

# Star MESSENGER

Dear Brothers

We're on the cusp of Christmas and the end of another year.

It is a time for gratitude!



I'm in a privileged position because I see the contribution of so many people to our Marist mission and life throughout the length and breadth of the Province. Where does one start?

Our endeavour is truly collaborative; it's a real network of interacting parts. In networks, all pieces – irrespective of size or complexity - are valuable and allow other elements within the system to function and achieve their purpose.

I'm grateful for all that so many have contributed throughout the year.

To our 50 community leaders who themselves take on varied roles in diverse situations. In particular, I acknowledge those who are concluding their terms:

- David McDonald at Epsom
- Colin Divane at Manly
- Kevin Wanden at Onehunga
- Frank Hough at Santa Teresa / Alice Springs
- Paul Kane at Daceyville
- Doug Walsh at Heidelberg West
- Michael Akers at Marcellin House Randwick
- Bill Tarrant at Seven Hills
- Dominic Tsibuen at Mabiri

- Rodney Pauru at Madang
- Simon Serero at Port Moresby
- Henry Uguni at Tenaru
- Bonaventure Tolack at Santo, Vanuatu

Over half of these Brothers are taking on leadership again but in another location. To all of them, sincere appreciation for your daily commitment to the Brothers and our shared life.

To the Chairs and members of our 17 Province Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. These have only been established this year but are already showing energy and insight.

To the staff at our Province Centres: Auckland, Sydney and Francis in Port Moresby, who carefully and competently handle a vast array of administrative, technical, financial, property, health and business matters.

To our health teams in New Zealand and Australia: Cilla, Catarina, Corinne, Jann, Bronwhyn and the nurses and carers employed in our aged care communities. We are very dependent on their knowledge, care and capacity to act as advocates for us in medical matters, and we are most grateful for all they do, often beyond their position descriptions and employment contracts.

Personally, I'm particularly grateful to the Vice Provincial, Darren Burge, and other Councillors, John Hazelman, Peter Horide, Greg McDonald, Graham Neist, Sefo Une. Over the last year, we seemed to have formed an effective and harmonious team that is working towards a common vision for Star of the Sea.

Council benefits enormously from the work of our key collaborators: Paul Kane as Province Secretary and Paul Burges as Province Bursar. Both are highly competent, alert and efficient. Sincere gratitude.



Of course, I have the superb support of Bianca, who continues to be highly professional, proactive, productive and a real delight to work with!

As I wrote a fortnight ago at the time of the first anniversary of the establishment of the Province, I'm also most grateful to each of you brothers for your own good will, patience and encouragement as we navigate new waters together!

The end of the year is also a time of change!



Some appointments were finalised after last week's Council meeting:

The community at **Manly, north of Auckland**, will close and the site will be redeveloped. It's our intention to maintain a residence there particularly for holidays. **Dunstan Henry** has already moved to Onehunga. **Graeme Clisby** will move back to Epsom. Appointments for Barry Burns and Colin Divane are still being negotiated.

The Brothers in the community at **Port Moresby** will be dispersed, and there won't be a resident community there. The house will be maintained as it is essential to have a house of welcome and transit. Francis Marai will continue to live and work there and will act as coordinator of the premises. Brothers will need to contact Francis if they are requiring accommodation at Korobosea.

**Simon Serero** will move to Laumanasa House, Tenaru. He will be Community Leader and will continue his current work in Vocations and Formation. **Laumanasa** will once again be a Formation House. We expect to have 4 Aspirants living there at the start of next year.

**Sixtus Winduo** will return to **Tenaru**. He will teach in the College and support Simon and the community.

**Cyril Benora** will spend the first six months of 2024 at Lomeri where he will work with Chris and Damien to operate the Centre and develop the eco-spirituality programme. Mid-year, he will return to Madang to continue his professional studies at Divine Word University.

**Clement Pekubei** will join the Santo, Vanuatu community. He will work in the school and undertake some vocations promotion.

The residence near Marist Brothers High School, Suva at **Carew Street**, will reopen as a new community in January. **John Hazelman** will be the Community Leader. Also in residence will be **Anitelea Fidow**, who will be commencing study at Corpus Christi Teachers College, and **Karalo Ratuyada**, who has returned from MAPAC and will be undertaking study at the Suva campus of the University of the South Pacific.

**Mark Kenatsi** is taking some time to consider his future so won't continue as Principal of St Joseph's College **Mabiri**. He will join the community at Madang for the time being. **Dominic Tsibuen** will replace Mark as Principal. **Henry Uguni** has agreed to leave the Solomon Islands and move to Mabiri as Community Leader.

Having been basically alone this year, **Rodney Pauru** will have companions once again at Madang. **Frank Hough** is taking up a position as Counsellor for male students. The University is working on his visa. **Fereole Melteror** and **Carlvin Rumina** will return to continue the second half of their studies. Cyril will join them mid-year. **John Curry** will be the Community Leader and house manager.

**Benjamin Corbafo** requested dispensation from his temporary vows and Br Ernesto has granted this. Benja will continue his studies in Baucau at ICFP next year. We thank him for his eight years with us and for 'trail blazing' with Melquiano and Jacinto. I know we wish him every blessing.

**Raphael Fakaia** will depart for Italy in late January. He will participate in the Institute's Formation Course to be run at Manziana. It's of nine months duration, so we'll welcome him back to the Province in November. Good wishes Raphael.



Newly appointed community leaders will commence in January, so I thank them for taking up this special and important responsibility:

- Due to Kevin Wanden's relocation to Australia, **David McDonald** has already started his responsibilities as Leader at Onehunga.
- **Geoff Kelly** will replace Frank Hough as the Community Leader at Santa Teresa / Alice Springs.
- The Heidelberg West community will now be located at Liberty Parade (the Exodus House) with **Harry Prout** as Community Leader and Doug Walsh as Emeritus!
- The leadership transition at Marcellin House Randwick takes effect on 25 December! **Bryan Davis** will be Community Leader, replacing Michael Akers, from then.
- **Jean Marie Batick** has been acting Community Leader at Santo, Vanuatu for the past six months and will continue in the substantive position.
- In addition to his role as Community Leader at Campbelltown, **Jeff Barrington** will be non-resident leader at Seven Hills, replacing Bill Tarrant.
- **Kevin Wanden** is not just replacing Paul Kane as Province Secretary but also replacing him as Community Leader at Daceyville.

## Paul Kane

Staff at Mascot gathered (in smaller numbers) on Tuesday to bid farewell to Paul Kane who is transitioning out of Mascot, Province administration and Australia into formation work in Baucau Timor Leste. The morning tea was marked by real warmth for Paul. He has been a very important part of the Mascot team and staff community. His good sense of humour and friendliness have been appreciated by everyone.

The gathering gave me the opportunity to express my gratitude, and that of the Council, for Paul's excellent work as Province Secretary. This is a role he's fulfilled for the past 5 years; four for the Province of Australia and just one year for the Star of the Sea. Paul fitted into the role perfectly. He is highly organised, efficient, has an eye for detail, works well with others and follows through. He also has that other wonderful asset: he is a touch typist! His desk puts mine to shame: it's ordered and mostly clear. In finishing as Province Secretary, Paul ends 31 consecutive years sitting around Provincial Council tables. For the first 26 it was as a Councillor for the Melbourne and then the Australian Provinces. For parts of that time, he was Vice Provincial in both. I'm not sure if that's a record, though I suspect it is. As Paul said in his reply, "it's time for a change", and what a change it is! Paul, sincere gratitude for your marvellous work as Province Secretary, for your friendship and brotherliness to us.





### Sesquicentenary Nouvelle Caledonie

This year was the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Marist education in New Caledonia. The celebrations were held in September when the Council held its meeting there. Michael Flanagan recently published an article in Lavalla about the Brothers work there. It accompanies today's Star Messenger.

### Tenaru Cemetery, Solomon Islands

The graves of Brother Alphonsus Laumanasa and Br Mark Poro have recently been renovated. The photos below give you an idea of the excellent work completed. Many thanks to Br Henry and Mrs Ruth Hihiru.

### MAPAC Update

The second years at MAPAC have now finished their programme and have returned to the Province. Karalo Ratuyada is back in Fiji and next year will pursue studies at the University of the South Pacific. Salvador, Julio, Ronaldo, Juvencio, Dionisio and Filomeno have returned to Timor Leste, and next year will commence their teacher training at ICFP. I wish them well for the continuation of their initial formation in their home countries.

### Brothers Dominic Stewart RIP and Bernard Hatfield RIP

The obituaries for our recently deceased Brothers are also published today. I encourage you to read them. They both tell extraordinary stories and were superbly prepared by Michael Herry and Michael Flanagan respectively.

### Star Messenger

This is the last edition for 2023. It will be in hibernation until February 2024. My sincere gratitude to Bianca for the care and creativity she brings to every edition!



**Br Peter Carroll**  
Provincial



**L-R: Fereole Melteror,  
Raphael Fakaia,  
Henry Uguni,  
Epalle Taega,  
Jean Marie Batich**



Fourth Sunday of Advent | 24 December 2023

**Scripture passage: Luke 1:26-38**

*Brother, sister, tonight God draws near to you because you are important to Him. From the manger, as food for your life, he tells you: "If you feel that events overcome you, if your sense of guilt and your inability devour you, if you hunger for justice, I, God, am with you. I know what you live, I have experienced it in the manger. I know your miseries and your history. I was born to tell you that I am and will always be close to you." The Christmas manger, the first message of a child God, tells us that He is with us, he loves us, he seeks us. Courage, do not let yourself be overcome by fear, by resignation, by discouragement. God is born in a manger to make you reborn precisely there, where you thought you had hit rock bottom. There is no evil, there is no sin that Jesus does not want and he cannot save you from. Christmas means that God is close. Let confidence be reborn!*

*Let's not let this Christmas go by, brothers and sisters, without doing something good. Since it is his festival, his birthday, let us give Him gifts that please Him. At Christmas God is concrete, in his name let us reborn a little hope to those who have lost it.*

*Jesus, we look at you, curled up in the manger. We see you so close, that you are with us forever. Thank my Lord. We contemplate you poor, teaching us that true wealth is not in things, but in people, especially in the poor. Forgive us, if we have not recognised you and served you in them. We see you concrete, because your love for us is concrete, Jesus, help us to give flesh and life to our faith. Amen. Pope Francis*

**REJOICE**

The story of the annunciation to Mary is an invitation to awaken in us some of the basic attitudes that we must care for in order to live our faith joyfully and trustingly. It's enough for us to examine the message that is placed in the mouth of the angel.

'Rejoice'. It's the first thing Mary hears from God, and the first thing we need to hear ourselves too. 'Rejoice': that is God's first word to every creature. In times like these that seem to us uncertain and obscure, full of problems and difficulties, the first thing that's asked of us is to not lose joy. Without joy, life becomes more difficult and harsh.

'The Lord is with you'. The joy to which we are invited isn't a forced optimism or an easy self-deception. It is the inner joy that is born in whoever confronts life with the conviction that they aren't alone. A joy that is born out of faith. God accompanies us, defends us and always seeks our good. We can complain about all kinds of things, but we will never be able to say that we are alone, since it's not true. Inside of each one, in the depth of our being, there is God, our

Saviour.

'Don't be afraid'. There are many fears that can be awakened in us. Fear of the future, of sickness, of death. We're afraid of suffering, of feeling alone, of not being loved. We can feel fear of our contradictions and incoherences. Fear is bad, damages us. Fear suffocates life, paralyses our energy, keeps us from walking forward. What we need is confidence, security, and light.

'You have found favour with God'. Not only Mary, but also ourselves have to listen to these words, since we all live and die sustained by God's grace and love. Life continues there, with its difficulties and concerns. Faith in God isn't a recipe to resolve daily problems. But everything is different when we go about seeking in God the light and power to confront them.

In these times that aren't always easy, don't we need to awaken in ourselves the trust in God and the joy of knowing ourselves welcomed by God? Why don't we free ourselves a little from the fears and anxieties by confronting life from faith in a God who is close?



CHRISTMAS DAY | 25 December 2023

Scripture passage: John 1:1-18



# CHRISTMAS DAY

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

FROM JOSÉ ANTONIO PAGOLA

Translator: Fr. Jay VonHandorf

### DON'T REMAIN OUTSIDE

There are those who live religion 'from the outside'. They pronounce prayers, go to religious celebrations, hear talk about God, but they limit themselves to being spectators. As the French thinker Marcel Legaut says, they live everything from an "extrinsic representation" of God. They don't enter into the adventure of encountering God. They always remain at a certain distance.

However, God is in what is most intimate of each human being. God isn't something separate from our life. God isn't a fabrication of our mind, a representation half intellectual or half affective, a game of our imagination that lets us live *illusioned*. God is a real presence that is in the very root of our being.

This presence isn't evident. It isn't grasped the way we grasp other more superficial things. It's perceived in the measure that one perceives oneself in our depth. Its mystery is as unattainable as is the mystery of each human being. God makes Self present when I make myself present to myself truly and sincerely. It's not possible to enter into the experience of God if one lives permanently outside of oneself.

Without this inner openness to God there's

no living faith. We begin to hear God's voice when we listen to our truth from our depths. It takes form in our existence in the measure that we welcome it. God's presence goes about being configured in each one of us by adapting itself to what we allow it to be.

What's human and what's divine aren't realities that mutually exclude each other. We don't have to stop being human in order to be of God. What's human is "the door" that allows us to enter into the divine. Actually the most intense experiences of communication, of human love, of purifying pain, of beauty or of truth are the channels that best open us to the experience of God.

It isn't strange that the Gospel of John presents Christ, God become flesh, as the door through which the believer can enter and walk toward God. In Christ we can learn to live a life so human, so true, so from the depth, that in spite of our mistakes and mediocrity, it can lead us toward God. But we must listen well to the warning of the Gospel writer. God's Word came to the world and the world *didn't know him; he came to his own house, and his own did not receive him.*



ARCHIVES

# 150 years of Marist Presence in New Caledonia:

## An Australian Brother played an important role

Br Michael Flanagan

### Introduction from the Star of the Sea website:

*“There is a very long connection with Marists in New Caledonia going back to the arrival of the first Marists in 1837 in the Pacific. France annexed New Caledonia in 1853 and the Brothers were very active in development of schools and orphanages and in catechetics from that time on. By 1873 New Caledonia was in fact a part of the Province of the British Isles which included England, Ireland, Scotland, Cape of Good Hope, Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania. So many French speaking brothers worked in New Caledonia over the last 170 years, supported by the French provinces and of late by the Province of the Hermitage. New Caledonia is now part of the Province of Australia and from 2023 the Star of the Sea Province. Currently there are two French speaking brothers residing at Paita, not far from Noumea, the capital.”*

On May 1st, 1873 Br Loius-Marie, the Superior General, named four Brothers for the mission in Noumea. The first Marist school was opened on

the 15th of October 1873 with 31 students. The conditions were deplorable...even a stove was commanded as a desk...with one observer stating: “The scene lacked everything except spirit and heat.”



Isle of Pines New Caledonia while fishing 1933. The habit is not quite the most sensible gear for such an expedition!

However, this spirit was obviously irresistible and a force for good: by the end of October that same year there were 100 pupils. On the 1st of January 1983 there were 22 Brothers in New Caledonia spread across 5 communities. After 114 years of service the Brothers' work on the Isle of Pines closed in 1993. It is here that an Australian Brother made a very significant contribution.

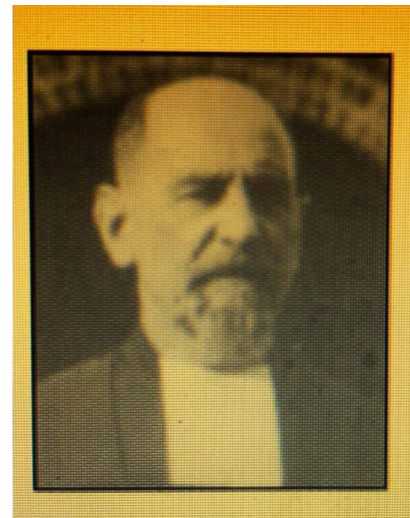


Juniors from Port-Laguerre (?) New Caledonia. Everyone is so happy, and there's no need to inspect the shoes of the Juniors.



Students and the parish Church at Vao, on the Isle of Pines. The Brother pictured looks very much like Br Columba.

**Patrick Gaffney (24 August, 1871-23 February, 1944)** came out from England to Australia in 1884 and with him was his brother, Francis, who was to



Br Columba (Patrick) Gaffney.

become the famous Br Henry of St Joseph's. Brother Columba spent most of his life working obscurely in the missions of Fiji and New Caledonia where he laboured (in black soutane and the heat) for some 45 years. Patrick entered the Juniorate at St Mary's and eventually received the habit, and the name of Br Columba, at Hunter's Hill Novitiate. He first taught at St Mary's and then became division prefect at St Joseph's in 1894. Having volunteered for the Islands he arrived in Fiji in 1897 and was Headmaster of the new 'Indian' School. His assistant was Br Cloman, and on the first day the attendance was 5 pupils. When Rewa (10 miles east of Suva) opened at the end of 1899 Columba was appointed Sub-Director, and after just over a year there he returned to the Indian School in Suva. In 1902 he seems to have gone back to Rewa.

From there he returned to Australia, stationed at Sacred Heart, Port Adelaide, where one of his pupils was the future Bishop Fox. But the missions called again and from 1909 to 1942 we find him in New Caledonia, mostly in the Isle

of Pines. For some 36 years he taught the boys' school and directed them in cultivating their food plantations. He returned to Australia for his last two years and worked with the boys at St Vincent's Westmead. In 1944, at the age of 72, he successfully underwent a serious operation at St Vincent's Hospital and was preparing to return to Westmead when he collapsed and died. A Solemn Requiem Mass at St Joseph's was followed by Br Columba's burial in the Field of Mars Cemetery.

'He hasn't much talent', wrote Brother John Dullea, 'but he is very tactful; he is regular, pious and has a good spirit.' In other words, even Br John thought he was an excellent Marist Brother. One wonders what the phrase "not much talent" referred to: he had enough talent to give his one life to the

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*Brother Columba spent most of his life working obscurely in the missions of Fiji and New Caledonia where he laboured (in black soutane and the heat) for some 45 years*

Lord's service, to spend that life in difficult missionary work, to be a Headmaster and to spend his final years on active service with the boys at Westmead. The 36 years on the Isle of Pines were not spent in a luxury resort or swanning around the Pacific on yachts. He lived these years immersed in the daily lives of the indigenous people and educating their children in basic classrooms and vegetable gardens...in his black soutane, in oppressive heat.

The two Gaffney brothers who arrived in Australia in 1884 lived very different lives as Marist Brothers. One was to stay mainly in one place and achieve international and national recognition as a remarkable Rugby coach; the other lived in relative obscurity in many places both in Australia and in the Pacific. One was not more significant than the other... both are fine examples of commitment and dedication to the education of the young. Both are exemplary Marists.

**Br Michael Flanagan FMS**  
Province Archivist

N.B. Photos of Brothers and others in New Caledonia from Champagnat.org website; their captions used. Br Columba's photo and bio details from the Necrologies of the Australian and New Zealand Provinces.