

Star MESSENGER

Dear Brothers and Champagnat Marists

From last week's message you know that the **Marist Year of Vocations** isn't purely focussed on promoting vocations to the Marist Brothers. It's also concerned with nurturing broader commitment and attachment to the Champagnat spirit. This has become a necessity since we accepted that Champagnat's charism isn't just for the Marist Brothers, but for the people of God, the Church generally. It is a gift of the Spirit that is available to all, and needs to be shared. Partnership, co-responsibility, shared life and mission – whatever language we use – is a long accepted reality in our part of the world.

Our Institute has been deepening its understanding of this reality for decades. Br Charles Howard's 1991 Circular, *The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family*, addressed as it was to Brothers and Friends, is a significant marker in this journey. Each General Chapter since that time has devoted considerable attention to the issue. *Gathered Around the Same Table*, a seminal document written and published during Br Sean Sammon's leadership of the Institute, was sub-titled '*The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity*'. At this very moment in Rome the **International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation** is taking place. It has brought together Brothers and Marist women and men from every part of our global family.

While the term '*Vocation*' doesn't sit easily with everyone, it is the term the Institute has decided to use. In reality, most people have various '*vocations*'. Primary life orientation, such as marriage, consecrated life, ordained ministry, is a major vocation that shapes a person's existence. If we use the term broadly, there are also other '*vocations*' that people hold,

including careers, special undertakings and major commitments.

The Message of the *2017 General Chapter* stated in part: "As Marists of Champagnat we believe that:

- the future for the charism will be founded on a communion of fully committed Marists, brothers and lay.
- as a charismatic family we should walk together respecting the diversity of the Marist world.
- all Marists are co-responsible for Marist life and mission.
- we need new structures and processes that recognise and support our distinctive vocational paths as Marists".

The *Star of the Sea Province* needs to respond to these calls from our last General Chapter.

People cannot commit to something unless they know and value it. In recent decades, there have been excellent initiatives designed to help those associated with us to develop and deepen their understanding of our Marist way. Documents have been written, programmes designed, gatherings held. These have been important elements of formative processes offered to promote the Marist way. The work of Alan Parker and Daniel Dungey in New Zealand and the Pacific, the offerings of the Mission and Life Formation Team in Australia, and the collaborative efforts of the Oceania Council's Partnership Commission across the Region have laid a solid foundation. We must now build on this.

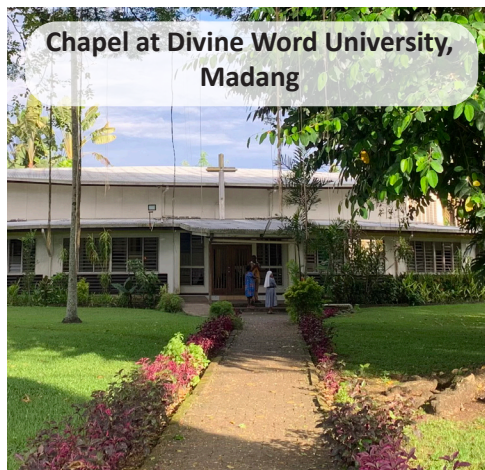
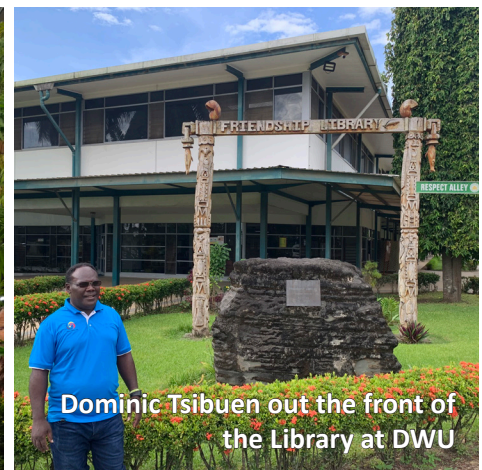
One way forward may be to harness our resources into an Institute of Marist Life and Mission that can manage and lead our initiatives to promote the sense of communion to which we are called as Marists of Champagnat.

Another element of promoting a broader sense of Marist vocation is to give women and men, and even other Religious and Priests, some way of identifying and belonging as Marists of Champagnat. We Brothers know we are Marists and are clearly identified as such. What of our companions? In Australia there is already the *Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat* with close to 1000 members. This emerged because of local circumstances. It is one model. What would a *Champagnat Whanau* look like in New Zealand? Is a *Champagnat Wantok*, or several of them, possible in Melanesia? How would e-Kiribati, Samoans or East Timorese want to express this sense of belonging? These are issues that need to be explored in the years ahead. An Assembly of Champagnat Marists, firstly national or regional and then Province-wide, may be the best way of addressing this. There will certainly need to be a Marists of Champagnat Commission to start investigating these processes.

Province Secretary

The New Province Executive has appointed **Paul Kane** as the Star of the Sea Province Secretary. Paul currently holds this position in the Australian Province and will make the transition very smoothly. His work begins immediately! The first meeting of the Provincial Council is scheduled for 15 December 2022! Thank you to Paul for his willingness to take on this broader responsibility.

Br Peter Carroll FMS
Provincial Designate



Br Sixtus Winduo,
Port Moresby



Mr Francis Marai,
Finance and Administrator
Officer, Port Moresby



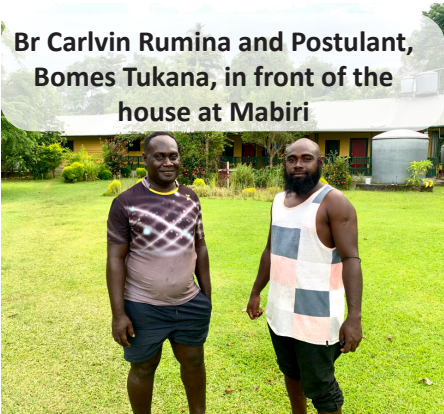
Br Finan Valei,
Port Moresby



Br Simon Serero,
Port Moresby

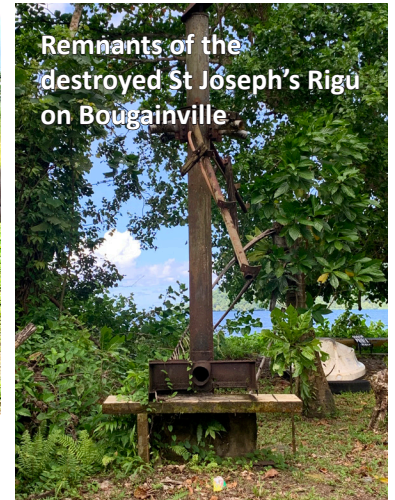
This week's 'Star Feature' is: Papua New Guinea & Bougainville

Br Calvin Rumina and Postulant, Bomes Tukana, in front of the house at Mabiri



Peter Carroll with Mabiri Community: Brs Mark Kenatsi, Clement Pekubei, Calvin Rumina, and Bomes Tukana

Remnants of the destroyed St Joseph's Rigu on Bougainville



Commemorative plaque to Brs Augustine, Donatus and John originally located at Rigu and now at Mabiri

Marist's Wambelong Haus Centre, Arawa, Bougainville



Buka, Bougainville Airport Terminal



Recently completed Year 11 Classroom and Dormitory Block, Mabiri



Chapel at St Joseph's Mabiri



St Joseph's Mabiri Administration Building



Boarders Dining Area, Mabiri

Papua New Guinea & Bougainville



History

In 1940 Bishop Thomas Wade SM invited the Australian Marist Brothers to open a school on the Island of Bougainville, which at the time was part of the Australian Territory of New Guinea. The first Brothers arrived in August 1941 and went to Chabai on the west coast of the main island where a catechetical boarding school already existed. The timing was tragic. Four months later, the Pacific war started, Bougainville was invaded by the Japanese and became a theatre of war. Brothers Augustine, John and Donatus were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and beheaded sometime around October-November 1942.

Six years later, Brothers Borgia and Simeon arrived on Bougainville, marking the return and continuation of the Champagnat Marist mission. Supported by Bishop Wade and the Marist Fathers, the Brothers moved to Rigu, next to Kieta in central Bougainville, where they established their school, St Joseph's. Over succeeding decades, the school grew and developed a fine reputation. Tragically, during the Bougainville crisis it was totally destroyed. In 1999 the school was relocated and restarted at what had been St Joseph's farm property at Mabiri. It is now a boys' boarding school for over 400 students. In 2024-25 it will take in its first Years 11 and 12 students. The Marist spirit of Rigu is alive and well at Mabiri.

In the 1950's, the Marists involvement, in what by that time was Papua New Guinea, developed gradually. In 1950 three Chinese Brothers, who had fled the communist government, arrived in Rabaul to lead Sacred Heart School

National Identity	Independent State of Papua New Guinea Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB)
Capital	PNG: Port Moresby AROB: Buka
Languages	PNG: English, Hiri Motu, PNG Sign Language, Tok Pisin AROB: Pidgin and English
Population	PNG: 8,935,000 (2020 est) AROB: 300,000 (2019)
Time Zone	PNG: UTC+10, +11 (PNGST) AROB: UTC (UTC+11)
Main Religions	PNG: Christianity, Protestant, Catholic AROB: Catholic (80%)
Arrival of Marists	1941
Number of Marist Brothers	PNG: 3 AROB: 5
Number of Marist Brothers Communities	3
Number of Marist Schools	1

which was comprised mostly of Chinese students. Soon after Australian Brothers arrived to support the mission but the school closed in 1959. In 1954 the Brothers opened a small school at Tarlena, on the north west coast of Bougainville Island. The Melbourne Province agreed to send men to the Sepik and in 1959 they arrived at St Xavier's on Kairiru Island. Melanesians had started to join the Brothers in the 1950's and a local Juniorate was established at Kieta in 1967.

The decades of the 70's, 80's and 90's were years of more rapid development in the footprint of Marist Ministry. On Bougainville, communities opened at Koromira, Buin and Marai. In PNG proper, Brothers went to Wewak, Kunjingini, Passam, Bongos and Yangoru in the East Sepik. They also opened communities in Goroka, Port Moresby and Madang. The Marists also ventured beyond their strongholds to the Enga and Western Provinces in this period.

The Marist mission on Bougainville came to a standstill during the Crisis of 1988 to 1998. However when peace was restored, the Marist Brothers were invited to help re-open the schools on what was then the Autonomous District of Bougainville (AROB). Hutjena High School (on Buka Island), Bishop Wade High School (Tarlena), St Mary's (Asitavi), St Gregory's Vocational School (Koromira) were all re-developed with Brothers either Principals or members of staff.

While the works in PNG were initially started and staffed by either the Provinces of Melbourne or Sydney, the Marist mission there gained a degree of autonomy when the District of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands was established in 1984. Its leaders were Jeff Crowe, Des Howard, Ray Arthur, Brendan Neily. This was reorganised into the District of Melanesia in 2003 when Vanuatu and New Caledonia were added to the administrative unit. Brendan Neily, Ken McDonald and Jean-Marie Batick were its leaders. In July 2020, the District merged into the Province of Australia. At various times there have been houses of formation in PNG, notably at Wewak, Goroka, Tsiroge and Madang.

Ministry Today

Over the last twenty years, as the Expat Australians left and the number of local Brothers declined, there has been a gradual withdrawal from places of ministry. Currently St Joseph's Mabiri on Bougainville is the only Marist led and governed School in PNG.

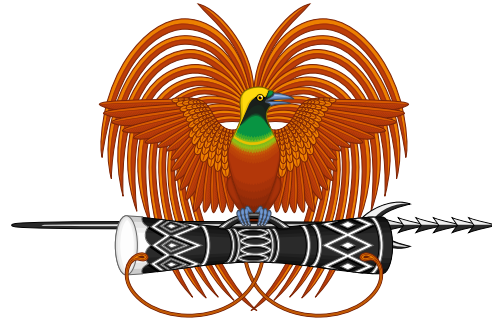
Recently some Brothers have worked at the Lasallian Vocational school in Port Moresby and other Brothers have been members of the staff at Divine Word University Madang; one is still there.

Marist Family

There is no formal arrangement that gives the broader Marist family an identity in PNG. However, there are many former Brothers, ex-students and former staff members who have maintained close connections with the Champagnat Marists. There is an informal network on Bougainville.

Communities

There are currently three Communities in PNG. One at Mabiri, Bougainville; one at Korobosea, Port Moresby, which was the former District Administration Centre; and one on the site of Divine Word University, Madang.



Papua New Guinea Flag and Coat of Arms

Marist Life and Mission Groups

Name of Group	Number of Groups	Location	Active Members
Marcellin Laity	1	Mabiri	2
Marist Laity	1	Arawa	4
Champagnat Group	1	Mabiri	40

Formation

Activity or Event	Description	Location
Wakabout Wantaim Champagnat	A Three-day live in course on Marist Charism, spirituality and pedagogy of Marist Education in the Footsteps of St. Marcellin Champagnat	St. Joseph's Mabiri College



Bougainville Flag and Coat of Arms