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Marist Joint Formation Experience - Mittagong

Australia: Five day shared formation experience



Fourty Marists, Brothers and Lay, gathered to a five day shared formation experience. We started in at the Rocks as this is where the Marist Brothers began Marist Mission in Australia. There is a plaque to commemorate this on the exterior wall of the 50 storey business building which stands where the original school was. Using the inspiration of this beginning we too began to explore our Marist story.

Our group comes from Marist communities and Ministries all across

the Province of Sydney, as well as members from each of the other three units of our Region – the Province of Melbourne, the Province of New Zealand and the District of Melanesia.

Today we took up the areas of Faith and Vocation from a Marist perspective, hoping to grow in our appreciation of that which is common and that which is unique in our experience and understanding of these two areas for Marists.

Does God listen to us?

The prayer we address to our models of Marist sanctity

Under this title, this new document, presented with those already on our site www.Champagnat.org, reflects about the prayer we address to our models of Marist sanctity: does God listen to this prayer?

We often have the impression that God is not listening, and we enter prayer with a question mark, already expecting to be disappointed. Opposed to this experience are the graces and miracles which the Lord has granted us through the intercession of our Marist saints: our Founder, Br. François and the others, with an often so detailed description that our curiosity to know and our Marist interested are both satisfied. Sometimes the graces are truly surprising, and they can be very recent, even in this year 2010. Those who wish to know about the miracles which the Church has recognised for our Founder, first for his beatification and then for the canonisation, can find them in these pages.

The document offers also prayer formulas which we may address to our Founder, to our confessors: Brothers François, Alfano, Basilio, and also to our various groups of martyrs: Bernardo, Laurentino, Henri Vergès... Sometimes people are looking for these formulas and ask where to find them. These pages solve this problem.

Among the prayers, there are also formulas for the offering of the day in company with our Marist saints. They constitute a variation of the already numerous list of morning

offerings we are familiar with, but they add the Marist seal.

Of great interest also are the Marist litanies, certain short, others longer. They may replace the morning invocations before Lauds, or be simply integrated into evening prayer. These prayers are often very original, and include not only the comparatively few Brothers connected with causes of beatification and canonisation, but all the Brothers already in heaven and all Marist friends. Our family's holiness is like an iceberg, with the greater part remaining invisible, but still there.

This document places at our disposal information about the graces and miracles obtained in the Marist world and elsewhere through the intercession of our saints. It aims at encouraging us to prayer, the prayer of petition, but also the prayer of gratitude and praise. Prayer is always a place of revelation; dialoguing with the best members of the family creates a space of knowledge, admiration, and confidence. With true charity, it is the only instrument provided for us to obtain graces and miracles.

Does God listen? Prayer is already a grace; God is with us: turning us towards himself is already a way of listening to us. To pray to him is already to place oneself in the shadow of his love. We are sure that God is no magician; he does not want to be. But we are still more sure that God is our Father.



Australia - Mittagong XII Marist Forum

As we remembered the brave young Australians who answered the call to serve their country almost a century ago in Gallipoli, 21 young Marist students gathered at Le Rosey, Mittagong to explore their vocation in how to best serve others in the twenty first century.

The schools represented this weekend were: St Gregory's College, Campbelltown; Marist College, Canberra; Cerdon College, Merrylands; St Patrick's Marist College, Dundas; Marist College, Eastwood; St Francis Xavier's College, Hamilton; St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill; Marist College, North Sydney; Parramatta Marist High, Westmead; Marist Sisters, Woolwich.

The weekend was highly praised in the students' feedback and the success of this forum is due to the coordination by Julie Sligar and the generous time gifted by Young Marists members: Darren Fitzpatrick & Laurie Lawira. We were fortunate to have inspiring speakers who volunteered their times to share their own vocational stories: Michael & Sarah Gleeson, Fr Paul Ghanem ofm and Br Anthony Robertson fms.

The depth of sharing and the strong rapport established amongst the young people reflect very much how these Marist schools are nurturing strong and gentle hearts who value relationship and a greater sense of other. Marist Vocation is alive and well amongst these senior students.



A Call to Serve

USA: Francis Cardinal George visits Marist High School in Chicago



At the invitation of one of the Marist students, Joe Ward, Francis Cardinal George of Chicago made a visit to Marist High School, Chicago, IL on May 10, 2010. Joe was inspired to invite the Cardinal as part of his Peacebuilders Initiative Course at Catholic Theological Union, in Chicago.

Cardinal George celebrated the Eucharist with 4 Auxiliary Bishops of Chicago, nearly 50 pastors, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, the Marist Board of Directors, Marist Brothers and staff, as well as the 1800 students of the school.

Cardinal George reminded the gathering of their authentic call as Christians to make a difference in our world as Catholic leaders according to Gospel teachings.

Cardinal George now serves as the President of the United States of America Bishop Conference. Following the liturgy, he and his brother bishops enjoyed a visit to the Marist community and enjoyed interchange with the students, Brothers, and faculty who were gathered. Marist Brothers opened Marist High School in 1963; eight Marist Brothers minister at the high school.



Tropical storm Agatha hits Guatemala

Once again, Mother Nature has shown us her very ugly face and in Guatemala she has poured great amounts of rain and sand on us. The Pacaya volcano and the storm have seriously affected the whole country. The latest official news from Guatemala reports that the number of dead has increased to 156 while the total of those injured, evacuated and in need of shelter is greater than 400,000.

Conred, the official coordinator for such disasters, reports that the number of dead is still not determined as rescue work on the national level still continues. Hundreds of people are still missing and 87 have been injured. The official report reports that 135,773 people were affected, 55,614 injured, 135,394 evacuated and 36,149 homeless are in more than 300 shelters throughout the country. Furthermore, 36,149 remain at risk due to serious flooding, 24,472 homes were destroyed and another 5,872 are still in great danger.

Eighteen bridges were also reported with very serious damage, and there are close to 100 in need of repair, 21 stretches of road have been totally destroyed and 52 more have been damaged. The Marist Brothers and Sisters in Guatemala are offering assistance to the injured in shelters and refuge centers, as in zone 6 of the capital as in Chichicastenango where there are 300 people at the Marist Center.

Personnel from the Marist Fund (Fundamar) in El Salvador have offered help to those affected by hurricane Ida last year and are now offering the same help. The construction of five houses is being planned.



The Marist laity vocation and the youth

There are many young people interested in becoming "MARIST YOUTH". They want to be Lay Marists, but they are still at school; so I have told them that they can be « Marist youth ». Are there particular criteria for "Marist youth"? Do you have examples of rules for this group?

Traditionally, the term 'vocation' has been almost exclusively applied to religious and priestly life. For many lay people, the term is still not very clear and they are afraid to apply it to themselves. We Brothers need to help them understand that God has a call for everyone, and explain to them that there exists a lay Marist vocation, according to the charism of Champagnat. Like the Brothers' vocation, the lay Marist's one is also for the entire life. This is the major theme of Gathered around the Same Table, which has been recognised and supported by our last General Chapter. We have to create a new culture of vocations which embraces all states of life. One can be a Marist of Champagnat, today, whatever one's way of life.

I agree with you that it is necessary to promote the Marist Christian vocation of young lay people, from school age, without excluding another type of vocations. It is normal for us to recommend the vocations which the Lord has bestowed on us: they are not for us but for the service the Church and the world. The principal dimension of a vocation is not the institutional dimension (to have more members) but the charismatic dimension (the vitality of the mission). So we are called to promote the Marist vocation of Champagnat in all ways of life possible. The first « humus » of any vocation is found in the lay Christian life. Then this vocation becomes little by little more concrete in diverse forms with different names, canonical or not: Religious life, Priesthood, Lay people belonging to societies of apostolic life, secular institutes, different types of associations of the faithful, movements, etc.



To accompany young people in discerning their choice of a concrete Christian vocation, the idea of groups of "Marist Youth" seems to me excellent. Not a few exist almost everywhere in the Provinces of the Institute: Remar, Marcha, Marist Youth Ministry, etc. We should offer them good means of formation to help them place Jesus at the centre of their lives. If they remain in friendly contact with us and we allow them to know us better, some of them will feel called to be Christians by following the charism of Champagnat. While they are young, they are not yet in a position to make a "definitive commitment" for life. So it is necessary to follow their progress beyond the school stage, especially in the "young adult" phase, in order to provide accompaniment especially for those who feel called to be "Christian and Marist adults", the equivalent of being "Lay Marists".

At present, there exists in the Institute a great gap between the stage of apostolic work of Youth Ministry and that of the Adult Lay Marists we are seeking to develop. We lack well organized processes with "young adults" (18-30 years). This is a complex stage

because of its lack of stability: university studies, change of reference groups and often change of town also, sentimental relations. Looking for work, engagements, marriage, search for a stable professional situation, first children, etc. It is a challenge for the whole Church, but especially for those committed to "founding charisms" who, for centuries, have worked almost exclusively with youth in schools.

Before speaking of "Lay Marists", we should propose a Young Adult Marist Ministry which facilitates the pursuit of the work achieved at the school stage and connects us with the definitive life commitments – Christian, social and professional – which should be the same. If we do not act thus, we are in danger of throwing overboard the whole work of Youth Ministry: it will be a fruitless task from the fact that no accompaniment is provided for the young at the most delicate time in their lives with regard to taking decisions.

(This text was taken of the last blog of Br Pau Fornells: Questions and answers on the way "to a new land")

