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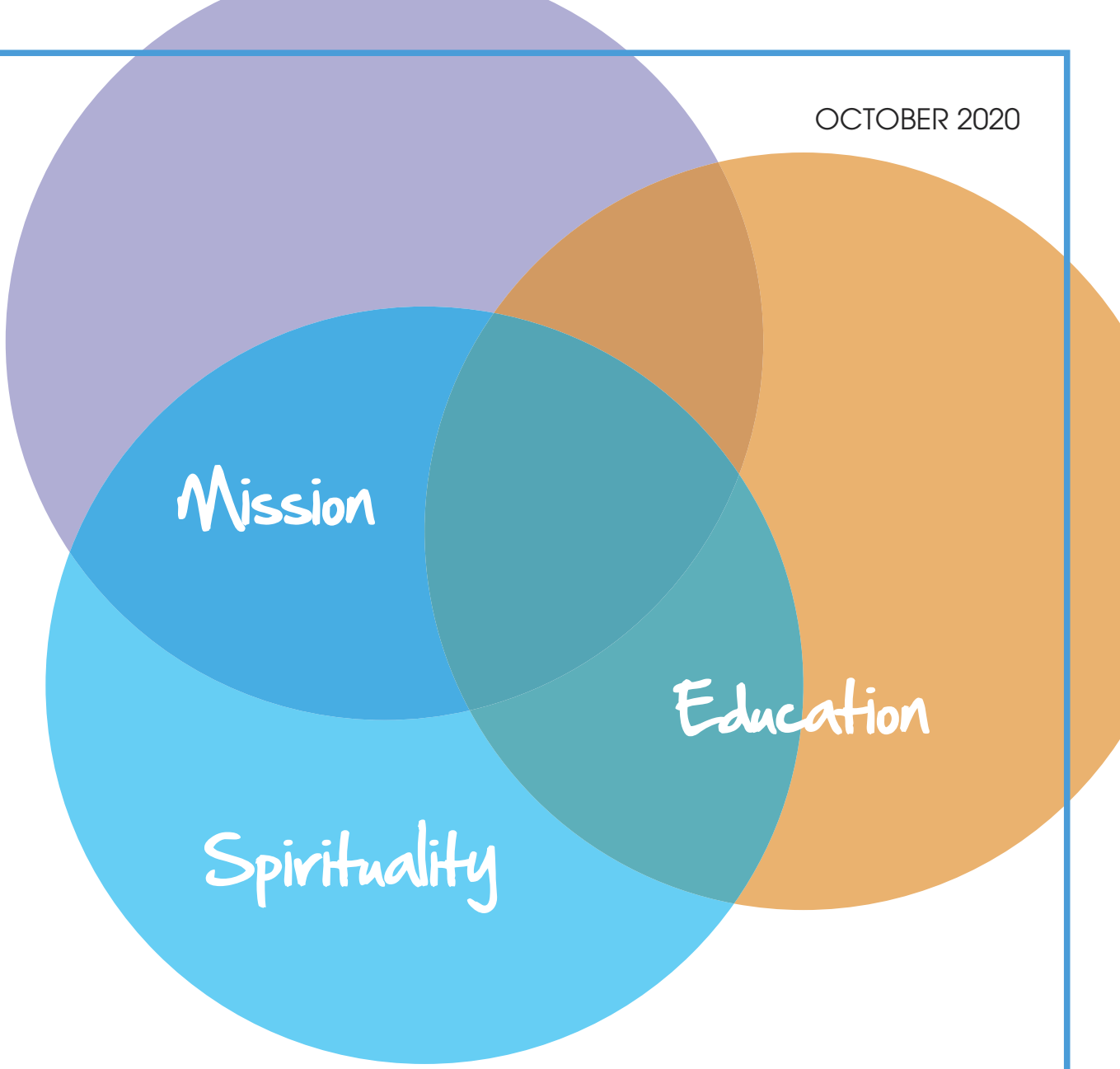

CHAMPAGNAT

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Inside:

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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Champagnat

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Volume 22 Number 01 October 2020

VIEWPOINT AND CONTRIBUTORS

Welcome to this edition of the Champagnat Journal, the first for 2020 and the first since the passing of our previous editor, Br Tony Paterson. (I would like to acknowledge our ongoing debt to Br Tony for his inspired and scholarly editorship of this Journal.) We were very keen to see the Journal back in print and hope that it can continue to offer valuable and timely academic reading and insight for the Marist community and beyond.

Our contributors in this edition are all committed Marists and their contributions are greatly appreciated:

Br Michael Green, fms

Br Michael is a well-known and highly respected Australian Marist scholar whose research and contributions have spanned many decades. Presently the Rector of Aquinas College in Adelaide, he has been a Marist Principal, Provincial Councillor, Founding Executive Director of Marist Schools Australia, member of the Association Council, international scholar and researcher of the Marist Institute and its Founder. We are very blessed to have Michael's articles on the Characteristics of Marist Spirituality made available to us in such depth, while at the same time being so readable and enjoyable.

Fiona Dyball:

BMus (ACU), Grad Dip Music Therapy & Education (Melb), Grad Cert RE (ACU), MMusSt (Melb), MTS (Liturgy, Boston College)

Fiona is a musician, teacher, composer, conductor, liturgist, and consultant based in Melbourne. She is *Music Leader (Voice)* at Marcellin College, a member of the National Liturgical Music Council (NLMC) for the ACBC, and a member of the National Executive of the *Australian Pastoral Musician's Network* (APMN). Fiona has travelled and taught extensively and internationally, and most recently presented on liturgical choir as part of the religious education curriculum in Catholic Secondary Schools at the 2nd International Conference on Religious Education in Melbourne in February, 2020. Based on her belief that "Music is a key way to evangelise young people" … her article proposes interesting possibilities.

Br Ben Consigli, fms

Br Ben was born in New York, USA. He made his first profession in 1989 and his perpetual profession in 1995. He has served as a secondary teacher, guidance counselor, and administrator in the States of New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Florida, and has served the Province of the USA as Vice Provincial, Director of Marist Education, and as Provincial. Since 2017, he has served on the General Council of the Marist Brothers' Institute and is based in Rome. Br Ben shares two articles with us in this issue.

I hope you enjoy reading all that follows. May I also encourage any reader who feels they have an article to contribute to this Journal, to please send same to me for possible inclusion in a later edition.

Br Michael Flanagan, Editor

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.

We are featuring a series on the Six Characteristics of Marist Spirituality that are described in *Water from the Rock*. The focus is on the historical sources and the spiritual emphases of these six characteristics.

Br Michael Green

Introduction

Marcellin Champagnat didn't know anything about Marist spirituality, or about any kind of spirituality for that matter.

What?

No, there's no myth-busting exposé to follow. Please, stay calm and keep reading.

The term 'spirituality' has not been around for long, just over a hundred years or so. The word, as a noun, would have been unknown to Marcellin. It emerged in France towards the end of the nineteenth century, and grew in common usage in the second half of the twentieth, helped not insignificantly by the assiduous compiling, between 1928 and 1995, of a mammoth ten-volume academic work called the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Begun by a small team of French Jesuits, its 1500 contributors came to include many of the leading theologians and masters of the spiritual life of the twentieth century. The concept of 'spirituality' (singular and plural) took its place in mainstream religious discourse. Today its breadth and grab is wide, covering not only traditional paths of the Christian spiritual life, but also those of non-Christian traditions, and indeed non-theist ways of experiencing and understanding life and the cosmos.

In Marist discourse, the word was not in general use until the last part of the century. Even as late as Brother Basilio Rueda's time as the Brothers' Superior General (1967-85), in the renovation and innovation of the post-Vatican II period, it remained more usual in the Marist world to speak of the 'spirit of the Institute' rather than 'Marist spirituality'. This was the same term that Brother François had used back in 1848 when he composed a seminal Circular on the distinctive identity and character of the Marist Brothers.

While he might not have known or used the word 'spirituality', Marcellin was, of course, more than familiar with the other word – 'Marist'. Yet, even though he and his co-founders of the Society of Mary had coined this adjective in their seminary days to describe the new movement of lay people, brothers, sisters and priests that they intended to begin, Marcellin did not use it extensively. He preferred to talk of the 'work of Mary' and the 'Brothers of Mary'. The two words together – 'Marist spirituality' – would have struck him as strange.

The concept of the 'spiritual life' was, however, something with which Marcellin was quite at home. Indeed, it was the project of his life. His theological studies in the seminary, and later his personal library, were replete with authors who addressed this subject explicitly and at depth. His reading of them was considered and life-long. For example, the influential works of St Francis de Sales – *The Devout Life* and *The Treatise on the Love of God* – were two of his most thumbed. Possibly no writer was more shaping of the way that Marcellin grew spiritually than de Sales. Marcellin was influenced also by many others, notably two Jesuit theologians of the seventeenth century, Alonso Rodriguez and Jean Baptiste Saint-Juré, and he was wont to quote each of them. But they, as did Marcellin, tended to eschew putting any label on the spiritual life other than that of 'Christian'. Their primary focus was on experience

of God, on knowing and loving God, and on a person's response to that knowledge and love. The 'spiritual life' was quite clear in its meaning and parameters: it was Christocentric, and concerned with how to grow in awareness, alignment and congruence with Jesus Christ.

While the centuries had produced a number of distinctive strands of spiritual wisdom – such as Augustinian, Benedictine, Carmelite and Franciscan – labels were not typically given prominence by writers and spiritual directors from individual traditions. There was no concept of these as distinct 'spiritualities' as we may understand the concept today. There was a single spiritual path: that of the gospel of Jesus. Indeed, any spiritual way that became identified by some other brand – such as Jansenism or Quietism, or even generic 'mysticism' – was often treated as suspect.

Marcellin was the beneficiary – as are we – of centuries of accumulated and tested spiritual wisdom. Many of the books that he studied drew on the traditional understanding of the spiritual life as a three-stage, or at least tri-faceted, inward spiritual journey often known by the terms 'purgative', 'illuminative' and 'unitive'. This conceptual framework came from the fifth century theologian who has to have a claim for the most curious name in the history of Christian writers: Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. But let's not linger on this ancient chap's odd name, but rather on what he wrote. To some extent what Dionysius proposed was a Christianising of Plato's ideas of moving from the lower-order 'active' way of living to the higher-order 'contemplative' way, but like other spiritual masters, Dionysius's ideas were drawn more from his own experience of a growing intensity in his relationship with God than study of Platonic sources. Many in the East and West built on these ideas during the medieval and early modern eras – giants of the spiritual life such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Catherine of Siena and Francis de Sales. The concepts continue to be used to this day.

We can come back to this way of conceptualising and understanding a person's growth in the spiritual life, and consider it in greater detail, but the point to make here is that Marcellin knew it well. He studied it. We sometimes can be tempted to think of the Founder as a holy but modestly educated country priest, with a big heart and an attractive personality, who rolled up his sleeves and got on with things, and was an inspiration to the many who came to know him. We can undervalue the level of his education, the breadth of his reading, and the time he spent throughout his life in both study and contemplation. Marcellin was twelve years in seminary formation, through to his late twenties – the equivalent of secondary school, university and graduate school today. He engaged with the great ideas of his time, both sacred and secular. He studied the spiritual and theological classical books in a country and an ecclesial milieu that had been at the vanguard of theological discourse and seminary education for hundreds of years. He developed and maintained a useful collection of books, and shared them with others, including his Brothers. The key Brothers he gathered around him – François, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie – he ensured to be men who were not only widely read and erudite but intuitively attracted to learning. What we have come to call 'Marist spirituality' was consciously informed and indeed distilled from the spiritual wisdom of the centuries.

There were, of course, other sources of what became Marist spirituality than simply the reading of Marcellin and the founding group. We can point, first, to Marcellin's family and his upbringing: the teaching and example of his parents and aunt; the influence of priests such as Alirot who baptised him and Laurens the curate at Marhles; Soutrenon, a hard-working curate whom he came to know during his year in St-Saveur-en-Rue as a fifteen year-old; Perrier and Gardette, his seminary rectors. Each these priests had his own heroic story of resistance and resilience from the years of the Revolution. Both Marcellin's family and his clerical mentors had their impact on Marcellin's developing personality and character. Then there were his younger Sulpician-trained professors in Lyon, men such as Cholleton, Cattet and Moiland. He had his friend and spiritual guide Duplay, along with his fellow Marists, and his close seminary companion Jean-Marie Vianney. They all sparked something in one another, these young idealistic men and that grew to become the Society of Mary, the Marists. Third, to the influence of all these people, we add the needs that Marcellin perceived in church and society and how he responded to them. Several of the early Brothers,

including his official biographer, used the same French verb to describe how Marcellin was affected by the educational, social and spiritual situation of people: *affliger*. Literally it means 'afflicted', but carries the sense of being moved to his very core. The poor evangelised him.

All these factors had their influence on what we sometimes clumsily call Marcellin's 'charism'. His charism was not something that Marcellin *had* or *possessed*, not a commodity. Rather it was who and how he was, who he was gifted to be and to become. Charisms are better understood as each person's graced way of being in the image and likeness of God. As the first Brothers were attracted to gather around Marcellin, to form community together and to share ministry, then a spirituality began to take shape.

A spirituality is different from a personal charism. A spirituality – as we typically use the term today – can be taught and learnt. Indeed, it needs to be. Its distinctive and graced ways of personal discipleship of Jesus, of relating and forming community, and of bringing the Good News to others, can be articulated and can evolve. It must do both in order to stay relevant and vital, and not become something for the church history books. It develops a language and a characteristic cultural style; it has its collected wisdom and wisdom figures, its heroes and stories, its sacred places and books, its intuitive and chosen ways of incarnating Christ-life and for naming how it does that. It is rooted in a living community of faith.

That has all unfolded in our Marist story over the last two hundred years. That is not long in ecclesial terms, just a couple of centuries. Although a new tradition, Marist spirituality did not start from scratch, appearing magically like cosmic kryptonite from some undiscovered spiritual planet. Like all new spiritual movements, it drew on what had preceded it – indeed it is this that helps to form any founder. Like other movements, its novelty was in how it drew from various sources in a distinctive way and innovated in others, in order to address new needs and new contexts with relevance and effectiveness. The Carmelite tradition was especially influential for Marcellin.

Then, like any new spiritual movement in the Church that is likely to last longer than just one or two generations (the fate of most), we Marists soon enough developed a literature, a strong self-identity, a growing collected wisdom, and accepted intuitions that could be taught and appropriated by the next generation. And which could inspire them with a love of Jesus and impel them to share it in effective ways. In the three decades that followed Marcellin's death, when there was an exponential eightfold growth in the size of the community – most of whom never knew Marcellin or the founding group – all of that unfolded richly. Nonetheless, it was still quite nascent thing before the 1870s. The spread across the world that was to unfold in the next few decades would sow Marist seeds both widely and deeply. This ensured that the Marist way quickly became unbound from cultural and social restrictions of one time and place.

It was, though, not to be until over a century later that the term 'Marist spirituality' began to be used with any frequency. As it did, it happened quite naturally, organically really, and almost without comment. When Brother Charles Howard, the then Superior General published the first Circular specifically on this subject in 1991, the actual concept of 'Marist spirituality' was taken as a given. People were more interested in how he defined it. With all respect to this wise Marist leader, his definition was a little all-over-the-place. What he did offer, however, was a window into how the Marist way of the gospel was being lived and expressed in many cultures and countries. The consistencies and emphases were striking. Of course, there was a growing and rich collection of other Marist documents and research projects that had been developing before and since Vatican II. Although these might not have used the exact term 'Marist spirituality', they were developing some shared conceptualisations and an attractive language for the Marist way.

It was to take another decade or two for these characteristics to be refined and sharpened, at least in terms of the language used to describe them. That happened toward the end of the first decade of this century. In 2008, when the reference text called *Water from the Rock*, *Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat* appeared, it was something of a watershed moment for you and me as Marists. It was the first time for more than a century and a half that we had been offered a concise description of what we would call Marist spirituality. The first one had emerged from the pen of Brother François, Marcellin's first

successor, in a four-part Circular he wrote between 1848 and 1853. François did not use either the word 'Marist' or the word 'spirituality'. The latter had not yet been coined; the former might have appeared to him to be an indulgence. He was concerned with Jesus and with bringing his gospel to young people; that was his focus. It is important for us to keep that as our focus – as does *Water from the Rock* – but we do have it now in contemporary language and addressing contemporary contexts. It is a rich document.

The articles that follow explore each of the six characteristics that *Water from the Rock* proposes as constitutive of Marist spirituality, in the tradition that has developed from Saint Marcellin Champagnat. It is worth noting that there are now several identifiable Marist spiritualities, each of which has the right and responsibility to claim that name – just as there are different strands of Franciscan, Ignatian, Benedictine, Dominican or other spiritualities in the church. Ours is that which we share together as a living community of faith that takes its inspiration from Marcellin.

Water from the Rock has these features of our shared spirituality:

- God's presence and love
- Trust in God
- Love of Jesus and his gospel
- In Mary's way
- Family spirit
- A spirituality of simplicity

There is nothing set in concrete forever and always about these traits, or indeed the number of them. They are not the only way we could slice our spiritual cake. There are other prisms we could use, other perspectives we could take. And it won't be its final or definitive description. Indeed, any spiritual tradition that stops evolving, stops innovating, stops discerning, or stops writing is one that is not being continually re-contextualised by its living faith community; it is destined for the history section of the church bookshop. What we can say, nonetheless, is that the authors of *Water from the Rock,* during some years of wide and structured consultation with all parts of the Marist world, have distilled something of great worth for our time.

The following articles look at these features one by one. They touch into the historical sources of each, from where it came, as well as its applicability to today. It is to be hoped that what is offered may prompt further nuancing, further sharpening, for that is a sign of vitality in spiritual movement.

1. The Presence and Love of God

Water from the Rock introduces the first characteristic of Marist spirituality – 'God's presence and love' – in a single, short paragraph. It is the briefest of the text's introductions to the six lenses onto our spirituality that it proposes:

> *Today, those of us who follow in the footsteps of Marcellin and his first disciples are seized by their same inner dynamism. We develop a way of being, loving and doing, in the spirit of our origins. Gradually, day by day, we deepen our experience of the loving presence of God within ourselves and in others. This presence of God is a profound experience of being personally loved by God, and the conviction that he is close to us in our daily human experiences.*[1]

That description, as rich as it unquestionably is, presents the spiritual life as rather gentle and benign, with phrases such as 'gradually', 'day by day', 'experience of loving presence', 'he is close to us'. Marcellin actually had a much tougher time of it. So many – if not all – of the masters of the spiritual life seem to have had followed similarly testing paths as they have sought to progress more deeply in their spiritual lives.

It is well for us to recognise that Marcellin's personal spirituality was something that did indeed grow and mature: the eight year-old boy impressed by the heroism of fugitive priests, the idealistic sixteen year-old minor seminarian, the inspired twenty-seven year-old ordinand, the indefatigable

1 *Water from the Rock*, #16

thirty-two year-old curate, the cancer-ridden fifty year-old founder – we need to view differentially. Far from the fanciful image of baby Marcellin with a flame flickering above his cot as one predestined for special holiness – as the strained hagiography of Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet would have us believe – Marcellin was like each of us in his need to discover, to reflect, to discern, to err and to change. Ultimately, the change to which we are all called is a fundamental one, a life-defining orientation of heart and mind, a *metanoia* (cf. Mark 1:15). For Marcellin, this journey was at times torturous, even quite gutting. 'Purging', the classical spiritual writers might say.

But more of the lumps and bumps of Marcellin's personal journey later. Let us first consider the phrase 'the presence of God', an expression that has enjoyed a prominent place in our Marist spiritual rhetoric since the founding time.

Sources of the 'practice of the presence of God'

We can smile when we read Marcellin's quip in a letter to the nineteen-year-old Brother Avit (a strong-willed Brother with a take-no-prisoners personality who later went to become one the great chroniclers of our early history). Writing to him at the beginning of Lent in 1839, the Founder sardonically suggests:

> *If the practice of the presence of God is recommended by all the masters of the spiritual life for people living in the world, it is surely non-negotiable for a religious. Try it out sometime ...*[2]

Why do I go keeping harping on this same subject, you may ask? He wrote in another spot. *Because it is the basis of the spiritual life.* An abiding cognisance of God's presence was at the heart of things for Marcellin. Another of his biographers, the practical-joker Brother Sylvestre, writing almost forty years after Marcellin's death, recalled the man he had known when Sylvestre was still a teenager:

> *The frequent remembrance of the presence of God was always Fr Champagnat's favourite practice. We could say that it was the soul of his soul.*[3]

'His favourite practice', the 'soul of his soul'. Perhaps we see it most strikingly from Marcellin's own pen in his 'Spiritual Testament', or his 'spiritual will': what he wanted to leave us as our spiritual inheritance. He began this important document with his customary phrase: *Here, in the presence of God* … Then, further on, as he turns to talk specifically about Marists' spiritual lives, we read these words:

> *I beg of God and desire with all my heart that you persevere faithfully in the holy exercise of the presence of God. It is the soul of prayer, of meditation, and of all virtues.*[4]

They are strong words.

The 'exercise' or the 'practice' of the 'presence of God' was a thing at the time, regarded almost as a synonym for whole of one's spiritual life. A popular book with that very title – *The Practice of the Presence of God* – was a work that would have been attractive to Marcellin because it offered such an accessible, affective and immanent spirituality. Written by a Discalced Carmelite, Frère Laurent de la Résurrection (1614-1691; usually simply called in English 'Brother Lawrence'), the book was compiled after the friar's death by one of the many people to whom he offered spiritual direction. That this person happened to be the Vicar General of Archdiocese of Paris might have had something to do with the book's publishing success.

Lawrence, a former soldier, joined the Carmelites after considerable life experience and did not seek ordination: he contented himself for forty years as cook, pot-washer and sandal-maker in a new 100-member priory in Paris. Not that he was uneducated; rather, the contrary. He was quite well read, especially in his own Carmelite mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Yet he developed a compelling simplicity for explaining what living in the presence of God meant, the fruit of decades of his own experience. For him, it came down to an intimate affair of the heart, and a continual conversation between him and God. His life was his prayer, and vice-versa.

> *The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are calling for different things at the same time, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees*

2 Letter 247, Letters of Marcellin Champagnat.

3 *Memoir of Brother Sylvestre,* Appendix, Ch.2

4 Spiritual Testament of Marcellin Champagnat, in J-B Furet, *Life of Marcellin Champagnat*

before the Blessed Sacrament.[5]

We are reminded of Marcellin's words found in a letter he wrote from Paris in March 1838 as he was occupied with running all over town pursuing his application for legal authorisation for the Brothers:

> *I am still in Paris, seeing this one and that one, with all my errands seeming to do little to speed up our major business … Yet I find greater solitude in the middle of Paris than at the Hermitage … I carry you all in my heart.*[6]

The Practice of the Presence of God, published less than a century before Marcellin's birth, comprises a series sixteen letters Brother Lawrence wrote to people to offer them spiritual advice, along with a record of four conversations he had with Joseph de Beaufort (the Vicar General), and some of his maxims. It is a modest little work, and still available.[7] Lawrence urges people to be intentionally, affectively and continually attentive to God's close presence. There was joy in that, for him: sustaining joy, quiet joy.

In his spiritual maturity, Lawrence became dismissive of the value of personal disciplines, penances, and even set prayers if they did not serve to nurture in a person a sense of the loving presence of God. Let us sit with a few pearls of his wisdom:

We need only to recognise God as intimately present with us, to speak with him every moment.

> *There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practise and experience it.*
>
> *Let us occupy ourselves entirely in getting to know God. The more we know him, the more we will desire to know him. As love increases with knowledge, the more we know God, the more we will truly love him. We will learn to love him equally in times of distress or in times of great joy.*
>
> *We should establish ourselves in a sense of God's presence, by continually conversing with him. What a shameful thing it is to quit conversation with him, to think of trifles and fooleries.*
>
> *We should fix ourselves firmly in the presence of God by conversing all the time with Him ... We should feed our soul with this and from that derive great joy in being his. We should put life in our faith … Lift up your heart to him during your meals and in company … One need not cry out very loudly; he is nearer to us than we can imagine.*
>
> *Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.*
>
> *There is needed neither art nor science for going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to attach itself to nothing but him, and to love him.*[8]

Lawrence's intuition was that spirituality is essentially relational. A loving relationship. God is companion, friend and confidante – always there, in our innermost self. We are absorbed in God, and God in us. How to 'live in the presence of God' was the same for him as how to build, sustain and develop any close interpersonal relationship. It was all absorbing for him, but also outwardly impelling – love radiated, love shared. To go anywhere, however, it needed to be intentionally and consciously pursued. That is the same for any relationship, of course.

A writer who had a defining impact on Marcellin, Francis de Sales (1567-1622), was also deeply influenced by the Carmelite mystics. He was also keen, like Brother Lawrence, to promote the notion that an intense spiritual life was not something to be confined to abbeys and convents, to religious and clergy. This emphasis on a personal and affective spirituality, and every person's capacity to nurture it, was an important feature of the century of the 'Catholic Reformation' following the Council of Trent. Later, we labelled that which developed as the 'French school of spirituality', a somewhat misleading term but one that does recognise that many of the movers and shakers of this spiritual revival were indeed French. Among them are familiar names such as Vincent de Paul and Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, and perhaps others

5 Practice of the Presence of God, Fourth Conversation.

6 Letter 181, *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*

7 A good edition of the book is that translated by John L. Delaney (published by Doubleday, and available in paperback and Kindle from Amazon). This edition has a helpful Foreword from Henri Nouwen and an Introduction from Delaney.

8 *Practice of the Presence of God. Passim.*

who may be less familiar to some, such as Pierre de Bérulle, Madame Acarie, Jean-Jacques Olier, Jean Eudes, and Jane-Frances de Chantal. Our Marist spirituality grew directly out of this milieu; all of these spiritual masters and others were known to Marcellin. They helped him to frame and to ponder the experience of the presence of God in his life, and how he taught others about it. A giant among them, and the one who possibly had most impact on our strand of Marist spirituality, was Francis de Sales.

De Sales' first major book, *The Devout Life*, was aimed at a general readership; it treated the fostering of a sense of God's presence in daily living. His second, *Treatise on the Love of God*, took his readers more deeply into their personal experience of God. We will delve more deeply into the spirituality of Francis de Sales and how it informed what has become known as 'Marist spirituality'. Suffice it to say here that his essential thesis was that he understood the love of God as something inscribed into the human heart as its fundamental desire. The itinerary of a person's spiritual life is a journey of discovery for how to fulfil this desire, and to become ecstatically consumed by the liberating and irresistible love of God. Indeed, the book was conceived as a commentary on the *Song of Songs*, an epic love poem. The only response to such love is to love in return, to become a loving person.

Marcellin's seminary studies led him to be much influenced also by the writings of the Spaniard Alonso Rodriguez SJ (1526-1616) whose one book *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* was widely read and studied in the seventeenth century, and the Frenchman Jean Baptiste Saint-Juré SJ (1588-1657), a more prolific author and renowned spiritual director. Both men explored the 'practice of the presence of God', albeit not quite in the same way. From Rodriguez, Marcellin was taken by the concept of

> *the whole world filled with God, as it is, so people can imagine themselves in the midst of this infinite ocean of God, surrounded by him, like a sponge in the midst of the sea.*[9]

Although, Marcellin drew much from Rodriguez, it was the more mystically oriented Saint-Juré to whom he seemed more drawn. Marcellin was a contemplative, by natural disposition and by conscious choice. Ironically enough, this most pragmatic of men did not have an especially pragmatic or tick-the-box approach to his spiritual life. For Marcellin, it was not a matter of climbing any ladder of holiness or being dutiful, not about what he *did* but rather *with whom* he was in relationship. From the writings of each of Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Sylvestre, we learn that one of Marcellin's most repeated pieces of Scripture was Acts 17:18

> *For it is in God that we live and move and have our being.*

Sylvestre tells us that Marcellin sat often with Psalm 139:

> *Seeing his serenity, his centredness and his sense recollection one could well believe that he was always conscious of the presence of God. I remember that when he was leading the meditation he always began with the words of Psalm 139: 'Quo ibo a spiritu tuo?'*[10] *He prayed it aloud in such a tone of voice, emphatic and solemn, that it produced an inexpressible impression and such a sense of recollection that you were afraid to breathe.*[11]

In the language of the time, his approach was more mystical than ascetical. In this, he differed by some good measure from his biographer, Brother Jean Baptiste.

Unfortunately, Jean-Baptiste, despite all that we owe him as a chronicler and biographer, can be criticised for the way he re-interpreted the

9 Rodriguez, *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*. Sixth Treatise, Ch. 2

10 Sylvestre quotes the last of these opening lines of the Psalm:
O LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar.
My travels and my rest you mark; with all my ways you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all.
Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is beyond me, far too lofty for me to reach.
Where can I hide from your spirit? From your presence, where can I run?

11 *Memoir of Brother Sylvestre*, Appendix, Ch.212 *Practice of the Presence of God. Passim.*

spirituality that Marcellin fostered in the first generation of Marists. In the second part of *The Life of Father Champagnat*, he devoted twenty-four chapters to describe the Founder's character and personal traits. His purpose in doing this was to depict the ideal Marist, to present Marcellin as an exemplar of how to live as a Marist. One of these chapters addressed itself to 'how Fr Champagnat kept himself in the presence of God'. A close textual analysis of it reveals that Jean-Baptiste has almost certainly based the whole chapter on a section of one of the notebooks of Brother François, who in turn seems to have composed his notes from a talk or talks given by Marcellin on the subject of the presence of God, parts of which Marcellin has obviously drawn directly from Rodriguez and Saint-Juré. No doubt, this was deliberate and well intentioned on Jean-Baptiste's part. However, while he improves the elegance and composition of François' notes, he changes its emphases. He presents the 'practice of the presence of God' as just that: a set of practices, things to do. Further, as he writes of Marcellin's idea of God's being 'everywhere', he employs the phrase 'God sees me' (which is nowhere evident in Marcellin's own extant writings); he offers it as something of a deterrent. That is to say, the practice of the presence of God is useful to keep us fearfully off the pernicious road to sin. This was not Marcellin's primary emphasis.

A vignette in the biography of Brother Jean-Pierre Martinol (the first Brother to die) is more instructive for pointing us to Marcellin's intuitions and the kind of spirituality he fostered in the first Brothers. It comes from the earliest years at La Valla. Young Martinol, twenty years of age and in the workforce for some years by that time, comes to join the small community in 1819 or 1820. He is struck by the way the Brothers are a long-time silent each morning, and he is troubled that he doesn't know how to 'do' that. Let us pick up the story:

> *One day [Jean-Pierre] asked, 'Father, can we pray to God without speaking?'*
> *'Yes, but why do you ask me this question?'*
> *'Because, every morning, I see you and the Brothers remain still for a long time, deep in contemplation, without saying a word. I understand that you are praying, but I don't know how to do this, which grieves me.'*
> *'And what do you do during this time?'*
> *'I recite my rosary and tell God, "I give you my heart and I love you."*
> *'You can very well continue with this prayer, but I will also teach you how to pray like the Brothers.'*
> *… To the young man's question, 'How can one take actions without speaking?' Marcellin responded by giving the example of the mother who looks at or who thinks of her child with love, without telling the child. 'Yourself,' said Father Champagnat, 'do you not love the good Lord when you see a crucifix?' When the postulant answered affirmatively, Marcellin explained that in this way he could pray to God without speaking, every morning, as did the Brothers.*[12]

The image of prayer as an intimate loving relationship, a loving gaze: this is the disposition of a mystic, a contemplative. It is revealing that Marcellin is still relatively young at this point, not yet thirty. His spirituality will deepen considerably, as we shall see, but already we sense that living in the presence of God is an affair of the heart for him.

Another insight comes from Brother François's notes – taken from Marcellin's talk(s) on the subject of the 'practice of the presence of God'. In his exercise book, François has written down the five means or pre-conditions that he has learnt from Marcellin for deepening a sense of God's presence:

- ≠ Purity of heart
- ≠ Prayer
- ≠ Silence and retreat
- ≠ Order your actions to the will of God; search for God in everything
- ≠ Contemplate God in all his creatures

They are good, and worth our taking heed, but they are really not surprising. We could take each one, and develop it, but probably they explain themselves well enough. Textbook stuff. More intriguing are the little phrases that François has added next to each one – no doubt noting down comments of Marcellin himself. Particularly teasing is what he jotted next to 'purity of heart': two Scripture references – Matthew 5, and the *Song of Songs*. The reference to the Beatitudes is predictable – *blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.* But the *Song of Songs?* A celebration of heartfelt yearning and of young love. How might that shape or change our image of Marcellin? After

12 *Biographies de quelques Frères*, p.34

the word 'prayer', François has written 'humility' and the French word 'douceur', which means gentleness, sweetness, softness.

Using the imagery of an intimate and loving personal relationship for appreciating how Marcellin would have you and me come to sense God in our lives is perhaps the most helpful way for appreciating the spiritual legacy he has left us. We have all been in relationships, fallen in love. We know about initial attraction, first flush, young love. But we know there is much more, needs to be much more. We know that a relationship is not essentially about doing things or proving oneself; that's not its basis. If we are in love, nonetheless, there is much we will want to do, time we will want to give, priorities we will want to make, disciplines we will willingly impose on ourselves. Equally, we know a relationship that is to endure cannot be built on anything less than complete honesty and gift of self – what the Scriptures might call purity of heart. We know also about the ups and downs we will experience, the heartaches, the trials, the moments of doubt perhaps, and the times of forgiveness and recommitment. The intensity. All of that played out in Marcellin's spiritual journey, the fruits of which have helped to shape the distinctive spirituality that today we call *Marist*.

The influence of Francis de Sales

To understand St Marcellin Champagnat's spirituality, and the spiritual tradition which is his legacy, we need to appreciate the spiritual fundamentals proposed by St Francis de Sales (1567-1622). If you don't get Francis de Sales, you won't get Marcellin Champagnat.

That is not to suggest that de Sales was the only shaping influence on Marcellin, and how Marcellin understood 'God's presence and love' in his life. Last month we mentioned some other significant ones. There were others in addition to these, notably the formative influence of his family in his first fifteen years, and other leading figures of post-Reformation Europe whom he read, such as St Alphonsus Ligouri. The spirituality that emanated from Le Puy was also defining for Marcellin, recognising that his home region was in that diocese and the orbit of its spiritual currents up until the time of Napoleon – influences such as St John Francis Regis and the spirituality of the Sisters of St Joseph (who had a house in Marhles, and to whom both Marcellin's aunt and great aunt belonged) being worthy of mention. The writings of the Spanish nun and mystic María of Ágreda were significant for him later on.

Indeed, the spiritual milieu of the time – as all times – was complex and heterogenous. It is misleadingly simplistic to talk of 'French spirituality' or the 'French school of spirituality'. There were, for example, Jansenist or at least strongly rigorist and ascetical emphases being pushed from some quarters. There was a current of more pessimistic Augustinian thought that emphasised nothingness before God, and that sometimes skewed towards an unhealthy self-abnegation. There were also some loud revisionist voices: let's go back to the way it was (or imagined to be) before the King lost his head. These rigorist and restorationist currents certainly washed through the seminary in Lyon when Marcellin was a student there. But he mostly eschewed them.

One reason he did so was his attraction to what Francis de Sales had to say.

Many spiritual families besides we Marists have deep Salesian spiritual bloodlines running through them. The Sisters of the Visitation (whom Francis founded with St Jane de Chantal, and from whose Rule Marcellin drew when writing that for the Marist Brothers), the Passionists founded by St Paul of the Cross, the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Oblates of St Francis de Sales, the Fransalians, and the Daughters of St Francis de Sales are just some examples. Yet each of them has its own distinctive spiritual emphases, language, tradition and culture. Their founders were attracted to various insights of Francis de Sales, bringing these into dialogue with their own situations and pastoral priorities; each continuing spiritual family then grew a shared spirituality that spoke compellingly to its members and to their specific way of sharing in God's mission. What in particular was it about de Sales that grabbed Marcellin?

Let's start in a perhaps unexpected place. Modesty. The third of our 'three violets'. The more obvious spiritual attitude with which we could begin might be humility. Just about every master of the spiritual life, from the desert fathers and mothers onwards, has emphasised humility as the basis of the spiritual life. Before them, and indeed before Jesus, the Hebrew Scriptures emphasised this fundamental attitude of heart. Of course; no

argument. Or, we could take simplicity, which in fact was something of a novel concept that Francis de Sales promoted for nurturing one's spiritual life, and which has become key in our own Marist tradition. Indeed, it is one of the six characteristics of our spirituality named in *Water from the Rock*, and we will explore it in a later article. But let us turn our attention to arguably the most neglected, or perhaps misunderstood, of the 'three violets' – modesty.

It is clear that, while Marcellin might have coined the metaphor of 'violets' to describe them, given as he was to the use of colourful imagery drawn from farming and nature, the spiritual dispositions themselves come straight from Francis de Sales. For the third one, though, Francis had another word: *douceur* in French. It has the sense of gentleness, sweetness, lightness of touch, pleasantness.

Tough taskmaster that he admittedly was, it is interesting that Marcellin was drawn to a spiritual attitude that was so essentially meek. It reveals much of his sense of God in his life, and his own relationship with God, a gentle and loving God. A life-giving God rather than a life-sapping one. An early Brother – Dacien who was young when he knew Marcellin – gives us a window into this in a testimony taken almost fifty years after the Founder's death:

> *His tone of voice, his sharp and sometimes severe glance, often intimidated me; but in the confessional I no longer heard the voice of the master, but only the loving tone of the gentlest of fathers.*[13]

In conventional spiritual wisdom, the early steps of a person's spiritual journey are known as the 'purgative stage'. This is what Marcellin would have been taught. It's what he would have read in Rodriguez, Saint-Juré and others. This stage is the time for stripping away all that encumbers further progression. 'Mortification of the senses' was an expression that was commonly used at the time and, indeed, for much longer. Literally, a killing of feelings. How many people have had their psycho-emotional wellbeing stunted and maimed by spiritual directors who have misunderstood this concept, or who have imposed it bluntly? This was not Marcellin's approach; there are myriad examples, rather, of his kindness, his patience, his understanding and his encouragement, especially of the younger Brothers. Baby-steps were fine, and lots them made for a decent journey. For this reason, he was attracted to de Sales' idea of the 'little virtues', which he adopted.

This is not to imply that Francis de Sales was any kind of spiritual namby-pamby who shrank from the need for discipline and decision in the interior life. He drew on both his personal experience and on the wisdom of the ages – from giants such as Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and Catherine of Siena – to affirm the need for radical and demanding personal change if progress in the spiritual life was to take place. It could be a rough and black ride at times. But this is not where he began. This was not his starting point. That is key.

For de Sales, it was, rather, all about the heart. And the heart was all about desire. Desire was not something about which to be fearful or in denial. It was to be befriended, not squashed. Indeed, desire was the key to understanding the human condition, made essentially in the image of God. Later Thérèse of Lisieux – another Carmelite – would write in the same vein. All desire was ultimately a desire for love, and love was God. Love was it for Francis. This is what grabbed Marcellin. He was intuitively attracted to the notion that growth in holiness was not, in the first place, about striving for perfection through disciplined acts of mortification, fasting, hours of praying, or proving oneself in one way or another. It was about the heart. This was the underlying premise.

Francis taught that a desire to love God was inscribed on the human heart as its primordial desire. It was a desire that he described in almost erotic terms – something that was seductive, irresistible, passionate. The journey of a person's spiritual life was to become entirely captured by this love that was God, and to be consumed by it. In *The Treatise on the Love of God*, he drew especially on the *Song of Songs* for imagery to describe this. Growing in holiness was about falling more deeply in love, and then responding in love. God, he wrote in *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, does not see perfection consisting 'in the multiplicity of acts that we do to please him, but why and how we do them … doing them in love, through love and for love.'

13 *Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat, Enquête Diocésaine,* Vol.1, #12, 1889.

The ultimate response was to become a loving person, because a genuine experience of love in God can elicit no other response.

Here we tread into the subtle but profound difference between someone who is driven, obsessed or fanatical, and someone who is a lover. The intensity of the fanatic is tied up in self and self-righteousness; that of the lover is bound up in the other and other-centredness. It is in the latter that we find 'modesty' at its most essential – a disposition not to impose oneself on the other, not to be a shouter and attention-seeker, not to control or possess, but to seek to give life to the other. Both the fanatic and the lover will go to extraordinary lengths, take risks, be moved to exercise discipline and restraint, but for very different purposes and to very different ends.

'Presence' and 'love' of God: twin Johannine dimensions of Marist spirituality

It is no surprise that Marcellin, so attracted by the intuitions of St Francis de Sales, would find himself most at home in the Johannine Scriptures, and especially the First Letter of John. Here we find Marcellin's go-to place in the Bible. In two Circulars he wrote at the beginning of 1836 and 1837 – by then as a quite spiritually advanced person in the last years of his life – the words of John and his own words mingle indistinguishably. 'Carissimi', he calls his Brothers, 'my beloved, my very dear brothers, let us love one another'. He goes on in both letters to write of his tender concern for them, the way his heart is moved by them, his deep desire for their spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. 'Cherished and well-beloved, you are constantly the special object of my love. All my desires and wishes are for your happiness.' These are the words of someone who, in Salesian terms, has been consumed by love and can do nothing else but only want to share it. Four years later, in his Spiritual Testament, we find almost the same words.

We can imagine Marcellin sitting frequently with the First Letter of John, letting these words of Scripture become his own words, his very self. 'Whoever has not loved, has not known God.' (4:7) 'We shall become like him when we see him as he really is.' (3:2) 'This is the message we have heard from the beginning: love one another' (3:11). 'God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God' (4:16) 'There is no fear in love' (4:18)

Thus, in Marist spirituality, 'presence of God' and 'love of God' must go together. It is misleading, perhaps, to use the expression the 'practice of the presence of God' if it implies some action or activity or discipline that is not integrally bound up with a loving relationship. It is also important that 'God's presence and love' is named as the first of the six characteristics of Marist spirituality, because everything else comes from this dual experience. It is our relationship with God, and God with us, that is at the source of what we wan to do or be.

Marcellin Champagnat was also attracted by the grounded approach of Francis de Sales. In this, they seemed to be of similar cut: intuitively drawn to the interior life, but always looking for how this is lived in the practical everyday. They were both incarnational in their emphases.

So, like Brother Lawrence, we find Francis de Sales, advocating a continual mindfulness of God and, indeed, an ongoing conversation with God, in the activity of the day. Francis called this making little 'spiritual retreats' during each day:

> *Throughout the day, as often as you can, place yourself in the presence of God … 'Where are we, my soul? Our real place to be is with our God' … Remember then to retreat often into the solitude of your heart, even while physically in the midst of your business … Our Lord inspired Catherine of Siena to make, as it were, a little interior oratory in her soul where, in the midst of all her exterior work, she could withdraw mentally and enjoy the fruits of this holy solitude … So withdraw often into this retreat of your heart so … you can enjoy heart to heart conversations with God*[14]

But it is not something to do dutifully, as much as something to want heartfully:

We withdraw into God because we aspire to God; we aspire to God because we want to withdraw into God … So, raise your mind often to God … A thousand times a day give your heart, fix your interior eyes on his goodness, hold out your hand to him as a child does to its mother.[15]

14 *Introduction to the Devout Life,* Part 2, Ch.12
15 *Ibid.* Ch.13

Here, he echoes Saint-Juré

> *We have to withdraw into ourselves … and there to experience the divine essence that pervades our soul and body and fills us entirely … We need to let ourselves be taken up with profound respect, deep humility … We are in awe. We adore, bless, praise and glorify this God of all goodness.*[16]

It is, he wrote, to 'taste God in ourselves'.

Such mindfulness and immanence are not difficult concepts to grasp for someone who is in love. It is only natural to think often and to yearn to be with. So, attentiveness is necessary:

> First, one must have a realisation that God's presence is universal; that is to say, that God is everywhere, and in all, and that there is no place, nothing in this world, devoid of God's holy presence, so that, even as the birds on the wing meet the air continually, so we meet with that presence always and everywhere. This is a truth which all are ready to grant, but all are not equally alive to its importance and lapse into carelessness and irreverence.

In the first official Rule of the Marist Brothers, published in 1837, for the 'method of prayer' Marcellin drew directly on de Sales' method for continually turning to God, being always conscious of God.

> *To be well disposed to make one's meditation, it is necessary to remain continually in the presence of God … so that the soul is always ready to unite itself to God, to stay close to him; otherwise there will be nothing but difficulty, and a lot of time lost when one tries to recollect oneself for the time of meditation. The spiritual masters call this continual presence of God the remote preparation for meditation.*[17]

Indeed, in this section on the Brothers' method of prayer, this is the first thing mentioned, using de Sales' exact phrase 'the continual presence of God'. No doubt, Marcellin knew well what de Sales had written about developing such abiding consciousness of God: 'Without it, there can be no contemplative life, and even the active life will be badly lived.'[18] So the Marists' 1837 Rule went on to make this expectation of the Brothers:

> *They will not be content with this half hour of meditation, but will try to continue it through the activity of the day, mindful of the presence of God and by making many small spontaneous prayers.*

In a letter to the Vicar General of Lyon, Jean Cholleton (his former Moral Theology professor and later fellow Marist), Marcellin wrote in more grounded terms about what would happen to someone who neglected to nurture a sense of recollection and retreat in their life: 'A fish cannot live long out of water.'[19]

Some of the best insights into what 'God's presence and love' meant for Marcellin come to us from the pen of his first successor, Brother François. Very different from Marcellin in character, temperament, interests and skills, François was still able to see himself as a 'living copy' of the Founder, and he urged his confreres to allow Father Champagnat to 'shine through' them. What he sought to develop among this second Marist generation – most of whom as soon as ten years after Marcellin's death had never known the Founder personally – was an integrity and consistency in their shared spirituality. This would be rich in the affective, mystical, spirituality of the heart that is so characteristic of Francis de Sales.

François, unlike Marcellin, was a writer. We have hundreds of his personal letters, many of his notebooks and journals (which he kept assiduously) and, of course, his official communications as Superior General. It is in one of his Circulars to all the Brothers – what has come to be known as the 'Circular on the Spirit of Faith' – that we find a structured and deliberate attempt to outline what today we would call a 'Marist spirituality'. It was François' conscious intention to describe what should be distinctive about those who would follow Marcellin's way the God.

François himself was man with a profound interior life, something that had obviously been nurtured in him by Marcellin. What leaps from his writings is a spirituality that is markedly affective, relational, mystical, Scriptural, mission-oriented

16 *De la connaissance et de l'amour de Notre Saveur Jésus Christ*, Bk.3, Ch7 #4

17 *Regle des Petits Frères de Marie,* 1837, pp.67-68

18 *Introduction to the Devout Life,* Ch.12

19 Letters of Marcellin Champagnat, #45, 8 September 1834

and Christocentric. There is much that can be said about the depth and richness of this signature Circular of François, but let us sit with just several small extracts from it and what it had to say about 'God's presence and love'.

The Christian is ... surrounded and penetrated with the holiness and the majesty of God: his providence ... his power ... his goodness and his mercy ... his justice ... his will ... for in him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 27:28)

We are always in the gaze of the living God … who fills heaven and earth with his immensity (Jer 23:24), and that we are penetrated and surrounded on all sides by his divine essence.

The four means … for nurturing [a spirit of faith] are: assiduous reading and meditating on the Word of God; a spirit of prayer; frequent communion; and the holy exercise of the presence of God.

Let us be attentive to see God in all his creatures, since they are the outcome of his goodness ... But, above all, let us seek him within ourselves, in the depths of our hearts; for it is here that he dwells as in his sanctuary ... Let us often retreat, therefore, to this inner cell, this temple of our soul, there to find God.[20]

His notebooks and personal journals are replete with gems of spiritual wisdom, no doubt the fruit of his own prayer. Here are just a few excerpts:

'Where can I run Lord from your spirit?' David cried, 'and where can I flee to hide from the light of your face? If I climb to heaven you are there and if I descend into hell you are present. If I go to the ends of the sea, your hand guides me and your right hand upholds me. The darkness would not be dark for you, night would be as light as day.' (Ps 139) But alas, how blind we are! We spend almost all our life unmindful of a God who is present and from whom alone we must await our happiness and who alone must govern all our mind's thoughts and all our heart's affection. He is in our midst and we do not know him! (Jn 1)

Nothing is impossible for God. We have received the Spirit of the children of God and we cry "My Father!" (Rom.8:15). The Holy Spirit prays in us.

Have confidence: 'It is I; fear not.'

It is to excite trust in us that God wants us to call him Our Father. It is the tender name which Jesus teaches us to give him. This is how you will pray: Our Father who is in heaven (Matt 6) When you pray say: Father (Lk 11) And St Paul adds that we have received the spirit of the children of God through which we shout: my Father, my Father (Rom 8). Because you are his children, he says again, God has sent into your hearts the spirit of his son which makes you cry out: My father, my father (Gal 4). We pray then the best of all prayers which seeks only to spread his freedom in us, his cherished children. How could we lack confidence? It is the Holy Spirit who prays in us.[21]

And, from one of the Sunday night conferences that he gave at the Hermitage in his latter years, after his retirement as Superior General:

It is not enough for us to pray once in a while, or even often, during the day. Prayer needs to 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)

To 'tremble with love' in 'heart and body'. A powerful image. A lover's image.

The Lucan portrayal of Mary as an archetype of discipleship

Learners of languages often get tripped up on 'false friends' – words that look or sound much the same in two languages but, in fact, have different meanings. In French, for example, 'magasin' has nothing to do with a printed publication but is the common word for a shop. 'Actuel' in the same language has more of a sense of 'current' or 'present' than of 'actual'; so we say that Pope Francis is 'le Pape actuel'. Sometimes one needs to be especially careful, for example 'embarazada' in Spanish doesn't mean 'embarrassed', but 'pregnant'.

20 This Circular was published in four instalments spread over Circulars that Brother François wrote between 1848 and 1853. The extracts cited here are taken from Parts 1, 3 and 4. *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux*, Vol.2, Nos.1, 5 and 11.

21 Brother François instructions and notes are contained in three notebooks in the General Archives of the Marist Brothers, catalogued as Numbers 307, 308 and 309.

Words also can change their meaning or their usage over the centuries without changing their spellings. Again, we may misread a word of which we think we know the meaning, because we are not alert to its etymological evolution. 'Conversation' is one such word, both in English and French. When Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection or St Francis de Sales wrote in the seventeenth century about maintaining continual 'conversation' with God as way of enhancing the presence of God in their consciousness, they did not mean chatting idly to while away the hours. At that time, the word had a sense that was closer to its Latin root, 'conversatio'. It was used to refer to where one usually dwelt, and with what or with whom one lived. The word carried a sense of abode and of relationship, and importantly, also of movement: literally, 'con-' (with whom or what), '-versor' (one turned, was busy, or journeyed).

One's 'conversation' in this late medieval and early modern usage described one's habitual way of being and doing, with what one was mostly occupied, and with whom one lived and connected. For example, a monk would have been in 'monastic conversation'.

When, as a seminarian, Marcellin sat down to study the writings of Pierre de Bérulle, this is the sense of 'conversation' that he would have had to bring to his reading. Cardinal Bérulle – contemporary and friend of Vincent de Paul and Francis de Sales, founder of the Paris Oratory, the one who introduced the Carmelite reform to France, and someone who had a permeant influence on Western European spirituality – was big on Christian 'conversation', as he described it. Bérullian thinking helped to form the spiritual emphases of French Catholicism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those that in turn helped to shape Marcellin and the Marist spirituality that is his legacy. Bérulle's writings became one of the staples of seminary studies.

Pierre de Bérulle proposed that Jesus's primary orientation was to be 'in conversation' with others and with his Father. By this, he didn't mean that Jesus talked a lot. He meant, rather, that Jesus was one with them, drawn to others wherever he found them, intimately involved with them as his ordinary place to be and, critically, offering to go with them to somewhere new. Of course, verbal interaction was an important element of this – because it allowed for challenge and discernment to take place – but to be 'in conversation' was something bigger than just that. Bérulle explained that Jesus went beyond the externals, piercing into the core of people's hearts in order to free their hearts from whatever it was that impeded their appreciation of God's love for them. He also used the expression that Jesus had a 'vie voyagère' which we may translate as a 'journeying life'. That is to say, Jesus's 'conversation' with people went somewhere. And where it went was deeper.

Like others who figured in the founding of the 'French school' of spirituality, Bérulle was especially drawn to the Johannine Scriptures. As we know, John's Gospel is structured around Jesus's encounters with people – with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman, with the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda, with the adulterous woman, with the blind man, with Martha and Mary, and most especially with his closest disciples – who come finally to be his 'friends'. Ultimately, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus brings them to his own dwelling, his Father's house, his own family – into Jesus's own conversation with his Father, so richly presented in what we usually call the Last Supper discourse. The Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross, symbolic of each of us, is made Jesus's own sibling. The people in these encounters – each of them spiritually blind, thirsty, lame, confused or disbelieving – are the ones with whom Jesus 'converses' and 'journeys'. His 'conversation' with them is transformative.

From our Marist beginnings, we can see that Marcellin offered his followers a similar invitation to enter into a transforming and abiding intimacy with the Divine. The call was to come to dwell in God, and to develop a deep consciousness of the indwelling God. Let us dip again into Brother François' writings to find a window into the kind of spiritual intuitions that Marcellin fostered, noting both the immanence and the affectivity of them. In his notebooks, François interweaves the fruits of his own ponderings with ideas and quotations from a number of spiritual masters:[22]

22 These are from the Notebooks of Brother François #308, pp.916-22. Several of the passages from this part of his Notebooks are also found in Ch.5 of the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat* by Brother Jean-Baptiste

God in me: the centre and resting place of my soul … This presence of God is a source of consolation for the just, and a support in the stress and strain that seeking perfection may cause. We see God in the depths of our heart, as our centre and our resting place.

We in God: the natural element of our soul. Outside of God, we feel as out of place as a fish out of water or a dislocated limb. God is our natural element. We abide in God. If you take a fish out of its natural element, water, it will suffer, even if you put it in a basin of gold and precious stones. In the same way, whatever a person does, he will find his true resting place in God alone.

God is present in me, in my very breath. When I pay attention, said St Augustine, that your eyes are always on me and that you watch over me day and night with such care, and when I imagine you gazing on all that I do, penetrating all my thoughts, and observing all my plans, I am filled with amazement. It is as if in heaven and earth you had no other creature but me to govern.[23] *… St Ambrose and St Bernard said that just as there is no single instant when we do not enjoy the fruits of the goodness and mercy of God, there should not be a single instant when we do not hold him present in spirit. St Gregory adds that being mindful of God should become like our very breathing.*

Let us try, little by little, to develop the habit of recollecting our spirit that gets dissipated, and our wayward heart that gets lost in its search for comfort. Let us try to draw our spirit back from outside to within ourselves, as often and as faithfully as possible, there to see God, listen to him, and converse with him.[24]

Which brings us to Mary.

Bérulle proposed Mary as the exemplar for how people should take up this life of Christ and live 'in conversation'. For him, the attentiveness and the responsiveness of Mary – to both God and neighbour, in the biblical imagery of the Annunciation and the Visitation respectively – captured the heart of it. Mary was the model of a disciple filled with the plenitude of a loving and merciful God, bursting forth with it in Magnificat song. In fact, the expression 'Mary in conversation with her neighbour' became one theme in seventeenth century spiritual discourse. Bérulle liked to present Mary as the one who 'treasured and pondered', the woman of prayerfulness and attentiveness, who could do nothing else but go out to converse with others about what was in her heart.

These Marian images from the Lucan Scriptures – not only of Annunciation and Visitation, but also of Pentecost – became archetypal ones for Marcellin and the founding Marists. Steeped in emphases that they had gleaned from Bérullian thought and from other writers they encountered in the seminary, they took Mary as model. Her personification of what it meant to be a disciple of Christ was drawn most especially from Luke. The spiritual tradition that has developed from them beckons Marists to identify with Mary as she is presented in the Gospel of Luke and in Acts, in much the same way that the Beloved Disciple is presented in the Gospel of John as the model of discipleship. Marist spirituality proposes the Lucan Mary as emblematic of Marists' discipleship of Christ: Mary in the first two chapters of Luke, and the first two chapters of Acts. Indeed, Mary and the Holy Spirit are the only two characters who appear in the opening chapters of both Books: a deliberate literary link. *To be Mary*, to embrace God's presence and love in a Marian way, is really the essence of Marist spirituality.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the Lucan Gospel – the so-called 'Infancy Narrative' – is bookended by reference to the Temple, which a late first century reader would have recognised as an allusion to the traditional dwelling place of God (by the time of the Gospel's writing, of course, destroyed). Zechariah's meeting with the angel occurs there in the Temple, as does the 'Nunc Dimittis' prayer of Simeon, the prophecy of Anna, and Jesus with the teachers of the Law (Lk 1:5-25; 2:67-79). (And the final verse of the final chapter of the Gospel ends there – Lk.24:53). Yet, Mary's most extraordinary encounters with the Divine, and the revelation the Divine, in these opening chapters take place not

23 Cf. Rodriguez, *Treatise on the Presence of God*, Ch.1.

24 François then adds this citation: *Bourdaloue: Retreat 5th day: Consideration; Rodriguez, Christian Perfection, Part I, 6th Treatise.*

with the Chief Priest in the Holy of Holies but with lowly people and foreigners in ordinary places – in Nazareth, in the hill country of Judea, and in a cave in Bethlehem. In the sequel – the Acts of the Apostles – Mary waits with the Apostles in the Upper Room, the place of Eucharist (which by tradition is located above the Tomb of David on Mount Zion – again God's dwelling place). The significance of the allusion is clear: Mary herself is now the Ark of the New Covenant, the new place where the presence of God is met. In Mary, graced with God's favour. In Mary, whose whole being rejoices in God. In Mary, who waits in faith for the Spirit. The bottom-of-the-social-scale shepherds see the Divine from their fields; at the end of chapter 2, Jesus ends up again in Nazareth, in the Galilean back country. Extraordinary things happen in the ordinary: an angel visits, a virgin conceives, a barren woman gives birth, a dumb man speaks.

Paragraphs 44 to 90 of *Water from the Rock* offer a powerful and insightful Marist exploration for how the Marian disposition portrayed in Luke 1:26-38 – the Annunciation passage – could play out in our lives. These rich paragraphs merit frequent re-visiting. They can lead us to foster in ourselves what it means to be treasurers and ponderers of life's events – discerners of the movement of the Spirit in our lives, contemplatives alert to the extraordinary presence and love of God in our everyday. In the hyper-sensory world in which we find ourselves today, they call us to be still and to listen, and suggest ways for us to be so.

The dynamic of 'visitation' – or in Bérullian terms, 'conversation' – also runs through these initial chapters of both of the Lucan books: an angel visits (twice), Mary visits Elizabeth, the neighbours visit Elizabeth after the birth of John, both Mary and Zechariah praise God for visiting his people. Annunciation and visitation go together, as Christ-life takes flesh.

Yet there is a stinger lurking in all this gushing of joy and epiphany, one that is central to appreciating Mary's place as a model of discipleship, and for how to deepen our sense of the presence and love of God. It comes in Simeon's prophecy (Lk.2:25) in a clause that seems at first to be a little parenthetical to his main point: 'and a sword will pierce your own heart, too.'

At one level, this line presents itself simply as a compassionate acknowledgement of the anguish that is ahead of Mary who as a mother will see her son suffer betrayal and execution. But there is a deeper reading of this verse, one that is concerned with how Luke presents the ideal of Christian discipleship, and Mary as the paragon of this. Recurringly Luke comes back to the core of what it means to be a disciple: it is to be someone who is attentive to the word of God, obedient to it, and acts on it (cf. Lk. 6:47; 8:21; 11:28). The mother of Jesus is portrayed as being and doing just that, linked to each of these verses. Luke then tells us that such hearing and responding involves the daily 'taking up of the cross' (Lk. 9:23-25). It means a leaving behind of all that we 'own' or, inversely, all that owns us. The first four disciples to be called hear and respond by doing this – Simon, James and John, and Levi (Lk. 5:11; 28). Discipleship is not possible without being dispossessed (cf. Lk. 14:33; Acts 2:45). Some, like the rich nobleman, have difficulty with this (Lk. 18:23); others, like Zaccheus, can forsake all their self-righteousness and embrace it. So Jesus comes to stay in his home (Lk. 19:1-10).

This way of understanding discipleship was explicitly applied in the formative years of Marist spirituality. In his *Circular on the Spirit of Faith*, in which Brother François consciously sets out to describe what should be distinctive about the Marists, we find this:

> *It is ... to think, to speak and to act according to the Gospel ... To be a disciple of Jesus Christ does not simply mean some pious practice ... but 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.*
>
> *... Where among us are the truly poor in spirit, the truly humble of heart, the true lovers of the Cross of Jesus Christ?*
>
> *.. the very spirit and character of our small Congregation … our distinctive characteristic, must be of humility and simplicity ... after the example of the Blessed Virgin, our Mother and our Model ... Nothing but a lively faith in the words and example of Jesus Christ ... can dissipate our illusions of vainglory, prevent false calculations of pride, and show us that true glory*

... is found only in humility, simplicity and modesty.[25]

Water from the Rock uses the phrase 'journey in faith' as the title for the chapter in the text that unpacks the Annunciation passage. It is the same expression that Bérulle used, and it speaks to something important: our experience of the 'presence and love of God' is not to be a static or mountain-top one. It is, rather, a journey. It is a life journey that is disruptive, disarming and dispossessing. The conditions of the journey call us to leave aside all that we might have imagined for ourselves – scattering the proud with all their plans, sending the rich empty (Lk. 1:53;55) – and to discern another way forward. It is to be vulnerable, to expose one's heart to be pierced, for there is a Word that seeks to make its home in our heart.

It is a journey also that needs to be discerning. A disciple is not a doormat. Mary, in Luke's account of the Annunciation, wonders and questions. Her 'fiat' comes only after that. Nor is her assent born in any way from fear of the consequences of resisting. Again, Luke makes this clear: both Zechariah's and Mary's responses come from a heart-space where they are not afraid (Lk: 1:12; 30), for God's visitation of his people is about freeing them from fear (Lk. 1:74). Jesus leaves them with his peace, and with assurance of no reason to fear, as long as they have come to faith (cf. Lk.24:36-49). François, in the Circular cited above, names a 'spirit of faith' as the kernel of being a Marist.

A journey in faith implies growth in faith. As we have seen previously, the wisdom of the centuries has traditionally framed this as a three-step process or a tridimensional experience: the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive. While people have differed in their naming and enumerating of these steps or spaces, and the degree to which spiritual growth might be a nuanced and centripetal journey inwards rather than a definitive and linear process up a ladder, the basic premise is the same: the spiritual life has movement and deepening, a journey towards an increasing singleness of heart. In our Marist language, we may prefer to call this 'simplicity of heart'. The journey certainly involves purging, discipline and decision, but not in any Pelagian sense. Mary did not conceive the Christ-life within her through her own agency. The overall direction is towards becoming more and more marked by the intimacy of total union with the Divine of which Mary sings in the Magnificat.

My own experience suggests that it is a journey that is neither even nor uninterrupted. I am reminded of an older Dominican friar who spoke to us in the first year of our training to be Brothers. He shared his observation of seeing many young people like us, readily pledging to give their whole heart to God, then spending the rest of their lives taking it back bit by bit. I recall being quite disillusioned at his comments. He was right, nonetheless, in that over time we can allow barnacles to collect on our hull, and the passion of our youth to grow dull. The young can be far less accommodating to compromise than those who have grown tired and jaded. Avoiding such spiritual sclerosis, ridding our heart of the accretions that can grow it, is a continual process. The heart needs to be pierced again and again. At least, I have found it to be so.

It is to be hoped, through it all, that the 'patient endurance' of which Teresa of Ávila speaks will gradually and ever more surely obtain all that the heart desires. For the older heart, the heart that has endured, the gentler heart, will be more ready to be open to the peace the Lord.

In the end, perhaps as it was for Mary, all our spiritual journeying brings us to be, quite literally, *at home* with the words of Gabriel in Luke that announced the presence of God incarnate: 'Rejoice … the Lord is with you'. Conversation ensues.

25 Taken from the first instalment of the Circular. *Circulaires*, Vol.5, No.1

Br Michael Green

2. Trust in God

'Nisi Dominus …'

Anyone with a passing knowledge of Marcellin Champagnat would know how frequent was his recourse to these two Latin words from the opening verse of Psalm 127: 'Unless the Lord …'[1] We find the phrase Nisi Dominus written in his letters, in the side columns of his notebooks, and peppered through his conferences; many of the early Brothers attest to how often the Founder spontaneously came out with the words. The sentiments of first part of this Psalm were at the core of the prayer that became his life. They have come to have a special place in our shared Marist spirituality to this day.

> *Unless the Lord build the house, the work of the labourers is useless*
> *Unless the Lord look over the city, in vain do the guards keep vigil*
> *In vain is your early rising, and your going late to rest …*

Often enough, however, Marcellin's characteristic trust in God – in 'Providence', as it was sometimes expressed – is simplistically understood. 'Trust in God' – which *Water from the Rock* names as the second trait of our living Marist spirituality – was, however, anything but facile for Marcellin. Indeed, it emerged from the deepest spiritual wrestle of his life. That is the case for each of us, or needs to be: the coming to a place, as a discerning and critically thinking adult, where one trusts God implicitly in the midst of all of life's pains and puzzlements, is rarely preceded by plain sailing. Marcellin's mature sense of trust – childlike (as the Gospels tell us) but not childish – were the mark of his later years as a genuine mystic. Understanding this 'trust in God' is a huge key for unlocking the richness of Marist spirituality, but we need to appreciate what it meant for Marcellin or, rather, what it came to mean to for him.

For reaching this understanding, we may not be helped by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, Marcellin's official biographer, and the nineteenth century's approach to hagiography that he employed. Jean-Baptiste devotes a whole chapter of his book to the topic, naming 'trust in God' as one of the attributes that most defined Marcellin.[2] But it is a disappointingly shallow analysis that he provides there. The chapter carries a catalogue of fortunate and unlikely blessings that came Marcellin's way: new recruits at critical moments; timely donations from benefactors; successes against the odds. The author contrasts this providential flourishing of the Marist project with some rather unflattering assessments of Marcellin's aptitude to lead it. His point is, of course, that it all prospered because it was God's work and not the whim of human imagination nor the fruit of human effort. He cites some of Marcellin's favourite expressions: 'When we have God on our side, nothing is impossible'; 'You insult God by asking him for little'; 'The bigger the obstacles we face, the stronger should be our confidence in God'; 'Put your confidence in God and count on him; he will help you, bless you, and see to all your needs'; 'I have the purse of Providence; the more you take out, the more it contains'; 'Providence is my strongbox. That's where I find the money'; and other sentiments along similar lines.[3]

One reading of such statements is that they smack of arrogance, the kind of smug self-

1 Most biographies of Marcellin and most of the early Marist literature refer to this Psalm as 126, as Marcellin did himself, since this was the numbering used in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible which was in common use at the time, and which aligned with the Greek Septuagint. Most modern translations follow the traditional Hebrew numbering, in which this is Psalm 127. 'Nisi Dominus' are the first two words of the Psalm in Latin, which is the language in which Marcellin would have usually prayed it – 'Unless the Lord …'

2 Ch.3 of Part 2 of *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*.

3 *Ibid, passim*, except for the last of the quotations which comes from the *Memoir* of Brother Sylvestre.

assurance that religious fanatics exude when they claim that their cause is righteous and that they have God on their side. 'Oooh,' I hear you snap, 'you can't be saying that Marcellin was an arrogant fanatic. He was such an amiable and well-regarded guy. And he said so much about humility.' Sure. But, there was a lot more to Marcellin than that, just as there is a lot more to the spiritual tradition that is his legacy.

Let us touch into Marcellin's spiritual journey in a little more detail.

His innate talent was to be a leader, and by natural inclination Marcellin was a doer. We see these attributes from early in his time at the minor seminary. He got out and did things, and he easily gathered others around him. People were attracted to him, and inspired by him. These were personal traits that served Marcellin well as a founder. They are the kind of qualities that leaders need. There was a degree of bullishness in this, a can-do and will-do attitude.

And Marcellin certainly could do and did do. We celebrate the images of him at the rock-face, pick in hand. Brother Laurent in an early Memoir, tells us that it was Marcellin

> *… who built our whole house at La Valla … When there were some big stones to carry, it was always he himself who carried them. It took two of us to put them on his back. When he came in at evening, his clothes were often torn, and he was covered in sweat and dust. He was never happier than when he had worked long and hard. Many times I saw him working in the rain and snow. When we others had left our jobs, he continued to work, and often bareheaded despite of the harsh weather.*[4]

The French can be more ambivalent about such people than those of us more immersed in an Anglo-American culture that often admires the risk-taking entrepreneur and people with a boys-own, sleeves-rolled-up, daring-do approach to life. Even in our local Marist history, we honour those who have dreamed big, maybe broken an egg or two to make their omelettes, presumed permissions that had not been received, and built grandly. Think only of the great sandstone edifice that the early Brothers in this country erected prominently atop Hunters Hill in Sydney, dreaming of a boarding college of 500 students when they had barely 70 on the books, and next-to-nothing in the bank; or the move in Adelaide from a couple of wooden buildings in Largs Bay to the generous estate at Glenelg; or the shifting of the boarders cramped on the verandas of the Brothers' monastery and postage-stamp hillside at Rosalie in Brisbane, to the sprawling grounds of a former seminary at Ashgrove in a city still recovering from the Great Depression; or similarly from Subiaco to Churchlands in Perth. The building of the Chapel at St Gregory's College and the digging out of its Olympic-sized swimming pool are part of that Marist community's folklore.

Marcellin was like that. The French, though, had clinical, albeit colloquial, diagnosis for people who displayed such behaviours: *la maladie de la pierre*, literally 'rock sickness'.[5] It was seen as a psychological disorder, what may be labelled today a 'syndrome'. They concluded that Marcellin suffered from it, a compulsive builder. One of the administrators of the seminary, Nicholas de la Croix d'Azolette (later Archbishop of Auch), was one of a number of influential critics of Marcellin during the construction of The Hermitage in 1824-25: 'You build in vain,' he warned him. 'You will become the butt and laughing-stock of everyone.'[6]

And just a year after the first section of the Hermitage was completed, they seemed to be right.

The year 1826 was Marcellin's *annus horribilis*. In hindsight, it was also the year that made him, but that was far from clear at the time. Everything seemed to be collapsing around him: serious debts were mounting and the creditors were moving in; senior clergy in the Diocese of Lyon were conspiring against him in a prolonged campaign to discredit him, culminating in a formal 'apostolic visitation' of the Hermitage; he lost his two most capable Brothers – his first recruit (Jean-Marie Granjon) dismissed after what seems to have been

4 *Memoir of Brother Laurent*, written probably in 1841, just after Marcellin's death in response to the invitation from Brother François for the Brothers to send in their memories of the Founder. The little script of Laurent is the oldest pen portrait we have of Marcellin.

5 The term is also used for kidney stones, but there is no connection between the two usages.

6 Cf. *Origines Maristes* Vol.4 p.191 – reported by Fr Terraillon. Br Jean-Baptiste also records this, without naming the bishop.

worsening mental illness, and his clerk-of-works for building the Hermitage (Jean-François Roumesy) leaving to join another group; the other founding member of the community at Lavalla (Louis Audras) was wanting to pack his bags and head to the seminary; the first two Brothers to die had passed away at young ages the previous year, while a novice died in 1826; and most cutting of all, his two fellow-priests at the Hermitage left – Jean-Claude Courveille, who was original leader of the Marist group at the seminary, departed suddenly under a cloud, taking two Brothers with him, while another who was there at the pledge of Fourvière, Etienne Terraillon, refused Marcellin's request to be the executor of his will and, feeling there was wasn't much future in Marcellin's project, left to do inland missionary work. On top of that, Marcellin's physical and emotional health had deteriorated to the point of collapse. On returning from a visit to schools on Christmas Eve, he fell apart. He became bedridden, for weeks, and people expected that he would die. It looked hopeless. He was just 37 years of age.

This was truly Marcellin's 'dark night of the soul', in the sense that St John of Cross conceptualised it. We have probably all heard that expression from the great Carmelite mystic – his *noche oscura* – but it is often employed loosely to describe any period of difficulty. What did John of the Cross mean by it? And later, another Carmelite, Thérèse of Lisieux? Let us first dispel what they didn't mean: they didn't mean having a particularly tough time of things. Nor did they mean slipping into clinical depression, what we Australians colloquially call 'the black dog'. Nor did they mean not being able to see the way forward for the present moment, although the Spanish 'oscura' does also have this sense. John of the Cross coined the expression to convey an experience of being absolutely disarmed and denuded, of being purged of all accretions, masks, defences, self-assurances, possessions, everything. To be brought to nothing. For John it had two phases – first a purging of the senses and, second, a purging of the spirit. That is where Marcellin found himself.

He was certainly under stress. Some of the classic symptoms of stress are clear in his letters: he feels alone; he believes that he has to do everything himself, and immediately; he doubts his own worth and his ability to move forward.[7] We see recurring in his letters a tell-tale phrase: *'je suis seul'* or *'je suis le seul'*: I am alone. I am alone against the wind. It's all up to me. Stress 101. But what was the cause of this emotional condition? That is the important question. What exactly was his torment? What ate him up? By nature, Marcellin was one to churn things over; he didn't let concerns go easily. The depth of his compassion and empathy was matched by a depth of anxiety. He felt deeply. Some would say, that is no coincidence that it was a stomach cancer that he developed in the 1830s.[8] What was it that struck him down in 1826?

It was not, per se, the debts, or the 'desertions' (his word), or the criticisms, or his failing health. It was, rather, what they signified for him. His essential torment was an anxious wrestle with this question: 'Am I doing God's will?'

As a young priest, he had had no doubt that he had been doing so. Of course he was about the will of God, he felt: bringing education to the ignorant, sustenance to the deprived, healing to the wounded, Word and Sacrament to all who were otherwise denied them. Simple. If things did not go as well as expected, from time to time, then it was a matter of his working harder and praying more fervently so that they would. This was Marcellin in the first seven or eight years of his time at La Valla, and then the construction of The Hermitage. He was a driven, confident and passionate minister of the gospel. Whereas others

7 See Letters 3, 4, 6 and 7 (in *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*) written to senior clergy in the diocese, each of with similar content and feeling. They appear as drafts in his notebooks, so they provide a good insight into the space in which he found himself.

8 Allow me to make an additional comment by way of footnote. I do it this way because my comment is moot, perhaps tendentious. It concerns the Enneagram, and where Marcellin's might have found himself on the construct of the spiritual life. Although it is an inherently fraught presumption to name where someone else other than oneself might be on the Enneagram, I feel confident that Marcellin was an Eight, and a healthy, 'redeemed' Eight. As such, his fundamental direction spiritually needed to be to surrender power and control to God. It may be instructive to understand his spiritual maturing from this perspective. It is also interesting to note that as an Eight he would have found himself in the centre of 'gut' space on the Enneagram. He was a man of the gut, unquestionably.

often saw him as stubborn – his spiritual director apparently gave up on him as being too self-willed – he might have regarded himself as resilient and not easily discouraged, just the kind of person that a fractured and wounded church needed.

Then it came apart. All his work risked coming to nothing, falling in like a house of cards. It was in this period of his life that Marcellin really came to a spiritual humility.[9] From Brother Sylvestre's Memoir, we learn that Marcellin came to see what he called 'pride' as his 'predominant passion'.[10] It is worth noting that Sylvestre only knew Marcellin in the last ten years of the Founder's life – in his spiritual maturity. Yet from seminary days until his last days, we see evidence in his resolutions and his personal writing of his tussle with 'pride'. It is, though, as a man moving into mid-life that it really hits Marcellin. It is a Marian moment. Like Mary at the Annunciation, he is brought to ask, 'How can this happen?' 'How can Christ be born in me? It's impossible.' Only then, like Mary, can he reach the point of not only hearing but being wholly captured by the angel's assurance that with God the impossible is possible, and only from God can 'the child be holy'. That is when he can he say, with Mary, 'Fiat!' 'Let it be done to *me* as *you* have said.'

This stage of trust, to which Marcellin arrives as a mature man, becomes thereafter the core pursuit of his life. Each of his biographers writes of it. His driving force is to be aligned with what God wants. He calls is *'le point capital'*, the main thing. Marcellin reaches the point where his desire 'to be' dwarfs any impulse 'to do'. That is not to imply that he becomes idle. Quite the contrary; he works with even greater resolve and spends his energies just as unsparingly. But it happens from a spiritually different space. Jean-Baptiste encapsulates it for us:

> *When he was undertaking a good work, only one thing preoccupied him: to know whether it was God's will. 'I don't care a whit about the embarrassment of possible failure; I am more frightened of being unfaithful to God than being despised by people.*[11]

Unfortunately, Jean-Baptiste does not really give us a sense of Marcellin's spiritual growth. He retrofits the Marcellin of the last ten years of life onto the young curate and the indefatigable stone mason. Yet that does not deny the validity of his description.

Brother François offers us a richer and more nuanced understanding of this quality of trust as he learned it from Marcellin. At one point in his journals, so frequently infused with Scriptural references and allusions, he takes us to Mark 6:45-52 – the disciples on the Sea of Galilee rowing against a strong wind when they grow frightened at the sight of what seems to be a ghost walking across the water towards them. The one verse written by François is Jesus's words: 'Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid'. God is present in the very midst of the disciples' struggles and doubts, an encouraging and calming presence. For François, Jesus was at the heart of his very being. The trust born of this recognition – for François as for the disciples in the boat – was not of a tub-thumping bravado, but more a deeply rooted serenity. It is perhaps instructive to note the French word that François used for 'trust' was *'confiance'*, a word that links the concepts of trust and confidence as two dimensions of the same heart space. François centres his *confiance* in God and 'God's desire', not in himself. It is, rather, all about God for him: 'God desires our good with an infinite desire,' he journals. He goes on to ponder God as 'Father' – being drawn Luke's account of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2), to Paul's sense of God as 'abba' in Romans (8:15) and Galatians (4:6), and finally to John 15.

This is instructive. If we want to understand Marcellin's sense of trust in God, and what this trust means in contemporary Marist spirituality, this is where we need to end up: John 15:1-17. This is where François leads us; this is where we need to

9 In his *Memoir* – which was written primarily to support Marcellin's cause for beatification when it was being considered by the Diocese of Lyon – Sylvestre returns to the theme of 'humility' more than any other. He uses the words "humility" and "humble" over seventy times in the narrative, and unambiguously describes this trait as the single most distinctive characteristic both of Marcellin and of his intention for the spirit of the Marists Brothers. He links humility with the other two traditional Marist virtues of simplicity and modesty, and he cites Marcellin's use of the metaphor of the violet to explain their significance.

10 *Memoir of Brother Sylvestre*, Ch.2

11 J-B Furet, *op.cit.*, Part 2, Ch.3

be to appreciate what *Water from the Rock* says about trust. It is all about abiding relationship and fruitful oneness. The whole four chapters of the Last Supper Discourse in John (14-17) delve profoundly into the oneness of Jesus with his Father, the disciples with Jesus, and the fecundity of the Spirit who comes, but it is the first part of Chapter 15 that is especially helpful for us for exploring what 'trust' means for Marist spirituality. It is here we find the final 'I am' of the fourth Gospel.

Let us look at this familar text:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.
He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.
You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.
Remain in me, as I remain in you.

Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither;
people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.

If you remain in me
and my words remain in you,
ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.
By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit
and become my disciples.
As the Father loves me, so I also love you.
Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.
I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.
This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.
No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.
I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing.
I have called you friends,
because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me,
but I who chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain
so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.
This I command you: love one another.

This is not the place for an extended exegesis on one of the richest passages from one of the richest books of the Bible. Innumerable doctoral theses have spilled ink unpacking it. Each line drips with meaning and profundity. But let us imagine Marcellin, or François, or indeed any great Marist we may have known in our life, sitting with this passage, as well they must have, and coming to appropriate personally the truth of it: that any fruitfulness they may have, any asking they may do, and all their joy, are fundamentally rooted in friendship with Jesus. Without that, nothing. Zilch. Nada. But it is more than human friendship: the absolute intimacy of abiding, of remaining. In love. Abide in my love, says Jesus. This is where Marcellin arrived spiritually, and the Johannine Scriptures caught it most effectively for him. This is the kind of spirituality he hoped would be his legacy.

Trust, as it is framed here, is both fruitful and joyful. The converse we know sadly too well: distrust leads to cynicism, jaundice and despair. And barrenness.

It is in the light of John 15 that we can best come to the two paragraphs from *Water from the Rock* that introduce the Marist characteristic of trust in God:

***17.** Marcellin's relationship with God, combined with knowledge of his limitations, explains his unbounded confidence in God. The depth of this trust amazed those who worked with him, and*

scandalised some who judged his actions as reckless. In his humble way, Marcellin saw God at work, and so acted with courage and commitment. 'Let us not offend God, asking him very little. The bigger is our demand, the more we will be pleasing to God.' Marcellin's oft-expressed invocations 'If the Lord does not build the house' and 'You know my God' were the spontaneous expressions of this confident trust.

***18.** We endeavour to develop our relationship with God so that, just as for Marcellin, it is our daily source of renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism. This vitality makes us daring, despite our short-comings and limited resources. Drawing from Marcellin's experience we embrace the mysteries of our life with confidence, openness and self-giving.*

Trust in God is founded on relationship and humility, as it was for Mary. Like Mary, and like Marcellin, the Marist is assured not to fear. This is not a glib assurance, but one that comes from deep spiritual encounter, and from which emerges both a joyful serenity and a life-bringing fruitfulness. God incarnate. God abiding. It is not plain sailing; it was certainly not for Marcellin. It was not for Mary. But the deeper the ask, the deeper the trust.

Br Michael Green

3. Love of Jesus and his Gospel

Jean Villelonge was born in 1810 in Saint-Genest-Malifaux, less than ten kilometres from Marcellin's hometown of Marlhes. The Champagnat family was well known in those parts, not least from the prominent role that Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, Marcellin's father, played in local affairs before, during and after the Revolution. We don't know what drew young Jean to apply to join Marcellin's nascent group of Brothers. Perhaps he had heard of the dynamic work of the youngest surviving Champagnat boy who was now a young curate over in Lavalla, or perhaps it was the arrival of the first two Brothers in Marhles in 1820, just at the time that Jean would have begun to prepare for his first Holy Communion. In any event, it was just four years after that, in early winter, that he made the good day's walk over the Pilat range down to Lavalla, and moved himself into the crowded little house there. Two years later, in the chapel of the newly constructed Hermitage, he received the Brothers' habit as a novice and was given the religious name of Dorothée (not one that works so well in English!). Only twelve years later, at the age of 27, he was sadly to die of pulmonary tuberculosis.

The fruit of those dozen years was an enduring legacy in the spirituality that emerged from the first generation of Marists. Brother Dorothée may seem to have been an unlikely source of such influence. Never the scholar, the young man asked not to be a classroom teacher, and he was put in charge of the cows at the Hermitage. He was known for his caring and hard work with the herd, and also for his sense of humour, his grounded wisdom, and his deep piety. In his spiritual profundity and young death, he is a little reminiscent of Thérèse of Lisieux; in his rich sense of the abiding love of God while carrying out his chosen lowly occupation, another Carmelite comes to mind: Brother Lawrence.

The story is told of Dorothée's being accused one evening in a Chapter of Faults of being distracted during Mass.[1] The perhaps sanctimonious young

1 The 'Chapter of Faults' is a ritual of mutual accountability in religious communities that traces its origins to the earliest days of monasticism; it had become well established by late medieval times, and a common element of the Rule of most religious orders. It involves the public admission of a transgression of the rules or customs of the community, done in the presence of the whole community – usually a self-admission, but it could be also an accusation by another community member – then a public sanction given by the superior of the community. By the 19th century, the practice had been influenced by the rigours of Jansenism and had become rather petty and legalistic in many places. By and large, it fell into disuse after the reforms of Vatican II.

Brother who admonished him said that he had observed that Dorothée didn't turn the pages of his missal during Mass, but 'amused himself by looking at a picture'. Father Champagnat, who was presiding at the ritual, asked Dorothée to go to his room and get the picture. When he returned, he presented the Founder with a holy card that depicted Jesus on the Cross. It was smudged and faded from being kissed often. Marcellin, of course, found no fault and praised Brother Dorothée for his 'unmeasured' love of Jesus.

Lest we be tempted to think that Dorothée, as a young adult man, retained a facile, sentimental or spiritually arrested relationship with Jesus, his biographer pre-emptively assures us otherwise. The incident in the Chapter of Faults is preceded by three accounts of conversations that reveal a genuine profundity in Dorothée's apparent simplicity. The first, which took place while he was looking after some cows in the field, was a with a visiting priest. Initially dismissive of what he may have suspected were rote answers from an unlearned cowherd, the priest finally came away thinking he has just spoken 'with a Doctor of the Church'. 'Where should one seek the love of God,' the priest had asked. 'In the heart of Jesus,' replied Dorothée. 'And how long do you spend each day in the heart of Jesus?' the priest continued. 'As long as I can, but always less than I would want.'[2] It was about desire and relationship for Dorothée, and purity of heart in each.

The second conversation was with Marcellin himself (with whom he spoke often and at length apparently). It followed a reading at lunch from *The Imitation of Christ*, during which Dorothée seemed to be inattentive.[3] Upon being quizzed by the Founder, Dorothée confessed to being captured by a single feeling that the reading evoked in him: that Jesus' whole life was an embrace of the Cross. 'These words made such a vivid impact on me,' said Dorothée, 'that I cannot describe it.' The biographer goes on to say – no doubt reflecting Marcellin's own response – that Dorothée, like Paul in I Corinthians 2:2, 'knew only Jesus Christ, and him crucified … He busied himself only with Jesus … His passion stayed with him everywhere … as he worked in the fields, he burned with love.'[4]

The third conversation is also with Marcellin. One of Dorothée's daily customs was to make the Stations of the Cross in the chapel, on his own. While Marcellin affirmed this practice, he thought that Dorothée might not be making the most of the exercise because he didn't use a book or set prayers. 'At each station', said Dorothée when questioned, 'I contemplate Jesus before my eyes. Then I tell him I love him.' Marcellin is reported to have had nothing to add or suggest. Dorothée didn't need any written aide; his method was 'excellent'.[5] It is easy to imagine the words of Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure coming to Marcellin, for Saint-Jure was such a key author in his own formation: 'The love of Jesus Christ makes us love contemplative prayer.'[6] It was in contemplation of Jesus that we can 'taste God in us.'[7]

From the short life of Brother Dorothée there are more examples we could draw that reflect the intensity of his spiritual life – the counterpoint of his humility and awe in the presence of a loving God in whose immense presence he felt absorbed, and yet his close intimacy and simple affectivity in his relationship with Jesus. While such spiritual emphases were characteristic of the main currents of post-Reformational French spirituality in which Marcellin was formed and in which he wanted the

2 *Biographies de Quelques Frères,* Ch.3, p.40

3 Following the tradition of monastic communities, it was common that some meals at The Hermitage were taken on silence while one of the Brothers read from a spiritual text. The late medieval devotional classic, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) was a staple of religious houses.

4 *Biographies de Quelques Frères*, Ch.3, p.41

5 *Ibid*, p.42

6 *De la connaissance et de l'amour de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ.* Ch VI

7 *Ibid.* Ch.VII

8 It was written by the same author, Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, and called *Biographies de Quelques Frères*. The first English edition did not appear until 1936, slightly edited, and with the addition of a summary of the life of Brother François who, of course, was still alive when the French edition was published. In the original 1868 French edition, as well as the 16 Brothers whose lives are recounted, there are an additional 27 to whom reference is made because of particular aspects of their Marist living.

first Marists to be immersed, it is instructive to look at what Marcellin emphasised especially and, even more pointedly, how and through whom he sought to have this spiritual formation take place.

For over a quarter of a century, at Lavalla and then at The Hermitage, there were only two novice masters. The entire first generation of Marists were, as novices, under the care and influence of these two men chosen by Marcellin. Who were they? Why did Marcellin select them, and keep them for so long? Other people certainly had a hand in the formation of the novices – not least, Marcellin himself of course – and the role of novice master was not quite as critical it may be today, but it is nonetheless insightful for us to look at who these two novice masters were. The first was Brother Louis, Jean-Baptiste Audras who was the younger of the first two to move in on 2 January 1817 while still in his teens. The second, Brother Bonaventure, arrived in 1830 as a man already in his mid-twenties. We could say a great deal about both – each one a genuine mystic – but let us highlight a few things about Louis.

Brother Louis was given first place in the collection of short biographies of sixteen of the early Brothers published in 1868 in what today we would call a 'sequel' to the biography of Marcellin Champagnat twelve years before.[8] (Dorothée was the third.) The purpose of the book was to portray important elements of the founding Marist spirituality as they were lived out by some of the first Brothers. The spiritual quality attributed to Louis was a 'burning love of Jesus'. It is telling to note that this was the first characteristic of Marist spirituality named in the book.

How this was lived by Brother Louis, and how it was understood by Marcellin, is, however, more nuanced than a simple or tritely expressed 'love of Jesus'. An incident related in the book tells us a great deal: an account of a session of spiritual direction given by Marcellin to Louis.[9] It is an intimate but intense conversation, and quite extended. Marcellin really puts Louis under the hammer. Many Brothers reported how gentle Marcellin was as a spiritual director and confessor, but this conversation is different. It reflects the depth that Marcellin senses in Louis and, as a master of the spiritual life, Marcellin intuits how far he could take him. It is not responsible for a spiritual director to play with the emotions of the one being accompanied, so Marcellin is in tricky territory here. But he knows what he is doing, because he knows Louis so well. It is a journey that Marcellin himself has taken, a journey inwards that involves one's whole being.

'Do you love Jesus with all your heart, Brother Louis?' Marcellin asks. 'Do you love with him your conscience, Brother Louis?' 'Do you love Jesus with your mind?' 'With your will and all your strength, with the sweat of your brow, as St Vincent de Paul put it?' 'Brother Louis, do you love Jesus with your words?' Each question is followed by Marcellin's expounding on the implications of what an affirmative answer would entail. The passion builds. The biographer describes Marcellin as being 'on fire'. He pulls no punches. Then, a most interesting question: 'Brother Louis, do you weep? He who does not weep loves Jesus but a little! Blessed are those who weep.' It is an intense way in which to address spiritual humility, but intensity and love go together. Marcellin wants to take the master of his novices deeply, very deeply, into his interior self.

Then Marcellin comes again with the same series of questions, this time in rapid succession like a series of boxer's jabs, left and right: 'Brother Louis, do you love Jesus with all your heart? Do you love Jesus with your mind? Do you love Jesus with all your strength?' Finally, a knock-out right hook: 'Brother Louis, if Jesus asked you, "Do you love me?", as he asked Peter, how would you answer? Could you truly say, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you?"' Brother Louis, we are told, 'was moved and touched to the point of tears by that series of questions, but Father Champagnat himself remained just as impassioned.'

Marcellin has brought Louis to a critical moment. He has been silent throughout and is now spent. He responds in a *cri de cœur*, ' "O Father!" he cried at the last question, "I dare not assure Jesus that I love him, but it seems to me that I desire to love him, and with all my heart".'

Desire.

Marcellin knew that the spiritual life was all about desire, and what we do with it. This was a key theme of Francis de Sales, his favourite spiritual writer, one that Marcellin had embraced. He had

9 *Ibid*. pp.25-31

done so because it was the prism through which he had come to make some sense of his own experience. That Louis was getting in touch with his heart's desire, owning that desire, and wanting to feed it healthily, that was where Marcellin wanted to bring him. It was seeking to sate the thirst rather than thinking that it had been done already. Marcellin eschewed any self-righteous claims of spiritual perfection. He was then able to take Louis deeper. We read of the four means he goes on to propose to Louis for him to nurture his love of Jesus:

- First is to want it. Marcellin quotes de Sales, 'As much as your desire increases, so does your love … The desire to love is the beginning of love.' What an insightful counsel at a time when desire was often feared and repressed.
- Second is to have 'purity of intention' in acting. By that, he explained, acting only out of love and good will. Using a metaphor that would have been rather novel, Marcellin assured Louis that that would be 'like going to God in a railway train'. The first railway in France was between the towns of Saint-Etienne and Saint-Chamond, and its building would have been a source of great marvel at the time. Marcellin contrasted this with the tepidity of a snail.
- Third is to show love in action. Again quoting de Sales, Marcellin tells Louis that, 'Love is something learned by loving, by doing loving things.'
- Fourth is to contemplate often the Passion of Jesus. It would be impossible to meditate deeply on this 'without being consumed by divine love.' For de Sales, 'Calvary was the mount of lovers.'

We learn that, 'These counsels made such an impression on Brother Louis that he would never forget them. It was a turning point in his life.'[10] Although Louis himself did not leave us much by way of a written account of his spiritual journey, it is reasonable to infer that what is encapsulated in this conversation with Marcellin (even if it be perhaps a little confected) is a spiritual awakening, akin to Marcellin's own emergence from his dark night. Certainly, Louis' biographer leaves us with an image of a veritable mystic:

> *From then on, his whole life became an exercise in love and some time before he died, he said to a Brother from whom he had nothing to hide, 'O Brother! How sweet love is! How strong love is! If only you knew, such waves of love which break against me! … Love is all I need, and henceforth I only wish to study, contemplate and love Jesus, my Saviour, my love and my beatitude.'*[11]

The Christocentrism of the 'French school of spirituality' was one of its most distinctive features, and became naturally embedded in its particular strands, of which Marist spirituality became one. These two early Marists – Brothers Dorothée and Louis – provide us with examples of how it was expressed and honoured in the founding time. A major contribution of the Bérullian tradition, as part of the broader Catholic Reformation in Europe, was to foster a better integration of theology and spirituality, something that is amply evident in these Brothers. Pierre de Bérulle was in turn influenced by both the deeply Christocentric and the mystical emphases of Teresa of Ávila and the Carmelite reform which he was instrumental in introducing into France. Other early shapers of the French school who had a major influence on Marcellin – notably Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul – were known additionally for both the *affective* and the *practical* dimensions they emphasised in Christian living, and were able to articulate this in their writings which Marcellin studied and appropriated. It was a spirituality of the heart, with a rich accompanying theology. Indeed, the French gave us the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus', a metaphor for the incarnated Divine that combines both the immanent and the transcendent in a powerful way. Marist spirituality drew from all of this as Marcellin was graced to shape his own spiritual way, and to inspire others to follow him in it.

Arguably, the nascent Marist spirituality of Marcellin and the first Brothers is best captured in the writings of Brother François. While Brother Jean-Baptiste was the prolific writer and polished in his style, he may be criticised for his poor synthesis of ideas and construction of themes. He was more of a collector and curator than an interpreter or synthesiser. He was more polemic and even apologetic in his approach. He was also a shameless plagiarist, although this was not the

10 *Ibid.*, p.32.
11 *Ibid.*, p.32.

crime then as it is today. François, on the other hand, was able more effectively to cohere the spiritual legacy of Marcellin. While his notebooks and journals are unsurprisingly more a hotchpotch of ideas, quotations and reflections, his Circulars and his formal correspondence are more integrated and considered. This is the case with his *Circular on the Spirit of Faith.*

What strikes a modern reader – after all the nineteenth century cladding is stripped away – is the Christocentric essence of this document. Recall that François' stated aim in writing it was to describe what was the essential 'spirit of the Institute' (what we would more usually call today 'Marist spirituality'). His thesis is that this essence is living 'the spirit of faith' which he defines as discipleship of Jesus. In delving into this theologically and describing its practical expression, he does not mention Marcellin Champagnat once, not a single instance in the four instalments of the Circular. This is even more surprising when one knows both the deep affection and the profound respect that François had for the Founder. But not a mention of him in describing the spirituality of the Marist community. Indeed, the proposition that Marcellin would have been a focus in such a document would have seemed as ridiculous to François as it would have been to Marcellin himself. For both men, the main game, the only game, was Jesus Christ – crucified, risen and alive. Simple.

The Christocentric spirituality that François explores has both the affective immanence and the theological richness that is typical of the French School. It was the French who gave us the Sacré Cœur, the Sacred Heart, that powerful metaphor that captures the divine in the human, and vice versa. In Bérullian tradition, François is at once in awe at the immense grandeur of God but in personal relationship Jesus Christ who 'deigns to call himself – and actually is our companion! our friend! our brother!'[12] He draws particularly on St Paul, summing up the third part of the Circular 'by saying, with the Apostle, that … *Christ will be formed in us* (Gal.4:19) and *we shall live in him and by his Spirit* (2 Cor.5).'[13]

It is in the fourth part of the Circular that the theology is sharpest and the sense of what living in Christ means is most captivating. François, as always, draws extensively from Scripture to do this, not least from Galatians. Indeed, if we really want to be in tune with the spirituality that Marcellin helped to flower in François and the founding generation, then it is well to spend some time with the Letter to the Galatians. François writes:

> *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 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.*

Both the theologian and the spiritual master, François writes from his own experience, and does so with considerable feeling:

> *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*

The allusion to Philippians 3 is obvious, as is Hebrews 12 in the culmination of the Circular:

> *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*

12 *Circular on the Spirit of Faith,* Part 1.

13 *Ibid*., part 3.

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!

It is clear that François has spent a great deal of time with the Pauline Scriptures. They have become an indistinguishable part of him. That the first Marists were so immersed in Scripture, and that they defined themselves in terms of Scriptural imagery and themes, is a lesson of itself. In the France of his day, there was a great amount of pietism and religiosity from which Marcellin could have drawn, but he went to the source, to Scripture. The books of Johannine and Pauline corpus were his spiritual habitat.

That was the space in which he nurtured in himself and his fellow Marists a spirituality of the heart. That is why he chose Louis and Bonaventure as novice masters. They were not his most capable and competent men – not the ones to be chosen as directors of the biggest schools or as the major superiors to deal with the administrative challenges of a quickly growing organisation. They people of with heart spirituality, people who understood this oft-cited sentence from Francis de Sales:

Since the heart is the source of actions, as the heart is, so is what you do. … I have wished above all else to engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy, sacred maxim, LIVE JESUS![14]

We get an insight into Marcellin's priorities from this excerpt from the biography of Brother Bonaventure:

There was a time when Brother Bonaventure used to give a short teaching to his novices after their morning meditation which took place in the sacristy.[15] *Father Champagnat would go there to make his preparations for Mass. He was so struck and delighted by the depth of the Brother's instruction and the way in which he spoke of God that he could not help but express to the members of his Council how impressed and delighted he was. 'Brother Bonaventure is outstanding,' he said to us one day. 'Listening to him, you feel that his heart is aflame with the love of God. It is impossible for me to continue my preparation for Mass when he speaks. Unwittingly, I catch myself listening to him. I don't know where he finds the beautiful things which he says to his novices, but I think that those young men are very fortunate to have such teachings. This Brother is a saint and he speaks like a saint. Listening to him, you are convinced that he says only what he feels and does. In his case, it can be truly said that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*

Again, we have a genuine mystic. His was not a spiritual life based on shallow sentiment, but on an ever-deepening conversion of heart. It showed itself in emotional expression; how could it not? But its core was solid. After his long tenure of almost two decades as novice master, Bonaventure worked for the last dozen years of his life in the dairy at Saint-Genis-Laval, the new General House, then a village some distance from Lyon and in a rural setting. His biography captures something of the mature man:

At the end of his life, his piety and his fervour were so intense that he had difficulty in containing his feelings. A year before his death, he said, 'I enjoy journeys because, alone on the roads, I can pray to God aloud and give full reign to the feelings of my soul. I am sometimes so carried away by joy and love that I stop to look at the sky to my heart's content or to sing the Te Deum, the Magnificat, or the Laudate, to invite all the animals to bless and praise God who is so good, so loving.'

A little too saccharine or unbridled for modern taste? Perhaps. But the fact it was written as exemplar of Marist spirituality at a time (1868) when the currents of secularisation were rather militant and growing on the one hand, and conversely there was a defensiveness among many in the Church that was increasingly expressed in cold, almost Jansenistic or Pelagian terms on the other hand, tells its own story. Bonaventure tended to neither. The first Marist generation had a self-perception that unashamedly celebrated the mystical, the affective and the relational. These were spiritual qualities that they honoured in one

14 Francis de Sales, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, III, 23.

15 Before the renovations to the Hermitage in 2010, the sacristy was quite a large room. The novices would have done their meditation there, while the rest of the community would have done it in the nearby room now called 'the Room of the First Community' and previously 'La Salle des Fresques'.

another. At the same time, theirs was a grounded and outwardly directed spirituality. Bonaventure embodied both for them. While a person of clearly deep interiority, a great part of his biography is also devoted to the portrayal of a person of magnanimity, kindness, tenderness, joy, solicitude and selflessness. A man in whom Christ-life bloomed.

Crib, Cross and Altar

'Do you know,' Marcellin asked his first followers, 'why I want you to be faithful followers of Jesus at his crib, on Calvary, and at the altar? Because it is there that you will find the love of Jesus … God is love says Saint John (1 Jn 4:8]).'[16] He goes on:

> *Yes, everywhere God is love, but especially at the crib, the cross and the altar. It is most especially in these three places that his infinite love becomes reveals its true essence. It is in these three places where, more than anything else, he inflames the human heart with his divine love. It is in these three places that our hearts, in their poverty, can best understand and feel how much God loves us. 'I have come to bring fire to the earth,' Jesus says, 'and how I want that it be kindled' (Lk 12:49) and set the hearts of all people on fire.*[17]

Marcellin speaks of the 'crib, cross and altar' as the 'three great hearths' where 'all the great saints' went to set their own hearts on fire. Then, mixing his Scriptural metaphors a little, he adds:

> *The person who goes regularly to those three sacred fountains will become like the tree planted near running water, which as the prophet says, bears fruit every month of the year.*[18]

He becomes rather passionate about it:

> *Oh, Brothers! Go to these fountains of our Saviour and draw from them abundantly! Did you hear that word, draw? Don't think that grace will be measured out to you there, or given to you stingily, or that you have to wait for it. Stop complaining that you ask for it but don't get any. It's not the priest who gives it to you; it's not even the generous hand of Jesus who bestows it. It's you. Yes, it's you yourself who draw it freely. You can take as much as you want, so if you have only a little, it's your own fault. It's because you're using a container that's too small: your heart is too closed, not open enough to love. So, go to the Saviour's fountains, go there often, and always draw from them freely and abundantly.*[19]

The expression 'crib, cross and altar' has always enjoyed a prominent place in the discourse of Marist spirituality. 'The first three places', Marcellin called them, and he seems to have make frequent reference to them. We have seen a number of times in this series how much he sourced his own spirituality in the writings of Francis de Sales, with their emphasis on a spirituality of the heart, and indeed how he used de Sales' books with the first Brothers. Yet, even as he gave de Sales' classic Treatise on the Love of God to Brother Louis to read, Marcellin counselled that 'the Blessed Virgin, the crucifix and the church bell' would take him even closer into God's heart than would the book:

> *'Are not these three before all our eyes to for us to bring to mind the mysteries of the Incarnation, of the Redemption and of the Eucharist, the three great marks of the love of God?' he said to Brother Louis.*[20]

Water from the Rock, devotes five of the six paragraphs in which it introduces the third characteristic of Marist spirituality – 'Love of Jesus and his Gospel' – to the crib, cross and altar. So, with all this focus and emphasis, we may be excused from thinking that Marcellin himself coined the expression. He didn't. Indeed, it had been around for centuries.

It was, for example, very important for Alphonsus Ligouri, someone whom Marcellin read and whose emphases in pastoral and moral theology influenced him. Indeed, the 'crib, cross and altar' remain central to Redemptorist spirituality. If we were to attribute its origin to anyone, however, perhaps two other Italians, Francis and Clare of Assisi, might have a claim on the honours, half a millennium before Alphonsus.

16 *Avis, Leçons, Sentences,* p.43. Brother Jean-Baptiste devotes an early chapter (Chapter 6) to this theme.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*
19 *Ibid.*
20 *Biographies de Quelques Frères,* p.19

They consciously put the 'crib, cross and altar' at the heart of their spiritual lives, their experience of the immanence of a loving God; these three elements are still at the core of Christ-centred Franciscan discipleship. Indeed, it was Francis who first gave us the visual image of the Christmas crib.

Six hundred years later, a diocesan priest in Lyon who had become a Franciscan tertiary, and who had something of a conversion experience in meeting the poverty and disempowerment of the young people he found on the streets of that city, wrote of these three ways meet Christ.[21] Antoine Chevrier, younger than Marcellin but a contemporary of many of the founding Marist generation in that part of France,[22] was shaped by the same writers and influences of the 'French school' of spirituality.[23] He would have read, as probably did Marcellin, the book on the spiritual life published in 1668 by the French Jesuit Amable Bonnefons *The Three Journeys of the Soul: to the crib of Jesus incarnate, to the cross of Jesus crucified, and to the altar of Jesus sacrificed.*[24]

Like Marcellin, Antoine Chevrier was no doubt moved by the writings of Vincent de Paul who found the face of Christ in the poor. Vincent, one of the giants of the first generation of the French school was less at ease in the private salons of Paris – with the likes of Pierre de Bérulle and Madame Acarie – than he was on the streets. Vincent, as was Marcellin later, was more attracted to the practical love espoused by Francis de Sales.

Indeed, there is an underside to the Bérullian school that was somewhat elitist, and even embarrassed by the poor. But in Vincent's writings we find the opposite:

> *If you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are in the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor. Although in his passion he almost lost the appearance of a man and was considered a fool by the Gentiles and a stumbling block by the Jews, he showed them that his mission was to preach to the poor: He sent me to preach the good news to the poor. We also ought to have this same spirit and imitate Christ, that is, we must take care of the poor, console them, help them, support their cause. Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty.*[25]
>
> *It is not enough to give soup and bread. This the rich can do. You, rather, are the servant of the poor, always smiling and good-humoured. They are your masters, terribly sensitive and exacting masters you will see. And the uglier and the dirtier they will be, the more unjust and insulting, the more love you must give them. It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them.*
>
> *We must serve the poor, especially outcasts and beggars. They have been given to us as our masters and patrons.*

It is profound theology, and of intuitive attraction to Marcellin. In writing to Brother Jean-Marie in 1823, for example, Marcellin updates him

21 For an exploration of Chevrier's theology based around the incarnation, redemption, and the Eucharist, and its sources in European spirituality, see: Yves Musset, Le Christ du Père Chevrier (The Christ of Father Chevrier). Desclé, Paris, 2000. Chevrier's own writing is best captured in his book *Le Véritable Disciple, le pêtre selon l'evangile ou le véritable disciple de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (The True Disciple, the priest according to the gospel or the true disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ). Edition Emmanuel Vitte, Paris, 2014.

22 Blessed Antoine Chevrier certainly had formal contact with two men associated with the Marists in their early years, Jean-Marie Vianney and Pierre-Julien Eymard. He consulted often with Vianney. He met with Pierre- Eymard (after the latter had left the Marists) and considered linking his work in Lyon with that of Eymard in Paris. Undoubtedly, he would have known well the work of the Marist Brothers in Lyon since they served the same districts, albeit Chevrier's main focus with older young people than that of the Brothers at the time. Chevrier founded the Priests of the Prado (now associated with the Conventual Franciscans) and the Franciscan Sisters of the Prado. His work with the poor is celebrated in the frieze above the main doors of the Basilica of Fourvière. In fact, his is the first figure in the freize; and Marcellin the third.

23 For example, we see references to Rodriguez and Saint-Juré, and the clear marks of Bérullian emphases and concerns.

24 The title of the book as published: *Les trois voyages de l'âme devote, à la créche de Jésus incarné, a la croix de Jésus crucifié, a l'autel de Jésus immolé.*

25 Writings of St Vincent de Paul (Epist. 2546: *Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents*, Paris 1922-1925, 7). It is also used in the Office of Readings for his feast day (27 September).

on the situation in Lavalla and tells him that they have 'many poor people', to which he adds 'thank God.' The kind of love that Marcellin sought to nurture in himself and others was the kind of love he saw revealed in Christ. The Pauline concept of *kenosis* – of emptying of self – is central for understanding what he experienced in meeting Christ in the 'first three places.'

For Marcellin, there was more to conversion of heart than just being caught up in an 'awesome wonder', as the old hymn goes, at the *kenosis* of Christ in the crib, cross and altar. Yes, there was evoked a humble awe – something that was a feature of the 'French school' and especially of the Sulpician spirituality that was a major influence on Marcellin at the seminary – but it was not the end of it. We find the heart of what Marcellin drew from Pauline theology as a theme that runs through Brother François' *Circular on the Spirit of Faith:* it is that 'Christ is formed in us' (Gal. 4:19). Or, as Paul says at the start of Galatians, 'Christ is revealed in me' (Gal 1:16). Not *through* me or *to* me, but *in* me. Galatians unlocks the core theology that underpins Marist spirituality. It is to allow Christ-life – the very life of God – to become incarnate in me; to allow love to become incarnate in me. 'I live now, no not I but Christ lives in me.' (Gal. 2:20).

This is the Gospel.

This is the Gospel that Marists 'love', as this third characteristic of Marist spirituality in *Water from the Rock* calls them to do. It is loved, because Jesus Christ is love incarnate. There can be no other response to the Gospel of Christ, as Marcellin understood it, than to love it. Or, more pointedly, to grow in love, to become God's love incarnate. The consequence is that Marist spirituality – as Christian spirituality more generally – inherently involves giving of self for others in love. It is other-centric. The second half of the verse Galatians 1:16 is as important as the first half: Christ 'is revealed in me, *so that I could proclaim him among the Gentiles*.' Love is formed in me so that I can bring love to where love is not.

This proclamation of Christ's love is pursued through who I am rather than what I preach. Marcellin understood it this way. Indeed 'preaching' was a style of evangelisation that Marcellin expressly didn't like.[26] Although we have no record of his having read the famous dictum of Francis of Assisi – 'preach the gospel everywhere; use words only if necessary' – we can imagine that Marcellin would have heartily affirmed it. It would have made absolute sense to him. When we say that Marcellin put an emphasis on 'good example' as means of educating – which unquenstionably he did – we can risk underselling what he meant. Marcellin had a more powerful way to say it: 'A Brother is a living Gospel', he told his first followers.[27]

Stay with that concept for a moment; plumb its meaning. It is very Pauline. Paul speaks of the Spirit bringing forth in us the life of God, revealed in kindness, patience, compassion, tolerance, peacefulness, resilience, forgiveness, endurance, gentleness, unity, hope, joy, gratitude, and so on. This is what Christ-life looks like. This is love incarnate; this is God incarnate; this is God's Good News incarnate. In emphasising to the first Brothers the importance of their example to the young people whom they taught, Marcellin suggested that their lives could be a kind of 'continual catechism', so that each of them, as a 'gospel worker' *(ouvrier evangelique)*[28] would be

> *a living Gospel, in whom each student can read how to imitate Jesus Christ and be a true Christian. In a word, you should live in such a way that you will be saying to those whom you teach what Paul said to the Corinthians: 'Take me for your model, as I take Christ' (1 Cor 11:1).* [29]

Marcellin, in requiring them to show good example, was not merely urging them to be careful about their words and behaviours. Much more than that, he was telling them as educators that they were the Gospel itself. It was their 'love, faith, and purity of heart' that would be 'read by their students'.[30] The implication is that the integrity of

26 In *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch.5 (just before the chapter on the crib, cross and altar) we find a list of ten 'kinds of Brothers' that 'Father Champagnat did not like.' One among them are 'les frères prêcheurs', 'Preacher Brothers'.

27 Brother Jean-Baptiste begins his collection of Marcellin's teachings – the book we know as *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* ¬– with a chapter entitled 'What is a Brother? according to Father Champagnat'. This expression is taken from that chapter.

28 *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch. 37

29 *Ibid.*

30 Marcellin cites 1 Tim 4:12,16 to make this point. *Ibid.*

the Marist is not sourced simply in a person's actions aligning with his or her words. Genuine Marists are, more deeply, people whose interior lives have fired them, an interiority in which they have encountered Christ at the crib, cross and altar. Marcellin quotes Vincent de Paul in saying that people will respond with their hearts when the one evangelising speaks with words that burn with divine love that come from the heart, something that is fired and sustained only by prayer.[31] As the Founder saw it, people who are attentive to their inner selves, and meet Christ there, will become like St Paul who can only exclaim 'Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel!' (1 Cor 9:16).[32] He could do or be naught else. Or, in Marcellin's own words, as they came to be written into the Brothers' Rule:

> *To make Jesus Christ known, to make him loved, this is the whole purposes of the Institute. If we were to fail in this purpose, our Congregation would be useless.*[33]

It is for this reason that Marcellin regarded the work of the teacher so highly. Following Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, he used the term 'ministry' to describe the teacher's work. This was unusual, if not controversial. At the Council of Trent, the term *'ministerium'* had been reserved exclusively for the ordained priesthood, and a theology developed around the sanctity and very ontology of the clerical state. De la Salle saw it differently,[34] as did Marcellin. If the educator was the one who lived among young people and whose own life was the Gospel that brought these people to a knowledge and love of Christ, then what could be more important? Marcellin, indeed, was given to using quasi-eucharistic language for the ministry of the religious teacher: 'Break open for them the holy bread of religion,' he wrote to the Brothers.[35]

Brother François went further. He described Jesus as a catechist, and as a model for catechists. Rather than preaching, Jesus sat among people and conversed with them: this was how the Brothers should be, François proposed, if they were to model themselves on Jesus. More than that, they would be exercising

> *… a ministry that Jesus has, as it were, divinised through exercising it himself. He passed this sublime mission onto the apostles, who transmitted it to their successors, in whose name we act.*[36]

The religious educator therefore acts *in persona Christi*, not in any hierarchical sense but as a living Gospel, an incarnation of divine love. Of its essence, the Gospel is news, and news is to be shared. For the Marist, this sharing happens through education of the young, so that each young person could become a good Christian and a good citizen. Frequently, in the writings of Brothers François and Jean-Baptiste, the ministry of teaching is described with words such as 'sublime', 'exalted' and 'esteemed'.[37] Like Marcellin, François roots the life of the educator in a personal love and knowledge of Christ. This is not to be any infantile or overly emotive relationship for the person, but one that is expressed through the maturing and flowering of the best of the human spirit. François draws heavily from Colossians 3 and Romans 6 to describe a person's coming to a new life in Christ. It is from this that someone can become a genuine expression of the gospel of love.

Lest we be beginning to feel that all this language is a little presumptuous – who am I to be using such elevated narrative about my imperfect efforts? – let us recall who these first Brothers were. The people whom Marcellin, François and Jean-

31 Ibid.

32 *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch.22

33 Brother Jean-Baptiste, *The Life*. Part 2, Ch.6. Successive editions of the Brothers' Constitutions have included these words, typically in the opening paragraphs. The 1986 Constitutions were typical: in Paragraph 2 the phrase 'to make Jesus known and loved' is described as the purpose for which the Institute was founded.

34 St Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, in his *Meditations*, writes extensively of the ministry of teaching. He draws on Scripture, especially St Paul, e.g. 1 Cor 2-6; 1 Cor 12:4-30. For him, the Brothers were certainly 'ministers' as they were 'co-workers with Christ'.

35 Letter 63, Circular to the Brothers, 19 January 1836.

36 Brother François here is drawing directly on Rodriguez *(Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, Part 3, 1st treatise, Ch.2), no doubt introduced to him by Father Champagnat.

37 This is recurring through François' notebooks (cf. #308). It is a theme of Brother Jean-Baptiste's treatise *The Apostolate of the Marist Brother* (see Ch.3) and peppered through the last five chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*.

Baptiste were extolling as 'living gospels' and affirming in their 'sacred' tasks and 'divine' work of educating, were, by and large, roughish young men, of limited education and professional readiness, mostly from the most modest of circumstances. Then, also, let us not forget who it was that Jesus chose. Talent, intelligence, refinement, personal resources – these were not the criteria which Marcellin sought in the first place. It was humility. He certainly attended with considerable effort to developing the personal and professional development of his Brothers, but it was a spiritual disposition to which he gave priority.

But not with overnight success! A survey of the extant letters of Marcellin to his Brothers reveals they were a motley mob. 'Rough stones', Marcellin once called them, and included himself in that category. Yet this did not dissuade him from the highest of regard for both them and their work. His approach was to encourage and to call them to see the extraordinary purpose of their ordinary efforts. They were 'sowers of the gospel', he told them:

> *Note that I said sower and not reaper. Why? In order to teach some of us who complain about their lack of success and who think that the children do not get anything out of their teaching, because the latter don't seem very pious, or stay away from church services and the sacraments, or drift with the current of poor example as soon as they have left school. Listen, those of you who talk that way. The season for harvesting crops is not the one when you cultivate the ground to make it fit to produce them. The seed doesn't spring up the minute you drop it into the furrow. For a while, it almost seems lost; but bad weather and even all the rigours of winter do not destroy it. Even while you are complaining, the seed is sprouting in the hearts of your children, and it will appear on the surface in its own time.*[38]

Marcellin wanted, he said, 'Gospel workers' – people who could be sowers of the Gospel through they themselves being the Gospel. And for that, there could be no better expression than the maxim that Jean-Baptiste de la Salle promoted with his Brothers: 'Live Jesus in our hearts!', the response being: 'Forever!' At the top of the pages of Marcellin's most personal correspondence, he wrote the letters 'VJMJ'. It was something novel: while putting 'JMJ' on a page was a common enough Catholic practice (one that people of a certain age would well remember from their days in Catholic schooling), the preceding 'V' was unusual. At the time in France, groups tended to have mottos which they abbreviated to a series of letters like this. Marcellin seemed to have coined 'VJMJ' for his motto, and this was continued by the Institute of the Marist Brothers on its official documents for a long time afterwards. We cannot be certain, however, what Marcellin meant by the 'V'. Was he using it in the sense that the French might exclaim 'Vive le Roi!' (Long live the King!) or 'Vive la France' (Glory to France!)? Possibly. But he might also have intended it in the sense that de la Salle and de Sales did: Live Jesus! And do that by living in the spirit of Mary and of Joseph.

We may never resolve that little riddle, but we can be in no doubt that 'bringing Christ-life to birth' in oneself and in others 'and nurturing its growth', as *Water from the Rock* puts it,[39] was at the heart of the spiritual life as Marcellin wanted to foster it. In everyone.

38 *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch.1

39 *Water from the Rock*, ## 11; 26.

Brother Ben Consigli, FMS

Courageous Marists

The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are – and will be – defined by choices. Myriad stories have already been told in print, audio, video, and photography. We've seen or heard of makeshift morgues in refrigerated trucks in New York City or ice rinks in Spain; selfless doctors and nurses struck down by the virus; and countless others on the front lines whose courage serves as an example of self-sacrifice for the whole. We are witnessing many acts of courage, generosity, compassion, and community that provide inspiration and underline the power of our humanity.

The weeks in "lockdown" got me to thinking about *why* people act courageously. I fell to pondering the biblical story of the widow's mite. Jesus, who has traveled with his disciples to Jerusalem for the Passover, is watching those who come to make their offerings to the temple treasury. He draws the disciples' attention to a widow who has given two small coins, saying that while others gave out of their abundance, she gave "all that she had, even all her living." How would he have known this? Perhaps she gave one coin, hesitated, and then, in defiance of circumstance, tossed the other after it. The meaning of the story is that an act of true generosity is an act of courage. A number of authors, including author Stacy Mitch, called this **"courageous generosity."**[1] In both Mark and Luke, the point is made that the widow has not one but two coins, together equaling one mite. Since she is a poor widow, if she had given one coin and kept one, she'd have been generous by any ordinary standard. But she gave them both. And since there was nothing in her experience to encourage the expectation of any material reward for her gesture, I think it might be best to imagine a kind of pure gallantry in it, an act of loyalty to what she loved best, a gift made freely, and in many ways courageously, in contempt of circumstance. Just as we can only practice courage in the face of fear, we can only practice generosity in the face of need.

In our Marist history, we have many examples of our Brothers who acted generously and courageously, whether it was during the revolutionary years in France in the 1830s and 1840s, the Civil War in Spain during the 1930s, or the Rwandan genocide and the Islamist revolutions in the African continent in the 1990s. But I found that not much was written about our Brothers during the Second World War.

Times of crisis generate extreme moral dilemmas: situations we cannot begin to imagine, unthinkable choices emerging between options that all seem bad, each with harms and negative outcomes. Generous courage means doing the right thing even at the risk of inconvenience, ridicule, punishment, loss of job or security, social status, and even death. This type of courage requires that a person rise above the apathy, complacency, hatred, cynicism, and fear mongering in our political systems, socioeconomic divisions, and cultural/religious differences to do "what is right" in the midst of our common humanity.

Countless of professional articles have been written about courage. These articles indicate that people who possess courage have certain characteristics which come to the forefront in times of trial or distress. Courageous people believe in themselves. They know who they are and what they stand for. They have strong values, recognize their personal capabilities, and are confident in meeting the challenges that lie before them. They are passionate and purposeful and know the difference between right and wrong. They do not just talk about honor; they live it every day. They are more likely to be trustworthy, objective, fair, and tolerant, and willing to stand up against injustice — backing their words with action. They also put other people's needs ahead of their own and are not afraid of "swimming against the tide" or challenging the

1 *Courageous Generosity: A Bible Study for Women on Heroic Sacrifice*. Published 2009.

status quo. They stare adversity in the eye — running toward the problem rather than away from it. They know that saying "no" to one idea may enable them to say "yes" to another, and that old ways of doing things should not stand in the way of a better solution. Courageous people follow their intuition. If information required to make a good decision is not available, they usually follow their "gut", their instincts, and given that, they know that it is not enough to talk about doing something — instead, they act. Courage is required to act even when one has doubts or fears about the consequences. It takes courage to make the difficult choices. Let us look at some of the actions of our Brothers during the second World War.

The Second World War

World War II (1939-1945) proved to be the deadliest international conflict in history, taking the lives of 60 to 80 million people, including 6 million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust. Of the 6 million killed, approximately 1.5 million children. Civilians made up an estimated 50-55 million deaths from the war, while military comprised 21 to 25 million of those lost during the war. Millions more were injured, and still more lost their homes and property.

It was during these war years in both Europe and the Pacific, that many courageous everyday heroes emerged to stand up to the terror imposed by militaristic and fascist regimes. Some of these heroes would survive the war, others were not as fortunate. All demonstrated a humanity that history shows persists even in the darkest of times. Of these everyday heroes, nine were Marist Brothers.

In Budapest, Hungary[2]

Brother Albert Pfleger, a French-born Marist Brother, served in Budapest, Hungary, during the war by running Champagnat, an all boys' school, together with seven other Marist Brothers, some of whom were French and others Hungarian. The Germans entered Budapest on March 19, 1944. Due to the onslaught of Allied bombings, the schools in Budapest were closed and most of the Hungarian children were evacuated to provincial areas. However, the Jewish children were left in the ghettos. The Budapest ghetto was a Nazi ghetto set

up in Budapest, Hungary, where Jews were forced to relocate by a decree of the Government. In October 1944, after the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party, led by Ferenc Szalasi, took over the country, the plight of the Jews inside and outside the ghettos worsened, and terrorism became commonplace.

A reign of terror had begun, especially in Budapest. Jews were massacred in the street and in their homes. Thousands of them were banished to Austria and the rest, about a hundred thousand, were concentrated in a ghetto under horrible conditions. Bands of murderers roamed the streets, and any activity on behalf of Jews was extremely dangerous. Ultimately, Szálasi's men murdered somewhere between 10,000-15,000 Hungarian Jews. More than half of those that were forced into the ghetto in 1944 were sent to concentration camps, starting almost immediately from the establishment of the ghetto. From occupation to liberation (November 1944 to January 1945), the Jewish population of Budapest was reduced from 200,000 to 70,000 in the ghetto. The Brothers, led by Brother Albert, engaged in their rescue work in this climate. Among the Brothers who served at Champagnat during these years were **Brothers Bernard Clerc, Jean-Baptiste Bonetbelz, Alexandre Hegedus (Brother Joseph), Louis Prucser, Ferdinand Fischer, François Angyal, and Ladislas Pingiczer (Brother Etienne).**

Jews who knew the Brothers began to seek refuge at the school and at the Brothers' residence. Escaped French prisoners and deserters from the German army, including men born in Alsace and Moseille, also found refuge there. Some civilians

2 The following information has been taken directly from the historical records of Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

came on their own initiative; others, whose relatives had disappeared or been abducted or shot, were escorted to the school by Brother Albert, who habitually, alone or accompanied by another Brother, walked the streets of the Budapest ghetto. The Brothers opened the doors of their monastery both to Jews and non-Jews. The place was full beyond capacity, taking in about a hundred Jewish children and about fifty adults, the children's parents or grandparents. The Marists placed their bedrooms at the disposition of the refugees and slept in the corridors or wherever they could, so they could save as many people as possible. With so many people sheltered in the monastery, it was sometimes necessary for fifteen people to huddle in one room. Not only did they provide food and lodging, they obtained forged documents for their protégés from the Swedish Red Cross. The most formidable difficulty, however, was keeping the refugees safe. The Brothers drilled them, preparing for German raids, and everyone knew his or her hiding place in case of emergency. During the drills, the Brothers even picked up the elderly on their shoulders and hoisted them into their hiding places under the rafters of the roof. In this huge rescue undertaking, the Brothers exerted themselves to locate new hiding places in other religious or private homes for people who could no longer be admitted to the Marist compound because of the overcrowded conditions.

By hiding such a large number of refugees in a religious house situated right in the middle of Pest, these men placed themselves in extreme danger. However, the Brothers regarded this act of rescue as their duty. To those who told them the possible consequences of their actions, they replied, "If they come to arrest the refugees, we will go to prison with them; otherwise we will not have completed our action." On December 19, 1944, after an informer gave them away, the SS raided the residence and the school and arrested everyone hiding there, including the eight Brothers. Tortured, starved, and subject to disease in their prison, the Brothers, with great courage, refused to reveal which of their protégés were Jews. Many Jews owed their lives to the actions of these courageous men. Their own lives were saved thanks to a fire that broke out in the Ministry of Interior where they were being held, putting their executioners to flight. Several weeks later, thanks to the intercession of the Swedish Red Cross and the papal nuncio, they were formally released. After the war, recalling his rescue by the Marists, one of the beneficiaries of their actions said: "They considered it the most natural thing to help us…If not for their humane deeds, I would not be here today able to testify on their behalf. We survivors express our deepest gratitude to them from the depths of our hearts."

On February 26, 1981, Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, recognized Brothers Albert Pfleger, Bernard Clerc, Jean Baptiste Bonetbelz, Louis Prucser, and Alexandre Hegedus (Brother Joseph) as **Righteous Among the Nations**.

In Rome, Italy[3]

The Ghetto of Rome had been established in 1555, and by the time of the Second World War, was a little over 400 years old. The ghetto consisted of four cramped blocks around the Portico d'Ottavia, wedged between the Theatre of Marcellus, the Fontana delle Tartarughe, Palazzo Cenci, and the river Tiber. When Nazi Germany occupied Rome two days after the Italian surrender to the Allies on 8 September 1943, 8,000 Italian Jews were in Rome, one-fifth of all Jews in Italy. On the morning of 16 October 1943, 365 German security and police forces sealed off the Ghetto, turning it into a virtual prison. A total of 1,259 people, mainly members of the Jewish community–

3 The following information has been taken directly from the historical records of Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

numbering 363 men, 689 women, and 207 children–were detained by the Gestapo. Of these detainees, 1,023 were identified as Jews and deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Of these deportees, only fifteen men and one woman survived.

In Rome and in other parts of Italy, many Christian professionals (writers, artists, doctors) attempted to save their Jewish colleagues; Christian employees aided Jewish employers; Jewish employees were helped by Christian bosses; and Gentile wives helped save their Jewish husbands and children.

It is within this context, that the efforts of **Brother Alessandro Di Pietro** came into play. He was the headmaster of San Leon Magno, a Marist school which was originally located at 124 Montebello Street in Rome. At the time, the school's enrolment was about 900 boys.

The Minerbi family (comprised of Arturo Minerbi, an engineer, his wife Fanny (née Ginzburg) and their son Sergio) lived in Rome. Fanny had gone to Warsaw in 1940 to bring her parents to Rome and had witnessed the Nazi brutality to Jews. After the October 1943 raid of the Rome ghetto by the Germans, the Minerbi family decided to leave their home at 24 Ravenna

Street and take refuge with Catholic friends. Shortly afterwards, Fanny Minerbi decided to find a safer hiding place for her son. She turned to Brother Alessando asking his help. He in turn admitted her son, Sergio, into the school. During his stay at the school, Sergio was treated fairly and eventually became aware that among his fellow students there were more Jews, mostly Italian but also several refugees from Germany, France and Belgium.

The Jewish children attended classes, mixing in with all the other students and shared life with the other boarding students, eating and sleeping on the site. Day and night, for all practical purposes, their safety was assured. In all, the school opened its doors to 24 Jewish boys and 10-12 Jewish adults and some Italian army deserters.

For obvious reasons, the safety of the adults who received their meals and lodging at the school was more problematic, especially at night. During the day, they ate and then left the school to go into the city. The big fear was that authorities would appear uninvited to carry out nighttime inspections. Thus, Brother Alessandro met with the men and planned what to do in the event of such a visit. A warning signal was agreed upon and an escape route devised: the men would use a staircase leading to safety in the Aurelian walls east of the school, remaining hidden until the undesirable visitors no longer posed a threat. If inspectors managed to find them, the men were to jump from the walls; if that became necessary, they knew the lowest jumping-off point along the wall. As things turned out, there were no inspections, and everyone was able to leave

4 The following informaton is taken directly from Brother Lawrence McCane's book, Melanesian Stories: The Marist Brothers in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, 1845-2003. Published by the Marist Brothers in 2004.

and once more know true freedom, even during the difficult days right after the War.

Over time, another Brother, Angelo Oreggia, was able to obtain counterfeit identity cards for the Minerbi family members and for some others from a local municipality clerk. While Arturo and Fanny and their fathers, all of whom survived the war, found shelter with different persons in Rome, Sergio remained at the school until the liberation of Rome on the 4th of June 1944. Alessandro's actions and those of his fellow Brothers were motivated by human and religious ideals. High risks were involved and there was never any expectation of receiving material compensation. **Dr. Sergio Minerbi,** a retired Israeli ambassador and former professor at the University of Jerusalem, never forgot his generous rescuer. On July 16, 2001, Yad Vashem recognized **Brother Alessandro Di Pietro as Righteous Among the Nations.** In receiving this honor, Brother Alessandro stated, *"I am deeply grateful and accept this honor, not for myself, but as a representative of all of us brothers at San Leone Magno Institute who made up that community. Actually, it was the community's decision to open our doors to those 24 Jewish boys and some ten adults. All the brothers worked together, each in his own way, knowing that we all ran a grave risk."*

In Bougainville in the South Pacific[4]

Between 9 March and 5 April 1942 during World War II, forces of the Empire of Japan occupied the islands of Buka and Bougainville in the South Pacific. At that time, these islands were part of the Australian-administered Territory of New Guinea. A platoon of Australian commandos from the 1st Independent Company was located at Buka Airfield when the Japanese landed but did not contest the invasion.

The Japanese invaded to construct naval and air bases to provide security for their major base at Rabaul, New Britain, and to support strategic operations in the Solomon Islands. After the occupation of Buka and Bougainville, the Japanese began constructing several airfields across the island. The main airfields were on Buka Island, on the nearby Bonis Peninsula and at Kahili and Kieta, while naval bases were also constructed at Buin in the south and on the nearby Shortland Islands. These bases allowed the Japanese to conduct operations in the southern Solomon Islands and to attack the Allied lines of communication between the US and the Southwest Pacific Area. It is in this context that the Marist Brothers continued their ministry to the people of the Pacific islands. The Marists worked hard, usually in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, bent on improving schooling and the physical circumstances of the students. To this end, they published books, adapted curricula, built classrooms, houses, dormitories, swimming pools and dams, and established gardens. These Brothers were dedicated to the work of improving the lot of the people of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands, particularly through education.

(From left) Brothers Augustine Mannes, John Roberts, Donatus Fitzgerald

In late 1940 and early 1941, Bishop Thomas Wade, SM, asked for Australian Marist Brothers to open a school in his Vicariate. The new Australian Provincial, Brother Arcadius, responded positively, and despite the looming Pacific war, committed three Brother for the North Solomon Islands. The three brothers – **Augustine Mannes, John Roberts and Donatus Fitzgerald** – arrived between August and October of 1941 to help run an already established school at Chabai.

Chabai was a catechetical boarding school, with a curriculum of basic English and Mathematics, religion, and practical subjects. It was well-organised, with a good balance of lessons, free time, and manual work in the school's extensive food gardens. At the time, the school had an enrolment of about 100 students; it was well-regarded, and the young men were happy there.

By mid-November 1942, the Japanese counter-attack on Guadalcanal had been repelled and their whole southern thrust brought to a halt. The Marists of the South Solomons were out of danger. In the North, however, the changed fortunes of war were reflected in Japanese treatment of the missionaries. Those from enemy countries were weeded out.

Starting in March of 1942, the Japanese came to Bougainville and Buka and began searching for anyone who may be supplying the American forces with information via radio communication. In May 1942, the Japanese visited the school, and after the students, who were instructed to go home or face death by the Japanese, left, only the three brothers remained. The Japanese, who suspected the Brothers were spies, made repeated visits to their school and required them to report regularly to the Japanese headquarters on Sohano Island. On 15 August 1942, a week after the first battered aircraft from Guadalcanal returned to Buka, the three Australian Marist Brothers were taken from the catechist school at Chabai and imprisoned on Sohano. They were never seen again.

The most likely scenario is that the Brothers were brought to Sohano to be interrogated. Of course, the Brothers had no information to provide, as they had only arrived on the island in October of 1941. At some point the Japanese commander decided that the Brothers were of no further use to his cause and ordered their execution in either late October or early November 1942. They were beheaded by Japanese war sword and their bodies burned on Sohano Island.

In November 1943, Allied forces landed on the west coast of Bougainville as part of the latter stages of Operation Cartwheel and began building air bases to assist in the isolation and neutralisation of Rabaul. Eventually, the U.S. Marines landed at Cape Torokina and established a beachhead within which the Allies would construct three airfields. The invasion force was later replaced by U.S. Army soldiers in January 1944, and these were replaced by Australian Militia troops in October 1944. The campaign ended with the surrender of Japanese forces in August 1945. While the war ended, the story of these three courageous Brothers lives on in those to whom they ministered as well as their fellow Marist Brothers.

The Mission lived from Marist Attitudes

Our Rule of Life encourages us to *"go out to meet children and young people where you find them. Draw close to them, taking an interest in their lives and welcoming them into yours. Journey with them in their struggles, their searching, their suffering… Be a brother to each of them: close, accessible, human. You will win their confidence by your attentive and hospitable presence."* [ROL #85][5] The Marist Brothers mentioned in this reflection did just that. They recognised that God had given them gifts and talents and asked them to use them in many ways in the service of Christ and the young people entrusted to their care. They followed the example of Christ and lived lives of courageous generosity. Could this be the narrow way taught by Jesus—the way that asks us to put ourselves second, the way that turns our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh and allows us to see the face of God in one another? I think so.

These Marist Brothers made their lives and their work *"a prophetic sign of God's reign and God's abundant love."* In very human and subtle ways, they never forgot that they were sent on mission as a sign of God's maternal tenderness and the fraternal love that they shared in Christ. May we never forget their courageous generosity.

Brother Ben Consigli, FMS
Marist Brothers' Generalate, Rome, 25 May 2020

5 *Wherever You Go: The Marist Brothers Rule of Life*, published In Rome, Italy, 2020.

Fiona Dyball

Singing and Living "Hallelujah"

– Class Based Liturgical Choir in the Secondary Religious Education Curriculum

Abstract

In 2020, Marcellin College in Victoria, Australia, offers a class-based liturgical choir subject as part of their Religious Education elective curriculum for students in year 9 and 10. This subject is a response to supporting and embedding Catholic Identity in a creative and interdisciplinary way that builds on the lived tradition of music making as a way to support and sustain faith development. Music is a key way to evangelise young people. It is also scientifically proven that singing with others promotes social bonds, has physiological benefits, is cognitively stimulating, and promotes health and wellbeing. For intergenerational faith communities, singing what we believe allows our sung prayer to become part of a shared life identity: lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi. This paper addresses the rationale for including this subject in the Catholic secondary school as a complementary Religious Education elective, and the multifaceted resources and practices that will be used to support the learning. Inherent in the design of the subject are user-friendly contemporary resources and foundational Church documents. The vision is to empower students to deepen their prayer life in community, and to enrich their own faith communities beyond the school context by practical and holistic liturgical formation.

Luke 1: 46 "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my saviour…"

Marcellin College is a Catholic Marist Secondary School with an enrolment of 1400 boys ranging in age from 12 to 18 years of age. The school is situated in Bulleen, Victoria, Australia and retains its strong links with the Marist Brothers who founded the school in 1950. The Marists, an order founded in France in 1817 by the French Marist priest St Marcellin Champagnat, see their key mission in the world as *making Jesus Christ known and loved*.[1] To achieve this in the educational context, St Marcellin believed that to educate children, first you needed to love them, and to love them all equally.[2] This aspiration is carried through and supported in contemporary Marist schools around the world that are now overwhelmingly staffed by committed lay people from a range of nationalities, and who come from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. Marists across the world form a unified tree with many branches: Marist Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and Marist Laity in partnership. And Marist schools can now be both single-sex or co-educational.

In educating young people, St Marcellin sought to form good Christians and good citizens by embracing and sharing a practical and down to earth charism that openly valued and lived family spirit, love of hard work, simplicity, and presence, all in the "way" of Mary. This "way" is typically characterised by the faithful and patient accompaniment of people, especially those on the margins of society. The motto of the Marists is *"All to Jesus, through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus"*[3] and Mary's great song of praise, the *Magnificat*, forms the unofficial manifesto of the Institute.[4] Marist

1 Ed. Br AMEstaun, *Water From the Rock* (Rome: Institute of the Marist Brothers, 2010), Article 19, 135.

2 John-Baptist Furet, *Life of Marcellin*, (Rome: Institute of the Marist Brothers, 1989), XXIII, 538.

3 Ed. AMEstaun, *Water From the Rock*, Article 25, 30.

4 Br Michael Green FMS, Foreword to *Magnificat* by Br Michael Herry FMS (Melbourne: Marist Music Publishing, 2015).

priests and brothers have a tradition of singing the *Salve Regina* in both their morning and evening prayer, and every Marist school community knows and sings the *Sub Tuum* at significant events. The text of the *Sub Tuum* comes from the Vespers service in the Egyptian Coptic liturgy and is dated around the year 250, making it the oldest known written hymn to Mary. It is now most often sung in Latin in Marist schools to a traditional keyboard musical accompaniment that was written in the 19th century by the Jesuit priest, Louis Lambilotte.[5]

Song is a foundational part of living Gospel joy in the Catholic tradition, and singing was and is a key part of Marist education across the world. St Marcellin himself was a fine singer and sang with his students and his Brothers every day: he understood the great power of singing with others in community to help build a shared identity and strong group cohesion; to help people grieve and to support them in their sorrow; and to celebrate together in joy. The voice is also an instrument that is free and accessible to all. In 19th century France where the Catholic church was rebuilding after the violence and excesses of the French revolution, St Marcellin employed methods of faith development that were simple, deeply embodied, and easily understood by people, regardless of their level of formal education, or their age.

The 21st century Australian context for the Catholic Church is one that lives with the reality of the aftermath of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse in Institutions. In their 2013 book *Education from a Catholic Perspective*, McKinney and Sullivan prophetically asserted that

> *"Maintaining Catholic identity in Catholic educational institutions emerges as the challenge for Catholic education, in a 21st century cultural context that is increasingly ambivalent if not hostile, to religion."*[6]

St Marcellin found himself and his brothers in a situation in post-revolutionary France where there was also considerable, and in many places deserved, ambivalence to the institutional Catholic Church. In response to his own and his students demonstrated love of singing popular French folk tunes, St Marcellin mandated regular singing of sacred songs in all his schools. 21st century neuroscience backs up his choice of using music as a key way to evangelise, teach, pray, and celebrate. Contemporary neuroscience confirms that sung text, especially in songs sung with others, is readily embedded into a person's long-term memory, with song evoking strong memories of time, person, and place. Other memories may decline but music, especially songs a person has enjoyed with others, will remain. This is demonstrated in studies with people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease who can still readily sing songs from their youth.[9] Singing together is also a powerful way to bond people, to create positive emotions, and to solidify identity.[10] St Marcellin's practical nature saw him adopt singing as a way to help people receive and remember the Word, and to also support attendance and participation at and in communal worship in and out of the school context, especially at the celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of Catholic and Marist life.[11]

Marcellin College honours this spirit of the founder of the Marists in supporting

communal singing as a way to support and sustain Gospel joy with students and teachers. In its own new *Polaris* learning program document, Marcellin College describes itself as

> *"an inclusive faith learning community where encounter with the self, place, God, and the other, creates opportunities for every young man to unlock his inherent possibility."*[12]

5 Ed. Very Rev. Peter G. Williams (Chair), *Catholic Worship Book ll* (Melbourne: Morning Star Publishing, 2016), 419.

6 Ed. S.J Mc Kinney & J. Sullivan, *Education in a Catholic perspective*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 29.

7 J.R Keeler, *"The neurochemistry and social flow of singing: bonding and oxytocin," Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 23 September 2015. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2015.00518

8 Lutz Jancke, *"Music, memory and emotion," Journal of Biology* 7:21 (2008): 21.1-21.5.

9 Robert DeLauro, *"Music and Memory – Elders With Dementia Find Hope in a Song,"* Social Work Today, Vol. 13, No.1, (Jan/Feb 2013), 18.

10 John-Baptist Furet, *Life of Marcellin Part 2*, (Rome: Institute of the Marist Brothers, 1989), XXII.

11 Ibid.

12 Marcellin College, *Polaris*, (Bulleen: Marcellin College, 2019), 4.

Singing, especially group singing of Roman Catholic sacred music, is a desired and intentional part of living the Marist charism in the context of this particular Catholic school.

The foundational document on liturgy from Vatican ll, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *(Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963), is clear in according a high value to musical training in Catholic schools. Article 115 states that

> *"Great importance is to be attached to the teaching and practice of music in … Catholic institutions and schools. To impart this instruction, teachers are to be carefully trained and put in charge of the teaching of sacred music."* [13]

Choral groups that sing some sacred repertoire are already part of the co-curricular program at Marcellin College but *Singing Hallelujah* is a Semester-based core curriculum subject that explicitly teaches Catholic sacred music. This is a deeper response to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The subject is embedded in the Year 9 and 10 Depth Stage academic curriculum as part of the *Polaris* learning program. The subject is an inter-disciplinary elective from the Religious Education and Music Departments that is offered as part of *Polaris'* Religious Education Depth Stage subject choices. The *Singing Hallelujah* course allows students to rehearse, sing, and play repertoire that is especially tailored to Prayer Services and Masses that take place in the school year.

The course also studies the Catholic Mass and Prayer Service forms to empower students to understand the context of liturgical and devotional music within these forms of communal worship in the Catholic tradition. The course gives a framework for discerning where sacred music is best placed to serve rather than dominate in any ritual context. It is grounded in the foundational Vatican ll documents *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Musicam Sacram* that inform liturgical music planning, composition, and practice. Australian liturgical music directives from the Australian Catholic Bishops are also referenced, as found in the 2016 Catholic Worship Book ll. The subject explores key differences between the more communal emphasis on the triune God that is typically expressed in the context of the Mass (we and God) and the more devotional and personal context that is more regularly found in a Prayer Service or on a Retreat (me and Jesus) in a way that is age appropriate for students at these year levels.

Questions explored within the course include: why we sing; how and why particular music is chosen and where to find appropriate resources; who sings, where, and why; what are key features of liturgical music; how does music serve the liturgy and an ongoing lived immersion in the paschal mystery (and what that is); and how the rich liturgical music tradition of the Church is to be maintained, while also allowing for new pieces to be created and included. Diverse repertoire in terms of genre that is theologically, musically, ritually and pastorally suited to the Catholic context will be explored and sung during the course and then applied in practice.[14] The course honours the power of music generally in people's lives and goes beyond the "how" into the essential "why." St Augustine, a great lover of music, had this to say about the place of song in the life of a Christian:

> *"A song is a thing of joy; more profoundly, it is a thing of love. Anyone, therefore who has learned to love the new life has learned to sing a new song, and the new song reminds us of our new life."*[15]

What we sing in any prayer matters deeply, as our sung prayer informs what we believe about God, and how we wish to live as followers of Christ: lex orandi, *lex credendi, lex vivendi*.[16] The songs sung in any prayer also crystallise images of God and cement them in long term memory. Singing of God's faithfulness, promises, mercy, creation, nature, and deeds reinforces an embodied sacramental worldview of all times and places being touched and held by the presence of a loving and accompanying God.

Singing Hallellujah is the only subject in eight subject offerings at the Year 9 and 10 level that looks at prayer and liturgy in some depth in the

13 Austin Flannery, O.P. *The Basic Sixteen Documents. Vatican Council ll* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2007), *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 115.

14 Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council ll*. Musicam Sacram, 5.

15 Augustine, *Sermons* (New York: New City Press, 1993), Sermon 34.

16 Don. E. Saliers, *Music and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 33.

curriculum at Marcellin College. Four electives may be chosen over a two year period at the Depth Stage. Liturgical Choir is included in subject offerings in Catholic Schools in other countries, notably in the United States, but this is a rare practice in Australia, where live and communally sung liturgical music can, unfortunately, be less explicitly included as a foundational and required element in Masses or Prayer Services. There are seven 53 minute lessons offered over a ten day timetable for 20 weeks in a Semester in the Singing Hallelujah course. Up to 28 students in the class will join with up to 100 other students from all year levels in the Champagnat Choir, the Marcellin Chamber Choir, and the Marcellin Junior Choir to support the College's liturgical program throughout the year. There is also one period per week given to the Music Leader (Voice) in the school so that they can explicitly teach traditional and contemporary sacred vocal repertoire with junior classes and their teachers who will prepare and run Masses.

There is a regular time on Thursday in the Champagnat Chapel given for Masses or Prayer Services, and this time acts as a practical focal point for students in the *Singing Hallelujah* class. Students will participate in these Masses each week as musicians and will plan and run Prayer Services and Masses on Thursdays as part of the assessments for the subject outcomes later in the Semester. It is envisaged that students will then be able to provide informed leadership in a range of ministry contexts beyond the course in helping plan and enliven Masses and Prayer services at Marcellin College, in partnership with teachers and other students who are rostered on for a Mass for a particular week. It is hoped that students can then be more encouraged and empowered to integrate into their local parishes and become active and engaged participants and leaders in the life of their community in both worship and mission contexts.

The extensive liturgical calendar in the school sees students sing for over 70 liturgical events during the course of a normal academic year, with two Masses each year at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne, and whole school Masses every term for different highlight events. These include The Induction and Commissioning Mass, St Marcellin Champagnat's Feast Day Mass, Mass for the Feast of the Assumption, and the Yr 12 Valedictory Mass. The liturgical program works in partnership with the extensive Christian service options available for students so that students see and celebrate the link between liturgy and life. Catholic Identity is underpinned by a dynamic balance and relationship between worship and mission. Both are explicitly acknowledged as being necessary for students to live their lives grounded and fed in Christ.

The purpose of liturgical music follows and supports a key purpose of liturgy itself:

to be a means for the Christian community to respond to and participate in God's saving work in Christ.[17] In including a subject like *Singing Hallelujah* in the core Religious Education curriculum offerings, Marcellin College honours both St Marcellin Champagnat's practices, the directives of Vatican ll, and the call to all Christians that is found in Ephesians 5: 18-20 to

> *"…be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The title of the course, *Singing Hallelujah*, is both a play on perceptions of "Hallelujah" that can be recognised in the soaring grandeur of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* in the oratorio Messiah, and in Leonard Cohen's broken, beautiful, and haunting contemporary ballad, *Hallelujah*. Praise and lament, as found in the ancient songbook of the Psalms, make their home together in the Catholic tradition. Both praising and lamenting allow believers to be fully alive in and through these two realities: God is with us in all things.[18] St Augustine's energised reflection on the power of singing God's praise, regardless of the road ahead, captures something of this complexity and integration of life:

> *O! What a happy alleluia there, how carefree, how safe from all opposition, where nobody will be an enemy, where no-one cease to be a friend!*

17 Anthony Ruff, OSB, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform: Treasure and Transformations* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2007), 50.

18 Ed. AMEstaun, *Water From the Rock,* Article 63, 44.

God praised there, God praised here; here, though by the anxious; there, by the carefree; here by those who will die, there, by those who are going to live for ever; here in hope, there in hope realized; here on the way; there at home.

So now, my dear brothers and sisters, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil. In the way that travellers are in the habit of singing; sing, but keep on walking… What's "keep on walking"?

Make progress, make progress in goodness.
There are some people, you see, according to the apostle, who progress from bad to worse.
You, if you're making progress, are walking; but make progress in goodness, progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behaviour.
Sing and keep on walking.[19]

In a contemporary world where the true riches of the Catholic faith can be marginalised and distorted at many turns, singing together the glorious mystery of the love of God that is present and singing in all of creation is a prophetic, courageous, and hope-filled act. This is the song that bursts forth as a gift for the ages from Mary in her *Magnificat:* she cannot help but sing of her gratitude to God for what God has done for her, and for all people. Her soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God, her saviour. With St Marcellin Champagnat, St Augustine, and Mary, Our Good Mother, may all people in Catholic schools be open to singing this song of thankfulness, joy, and praise to Christ throughout their lives, and with all those who accompany them on the shared journey of faith in community.

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19 Augustine, *Sermons* (New York: New City Press, 1993), Sermon 256, 168.

Br. Ben Consigli

A Marist Reflects on a Post-Pandemic World

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.[1]

L.R. Knost

A moment of lasting change

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a general sense that the world is at an historical turning point, a point in time when something happens that causes a shift or an irrevocable change in direction. The way I see it, the world is at a crossroad and has a choice to make - to turn one way or another. Continuing straight down the same path that led to the present disaster is not a realistic or attractive option. The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are – and will be – defined by choices. Some sociologists and political analysts believe that both choices involve more of the same state and global actors, but the real change will come from bottom-up popular movements and pressures and not from top-down political directives and machination.

As the rate of infections and deaths subside in some parts of the globe and rise in others and we begin to count the human, emotional, social, and economic cost of the epidemic, we will be faced with some great existential questions with which we will need to grapple and to answer: As a people, will we embrace nationalism, isolationism, selfishness, religious and racial bigotry, and outright neo-fascism or will we choose a more humane, open and compassionate "we-are-in-this-together" global approach to our common destiny? The answers will be found in the choices we make as a global family.

Where do these questions leave us as Marists?

So where do these questions leave us as Marists? Our history as an Institute has been full of new beginnings and choices. Our Rule of Life reminds us that in January of 1817, when Marcellin walked into the house at LaValla for the first time with two uneducated men, he chose to respond to the needs of his time and place.[2] His early decision to move out of the rectory and move in with the Brothers was a choice that had deep and lasting impact not only on the Brothers of Marcellin's day, but on those Marist leaders who followed him and saw their leadership style as one of close personal accompaniment of the Brothers entrusted to their care. Marcellin's choice to build the Hermitage when he had limited resources and little vocations seems providential today, but in the 1820's, many viewed it as fool-hardy.

Often enough, someone or something else determined the road that the Institute would travel and the destination at which we would arrive. Such was the case at the beginning of the 20th century when our Brothers in France were confronted with a new law on the *Separation of the Churches and State* and faced a similar challenge filled with choices.[3] If our Brothers in France wished to remain in education and to maintain their schools,

1 L.R. Knost is the founder and director of the children's rights advocacy and family consulting group, Little Hearts/Gentle Parenting Resources, and Editor-in-Chief of Holistic Parenting Magazine. I do not know the original source material for this quote.

2 Introduction to *Wherever You Go: The Marist Brothers' Rule of Life*. Publish in Rome, 2020.

3 Ibid.

they would need to be fully laicized (or at least laicized *pro forma*) or remain as religious, abandon their schools, and go into exile into other countries. Neither option guaranteed security nor an apparent way forward, yet a choice was made. Between 1901 and 1905, almost 1000 Brothers left France and established over 30 foundations in Europe, the Americas, Oceania, and Africa. When all was said and done, this historic impasse led to a significant turning point in our Institute's ability to fulfill its mission of making Jesus Christ known and loved in new lands with new possibilities.

Today, we are once again faced with an historic turning point. A pandemic has now determined the choices before us. With a looming global economic crisis and the prospect of hundreds of millions of workers losing their jobs and becoming even more impoverished, the potential for popular anger and an insular, tribal thinking taking over public sentiment should not be underestimated - especially, as the pandemic persists. Just a quick read of the world headlines in the media gives strong credence to this. In some places, the push for such a turn towards isolation and self-centeredness has already been set in motion by the hyper populist, nationalist culture of the last dozen years, which cynical populist leaders in a number of countries throughout the world are readily exploiting to solidify their power base.

As Christians, we are called to believe in a better world

Our Christian faith calls us to be a hope-filled people, neither "gentile nor Jew; servant or free", but a people united by our inheritance from Christ as children of God. A better world is possible, and the first necessary step in enacting such a world is to imagine what that better world should look like and what our mission as a people of God must be. The crises with which we now struggle invite us to rethink the fundamentals of our lives – work, school, economy, government, family, faith, and community, and to re-imagine the kind of world we would like to live in. Some who have begun to frame those questions have done so in both coarse and fine-grained ways, asking grand questions, like what does it mean to live in a society, what are our responsibilities to each other, can humanity survive climate change, as well as very specific questions like how do we meet the needs of the hungry, the jobless and the homeless in our midst?

The pandemic and its aftermath demand that we as an Institute rethink everything and that we come together to confront the challenges that we now face. What are the greatest needs in our community? How will they be met? How do we ensure that the most vulnerable among us are visible and heard? How do we want to or need to reframe our priorities considering the ongoing crises? How has the pandemic shaped our understanding of and ability to imagine what we want and what we need in light of the Gospel and of what is possible and what is necessary? What would we like to replace/change in a post-pandemic world? What needs to go and what ought to stay the same?

Journeying Together as a Global Family!

It is not sufficient for us to ponder these questions individually. We need to be doing this together. As Marists, we have the calls of our most recent General Chapter to guide us as we contemplate these questions collectively. In and of themselves, the calls hold true today as they did three years ago; the difference will be our responses to the calls. We cannot return to the previous "normal"; we need to shape a vision that goes beyond "recovery" from this pandemic.

Looking back at 22nd General Chapter, it is sometimes easy to forget this Chapter was the first to be held outside Europe, broadening our view of the world from the perspective of the southern hemisphere. The participants formed a rich and diverse community, gathered from all continents, all Provinces and Districts, Brothers and Lay Marists. Our Chapter was enriched by some very special moments and experiences. We stood with those who, during that time, were affected by the devastation of hurricanes, earthquakes, and violence, and we focused on crucial current and emerging realities in the various parts of the world where we minister. We were challenged to let go of old ways, of comfort and security, and to respond genuinely to new needs.[4]

The Chapter called us *to be a global charismatic*

4 *Journeying Together as a Global Family: The Message of the XXII General Chapter*. Published in Rome, January 2018.

family, a beacon of hope in this turbulent world, to be the face and hands of Jesus' tender mercy, to be bridge-builders so as to journey with children and young people on the margins of life, and to respond boldly to emerging needs.[5] These calls continue to contain concrete implications for all dimensions of our life and mission.

What does God ask of us today?

Marcellin Champagnat, too, was moved by the needs and possibilities of his surroundings and listened attentively to the Spirit, to discover what God was asking him at that point in time. Today, in a similar way, we are challenged to answer two fundamental questions in a pandemic-ravaged world:

Who is God asking us <u>to be</u>
in this emerging world?
What is God asking us <u>to do</u>
in this emerging world?

Answering those two questions will help us to wrestle with a myriad of others, such as: How can we best be a global charismatic family when national borders are closed, when the irrational fear of the immigrant, of "the other", is running rampant? How can we be beacons of light and bridge builders in a divided, and at times, violent world? How can we journey with those on the margins of life as the margin continues to grow and poverty increases? In a world that professes "me first" and places blame on others, how do we be the face and hands of God's tender mercy?

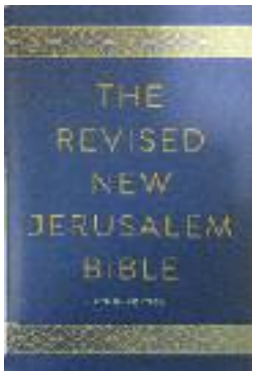
Our answers to these questions will profoundly impact the course of who we are and what we do as Marists in the years to come. As L.R. Knost so eloquently points out, it is not time but *intention* that affects change. Days, weeks, and months may pass, but what do we *intend* to do in this moment, in the time that is given us? Who can we inspire, touch, or help with our words or actions?

Big change happens when a lot of little changes come together. It is that ripple from the pebble that slowly moves into a wave. So, we need decide on what our intention, our choice, will be, and we must remember that "the broken world is waiting for our light".

Br. Ben Consigli
General House, Rome, Italy
10 June 2020

5 Ibid.

Book Reviews



The Revised New Jerusalem Bible is the third draft in the "Jerusalem" series. It presents anew the scholarship, character and clarity of the 1966 Jerusalem Bible and the 1990 New Jerusalem Bible. "This edition recognizes the most up-to-date developments in Biblical scholarship and meets the modern-day needs of the Church in terms of accuracy and accessibility." It is a scholarly production which is also accessible to non-professional students of scripture. It is also gender-inclusive: such a quality has been long overdue in an authentic translation of the Bible.

Printed and published in the USA in 2019 by Image, a division of Penguin Random House. The translator is **Dom Henry Wansborough OSB**; he made special mention of Australian Father Frank Maloney SDB who read the whole New testament transcript. Retained and updated are the study notes, cross-references, and book introductions that made the original versions so popular and so valuable a companion in one's ongoing spiritual journey.

Available in the usual Catholic bookshops.
(Br. Michael)

The Interior Castle is the first translation by anyone outside the Catholic Church of Teresa's classic writings on the spiritual life. **Mirabai Starr** is Adjunct Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of New Mexico. "Free of religious dogma, this modern translation renders St Teresa's work a beautiful and practical set of teachings for seekers of all faiths in need of spiritual guidance."

This text was the recommended translation for the on-line course on St Teresa offered by Richard Rohr's Centre for Action and Contemplation. Mirabai's translation is accessible and accurate in making present to us the Saint's remarkable exposition of the metaphorical Interior Castle and its seven mansions. As well there is a beautiful … poetic, even …initial writing in the introduction which is unlike anything we may have read previously. It begins: "There is a secret place. A radiant sanctuary. As real as your own kitchen. More real than that. Constructed of the purest elements. Overflowing with the ten thousand beautiful things." And so it goes.

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(Br. Michael)