



Br Charles (Elias) Howard
1924 - 2012

INTRODUCTION

Some say, ironically, that the best way to cancel out someone's prophetic witness is to canonize him. Once he is on the altars, far from us, it makes it easier for us to say he was exceptional, a once-in-a-lifetime person. In the process we excuse our own mediocrity by over exalting those persons we are afraid to imitate.

This is not what we want to do with our dear Br Charles, whose memory we wish to last among us, because we recognize in him the authenticity of values we cannot afford to lose.

In December 2010, I had the opportunity to meet him and see that Charles continued to be the Charles of old, with his large personality and commanding ways! It is a joy to belong to an Institute that does not "mass produce" Brothers, but respects each one's way of being and, out of respect, accompanies our human and spiritual growth.

How will we remember him?

Charles was a man who demonstrated his affection in small details. When I was a young brother in Barcelona, Br Charles visited my province and, though I do not remember the details very well, we must have exchanged a few words in English. To my surprise, I received, a few weeks later, a copy of the Constitutions in English, with a personal dedication from Br Charles. I know that many other brothers would give similar testimony of such gestures, expressions of his sensitivity and attentiveness.

Charles, passionate in his quest for a more just and fraternal world. With sensitivity and tact, he knew how to transmit his sensibility to many people, opening new frontiers for our mission.

Charles, who sent a very powerful message to the whole Institute, in inviting a group of lay people to the XIX General Chapter. I remember with emotion the moment when this group entered the Chapter Hall, received with loud applause by the standing capitulants. In a symbolic way, they were opening the doors not only of the Chapter Hall, but of the whole Institute.

Charles, who coined the expression "to be Champagnat today", and was truly so for all of us. Marist at heart, a true son of Champagnat.

As I write these lines, I imagine Charles looking at me with a somewhat mischievous smile, and telling me "it is not necessary to write anything about me!" freeing himself of any self-importance... And I am left with that marvelous smile, a reminder of a life lived in all naturalness and simplicity... and in the manner of Mary.

Thank you, Charles: your time with us has been a gift from God and a sign of Mary's tenderness.

*Br Emili Turú,
Superior General,
January 2012*



FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE

Charles's parents were Charles (known as Charlie) and Mary (known as Mollie). Charlie and Mollie were born and raised in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. Charlie initially worked as a timber worker and a plasterer. He later joined a carpet cleaning company and rose to managerial level positions. Mollie, until her marriage, worked as a machinist in a shoe factory. They had three children, all boys, Charles, James (Jim) and John.

Charles was born on 29th October 1924 in the Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne. With his brother, Jim, Charles attended a parish school conducted by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, an Australian congregation. In the final year of his primary schooling his father was transferred to Sydney to be General Manager of his company. The family arrived in Sydney in August 1937, three months after the birth of John. The family rented a house in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney.

There was a different system of education in Sydney. Charles and Jim had to attend a Brothers' school which they had never done before; they had only been taught by nuns. Two Catholic schools were recommended to Charlie for the boys: Christian Brothers' (Irish) Waverley and Marist Brothers' Randwick. On a weekend Charlie went to Marist Brothers' Randwick to inquire about enrolment. There were a group of men working around the school. He approached a man pushing a wheelbarrow and told him he was looking for the brother-in-charge. The wheelbarrow man was the Brother-in-charge! That was enough for Charlie. This was the school for his boys. Teachers who were prepared to get their hands dirty were the right teachers for his boys! So Charles and Jim were enrolled for the final term of 1937.

When Charlie and Mollie were looking that year for a house to buy, one of the criteria was that it had to be near a Marist Brothers' school so the boys could be enrolled there. They eventually bought a house in Beverley Park so that the boys could attend the nearby Marist Brothers' Kogarah. Charles, however, never went there since he had made the decision to join the Brothers, inspired by the witness of the Brothers and by a talk by Brother Andrew about the Brothers in the missions.



Charlie and Mollie with Jim (L), John and Charles (R)

1937 was a difficult year for Charlie and Mollie, especially, for Mollie. She had to leave her family and friends and move to a strange city with a baby three months old. Now their thirteen year old son was asking to leave home and go away to the Brothers' juniorate at Mittagong—a place which neither he nor his parents had ever heard of. It took a great act of faith on their side.

Charlie and Mollie were active in church affairs over the years, supporting their parish and the boys' schools. Mollie was a catechist in public schools for many years. Charlie was active in the Knights of the Southern Cross and the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. In retirement he was responsible for the widespread growth of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society stores and Welfare Centres. Our Brother Charles came from solid stock indeed.

JUNIORATE / POSTULANCY / NOVITIATE

About his schooling, Charles admitted that he always came first in the class. This was to continue at the Juniorate where he had excellent teachers, including Brs Oliver, Canice, Damian, Ethelred, Peter Carrick, and Frederic Eddy. He felt that kids who were not so good academically were more likely to be afflicted by serious homesickness. Charles recalled in later life that although he and others had short trousers in 4th Year at the Juniorate, the “spirituality” of their prayer forms could only be described as “adult Marist”, and often in Latin.



When he received the Habit on 2 July 1942, he became —surprisingly — Brother Elias. Charles wrote later that his mother went to the Provincial and said “How do I tell the family that his name is Elias?” The response was “Oh, that’s a very good Biblical name”. She was not impressed.

In reflecting back to his days in the novitiate, Charles spoke appreciatively of the Brothers caring for their formation but added, “Though you can readily criticize some aspects of the spiritual development and whether it helped young people grow, they were pretty much standard in those days, including in seminaries. It was later on that we would become wiser!”

APPOINTMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Charles was sent to Bondi Beach (July 1943), in a community referred to as the “Second Novitiate” since the Director was quite strict. From there, he moved to Glenelg in Adelaide as Senior Maths Master (1945-47). Here the students called him “The Boy” because he turned 21 that year. Then it was back to the Mittagong Juniorate (1948-50). While he was teaching at Kogarah (1951-54), the Provincial suggested it was time for him to start University studies at night. Although he was teaching Maths and Science, he could not study these part-time and so did an Arts degree, majoring in History and English Literature. For some years this meant travel by motor-bike!



After two years at St Joseph's College (1955-56), he was appointed Director of the Juniorate from 1957-61. Men who were Juniors in those days remember him with great admiration and affection. The first visiting day a parent said to him: "You're a bit young for this aren't you?" He responded that this was probably true, but nonetheless he enjoyed those years and was a breath of fresh air: he engaged parents more, started a fundraising group, conducted interviews with the juniors, abolished the "point scoring system", established a library, created a grotto, reinvigorated a monthly bulletin, and supervised all the essential activities which had characterized the Juniorate for half-a-century.

In January 1961 he sailed to France for his five month "Second Novitiate" at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, at an earlier age than usual because he was to go to St Joseph's Hunters Hill as Headmaster and Community Superior on his return, a task which he was not initially elated about.

In the 1960s —both in society, university and later Church—a spirit of contestation was growing up, a cultural shift that meant a new imagining of systems in student and boarder formation. Secondary education in NSW was undergoing massive change, the State-aid issue was surfacing, and differing interpretations of the ongoing Vatican II were being proposed. These were the most complex problems the College of 1000 boarders had encountered since its foundation years. Charles understood that winds of change were blowing and that he had to steer the Brothers and College in uncharted waters. As one College review put it, "There was no blueprint" for what needed to happen and "the spectre of finance haunted the planner".

In the midst of the myriad activities of College Headmaster, not excluding some 10-16 periods of teaching per week, Charles was able to lead with serenity, consultation, humour, astuteness, and compassion towards all stakeholders, and to make life-long friends in so doing. In accomplishing the needed expansion and upgrade of facilities, Charles showed himself a man of vision, a leader who could rally people behind him. After four years of planning, and construction completed, the College had accommodation and educational facilities unequalled in Australia.

His boldness was extraordinary. What was truly remarkable, however, was not the building but the advancement in thinking that Charles succeeded in achieving. New approaches to religious education in particular were gradually introduced. He initiated a number of spiritual and liturgical practices that were contemporary and engaging. Far from dividing the Brothers, he managed to enthuse them. As one young Brother of the time noted, "Charles was the best Principal I ever knew: a superb educator and one of the very few people I have worked with who displayed lateral-thinking brilliance."

ONGOING FORMATION and PROVINCIAL

When he finished at St Joseph's he spent the first half of 1968 in the Lumen Vitae program in Louvain, Brussels, doing religious and catechetical studies. Immediately after attending the General Chapter in late 1968, he went to University College, Dublin, where he studied Clinical Psychology for 18 months. He finally had lots of reading time! These studies were to be invaluable in his future pastoral and formation roles. He enjoyed living with the Irish Brothers at Ballsbridge during this time.

Then he was in quick succession interim Headmaster of St Gregory's, Campbelltown, in the second half of 1970, Community Leader of Parramatta-Westmead as well as Co-ordinator of Formation in 1971, and full-time Co-ordinator of Formation living in the Wahroonga postulancy in the first half of 1972. His interest in formation was not simply a consequence of his previous experience at the Juniorate but an intuition that the questioning around vocations and formation was not going to go away, that a paradigm shift was happening.

In August of 1972 Charles became Provincial. At that time there were 420 Brothers in the Province in 40 communities. He would never say "I want this", but rather "I think this would be a good idea". At his Chapter of installation, he canvassed the closing the Juniorate and making it a retreat centre. Another project was the opening of the Palm Island mission. He did all the visitations himself—he felt this was important for himself and for the Brothers themselves. He gave this pastoral work priority over events such as school openings. He found plane travel a great thing "because you had a few hours to read... Time was very precious".

In this period in Australia a number of Brothers were reconsidering their life vocation. Charles did all he could to help the men discern well and to leave in inner peace if that was their decision. One former Brother writes, "To leave the Order I required approval from the Vatican to be dispensed from my life-long vows. I made my case and the Provincial, who was now Br Charles Howard, ... sent it off to Rome. Some weeks later he rang me to say that my Dispensation had arrived. That afternoon in Br Charles' office in Drummoyne I turned over the document. On the back, in Latin, was a handwritten note from a Vatican official which invoiced the Order for the sum of twelve hundred pounds sterling in legal costs. Shocked, I expressed my regret to Br Charles that I had cost the Marist Brothers so much to leave. "Give me a look" he said. Then he roared with laughter. "That symbol in front of the 1,200 is not British pounds sterling. It's Italian lire. You've cost us only about one Australian dollar". I now actually felt a little deflated. 'Is that all I'm worth?', I thought!"

As he reviewed his time as Provincial in 1976, he was aware of having moved on numerous matters: he had helped Brothers to cope with changes in Religious Life, Church, Education, continuing Formation, Chapter Documents, and above all he had promoted their reading! There were other tasks which yet remained such as: new attitudes to Obedience, affectivity, the role of women, celibacy as a permanent commitment.

A measure of his contribution on a wider Church front is the comment of a Bishop of that time, "Charles was the most significant leader in the Australian Church at that time, bar none." For example, he had instigated the unification of the male and female Religious

Conferences in Australia, and he remained great friends with many of these leaders in years to come. He helped many to understand and embrace the spirit of the Vatican Council.

CAPITULANT and GENERAL COUNCILLOR

In 1967, Charles flew with Othmar Welden, the Provincial, to Rome for the first General Chapter of the Institute after Vatican II. It was a time of ferment and promise. The Church had directed all Religious Institutes to take up the question of renewal, starting from the Gospels, a re-examination of their founding origins and charism and a fresh discernment of the “signs of the times”. Unusually, the Chapter had to break and then re-convene in late 1968 owing to the need to give time to let proposals mature and to consult a wider group of Brothers. The question of the Institute and Priesthood was exhaustively discussed and almost resolved; it had been the most divisive issue of the Chapter. Looking back, Charles described this Chapter as “a passionate, complex, and very rich experience”.

His second General Chapter was that of 1976, which re-elected Br. Basilio for a second time, and elected Charles as a General Councillor. Br Richard Dunleavy recalls, “During this Chapter, Charles was the dominant influence responsible for a historically significant step in educating the 136 Marist leaders from around the world gathered there in Rome, to begin to “feel”—many rather uncomfortably—some of the key issues and implications arising from the call to Poverty and Justice. Until that time, Br Basilio had said that the topic was too sensitive to be dealt with in open forum in many cultures. The day of prayer and reflection Charles organized was a real turning-point for the Institute, and something that he, perhaps more than any other, was able to foster with growing fruitfulness for the Church and the Institute in the years which followed.” Hence emerged the “*Justice and Peace*” document as well other rich documents of the 1976 Chapter: the Prayer, Apostolate, and Community document, the Marist Spirituality document, the *Marist Brother Today* document and the draft of the new Constitutions document (to be finalised in 1985).

As General Councillor, Charles travelled widely particularly in the English and French-speaking Marist world. These were times of great change in many African nations, in particular, and Charles spent a lot of time there. This was the end of the colonial era. There was hope and promise but also a lot of civil disorder. Apartheid was still government policy in South Africa. Charles worked with the Brothers to build unity and a new sense of purpose in their communities and ministries.

The politics were different but no less tense in other parts of the Marist world. Charles was asked to establish a Secretariat of Social Justice within the General Administration. The idea was that there would be parallel bodies established in all Provinces to reflect on the social contexts of Marist ministries and to discern where transformation was needed. His brotherly manner in dealing with politically sensitive issues was critical in helping groups of Brothers to make significant changes in regard to entrenched attitudes and practices.

SUPERIOR GENERAL

During the 1985 General Chapter, Charles was elected Superior General, succeeding Br Basilio Rueda.



This Chapter completed the new Constitutions of the Brothers. While this was a feat in an Institute with such evident growing diversity of nationalities and cultures, Charles felt that he lacked the benefit of a focused discernment of priorities by the Chapter for his time as Superior General.

So he set about working with his Council on priorities for their ministry. They determined five: getting the new Constitutions understood and accepted by the Brothers; discernment as the new faith approach to decision-making; mission, especially the courage to adapt or start new ministries in changing circumstances; formation: the preparation of the Formation Guide and insisting on serious experiences for those who would be involved in the formation of our younger men; vocations, active promotion as a key factor in Vocations at the world-wide level.

Other significant emphases for Charles: he spoke of our era as being the ‘springtime’ of the laity and promoted a greater openness to lay participation in Marist life and mission, inviting a number to the 1993 General Chapter; he launched the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family; he was instrumental in the establishment of the International Finance Board at Institute level; he sought to establish a new Marist presence in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, eventually deciding on Hungary; he was very attached to the work of the Hermanitas, young women mainly in Central and South America who were attempting to develop a religious community based on the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. His one regret was not writing a circular on Mary. He was behind the choice of the slogan “Audacity and Hope” for the 1993 General Chapter.

A major undertaking for Charles was the establishment of an international scholasticate for the African region with the collaboration of the 19 or so authorities then responsible for the

Marist Brothers in Africa. There was tension, but due to Charles' wisdom and relational skills, all was eventually resolved with harmony. And now a magnificent complex housing some 100 Brothers in a network of fraternities has been established.



With Marist leaders in Zimbabwe in 1986 where the decision was made to build an international scholasticate in Nairobi

Before he finished his term as Superior General, Charles had also launched a similar scholasticate in Manila, Philippines, for young Brothers in Asia.

He made himself available to the Church in Africa and in Rome. He participated in the Synod *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

He was the first Superior General to make a somewhat surreptitious visit to China in the late 1980s, causing overwhelming joy to the older Brothers who had suffered so ignominiously in former years.



With Brs Hilaire (L), Dominique and Norbert in 1988

SOME OF HIS WRITINGS AS SUPERIOR GENERAL

Br Charles wrote a number of Circulars, sharing of himself, his faith and vision. His style was quite personal and direct.

“I believe, Brothers, that these new Constitutions can be a powerful factor in helping us to persevere more faithfully and more fruitfully. Let us thank God for them and let us pray them, love them and live them.” (*Our New Constitutions XXIX* December 25, 1986. 1)

He also wrote at length on the theme of *Vocations* (*XXIX* Feast of All Saints. 1987. 2), insisting that the vocation which is “right for me” becomes obvious to a young man only during a process in which the Lord “patiently and lovingly and skillfully” fashions the heart and prepares the Spirit’s guidance “in the shaping of my values and attitudes, my interests, principles and preferences”. He wished upon those involved with this important work, the Joy and Wisdom of the Risen Christ as “you give yourselves generously to this apostolate of vocations”. It is hard not to see Charles as a Formator and Recruiter at heart!

He tried bravely to educate us to a new form of prayer (*Discernment XXIX* July 30, 1988, 3). “God relates to me in a way that is unique to me. Discernment is one of the important keys which unlocks for me the secrets of that relationship.” His plan for me is “true freedom, a veritable explosion of love in our own lives and in the lives of those to whom we are sent.” Through discernment and the Review of the Day we endeavour to be ever “more faithful to the charism of Marcellin and ever more sensitive to the action of the Spirit in our lives.”

Amongst the wonderful recollections of *Champagnat* in the Circulars are to be his own fond reminiscences which cover quite a few pages (in *XXIX* May 20, 1989, 4). He first encountered the Founder as a boy of 14 at the Juniorate. He later went to the Second Novitiate at 35, and longed to return to the Hermitage after his first trip, but was able to do so “only a quarter of a century later”, during which time “I really got to know Champagnat and appreciate him.”

Later he said he “began to see him as a human being with his faults and inner conflicts, griefs and failures, rather than a faultless paragon. This helped greatly to build up a rapport between us, as I felt now that he could understand and share in my own problems.” He got to learn of him “like meeting less a stranger (so much did he differ from my earlier impressions of him)... he revealed himself as warm and human, concerned and compassionate, a “man of the heart”, a man who loved deeply and passionately: ...a leader... who [was] friend and companion and father, who lived the sufferings and the joys, the trials and dangers and successes of his men.” He later saw the “cut rock, the enduring buildings, the oak trees, the channeled stream, the quiet chapel” still bearing his imprint and which “is never far below the surface of my life”.

He says he instinctively identified with all the symbols that awaited him in Champagnat-territory and “still it pervades all he does. It influenced his decision making, governed his life style, dictated his tastes.”

He wrote with deep affection and gratitude, “If I have a gift for having a vision that is clear, goals that are practicable, then it is because Champagnat had a vision that was clear, goals that were practicable... If I express deep compassion, especially for those most in need, if I delight in the family spirit of my Brothers, if ... I turn to Mary as my Good Mother, and if prayer, particularly the prayer of absolute trust and faith, comes to my heart with the ebb and flow natural to my blood stream, then it is because all this happened in Champagnat’s case.”

In “*Sowers of Hope*”, Charles reminds us that since “God is always faithful, we do not harbour doubts” (XXIX March 12, 1990, 5) and he reminds us to pray to the Holy Spirit, the Forgotten Member of the Trinity whom he reinstates in his “*Mysteries of Hope*” to “breathe new life into a new world”.



At the end of this new Rosary of Hope he admits that we that “too often in our weakness... have been disturbed by the passing of an old familiar world, and have grieved at the loss of things that gave us comfort. Forgive us our fears, our lack of trust in You, and stir us to deeper faith and surer hope.”

Moving into his most personal of Circulars, “*An Urgent Appeal: Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*” (XXIX Nov 30, 1990: 6), Charles speaks of his conviction that “the call to become engaged on behalf of the poor and those suffering from injustice... is a gift of the Holy Spirit...and hence it should be accepted with serenity and joy; ... I don’t want you to think it is just an optimistic theory summoned up in my dreams...” Here is an extraordinary on-rush of urgency from this man who really loved the poor, and desperately wanted to communicate that love to his Brothers. He concluded, “When the fire of my own passion burns low, it is readily rekindled when I think of these children and of the anguish of their parents who do not have food to offer their children: what a terrible anguish and suffering is theirs.”

Charles finishes this Circular by invoking *Article 34* of the Constitutions: “In being true to Christ and our Founder we love the poor. They are God’s blessed ones; they draw down his gifts upon us and evangelize us. We love the places and the houses which enable us to share their lot, and take every opportunity to be in contact with the reality of their daily lives.”



At a Marist school in a favela in Londrina, Paraná, Brazil, 1992

He also wrote a pastoral letter to the Brothers of Africa, entitled “*Pilgrimage in Africa*”. This letter must have remained close to his heart since he quoted it at length in some private memoirs. “The title may seem strange. But it has been a pilgrimage in a real sense, a visiting of holy places, if one defines a holy place as one where God is found, where God speaks to us – through the goodness of people, through the needs of others, through the terrible suffering of many of His sons and daughters...

How often, as I saw hundreds and thousands of young people going to school in the morning, I wondered about their future ... all their dreams and hopes and aspirations ... knowing that, unless there were drastic changes, many of them would be frustrated in their efforts to find employment, to use the skills they had learnt, to fulfill their dreams. . .

Any visitor to Africa cannot but be struck by the role of women in society. As the bishops of Zambia mentioned recently, “they are the background of our families and the leading actors in our economy.” ... Here, as in most countries, women constitute the majority of the active Church members, whether lay or religious. But for a variety of reasons – lack of formation, male dominance, forms of clericalism – they are often absent from decision-making in the Church.

The question for us is: what are we being called to do? ... what does this mean for us? ... or do we think it is something that concerns only the politicians and other leaders? Are there some signs of the times for the Marist Brothers here?”

In the Circular on *The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family* (XXIX October 15, 1991: 7), he quotes Patricia Jones who had requested this beautiful inclusion from the Holy Father in *Christifideles Laici*:

The eyes of faith behold a wonderful scene: that of a countless number of lay people, both women and men, busy at work in their daily life and activity, looked upon in love by the Father, untiring labourers who work in the Lord's vineyard. Confident and steadfast through the power of God's grace, these are the humble yet great builders of the kingdom of God in history. (n. 17)

Charles adds these words which would describe, without doubt autobiographically, the “many wonderful lay people that we have known, including...our parents.”

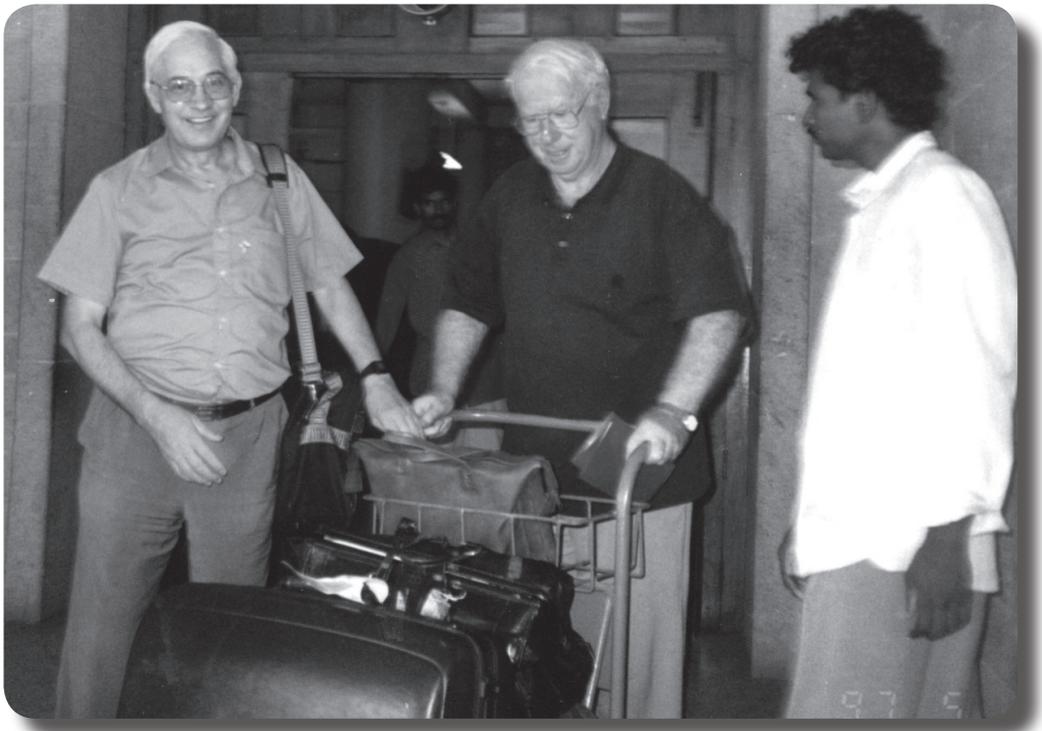
As a final gift to the Institute, Charles wrote a Circular on *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* in two parts (XXIX March 25, 1992: 8 and July 10, 1993: 10). “Not only is this subject of capital importance in our own lives but we see many signs of people searching for an appropriate spirituality for our time. . . Are we able to speak about our spirituality with others? Can our young people see and feel the flame of our spirituality?” For Charles this meant opening his heart, sharing his experience of God's love, inviting his Brothers to do the same. He reminds us that “our vocation (as Brothers) can never be adequately understood solely in terms of call, covenant and consecration. These elements find their full meaning only in mission.” Ours is a grounded spirituality, both marial and apostolic.



Visit to the community and school at Chamberí, Spain

AFTER BEING SUPERIOR GENERAL

Many things could be said about Charles' labours after his Generalate was over. He spent years in two novitiates, Kutama in Southern Africa and Lomeri in the Pacific. Finally he was able to fulfill a youthful dream of being a 'missionary'. He was the delegated Visitor for the Sector of India. He was a member of a group of eminent persons appointed to observe South Africa's first democratic elections.



With Br Benito, his successor as Superior General, at Trichy airport, India, 1995

When he returned to Australia from Rome, he first stayed at the Provincial house where there were secretarial services. He devoted time and energy to his much valued correspondence to a whole range of people. He once wrote with tongue in cheek, “Some people give books as gifts at Christmas time. A commendable custom. Others give book vouchers. Also commendable. ‘El cheapo’ goes one further. He suggests what books you should buy for yourself! Now that’s real creativity.”

In putting together a modest photo album of his time as Superior General, he chose words of Thomas Merton as the introduction,

“We are not rainmakers, but Christians.

In our dealings with God he is free and so are we.

It’s simply a need for me to express my love by praying for my friends;
it’s like embracing them.

If you love another person, it’s God’s love being realized.

One and the same love is reaching your friend through you, and you through
your friend.”

Later he asked to move to Blacktown in western Sydney where he joined two other Brothers. He delighted in taking his turn at the cooking. He enjoyed living in a house on a suburban street where he could mix easily with people of different churches and faiths.

Charles kept on engaging with life. He linked with a number of Church-related groups: the Aboriginal Ministry in the Archdiocese of Sydney and Diocese of Parramatta, Catalyst for Renewal, Australian Reforming Catholics and the Women and Australian Church movement.

In 2006 he moved to Campbelltown where the community has medical and other helpers. He remained extraordinarily kind and attentive to the end, even when he was quite confused.

TRIBUTES

The tributes that follow were collected on birthdays, jubilees, others' memoirs, the 1993 General Chapter, when he was awarded the Order of Australia in 1997, recent notes of family and others. They give some glimpse into the extraordinary impact of Charles on individual Marists throughout the world.

Br Kelvin Canavan

Drummoyne, Sydney 1997

Charles, you are not an easy man to speak about. Your modesty, humility and simplicity will not tolerate any exaggeration...

At a personal level you work diligently, and with great constancy, never drawing attention to yourself. ... Your lovely simplicity and humility may sometimes hide from us, your friends, so much of what you do for others.

Two weeks ago Charles was working on some papers—I enquired what he was doing: preparing some lectures for the Brothers in Korea (to be translated); working on a document to help the Brothers in Hungary. This was all being done quietly without drawing attention to this work.

His desk was littered with correspondence from all around the world. His bedroom is much the same!

Earlier this year he went to Rome for the General Conference. Not the Kangaroo Route for Chas who travelled via South Africa, Zimbabwe, Rwanda to see his fellow Marists.

Chas has been a worker all his life. As a student at Kogarah in the early '50s I recall young Brother Elias, clutching a briefcase, hurrying to catch the 3:45pm train for his BA studies at Sydney University.

45 years later Charles is still hurrying and retirement is not something he appears to have time to think about.

Chas was Provincial for just 4 years but his achievements—fruit of vision and tenacity—live on:

- he organized the first combined National conference of Major Superiors of Religious;
- he ensured the four Marist congregations were well placed for collaboration and presence at National level;
- he was at the Armidale Conference (1972) which famously produced a Select Committee report institutionalizing the current National-State-Diocesan structure that Catholic education in Australia knows now;
- he provided the means of directed retreats and spiritual direction for the Brothers.

Of course he had the assistance of his ever present Dictaphone...

A list of the places Charles has traveled to support the Brothers reads like the index to an atlas. Charles we can only guess what this journeying cost you personally.

But this is only one side of Charles' life. Most of us are here because the ever busy Charles always had time for his friends... for me and for you...

Despite the workload as Superior General, Charles, you found time for the card, the Christmas message, the occasional phone call...

You are a person's person, like Jesus you are a compassionate and caring man.

A quick scan of Charles's writings reveals a great deal about this extraordinary Marist:

- a man with a dream for a just and compassionate society
- a man committed to the Common Good
- a man who feels the anguish of parents who do not have food to offer their children—
AND WHO DOES SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
- a man with a special concern for the poor and the marginalized—hence his great support for the work in Africa
- a man who has contributed very significantly to the development of Catholic education in this country
- a man committed to Lay people and Brothers working together on mission
- a man constantly urging the Brothers to share their faith with others
- a man committed to the Marist Congregation who continues to be daring in his hope
- a man who loves people and who included those of us gathered here this evening as his special guests.

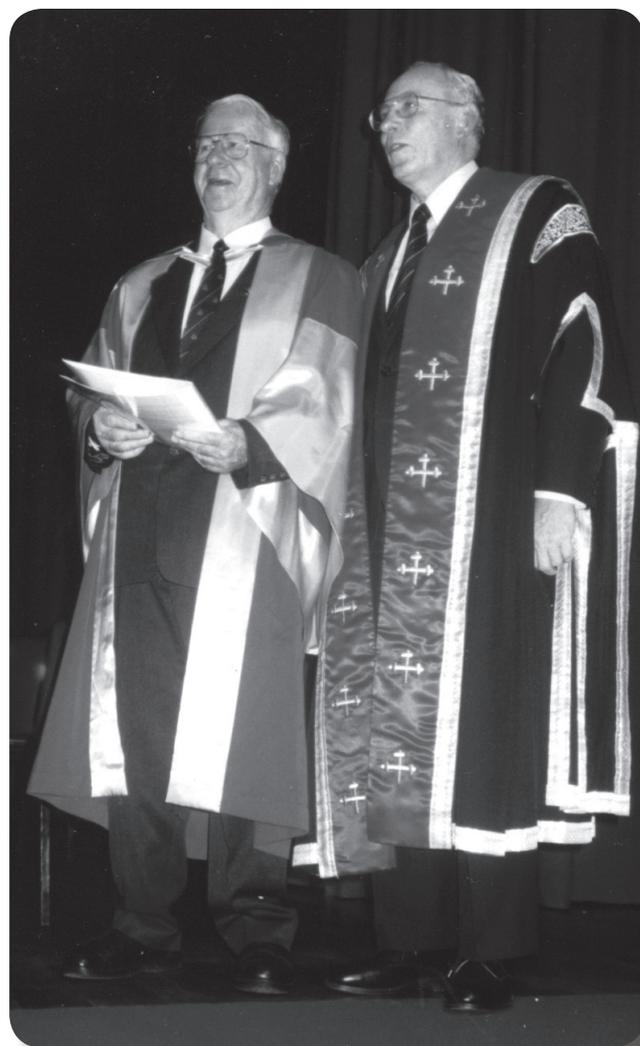
Charles, we love you, Kelvin

Br Quentin Duffy Former Vicar General

Ashgrove 1997

The Institute or Church often calls on us to undertake a special work which puts us in “the first place” while our vocation encourages us to seek the lower place. Religious Life can be ambiguous, asking us to be a “flaming light” while on the other hand Fr Champagnat wanted us to be “hidden and unknown.”

On many occasions Brother Charles has shown us how we should react. He never flaunted the honour bestowed on him by the General Chapter... He was happy enough to remain



*Receiving an Honorary Doctorate from
Australian Catholic University, 2000*

“the least of all”. Amongst the African bishops he was often called upon to be their leader... especially in matters of education. He was able to do this, putting the emphasis on what he had to say, rather than on the fact that it was he who had to say it.

He led two General Chapters and later the whole Institute to give to the poor the first place in their efforts, always giving the poor the attention that they deserved. To do this he never neglected either his own religious life, or that of any others for whom he was responsible.

Above all he never let slip from her place in the Church and in our lives, the Blessed Virgin, our Good Mother. She was the first of the disciples and this he wished his Brothers to remain.

Congratulations, Charles, and many thanks for the example you have given us all.

Br Phillip Robert Oulette Former Councillor General, USA 1997

... with you in spirit and prayer in thanking the Lord for the marvelous blessings that have come to the Congregation, the Church and Society through you and your leadership.

Let me simply express to you as a fellow Marist and friend for what you have meant to me... over the years. In particular let me thank you, Charles:

- for your leadership in so many areas that have touched our lives
- for the love, the respect and the appreciation you have shown towards all who have come in contact with you
- for your marvelous gifts of communication and organization
- for your sensitivity and awareness of others' needs
- for your willingness and ability to listen
- for your attention to details in the small things that give life meaning
- for your ability to motivate so many people to place their gifts and talents at the service of others
- for convincing us of the power of the Holy Spirit in our individual lives and the life of the Congregation.

There is so much more that I could say and would want to say, but I am sure others will do that this evening. Just know, Charles, that you have been for me a wonderful mentor and a faithful supporter of all my endeavours. I am deeply grateful for your concern, support, and friendship.

Br Stephen Urban, Former Councillor General, USA

(on the occasion of Charles' 60th birthday, 1984)

Man of love and vitality
Whom God chose to shepherd his sheep
With your warm manly heart
And boundless trust in the Lord.

You have conquered the hearts of your flock
You seek out the lost and
Bind up their wounds
Bringing them to pastures green.

So, lead on, shepherd true,
Be sure of your step,
For the strength of God's in your heart
And you'll never go astray.

So LEAD ON! LEAD ON!

Through thunder and storm
As Champagnat did before
And following the Morning Star.

Br Benito Arbués Superior General

Rome 1997

Dear Brother Charles

Your years of devoted service within your Province in the roles of teacher, Director and Provincial would alone be worthy of high recognition. But your leadership of the Institute during your term as Superior General advances these three causes on a global level and brought into sharp focus for us the importance of Solidarity in keeping alive the charism of Champagnat in today's world.

Few Brothers in the Institute would be unaware of this; few would not feel a debt of gratitude. But it is especially pleasing that the Government of your country has chosen to recognize your contribution by the bestowal of such a high civil award. This is indeed a cause of joy for us all.

We pray that you may continue to enjoy the protection of our Good Mother and that we may have the benefit of your inspiration and leadership for many years to come.

Rome, 17.08.96

Director
Honours Secretariat
Government House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir

... The very fact of his election to such key leadership roles in a group as widespread as our already says a lot about how people have recognized in him gifts of wisdom and courage beyond the ordinary, a leader among leaders.

He was given special responsibility after 1976 to liaise with our men in South Africa, His special contribution there was to assist them to develop a vision of their presence as an edu-

cating body in S.A. which was multi-racial, multi-religious, open to people from all socio-economic circumstances... [and to] make a stand on such principles. With his encouragement, decisions were taken which transformed Marist schools from being for the better-off, white Catholic community to be characterised by the above values. The Brothers themselves moved into new circumstances alongside the long-suffering black African community.

Also during the period 1976-85, Brother Charles established an international commission for reflection and analysis on social justice, and a social secretariat which was responsible for distribution of funds to worthy development projects in countries in great need. These two initiatives inspired and supported Brothers and their lay colleagues worldwide to develop similar national initiatives and to be daring in their ongoing review of priorities. In this regard, he was very much at the cutting edge himself, while enabling others to make quite radical shifts in perspective, in the name of greater service to humanity.

His life cannot be reduced simply to its humanitarian aspects. His personal life and his abundant writings speak of a spiritual integrity that is refreshingly contemporary and down-to-earth. Just the title of one of his books, *Sowers of Hope*, communicates the tenor of his thinking. His personal faith is at once profoundly Christian and respectful of each human person irrespective of their creed, a characteristic which was important in his dealings with countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Indeed there is a prophetic side to his character which is equally inspiring of courageous vision and disturbing of false complacency.

As Superior General, he was in a position to influence the Brothers with a clear mandate to refocus our mission towards the poor and underprivileged, and towards international solidarity. ... [e.g. Latin America...] including the indigenous peoples of those countries.

He made the concerns of Africa a special priority for his term of office. His interest and dynamism in this regard won the attention of the Vatican and he was appointed to the Commission of Bishops and Religious Leaders for Africa. His experience proved invaluable for Church authorities in many sensitive situations who recognized in him a person of confidence. His particular care was the formation of our African men to be imbued with a fully Christian sense of humanity with all that this entails in terms of commitment and pride in local culture, and to be well-prepared for assuming leadership roles. It was his personal drive which led to the creation in Nairobi of a pan-African centre for the pre-service formation of our younger men and other Religious and lay people—after 10 years of existence there are over 100 graduates of the three year programme.

His universal and keen sense of timeliness led him to initiate new ventures in Eastern Europe and in Cuba through an appeal for international volunteers—there is now an Australian Brother working in Hungary (together with a number of others.) His particular gift there has been to keep the focus on the needs of youth irrespective of the political or ideological system of the country.

Since leaving international office, he has continued his own commitment to Africa through establishing twinning arrangements between Australian schools and deprived schools in

various countries of Africa. Also, I have been fortunate in having him available to exercise leadership and support roles throughout Asia and the Pacific, and to undertake some sensitive missions in China and India.

In brief, I would say that Brother Charles has displayed extraordinary leadership on the international scene. He has had a profound influence on the priorities and daily work of thousands of educators and youth worldwide, Brothers and their lay colleagues, in terms of his strong presence, personal interest, and clear teaching. He leads by example. He has succeeded in communicating a vision of education as leading to personal commitment to the best of human values including religious faith, and to their expression in concrete actions of solidarity.

He has been then a most worthy ambassador of Australia, a person of whom any nation could be justifiably proud.

I trust that this letter communicates my own deep personal respect and gratitude for someone whom I have come to know as a colleague and friend.

*Yours sincerely,
Br Benito Arbués
Superior General*

Br Richard Dunleavy Former Councillor General, Auckland 1997

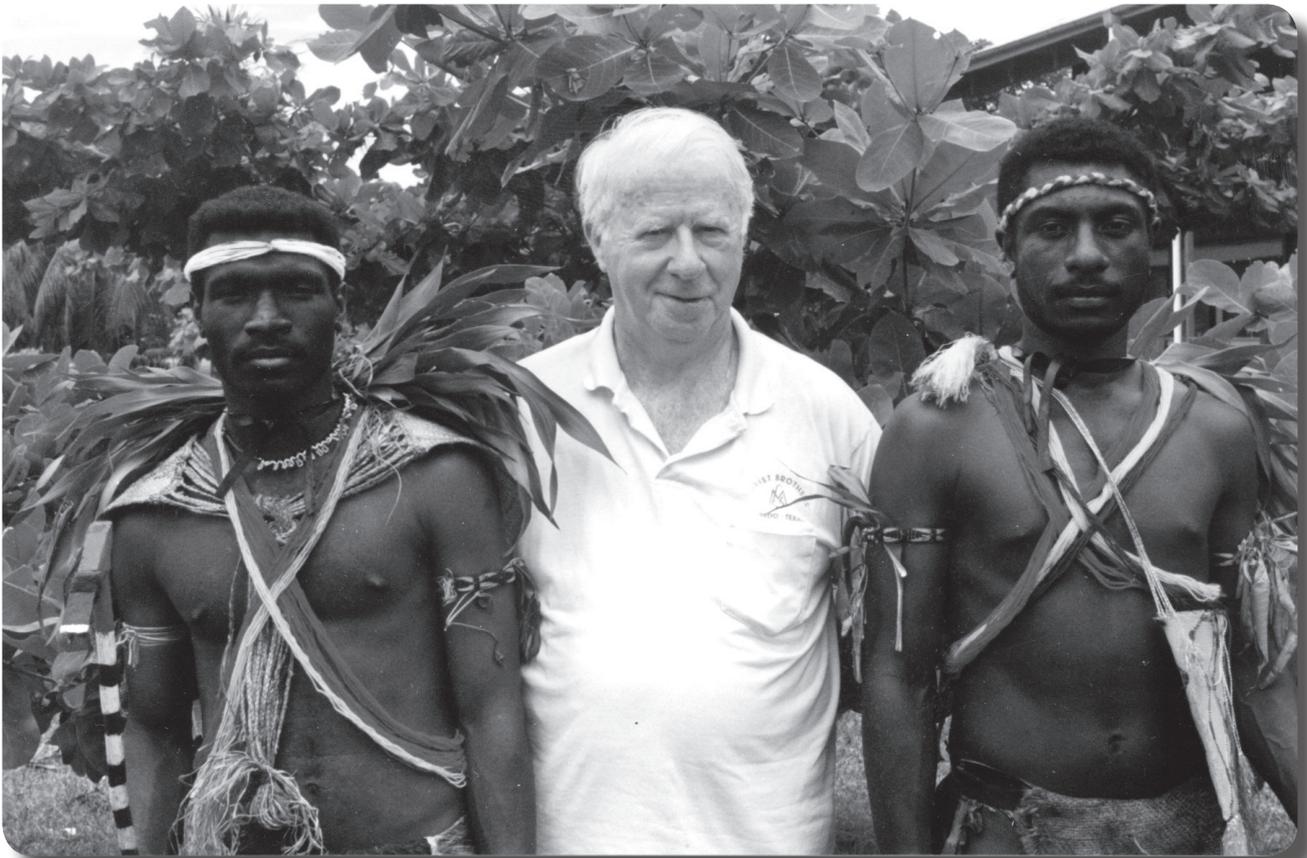
- At the Marist African Congress in Nairobi in 1992, Frère Alvarus, a normally unemotional Belgian of very few words, publicly saluted Charles as *Charles CHAMPAGNAT*. I believe it was the highest honour that ageing missionary in Rwanda, who had suffered heroically in war for decades, could possibly have paid to Charles: a tribute which spoke eloquently for hundreds of Brothers, not just in Africa but across the world, who have deeply appreciated Charles' vibrant Marist spirit and excellence as a leader, his intelligent but always practical grasp of the realities of their situations, and his obvious Marist love and compassion for them and those they served. In Charles they met someone who "educated" them in their simplest contacts with him.

- Another highlight I mention is a daily ongoing characteristic of Charles' approach to education and formation: his unequalled capacity for, and commitment to, written communication. I refer in particular to these two:

Firstly, the phenomenal writing of thousands of cards and letters to Brothers, family, friends and colleagues of the Brothers, and to other fleeting contacts he had in his visits. His network of correspondence stretches all over the world, touching into people's lives with a short message of affection, care, and encouragement. I heard many people refer to these messages, deeply grateful for the inspiration they brought.

Secondly, there is that marvelous library of circulars that Charles produced, and which were so welcomed by Brothers of every cultures, despite the difficulties of translation...

Kia ora, Charles! May Mary and Marcellin also sit at table with you at this celebration organised by your Brothers at Drummoyne, and enrich you with their spirit to make it a blessed and memorable occasion for your and everyone around you.



On visit to Papua New Guinea – a cultural display

Br Wency Calimpon

Philippines, 1997

Br Charles is a great leader a committed religious and a big-hearted Brother!

He is greatly respected for his great skill in leadership. He is looked up to for his profound spirituality and for his strong sense of commitment and service, especially to the least favoured in society and to the religious formation of the young Brothers in the Institute. He is deeply loved by all the Brothers for his simplicity, openness and warm personality.

Br Teófilo Minga

Portugal 1997

Iwas on the first team to go to Nairobi. For several weeks the team stayed in Rome, preparing both the academic and formation programme for the Nairobi student Brothers. On this occasion, Br Charles spoke to us a couple of times.

His main concern was the formation of our African Brothers. In other words he wished to see and to have in the young African Brother, on the one hand, the true and the committed apostle and catechist of youth, and, on the other, the true and capable educator with a deep knowledge, and an appropriate pedagogy to teach.

Apostle and educator: this is what the Marist Brother going out from Nairobi should be. This binomial had a very special place deep within his heart. The very fact of witnessing this sense of his apostolic enthusiasm and education helped me, as well, to deepen the sense of my apostolic consecration and of my presence, as educator, amongst the youth.

Why was Br Charles so concerned with the formation of our Brothers in Africa? Besides developing a greater appreciation of the vocation of Brother, with possibilities of greater perseverance, there was in Br Charles a great concern of giving to the black continent. so damaged by the corruption of politicians, educators and lay religious a full capacity for their mission... African youth, with its material and religious poverty, was the final goal of Br Charles.

I think, the gradual accumulation of some 140 Brothers who have now finished their formation in Nairobi, and now working in their own countries, is a marvelous gift for Africa, and responds to the dream of Br Charles. They are, quoting his own words, *Sowers of Hope*. He was, of course, concerned for the whole Congregation, but I think there was (and certainly is) a special place for Africa in Charles' heart.

On several occasions that he spoke to us, I could guess and even feel, his missionary heart. No doubt, as far as Africa is concerned, this missionary thrust he tried to deepen, is linked with his concern for the development of peoples. A good number of our new African foundations were in places where there was nobody to help, or where there was a special need for education. Thanks to Br Charles, Marist presence in those places became a missionary presence, a source of education directed towards development. We can see already today, some fruits of this vision.

Development, the way Br Charles thought about it, was an integral part of justice and peace. We all know his devotedness in bringing this topic to the awareness of the Brothers and the Marist family. The Marist School should be a normal place to educate people in the values of justice and peace. An education ignoring these values would be meaningless...

I should just add a word on prayer. I can remember when we went to Nairobi how much he insisted on the need of prayer for one another, for the Community, for our undertakings, in such a demanding work as was the Marist International Centre of Nairobi at all levels. This dimension of prayer would consolidate and strengthen love and unity among ourselves, and would give a certainty that our efforts in the new and growing Formation Centre would be fruitful. Time has proved him right.

I may say that I myself have been very often inspired in my teaching and in my action by the word, example, and enthusiasm of Br Charles...

Therefore Br Charles remains still in my heart, not only a friend but an inspiring example and a voice that still challenges me, telling me not to be afraid, but to take courage, and to go ahead beyond my fears. As the prophets of the biblical world did. In fact the prophets of today are not very different from those of biblical times. For all those reasons, I say once more: Thank you, Brother Charles.

Br Jude Pieterse Former Provincial, South Africa 1997

A few recollections... My first real contact with Charles was during the General Chapter of 1976. There can be no doubt that it was Charles who was largely instrumental in drafting the Poverty and Justice document and piloting it through the 1976 General Chapter. Using the language of a recent General Chapter, the Poverty and Justice document was cer-

tainly audacious for its time and there were many interventions questioning its wisdom and contents. But Charles' respectful but firm handling of these won the day. When the concept of consultation wasn't as popular as it is today, Charles could always be found seeking out the opinion of others and checking things out with them. I firmly believe that the Poverty and Justice document of the 1976 General Chapter was over the next 9 years a critical instrument in the process of conscientisation of the Institute in matters of justice and poverty.

For us in South Africa, Charles' presence of the Provincial Chapters of 1980 and 1983 and his consistent encouragement to us all as we struggled to deal with the glaring injustices of the policy and practice of apartheid will not be forgotten. His deep humanity and compassion, his lovely sense of humour illustrated by many a story and unwavering love for us his Brothers won over one and all.

In August 1983 a Justice and Peace Workshop was held in Zimbabwe for Brothers from the African continent. Again it was Charles who prodded and encouraged the participants to rise above any complacency about these issues in the African context.

I cannot think of the African Congress help in Nairobi in 1992 without calling to mind Charles' challenge to us to be truly Brothers to one another and to those around us, and which he so succinctly summed up with the word of the pop song: "He ain't heavy, he's my brother".

On a more personal level the encouragement and support I received from Charles during my earlier spell as Provincial was invaluable. It may have been in the form of a few words, a brief letter or a few lines on a card, but it was always there. To this day I marvel at how Charles could manage to keep in touch. ...

Then of course, there was another kind of note as well—the General Chapter 1993—"Don't wear shorts in the Chapel!" Put more apologetically, but essentially that.

Again during the recent General Conference, quietly but surely Charles was as busy as ever: a word of encouragement, a challenge, an infectious and at times mischievous smile, a note, something to read.

1993 Chapter Delegates

- a. What an exceptional memory you have for faces and the details of life of each of us! ...
- b. thanks for your circulars that have brought light and encouragement.
- c. "especially for your visit to Mainland China in 1988... your fraternal care, daring spirit, energetic leadership, human sensitivity, simple and warm personality... are all a great inspiration to us. (Joachim)...
- d. your daring in sending a new community to Hungary; your care and support of new Provincials.
- e. mountains of gifts, letters, cards sent from all over the world, especially from Rome; (and more lately from Sydney)...
- f. grateful... for your vision, your courage, your dreams and your hope. You have led us well, and where you have called us to is a wonderful legacy of your time at the helm. (Sean Samon)...

- g. my personal experience of your love and of your competence as a leader give deeper meaning to the word GIFT in reference to you. May you continue to promote audacity and hope wherever you are. (Renato)...
- h. what I felt deeply whenever we met was your understanding, your brotherly affection, your sense of solidarity.
- i. your small signs of personal attention – words of appreciation, postcards, souvenirs, birthday wishes etc. – have often been a comfort and inspiration ...
- j. “the Dreamer” who dared to dream the impossible (Phil)...
- k. your prophetic voice has been heard by the Brothers. Thanks for having remained true to this vocation, for having known how to blend prophetic action with a spirit of communion.
- l. thanks for the gift of yourself to the Brothers, for your dynamic words, your human warmth, your untiring dedication. You have been a great gift to the Institute. (Reginald Racine)...
- m. dared us to be dangerous dreamers, and you gave your time and life to us as an example. Thanks for your words, your life, your teachings, your love...
- n. you became our brother in word and deed; I thank you for being such a wonderful brother to us and a great lover of our continent... (Michael Oruche, Nigeria)
- o. you have been a father to us, full of tenderness and personalised attention (Gilles, Canada)
- p. a life in the service of others, treasures of goodness, an enthusiastic master of communication calling us and challenging us to action, a repeated invitation to attend to our inner lives (Pascal Kurunziza, Rwanda)
- q. God bless you Charles for your passionate commitment to this extraordinary continent so rich with dangers and potential. The future will remember you ...

Ex-students and teaching colleagues

He was all class. He was to the Marist Brothers of the late 1950s what John F Kennedy was to the United States a few years later – the hope of the future. He was handsome, highly intelligent, a good sportsman, and had an even temperament, a quiet sense of humour, excellent judgement and a very spiritual tone.

The Province at this stage seemed to make a conscious decision to pour some of its best talent into the juniorate staff. We had a great blend of older and younger Brothers who all enjoyed high reputations in the Province. Under Brother Charles we felt trusted, we were motivated to strive for higher standards, we were introduced to a more mature form of prayer life and in general we experienced a well-balanced, reasonable, calm lifestyle, where you felt at one with the Brothers and not in conflict with them.

... He encouraged originality, especially in ideas for the improvement of conditions, initiatives, and a well-rounded education.

James Gray

Br Charles' five years as master of juniors was a golden era in the juniorate's academic history. He was the man who took all the other opportunities and ran with them. He had the support of a good staff and willing parents. Everything about him from the time he

walked into the place was fresh and contemporary. His religion lessons anticipated many of the things that came about in Vatican II: even then he was aware of what was going on in the world around him.

I recall the relief and happiness that Brother Charles' personality and way of relating to the juniors brought to all of us in his first few weeks in charge of the juniorate.

Br Brian Etherington

My first Headmaster, Br Elias (known later as Br Charles Howard) was the best Principal I ever knew: a superb educator and one of the very few people I have worked with who displayed lateral-thinking brilliance. . . Through sheer hard work, Br Charles was able to memorise the Christian name of every boy in the College – and their parents – without exception. I personally watched him as he built up that skill. He was driving the car on our way from Brewarrina to Bourke to attend yet another fund-raising dinner. I was sitting beside him with the names of the 100 or so who were also attending. We went over and over the Christian name and surnames, and then he had me test him until he made no mistakes. Few things demand so much discipline as planned spontaneity. The subsequent impact upon the attendees, as he effortlessly greeted each by name, was powerful. As the Old Testament puts it somewhere, 'Yahweh knows me because He knows my name'.

Br Charles scrutinised every comment on every report card. He had no time for meaningless comments such as "could do better" and any unfortunate Brother who wrote such drivel would be handed back the offending cards for rewriting!

Paul Brock in his book, "A Passion for Life", 2004

Family and Friends

Charles Howard has long been a legend in our family and we are proud to claim him as our own. Despite our faith that he now enjoys eternal life with his God, we are very sad to be saying farewell to him. So much could be said about Uncle Charlie and we each hold precious memories of him but a few qualities stand out:

He was a great communicator, and connected with all of us through postcards, birthday cards, cards for no reason! His correspondence always reflected something unique to the person. He had an extraordinary ability to remain closely connected to the family despite often vast geographical distance.

He increased our knowledge of the world by sharing his experiences of his travels and his work by sending postcards & bringing back little gifts and mementos. One of the little ones began his piggy bank saving as a young boy with a million dollar note from Peru.

Charles brought a wooden nativity scene brought back from Brazil which has adorned both our family's homes at Christmas for 20 years and will continue to do so.

He was a great listener. He was interested in each of us on more than a superficial level, he was genuinely interested in what we were feeling. Doing at work or travelling and what was happening for us.

He was gentle, compassionate and understanding

He was gentle, inclusive, thoughtful

Charles had a particular appreciation for the role of women especially mothers: as a Marist, he was obviously influenced by the model of Mary, but he spoke often of his love and admiration of his own mother Mollie, as well as his exposure to the experiences of women in developing countries. He seemed especially aware of the mothers and caregivers in our family. He so often used the word “lady”.

His generosity with books and articles encouraged people to think about the God aspect of our life.

The world is diminished without his presence yet it is a better place because of his life.

He will be sadly missed but always in our hearts.

Clare Howard for the Howard family, 2012

My first thoughts of Charles is a profound gratitude for the wonderful friendship over many years... I remember that when it was first rumoured that Charles was likely to be elected to go to Rome, I spoke severely to God, suggesting in no uncertain terms that this was definitely not a good idea! ...

It has been a yardstick friendship for me, typifying the very best that can happen in relationships ... truth, directness, mutual support, fidelity, non-possessiveness, freedom, affection, reliability, sharing of faith and on and on. Charles has been a wise confidante whose presence in my life has been pure grace. Much of the encouragement in my religious life has come from him both verbally and in his lived practice. He is a man of God and man who loves the Church.

It is kaleidoscopic friendship, different colours and designs appearing in my mind as I look at it from different angles. Without it, my life would be immeasurably poorer.

Sr Evelyn Woodward, RSJ 1992

Charles was a long time great friend to Frank and Meg Stackpool and an inspiring very dear adopted uncle and grandfather figure to their children and grandchildren.

A storyteller, Charles' stories were always of characters, of people from around the world whom he encountered, and admired: tales of inspiring and courageous educators implementing educational models that challenged the then prevailing system in South Africa, of health and community workers in transformative projects in South America, of courageous brothers who kept the church alive underground in China, of a fine violinist whose music uplifted all those around him, of a gardener whose feeling for cultivating the land in Campbelltown made him a role model for young students, of mothers, of brothers – he delighted in each one's story and always discerned and celebrated each person's unique gifts. We also delighted in sharing these stories Charles brought home to our table from around the world, en-

riching our lives at many family gatherings and dinners – gatherings when he would always be sure to engage with each person, eager to learn about our daily activities and to encourage us all to pursue our dreams.

His enthusiasm also clearly extended to his passionate support for social justice projects, his practical and courageous opposition to dictatorial regimes, in places like Zimbabwe where he found the oppression of those around him so heart-wrenching, and his determination to use his influence and his efforts to encourage and support projects and individuals who were community-builders and who challenged existing hierarchies in pursuit of structural change to improve the lives of others and address inequalities. These qualities always inspired us.

Charles frankly communicated the joy he found in sharing good times together. A gruff but affectionate family member, he would joyfully crush us with enthusiastic, all-enveloping hugs, and no-holds-barred back slaps, and on each meeting he would always want to know exactly how EVERYBODY was doing, such was his genuine care for each of us. He was a staunch supporter on the sidelines of many of our childrens' games of Saturday sport – never an ardent sportsman himself, he typically encouraged and took pleasure in supporting the fun and games, never giving a fig about the end result. They'd race off the field to greet him and be greeted back with a rough ruffle of tousled hair and many congratulations, irrespective of the scoreline.

And gardening. Well, to gardening Charles brought..... boundless energy, staying power, disastrously indiscriminating judgement and, on the whole, a slash and burn take-no-enemies approach. A cleared garden bed was a good garden bed, and there were some breathtaking occasions we would arrive home to discover a grimy, sweaty, flushed Charles, in filthy white singlet and khaki shorts, down on his haunches, broadly grinning back at our astonishment, saying, <Well, how do you like it?> <Wow!> was the safest response. And, we'd reflect, those geraniums needed a lesson and it's always good to start again with a clean slate!

All our lives Charles has frankly told us, <What a joy it is to know you>. Well, the joy has been ours Charles, it is a joy to have known you.

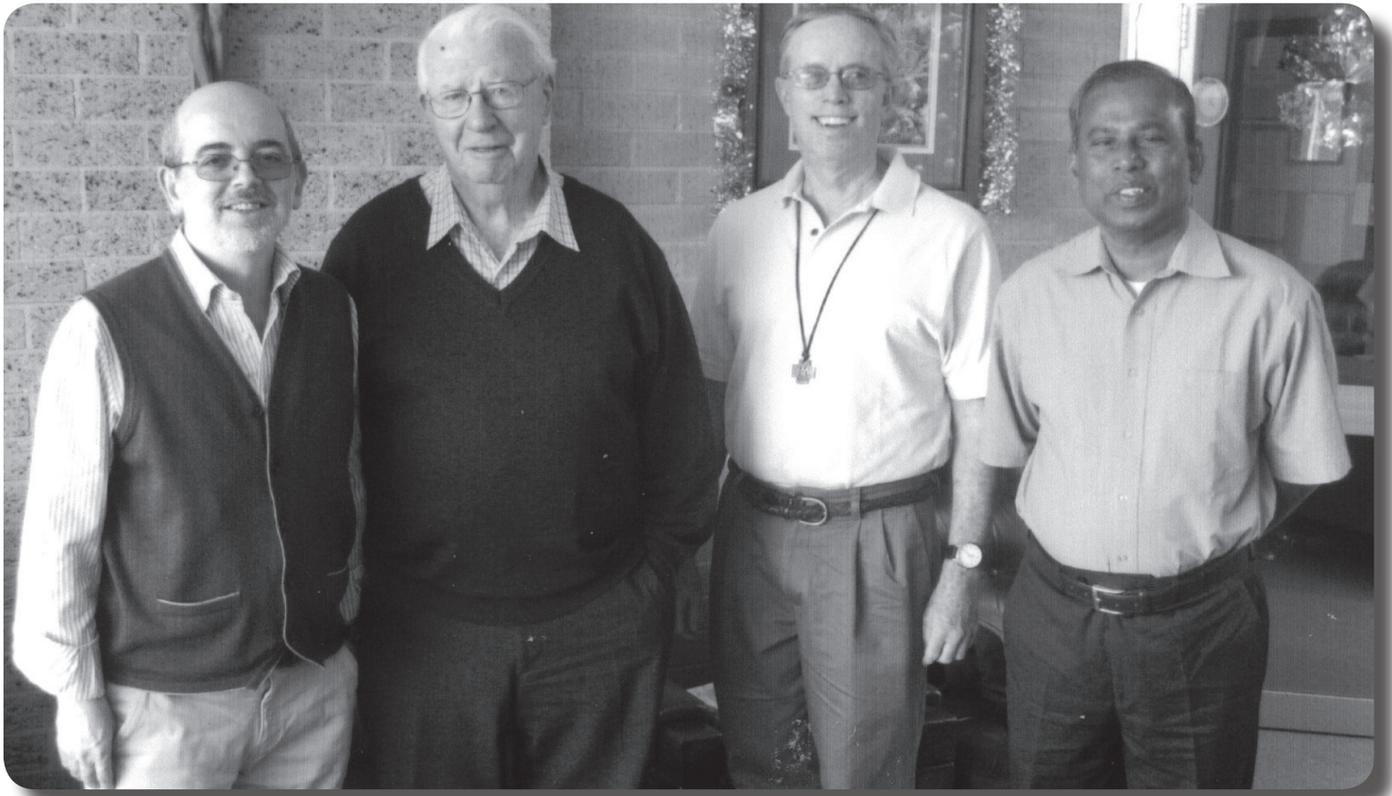
By Jane van Beek (Stackpool) and family, 2012

May the Lord grant him eternal rest, and may he be considered
“the noblest Roman of them all...
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’”

(Julius Caesar: V, v, 68-75)

Charles taught me this Shakespearean play in the Juniorate in 1961, with no inkling of his future and certainly no ambition to be ‘a Roman’ but the words are surely appropriate.

Br Jeff Crowe, Provincial, Sydney.



*With Br Emili, current Superior General,
John Klein and Michael de Waas, General Councillors
Campbelltown, Christmas 2010*



Like a shepherd



Father,

We thank you for the gift of being Marists today in a world alive with new challenges and possibilities.

You know how too often in our weakness we have been disturbed by the passing of an old familiar world, and have grieved at the loss of things that gave us comfort. Forgive us our fears, our lack of trust in You, and stir us to deeper faith and surer hope.

Give us the gift of Hope:

- *that is patient and confident in waiting for the unfolding of Your mysterious ways;*
- *that can see the potential for new life in the seed that must die;*
- *that knows You ask of us fidelity rather than success;*
- *that understands and supports the young, especially when their human growth causes tension and pain;*
- *that inspires us to deeper compassion, to generous sacrifice, to a broader vision that draws its energy, its life, its sparkle from our Risen Lord, the Lord of History;*
- *that is serene and joyful even in the midst of difficulties;*
- *that is an active hope for what others can become with the help of our mutual support;*
- *that inspires willingness to stand with Mary at the foot of the cross.*



Father, let us be sowers of hope. Open our eyes and our hearts to see the power of the Holy Spirit renewing the face of the earth, and to welcome Your surprises in the signs of the New Creation.

We make this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

From Br Charles, Circular, "Sowers of Hope", 1990.