be effective in ministry, one needs to know who Jesus is and be in relationship with him through prayer and prophetic works. Our Catholic saints tell us the same thing: just think of Marcellin Champagnat, or Teresa of Avila, or Oscar Romero by way of examples.

The most recent Brueggemann book consists of a number of reflections from his earlier writings or talks. One reads:

This moment of crisis in the church is a moment to consider among us the richness of the treasure and the fragility of the vessel in the presence of the treasure. It may be a moment to decide yet again to give ourselves over to the truth of the treasure and let God manage much of the rest for the sake of the vessel.

We are watching while the clay pots are being smashed like Jeremiah imagined old Jerusalem to be smashed, smashed maybe for being disobedient and irrelevant, smashed for being too self-preoccupied, smashed for being comfortable with privilege and national ideology and middle-class morality. So I had the thought, the clay pots are being smashed for the sake of Jesus, that the power of Jesus in his generosity, forgiveness, hospitality, and justice can break loose in the world for healing and newness (A Gospel of Hope, 2018, Page 72).

While some may think this is a long statement, it is a statement about us and the people of this world. Yes, we live in a very difficult time for the Christian Church and the one quest must be to seek healing and newness.

How do we do this? Well, we have heard what the Church in Australia is going to do; we have heard what governments are going to do to help people who have not been given respect and care. All of this is important. But, it also comes down to each of us and how we can reach out to our communities, to the stranger and give them life that is meaningful.

This little journal, makes an effort to provide some small inspiration for each of us. The wise men and women who write are taking a risk, but they hope that one or two of the words that they write, may inspire others to take the risk and reach out to their neighbor or the words may throw new light on our tradition that helps others to move forward with ‘fire in their belly’.

So the wise men and women who write for us in this edition are:

Jeni Miller who leads the Marist Youth Ministry Team in Sydney and around New South Wales. In her short reflection she writes of just who the Mother of Jesus is in her life. This is inspirational because Jeni seeks to be a Marist, to be a disciple of Marcellin Champagnat, and to be able to reach out to young people to help make Jesus known and loved. I suspect that this is something that the Mother of Jesus also did.

Catherine McCahill is a Good Samaritan Sister. For some years she taught at Sacred Heart College in Adelaide and so knows the Marists well. In recent years she has been a full-time member of the Leadership Team of the Good Samaritan Sisters, and prior to this she lectured at the Yarra Theological College in Melbourne. Given the ongoing quest of Pope Francis to ‘deliver’ all the decisions of Vatican II, and those who publicly work against this, Catherine’s paper challenges us to remember that we cannot turn back. The Church has to move forward, and the earlier quotation from Brueggemann supports this position.

Katherine Anderson is the Publicity Officer and a key faculty member at Marist College Canberra. Katherine reports on the visit to Canberra and Sydney of Lisa Hendey who worked with all members of the community promoting discussion and approaches to family, faith and ministry. In this era of the Synod on the Family, these are important issues, and one has to congratulate the Principal and staff at Marist College on this undertaking. At the end of the day, the family is the key to our future.

Justin Taylor is a Marist priest who currently resides at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Auckland. He has been a lecturer and scholar for a number of years, and he has assisted the Marist Brothers with Renewal courses in Rome. In addition he has lectured at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem and in Rome. His books, and papers on Marist patrimony are of special interest to all of us and help us to understand what it means to be 'hidden and unknown' in our personal, communal and ministerial life. Justin was in Sydney recently, and the paper is a summary of his talk given at St Patrick's Church in Sydney.

John McMahon is a Marist Brother who resides in Melbourne. He has been a College Principal, a Provincial Councillor in the former Melbourne Province and is currently National Director of Marist Tertiary Studies in the Australian Marist Province. His paper continues with the reflection

commenced by Jeni Miller in 'Viewpoint' in this edition, namely who is Mary for each of us? How does she speak to us? In the Christian Orthodox tradition we read of "Deification in Christ". That is, the true aim of the Christian life is union with God through the Holy Spirit. Our call in living is not just to 'be good' but to be perfect, to be 'gods by grace'. It is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who exemplifies this, who helps us with this process. John makes some practical suggestions on how we can undertake this journey that Christ calls us to.

Tony Paterson has been a Marist Brother for forty or so years and grateful for the experience and the help received along the way. You don't have to read any more of this paragraph if you know him in his capacity as the Editor of the Champagnat Journal. In this paper, he is suggesting that we can learn a great deal about the current state of the Christian Church if we look at events and decisions in the very early days following the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. Like today, the early Church was a bit like a 'field hospital' and despite the disagreements, splits and challenges of that time, Jesus the healer, the Compassionate God, came through. As the late Sebastian Moore OSB suggests, the crucified is no stranger. There is always a resurrection experience if we are people of faith and hope. This paper may be useful for teachers who are looking for a short comment on the topic.

THANK YOU

Our gratitude to those who have contributed papers to this edition, and to the proof-readers and to those who have assisted with the peer-review process. The Management Committee.

Vatican II: does it still matter?

It is time for all us to reconsider the call of John XXIII for “Christian charity”, to work for unity, to engage with the people of our times, says Good Samaritan Sister Catherine McCahill.

“The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of men and women who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onwards towards the kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all people.”

So begins the *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*. This is the Church that I love, this is the Church in which I choose to live out that commitment of love in and through Jesus who has shown us the way.

Let me begin at the beginning. Some 50 years ago (October 11, 1962), Pope John XXIII declared open the Second Vatican Council, the four sessions of which lasted more than three years and produced 16 documents. It was his intent and remained the intent of his successor, Paul VI (who assumed presidency from the second session) that this council “would be a demonstration of the vitality of the Church, a means of rebuilding Christian unity, and a catalyst for world peace”.

This council *was* different to the preceding 20 ecumenical councils of the Church. Firstly, the bishops were greater in number (2,600) and more diverse in culture and nationhood than ever before, coming not only from Europe but also indigenous to the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. Secondly, representation from non-Catholics and lay persons (including 23 women by the fourth session) was visibly noticeable. Thirdly, its purpose was to promote study and exposition of the teaching and doctrines of the Church “through the methods of research and... literary forms of *modern thought*” (Opening address of John XXIII). Dialogue and

engagement with the world was essential for the authentic promotion of the Gospel message.

So for the first time we had a “pastoral” constitution (quoted above), proclaiming that the Church exists “within” and not “apart from” or “alongside” the world, requiring serious engagement of all the faithful in the promotion of the dignity, well-being and freedom of all persons. For the first time too, the Church is presented as “the People of God”, a community of laity, religious and clergy, all sharing in the “priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, no. 30, 31). For the first time in hundreds of years, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, promoted the active participation of all God’s people, requiring that it be celebrated in the language of the people and that its “signs” be “understandable”.

Numerous other determinations could be noted if we were to work our way through the various documents on divine revelation, ecumenism, non-Christian religions, religious freedom, and the Church’s missionary activity, to name but some. New emphasis was placed on the accessibility of sacred scripture, on the promotion of understanding amongst all Christians, on the “ray of truth” that is found in all religions, on requiring that the Church never participate in any form of religious coercion or prejudice any persons on the basis of their religious faith, and on promoting missionary activity that recognises and preserves the gifts of all cultures.

Reading these documents 50 years later, significant questions arise. How comprehensible are they for the postmodern person, for persons from Europe, Asia, the Pacific, or the Americas, impoverished or not, educated or not, seekers of truth or consumed with human survival for

themselves or their families? In recent times in English-speaking countries, the language of the liturgy has been re-visited, and many are left wondering about the gap between the language chosen and contemporary English. I am saddened by the divisions that this is causing and the energy being consumed, whilst all the time sacramental participation is decreasing.

We are, unfortunately, all too aware of division and disharmony in this Church that 50 years ago promoted unity and freedom of conscience. We live in times when some theologians are “silenced” for their attempt to give contemporary expression to the ancient Christian truths. We are aware too, of so much critical energy, an energy that leads to anonymous reporting to Roman curia and seemingly harsh censure.

When I read the conciliar documents with lay, educated Catholics many are unimpressed. Certainly, they are not as excited as many were in the late 1960s and 1970s. Is it time for the Church to look once again at its relationship to the contemporary world? I am very aware of so many places in the world where the Church is engaged with the world but that is not the experience of many Australian Catholics. They experience a Church no longer connected with the reality of their lives, with the “joy and hope, the grief and anguish” of all humanity. It is time for all of us to reconsider the call of John XXIII for “Christian charity”, to work for unity, to engage with the

people of our times. We will be unable to proclaim the Good News unless we do.

Many of my peers have “given up” on the Church. I refuse to make a connect with the forces that demoralise. I still believe in the unmined treasures of the conciliar documents. I hope and pray for dialogue, for serious and committed dialogue amongst all members of the Church – the People of God – those who actively participate and those who have become disillusioned, apathetic or ostracised. I believe it will only be possible if we focus more clearly on the teaching, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then the Church will truly serve his mission not its own; his commandment of love and compassion will take precedence.

Let us once more throw open the windows of this ancient institution so that the fresh winds of Jesus’ teachings and our contemporary world might collide and enliven us.

Good Samaritan Sister Catherine McCahill is currently a member of the leadership team of Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Prior to her election, she was involved in education for over 30 years, in secondary schools and, more recently, at a tertiary level in biblical studies and religious education.

This article was first published in the February 2012 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-magazine of the Good Samaritan Sisters. It is printed here with permission.

KATHERINE ANDERSON

Family, Faith and Ministry: Visit of Lisa Hendey

Marist communities, parishes and movements were blessed to welcome Lisa Hendey to Australia in August for a two week speaking tour in Sydney and Canberra. Lisa is an international speaker, author of 13 books, and founder of the website CatholicMom.com which has over 100 bloggers writing about family, faith and ministry with young people in the US.

The speaking tour was an initiative of Matthew Hutchison, Headmaster of Marist College Canberra, and part of the College's 50th Jubilee celebrations. Mr Hutchison said, "It was important to provide an opportunity to celebrate and deepen our faith through this Jubilee year, which honours the deep spiritual heritage inherited from the Marist Brothers". Following in the footsteps of the early Marists in Canberra, Mr Hutchison was keen to

share Lisa's knowledge as broadly as possible, and extended the invitation to Marist families, Catholic principals, Catholic Education Office staff, and parishioners.

Over the fortnight, Lisa spoke to hundreds of parents, teachers and students. During her time in Canberra, Lisa facilitated sessions with Junior School classes, parents, Religious Education teachers and Catholic Principals and leaders. A highlight of the week in Canberra was the Mothers' Retreat. Lisa led with openness, love and compassion. Attendee Anne Hartwell said, "I was blessed to be able to attend the parent evening, Mother's Retreat and the Sisterhood event where Lisa spoke. Lisa shared her faith in Jesus in a real and accessible way. She is a creative and generous person, and very genuine in the way she reminded



and revealed to us the incredible gift of our faith in God. Life is too busy – Lisa’s profound wisdom to families is to reclaim Sunday Mass as the focus and most important highlight of our week. Lisa brought to life the Pope’s call for all of us to become holy – right where we are – to become saints for the kingdom. Thank you for the wisdom and generosity of Matthew to bring Lisa to our community and to Nathan for all his hard work. The blessings of her visit will continue to flow. Having Lisa here was so encouraging – an injection of hope, peace and joy!”

Lisa paid tribute to the example of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop as a woman of strength and resolve in times of adversity and change. The College’s Religious Education staff enjoyed the opportunity to discuss, share and respond to prayer with Lisa. It was insightful and refreshing which in turn allowed growth of their own spirituality. Teachers noted Lisa’s spiritual maturity and were grateful for the many ways she presented to bring dynamic prayer to the boys. One teacher commented, *“It was a truly amazing experience to listen to Lisa’s insights on faith, and how each of us can live holy lives as parents, educators, students and families in the modern world of busyness, social media and the everyday challenges of life”*.

The art of storytelling was a common thread of Lisa’s presentations as she encouraged participants to write their own stories and become Missionary Disciples, sharing the great story of Jesus’s love in their homes, classrooms and parishes. Students at Marist College Canberra, St Francis Xavier College and Girls Grammar also had the chance to spend time with Lisa during her time in Canberra. Students at Marist commented, *“Lisa came to visit our class and we learnt that we are being saints by helping the environment, being kind and helpful. By being kind and helpful we are being good role models to other people. We found it inspiring the way Mrs Hendey urged us to live our lives. She told us we are all called to be saints and that made us think we should really strive to live our best lives. Mrs Hendey really connected with us; she didn’t just give us information. She had a positive attitude and a good sense of humour”*.

Lisa offered practical advice to parents and principals on how to manage the sacred balancing act of deepening the spirituality of young people whilst caring for their own spiritual needs. This

included the importance of role-modelling, teaching the skills of conversation, engaging with parish and providing accompaniment to families. Lisa explained that families are not after an app or a book, rather, they want to connect and the school is both a place for evangelisation and a wonderful bridge between the domestic church and the Parish community.

Daniel Ang, Director of the Office for Evangelisation in the Diocese of Broken Bay said, “It was a delight to welcome Lisa for a day with their families. Lisa shared tremendous encouragement as well as practical tips for women, families and married couples to not only sustain their engagement with the life of the Church, but to also deepen it. Lisa was able to speak into the lives of the 60 participants and affirmed the holy significance of the everyday and the domestic church, the sacred ground on which the mission of our Church depends. We were so grateful to have Lisa with us during her visit to Australia and we thank the Marist community for their generosity in sharing her gifts with us”.

In between sightseeing on the north shores of Sydney and patting kangaroos, Lisa also visited Parousia Media and conducted interviews with *Catholic Weekly*. A highlight for Lisa was joining Marist Association members for the Feast of the Assumption Mass at St Patricks in the Rocks.

Lisa Hendey offered the following reflection on her time in Australia, “The words “grateful” and “blessed” don’t begin to describe the feelings in my heart as I return home from my first-ever journey to Australia. While I came to your country to serve, I departed you filled with an awesome sense of the Universal Church in her wholeness. Especially at a time when our Church in the United States is undergoing such a time of difficulty, the Missionary Disciples I encountered in Australia left me inspired, uplifted and anxious to find new ways to continue our international dialogue on the role of every person of faith at this time in our Church’s history. From the Year 4 students who reminded me that we are each called to be a ‘saint-in-the-making’ to the great-grandmother who reminded me to claim my role as a servant leader, every person I met along my path has become part of a beautiful quilt of spiritual memories that wrapped me in such a warm and loving welcome. I am anxious to see how the seeds that were sewn by



so many who participated in my events during my visit will continue to blossom and flourish in your communities. I want to thank in a special way the entire family at Marist College Canberra, especially Headmaster Matthew Hutchison and Director of Faith Formation Nathan Ahearne, for your warm hospitality and the glowing example of "Fiat" in

today's world".

We are so grateful for the wisdom, energy and faith that Lisa brought to each of her encounters, and wish her all the best as she continues in her ministry which is reaching thousands of people every day.

JUSTIN TAYLOR

‘Hidden and Unknown’ – a Marist insight for today

INTRODUCTION

The Marist Fathers who came from France to St Patrick’s Church 150 years ago and those who continued to serve here were imbued with a particular and deeply Marian spirituality. At its heart is an interior attitude – a way of thinking and of viewing the world – that is meant to influence everything they do or say. It can be summed up in six words: ‘Unknown and hidden in this world’. Frequently only the first three words are used: ‘Unknown and hidden’, or, perhaps more usually, ‘Hidden and unknown’. I believe that this outlook, this way of thinking and acting – correctly understood – is relevant well beyond France and the 19th century. It could in fact be just what is needed to help cure some of the ills from which not only the Catholic Church but also wider Western society suffers today.

THE ORIGINS OF THE PHRASE

We’ll start with some history. The first time we read the phrase ‘hidden and unknown’ in a Marist document is in a letter Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, foundress of the Marist Sisters, wrote on 15 November 1824 to Bishop Devie of Belley. Her subject was the community of sisters that she had by now gathered at Cerdon, the parish where Jean-Claude Colin – founder of the Marist Fathers – was assistant to his brother Pierre the parish priest. The bishop seemed to be favourable towards the sisters, but was delaying giving them official recognition. Jeanne-Marie’s letter is skilfully composed. In the first paragraph, with an adroit touch of irony, she tells Bishop Devie that her sisters are happy with the way he treats them (which, of course, they were not). In particular, they ‘see and have appreciated with an extreme contentment the course that Your Lordship has held them to, to stay hidden and unknown in the

eyes of people.’ In fact, she tells the bishop, that is precisely the way of proceeding that they had set before themselves from the moment they thought of the ‘work [of Mary]’, namely, to remain hidden and unknown in the eyes of people. The bishop, it is implied, knows the expression – he has no doubt heard her use it – and may have returned it to her with his compliments: she and her sisters should be only too happy to remain ‘hidden and unknown in the eyes of people’, since that is the way they have said they prefer to proceed. Hence the vigour and wit with which Jeanne-Marie concludes: ‘We trust that Providence will soon make known to Your Lordship the moment when (the work) is to be known and a little less hidden, especially from people.’

Her phrase ‘hidden and unknown in the eyes of people’ is a close counterpart to the ‘unknown and hidden in the world’ that Jean-Claude Colin was to write into the Marist Fathers’ Constitutions. So, did Jeanne-Marie pick it up from Jean-Claude? Or was she really the originator of an expression that is traditionally attributed to him? (Colin, by the way, never claimed to have created it.) The truth may be a little more complex – and more interesting.

In fact, neither Jean-Claude nor Jeanne-Marie coined the expression ‘hidden and unknown’. I first came across it outside Marist sources in a spiritual author we know Colin read, the 17th century French Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin, and in a work, the *Spiritual Catechism*, which Colin explicitly refers to and which he had in his personal library. In fact, the words ‘hidden and unknown’ turn up quite frequently in the sort of spiritual literature that Colin – and also Chavoïn – were reading, to the point that it seems to have been ‘in the air’ in the 17th and 18th centuries. One of the books in Colin’s library is called *The Life Hidden With Jesus*. Chapter 7 of Part 2 is headed: ‘Rejoicing Greatly in Being Unknown’. Although the pair ‘hidden and unknown’ does not seem to occur as such, the two

words alternate throughout the chapter. I have even found the expression *'inconnu et caché'* in the war memoirs of General de Gaulle, in a context that is not at all spiritual, but rather political – so perhaps we are dealing with a pairing of words that comes readily to a French writer or speaker. The point is, anyway, that both Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Jean-Claude Colin had ample opportunity to encounter these words in their reading. My feeling is that they forgot where they had read this expression – or even that they had read it – and came to see it as a kind of inspiration.

I think something like this may have happened. In sharing their confidences, Colin and Chavoïn found that they both experienced a deep attraction for the hidden life, even though they felt called to work for the salvation of others. In Jeanne-Marie this went further than simply the preference for a devotion that passed unnoticed. She told Bishop Devie that, 'if I looked only for my own sanctification and not that of the souls that the Blessed Virgin wants to lead to us, I would bury myself in a Trappist monastery'. How, then, to combine an active apostolate with a love of the hidden life? Obviously not by hiding oneself away from the world. Here, by the way, we see clearly that the point of being 'hidden and unknown' is not precisely to be hidden and unnoticed for its own sake: as one of Colin's younger contemporaries was to put it, 'Corpses are hidden and unknown'. It is instead a way of living and doing. The meaning should become clearer as we go along.

At some point the three words 'hidden and unknown' emerged from memory – it doesn't matter whether it was Colin's or Chavoïn's – and powerfully indicated to them the way of doing things that was proper to the 'work', especially when 'hidden and unknown' was expanded to 'in the world', or, even more emphatically, 'in this world'. The phrase struck them with a fullness of meaning that seemed to speak of a divine origin. As Colin was later to say: 'When God speaks to a soul ... he says many things in few words. So this saying: "Unknown and hidden in the world"!' Just so have poets felt when a new meaning rises in familiar words.

MULTIPLE MEANINGS

In the course of his *Spiritual Catechism*, Surin uses the expression 'hidden and unknown' in several

different, but related, contexts. One is the 'hidden God' of the mystics: in contemplation, a person 'rests peacefully', he writes, 'in something that is more unknown and hidden than uncovered and known', that is, in God, hidden from human eyes. I believe that, although the expression can carry many meanings in different contexts, it has never lost its potential mystical reference. In fact, the implied reference to the 'hidden God' gives it depth of meaning wherever it is used.

Elsewhere, Surin uses the expression 'unknown and hidden' in connection with phrases that both recall and also form a contrast with the second part of the Colinian expression, 'in the world'. We are not surprised to find them used of the life of Jesus at Nazareth, living a life *'hidden from and unknown to the earth'*. The 'hidden life' of Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth is, of course, a major theme in Christian spirituality.

The originality of the expression used often by Colin in its full form is well illustrated by comparing such expressions of Surin with that of the Marist tradition, according to which we are to be hidden not *from* the world but *in* this world – where God is unseen, even apparently absent, but all the time hidden in the heart of the world and in the human heart.

All the same, our understanding of the *Hidden and unknown* is enhanced by seeing the richness of its context in Surin (and other authors). It is not simply a strategy for a certain kind of active ministry; or rather, it is that, precisely because it is a key to union with God, who is hidden and unknown in contemplation, and to identity with Jesus and Mary hidden and unknown at Nazareth.

'SELF-EMPTYING'

We are dealing here with a 'big' spirituality. We would, therefore, expect it to be thoroughly grounded in Holy Scripture. I would like here to refer to a wonderful article published by Marist Patrick Bearsley, just before his untimely death in 2000 ('From Asceticism to Kenosis: The Evolution in Marist Understanding of the "Hidden and Unknown"', *Forum Novum*, Vol. 5, n. 1, May 2000: 69-94). There he recommends us to meditate on the great hymn in St Paul's Letter to the Philippians, chapter 2:

'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the

form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

The essential words in this passage, which are the key for us to understanding the 'hidden and unknown' are: 'he *emptied himself*'. This is Jesus' *kenosis* – from the Greek word for emptying. According to St Paul, it is exemplary for every Christian, who should have 'the same mind' as Christ Jesus. That is, being prepared not to regard even something to which one has a right as 'a thing to be grasped'. Far from seeking power or prestige, those who want to follow Christ should rather 'humble themselves' – let us say, be content with the lowest place – and become obedient.

For the Marists, the first one who followed Christ in his 'self-emptying' was Mary. She did not claim the right to be honoured and glorified as his mother, but accepted obscurity. She was content not to be seen and made 'no noise', as Fr. Colin liked to say. He often pointed out that, in the early Church, Mary, who was the 'Queen of Apostles', was hidden among them – yet, by her prayers, doing more for the spread of the Gospel than the Apostles by their preaching.

Here is the pattern for the Marists. In the last analysis, Colin, in recommending the 'hidden and unknown', wants them to *empty themselves*, so that, as far as possible, there are only Jesus, his Father and their Spirit working in and through them. Then *egos*, ambitions, sensitivities, self-seeking, self-regard, will not get in the way of God's grace, of which they are to be ministers. They would be channels of that grace, as open as possible and not obstructing, not blocked by weeds and rubbish.

A STRATEGY FOR EVANGELISATION

Already, as used by Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn in her letter to Bishop Devie, 'hidden and unknown in the eyes of people' seems to indicate a way of doing good that does not draw attention to itself. Colin never tires of emphasising that 'hidden and

unknown' is the best way of acting in the modern world, where people are jealous of their autonomy and suspicious of religion. He was not alone here. At this time, in the early 19th century, silence and obscurity were frequently recommended to religious in general as the best way of doing good in a difficult, even hostile environment, such as that presented by France in an era of revolutions, which often took an anticlerical turn.

But I believe that, among the first Marists, the application of the expression 'hidden and unknown' underwent a significant development. For these men and women, it is not simply a tactic for avoiding hostile attention, for example, from anticlericals. It becomes a strategy for evangelising the society around them. 'Hidden and unknown' expresses a way of acting in this world that belongs to 'the work of Mary' and is inspired by her example. It was a way of acting that was very appropriate for a social context characterised by indifference and even hostility towards the Church and all religion.

You find both nuances of meaning in Colin on different occasions. Sometimes he speaks of the need to avoid provoking opponents: 'This is not a good time to be attracting attention to ourselves... I know people say, We have to do good. But I say that, in the age we are living in, we have to go about things as our rule prescribes: "Unknown and even hidden." ... In a few years time, we are going to suffer violent persecution – this was a recurring theme with Colin, based on past experience in his early childhood – We mustn't be afraid, but we mustn't provoke it.'

On other occasions, he adopted a different tone: 'The more self-effacing we are, the more we shall do God's work. Each age has had its share of pride, and ours too... The only way to succeed today is through self-effacement.' Even more explicitly: 'When preaching, we must not appear to want to dominate; otherwise we would drive people away. People today are more than ever mindful of their liberty and independence.' These are just a small selection of many sayings in which Colin showed that he understood the age he was living in. He didn't necessarily sympathise with its preconceptions and preoccupations. But he recognised that that was the way it was. It was only by respecting people and taking them as they were, that you could hope to get anywhere with them.

TODAY

Two hundred years later, this advice is still sound. Since then, the march of secularism has continued in a great part of our world. In such a context, whether it be in the 19th century or the 21st, any sort of triumphalism, any way of acting that smacks of power-seeking or seems not to respect the rights – Colin would say, ‘the liberty and independence’ – of others, is useless and condemned in advance to failure. As we have seen in our own time, a Church that is not humble will certainly be humbled and humiliated. This is a situation that calls for a way of acting on the Church’s part that is ‘hidden and unknown’.

At the same time in the contemporary world as we experience an increasingly radical secularisation, we are also seeing a new vitality – the word ‘explosion’ has even been used – of religion. The religion in question may not, of course, be Christian, or at least, not ‘main-stream’ Christian; but religion is not simply disappearing everywhere. You can even find the two phenomena, of the absence of religion and the explosion of religion, more or less side by side in the same social context.

In both cases, it seems to me, the approach of ‘hidden and unknown’ is the only one that is appropriate. Faced with the explosion of religion, we are likewise called to humility and the renunciation of every kind of power. In those situations too, Christians, or at least Catholics, often in a minority and subject to suspicion, can only respond with the offer of dialogue and friendship in all respect for the other.

Even outside a directly religious context, ‘Hidden and unknown’ is indeed a spirituality for our time. The most pressing issue before us today is that of the environment. Pope Francis speaks of the need for an ‘ecological conversion’, a complete change of behaviour and attitudes with respect to the earth and its other inhabitants. The approach of ‘hidden and unknown’ would inspire respect, humility, self-effacement, reassessment of our needs, renunciation even of what we might think we have a right to in the use of resources and generally in our way of looking at ‘the other’ and at our common home. Could we even conceive of politics conducted according to these values?

TONY PATERSON

The Early Church: Successes and challenges

The following short reflection may be useful for any teacher who wanted to encourage students to investigate the emergence of the Church following the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It certainly was not 'smooth sailing'. The paper focuses on the first 50 years.

1. INTRODUCTION:

This short paper focuses on three issues: the challenges the first Jesus groups faced in the period following the death and resurrection of their leader; the way the groups responded to these challenges – either successfully or unsuccessfully – and the outcomes that followed.¹ At the outset, the focus will be on three Jesus groups: the Jews of Palestine who followed Jesus but maintained their commitment to their Jewish faith; the Hellenistic Jews who lived in Palestine as well as in the Mediterranean area of the known world at that time and who were influenced by Greco-Roman culture in particular; and the Gentiles (non-Jews) who became followers of Jesus.

2. THE IMMEDIATE CHALLENGE:

The first Jesus group, the Jews of Palestine, had one immediate challenge following his crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 15: 21-47; and 16:1-8).² This challenge can best be described as dealing with the shock of what had happened. Then the small Jesus group of gathered in Jerusalem are

energized by reports of the citing of Jesus who has risen from the dead, then follows the Pentecost experience that further energises them (Acts 2: 1-41).³ What is being suggested here then is the fact that this first group of Jesus followers had to deal with themselves. Their response was to move forward confidently, and they took up the words of Jesus:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 19-20).

It is also in these early days following the death and resurrection of Jesus that his first followers started to respond successfully to some immediate challenges: their commitment to fulfilling the Scripture to replace Judas who had been allotted his share in their ministry (Acts 1:17-18), and the ultimate election of Matthias (Acts 1:26). This may seem unimportant, but its symbolism for this small group was important. Likewise, the group met to select a group of seven men to take care of the daily distribution of food. That is men of good reputation (Acts 6:3)⁴ who could organise how to help the widows, the sick and orphans that was central to the teaching of Jesus. In addition, the decision to continue with the fellowship of believers through

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- 1 The period following the death of Jesus and his resurrection in 33 CE to 70 CE the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem will be the primary focus.
 - 2 The crucifixion and resurrection are recorded in all four Gospels of the New Testament. In addition to Mark's account it can also be found in Matthew, Chapters 27 and 28; Luke in Chapters 23 and 24; and in John, Chapters 19 and 20)
 - 3 Pentecost: now a major feast in Christian calendar. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the first apostles or Jesus followers.
 - 4 The male followers of Jesus still thought in terms of a dominant male 'hierarchy' to lead the new group and this issue is still with us in some Christian Churches today. Such an approach by the first Jesus followers would have been based on their experience of Jewish culture/society where women were in support roles. Although there are clear examples of Paul incorporating women into ministry. The deaconess Phoebe, for example carried Paul's Letter to the first Christians in Rome later in the first century. See Romans 16.

the blessing and breaking of the bread, and Peter and John continuing to preach publicly in Solomon's Portico (Acts 3:26) are clear statements and examples of the early followers of Jesus being ready to take up the challenges required of them if the Jesus movement was going to survive and flourish. It is in these examples that one picks up a sense of unity in addressing the immediate challenges.

3. THE FIRST JESUS GROUP:

The first group of followers of Jesus lived in Palestine. They were Jews, and were often called Hebrews – a term for them in their scriptures and the language they spoke – Aramaic. Jesus was part of this group. This first group, after the death of Jesus, were led by Peter. There are a number of characteristics of this group:

3.1 For them there was only one God. Monotheism was fundamental for the Jew.⁵ Each day, the Jew recited the *Shema*⁶; and the Ten Commandments were central for the Jew who was required to recite these in public worship.⁷

3.2 This group of Jews also had the conviction that they had been chosen by God as a special people, and that they had a contract or covenant with him.⁸ This conviction of election, or being a chosen people, is exemplified in the sociological perspective of living faithfully as a Jew in Palestine at the time: the covenantal requirement of circumcision for Jewish males (Gen.17:9-14); the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath that was “part of the

decalogue and rooted in creation itself” (Gen.2.2-3; Ex.20:8-11)⁹; and finally, the explicit food and dietary laws.¹⁰

3.3 The third central characteristic of Judaism in Palestine was the focus on the Temple in Jerusalem and the centrality of the Torah.¹¹ This focus expressed Israel's distinct relationship as the chosen people of God and the “sense of privilege” of being such a nation.¹²

3.4 The final characteristic of these first Jewish followers of Jesus was the second Temple and the land associated with it.¹³ The Temple and the land provided a ‘rationale’ for Palestine's existence as a separate entity in the predominant Hellenistic world of the Mediterranean.¹⁴ The Temple made a political statement for the Jews. The political power of the High priests of the Temple and their families extended across Palestine; its chief court, the Sanhedrin, was the centre for legislative and executive power.

In addition, the land around the Temple was important for it was rich in Agricultural resources and provided the food for the Temple officials and for the sacrifices (such as wood and animals). As Dunn suggests, the Temple was most significant as a religious centre:

It was the city of God, the place where Yahweh had put his name, where the one God's presence was manifested on earth – a religious centre and theological symbol of tremendous emotive power.¹⁵

5 Monotheism means worship of one God.

6 Shema is the name give to the three passages found in Deuteronomy 6:4, and 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41, that are used in Jewish Morning and Evening Prayer.

7 Dunn, James D.G. (1991), *The Parting of the Ways*, Page 19.

8 This is a theme in the Hebrew Scriptures and demonstrated in many passages. For example: Deut.32:9; Jub.1:19-21; Micah 7:18.

9 Dunn, James D.G. (1991), *op.cit.*, Page 29.

10 For example not to eat the food of Gentiles (non-Jews); not to eat unclean food or pork was a very clear characteristic of Jewish identity; and becomes a problem for Gentiles who seek to follow Jesus (see later in paper)

11 Torah – the first five books of the twenty-four books in the Tanakh - the Hebrew Bible. These books outline the relationship between God and the Jewish people. The Torah is central to Jewish identity.

12 Dunn, James D.G. (1991), *op.cit.*, Page 27.

13 Called the ‘second Temple’ 516 BCE - 70 CE for tradition suggests that it replaced Solomon's Temple that stood on the site, and was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

14 Hellenistic world of the Mediterranean - influence of Greek culture, lifestyle, architecture, Greek gods, from the time of the conquest of Alexander the Great of much of the then known world in 323 BCE through to the Roman world in the time of Jesus – to be discussed further in this paper.

15 Dunn, James D.G. (1991), *op.cit.*, Page 33. See also: 1 Kings 8:48; 9:3; Psalm 76:1-2; Isaiah 49:14-16; Sirach 36:18-19 as further examples of this line of thought.

So in the first century CE the Jews of Palestine who also became followers of Jesus continued to participate in, and meet their obligations with regard to their Jewish faith and lifestyle. In addition, they met separately outside of the Temple or Synagogue to discuss their commitment to the teachings of Jesus and to bless and break the bread as he had done at the Last Supper.¹⁶

This process of addressing challenges for the immediate Jesus followers becomes more complex when one considers the two other Jesus groups who emerge...

THE HELLENISTS AND THE GENTILES:

A separate group of followers of Jesus were the “Hellenists” who were the “Diaspora Jews” some of whom had moved to Jerusalem, while others lived in countries around the Mediterranean area. That is, those countries that were predominantly part of the Roman Empire at that time. The Hellenists were led by Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:5); and they spoke Hellenistic Greek. There were serious tensions between the first group of followers known as the Hebrews as discussed so far in this paper, and the Hellenists. The Hellenists had a fairly liberal attitude towards the Torah and its purity and fasting

regulations, and given the influence of the Greco-Roman worlds on them at the time, the Temple in Jerusalem was not central to their system of beliefs. The open attitude of the Hellenists to the Gentiles (non-Jews who became followers of Jesus) created further tension for the Jews in Palestine had very explicit instructions with regard to their relationship with the Gentiles. For example, in the Book of Jubilees we read that the Jews were to:

Separate (themselves) from the Gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs.

And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled,

And all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable¹⁷ (Jub.22:16)

These examples clearly indicate an attitude to the Gentiles that was not in line with the teachings of Jesus: love of God and neighbor (Matt 22:36-40). This situation is further demonstrated with the ongoing criticism and efforts by some Jewish officials to destroy the followers of Jesus. This included the Pharisees and the Sadducees, both groups being extremely hostile to Jesus and his followers; and who saw the Jesus movement as yet another threat to pure Judaism and the Law.¹⁸ In

16 Last Supper – the final meal Jesus has with his apostles – the blessing and breaking of the bread. See Matt: 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20; John 13:1-20.

17 Book of Jubilees sometimes called Lesser Genesis outlined further details on the observance of Jewish law and would have been well known to the early Jewish followers of Jesus in Palestine. See Dunn, James, D.G. (1991), *The Parting of the Ways*, op.cit., Page 26.

18 The Sadducees were mostly composed of the priestly aristocracy of the Temple. They denied the resurrection and the existence of angels and spirits (Matt 22:23 and acts 23:6-8). They accepted only the Torah. The Pharisees were another religious and political party within Judaism. Saul of Tarsus (later called Paul) admitted that he had been a Pharisee in Acts 23:6; 26:5, and in Philippians 3:5. The Pharisees were hostile to Jesus and his followers; they were Jews who followed a strict interpretation of the Torah and associated writings. Other groups were also in existence in Palestine in this early period of the first followers of Jesus. These included the Samaritans who were regarded as a heretical and schismatic group of worshippers of the God of Israel. They did not worship at the Temple, but made sacrifices to God on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria. Similarly, the Essenes (massacred by the Romans in 68 CE) were a small group of Jews who lived in community; some took a vow of chastity, and they believed in the immortality of the soul and they read and discussed the message of the Torah in groups. All of these groups had their identity, and were not terribly interested in the emergence of a new group who followed Jesus. Some of them saw the Jesus group as another threat, as at this time there were many other groups in the community. For instance, the Romans had arrived in Palestine with their gods, such as Jupiter, Diana, and Mars (and others) and while there may not have been any proselytisation by them, they were present. And in the Jewish community in Palestine other groups came and went at this time such as Jewish miracle workers including Honi ha -Me-gal, a rain-maker; Hanina ben Dosa – a contemporary of Jesus renowned for healing the sick; exorcist such as Eleazar; and from the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE to the second revolt against the Romans in 132-135 CE, a number of popular figures presented themselves as Jewish Kings. Such a situation was undoubtedly a threat to the Jews. It also clearly suggests that the first followers of Jesus were in a situation where they were unable to successfully counter all of these developments. One of the most notorious political groups at the time was the Zealots who espoused armed rebellion against Roman rule. One of Jesus’ apostles, Simon (not Simon Peter) was a zealot. Obviously such a proposal of armed rebellion was anathema to the followers of Jesus.

the midst of the growth of the first followers of Jesus, there emerged a number of charismatic figures, one of whom was Stephen a Hellenistic Jew who set out to implement the teachings of Jesus: we read in Acts that “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). Stephen was stoned because he went among the people, and he boldly proclaimed the message of Jesus and the response of some Jews was one of hostility to him. It is in this situation that false accusations were made against him, he appears before the Sanhedrin Council of the Temple and charged with blasphemy. Ultimately he is stoned to death (Acts 7:54 - 8:2). This is yet another challenge that the first followers of Jesus had to face: false accusations, and sometimes death by those who wanted to wipe this emerging sect of Jesus followers out.

This hostility from the Jewish leaders in Palestine was eventually resolved to some extent with the Hellenists relocating to Antioch.¹⁹ This city became an important centre for the Hellenistic branch of the Jesus followers, even though the tension with the Jesus followers in Palestine continued for most of the first century.²⁰ The Jesus followers in ‘diaspora’ by the time of Paul, had fully endorsed his words: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).²¹ This situation was resolved in the year 50 CE when the first Jesus groups convened the Council of Jerusalem to try and reconcile the practical differences concerning the mission to the Gentiles. At this Council, it was agreed that Gentiles could be accepted as followers of Jesus without full adherence to the Mosaic Laws. Thus in a very direct way, such a decision represents a major break between what we know today as Christianity and Judaism.²² The question then arises, and it is well beyond the scope of this paper, is this what Jesus envisaged by way of an outcome?

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the most important outcome for the Jesus groups in the first century CE is the fact that they survived. This was despite the various tensions between the Jesus groups that emerged; and despite the persecution from those within the Temple administration in Jerusalem who favoured the maintenance of a “pure Judaism” and who thus wanted the Jesus groups out of the way²³. Not only was there a movement against the Jesus followers from within Judaism itself, but as the numbers of Jesus followers grew through the baptism of Gentiles in particular, the Roman authorities started to become alarmed at the size of the group and its power as a religious group. For example, the first followers of Jesus in the Mediterranean were often persecuted for their refusal to give any worship to the Roman Emperor which was considered treasonous and punishable by death. In places like Rome the first followers of Jesus were forced to respond by way of becoming an ‘underground movement’.²⁴

In addition, apart from such persecution, the followers of Jesus clearly realised as the first century progressed that those who witnessed Jesus were passing from this world, and so an agenda emerged to record the teaching of Jesus in writing from those who knew him, who were taught by him, or who had received instruction from the first apostles. This was no simple exercise in trying to recall what was said, ascertaining whether it was correct (issues of memory and interpretation) and obviously beyond the agenda of this paper. However, it was an issue that needed to be addressed and one that was still being addressed at the end of the first century CE. While this agenda, and all of that raised in this paper is being addressed by the first century members of the Jesus movement, we also need to acknowledge that they would have been caught up with the political agenda of their time. The most obvious example of

19 It is not resolved permanently in this first century as demonstrated later by the crucifixion of Peter and the decapitation of Paul by the end of the first century of the Christian era.

20 Paul of Tarsus and those working with him, eventually leads the parting of the ways of both groups.

21 Diaspora – away from, outside of the influence of the Temple leadership in Jerusalem.

22 Acts 15:20

23 As the story of Stephen suggests in Acts 7:54-8:2

24 We have the emergence of the underground Catacombs in Rome at this time. In 64 CE Emperor Nero blamed the Jesus followers for the Great Fire of Rome.

this would have been the the events of 66CE where the Jewish population in Palestine rebelled against the Roman Empire. Within four years the Roman legions had not only defeated the rebels, but they also destroyed the Second Temple and much of Jerusalem. It is in this situation that St Paul is able to respond suggesting that the time had come for the Jesus followers to realise that the “New Temple” was within the heart and soul of each person, a Spiritual Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). So Paul is crucial at this point in assuring the first followers of Jesus that the Jerusalem Temple, built of bricks and mortar, is not central to following Jesus. It is a question of the Temple of God being in one’s heart; in treating one’s body as the Temple of God. This is a central move from the first days following the death of Jesus and the resurrection. However, it further demonstrates the ongoing need for the Jesus movement to keep responding to the issues that they encountered as they progressed through the first century CE.

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JOHN MCMAHON

Mary's Truth

MARY'S TRUTH

Living Marist Community life for so long has given me a love of trying to see things as Mary does. This, of course, is a speculative way to approach the topic of Marian Leadership, as I do here. Benefiting from modern biblical scholarship would offer an alternative approach. I prefer, for this short piece, to examine Mary's leadership through the way we understand her to have lived her life. Yes, our societies and times are very different, but Mary's truth, I propose, is still relevant for us.

1. MARY TAKES A STEADY APPROACH TO LIFE

Mary seems to take life as it comes, sometimes happily, at other times unsure, but always acting when she needs to - 'for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant' (Lk1:48). This approach gives her the opportunity to examine what is going on around her, such as the need to grow her family life, first with Joseph and then with both Joseph and Jesus. No doubt Mary looks beyond her own house too, contributing to her local Jewish neighbourhood. It is out of this village context that Mary leads. So too each of us has our unique context out of which we can lead.

2. MARY RELIES ON COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

When Mary travelled to see her older cousin Elizabeth, the two of them must have celebrated their pregnancies with awe and wonder. They certainly had much to talk about, to wonder about and to plan for the future. Sharing the deeper realities of life, as no doubt Mary and Elizabeth did, would have helped them, as it does us, to build strong and lasting relationships. When I feel comfortable spending time discussing with my colleagues and friends, I find I am more able to

think through and fulfil, my leadership responsibilities.

3. MARY EMPATHISES WITH PEOPLE IN NEED

Mary knew how to relate with others, whether they be family, friends or civil authorities. When this became particularly difficult, as on the way to Calvary, Mary maintains her presence and union with her Son, accepting what could not be changed. To see the Son she had reared in this situation, dying under the weight of a wooden cross, must have been almost unbearable, yet she continued on and endured. To a less extent, we leaders are called to endure through tough times, to empathise and to act where necessary.

4. MARY HANDLES LOSS WELL

Any mother fears losing her child. So we can only imagine how Mary felt when Jesus was lost in the Temple. How did she respond? On finding him she asked Jesus 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety'. He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father's House?" But they did not understand what he said to them' (Lk 2:48-51). Listening attentively and patiently to God's Word in whatever way we hear it, is central to Marian leadership, especially in times of loss.

5. MARY IS ONE WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Mary's approach to all that was happening around her seems to include spending a good deal of time pondering (Lk 2:19) and treasuring all these things in her heart (Lk 2:51). This, no doubt, involved praying and reflecting about, and with her God - we might say living contemplatively. This union would have helped her when she needed to respond to the big calls of life, like being asked to

become the mother of Jesus. No doubt, throughout their lives, she and Joseph had developed their own process of discernment which is exemplified when Mary responds to the Angel: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word' (Lk 1:38). Our union with God enables us to respond appropriately to the calls in our lives, which can often come unexpectedly.

6. MARY AS UNIFIER

Then after Jesus is risen, we meet Mary in a different space, huddled with the apostles in the upper room trying to make sense of all that had happened. When Pentecost arrives we're told 'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages' (Acts 2:4). Here I see

Mary helping to facilitate, and perhaps even explain, the leadership the Spirit was initiating. Today, we too can have other leaders around us with whom to dialogue and decide. One of our key leadership roles can be that of unifier.

As Marian leaders, then, I believe we can learn much from Mary's example by periodically considering these six characteristics: 1. taking life steadily, 2. relying on our colleagues and friends, 3. empathising with people in need, 4. accepting loss, 5. striving to be in union with God and 6. acting as unifier. For us to be able to lead in this way is a blessing.

John McMahon

