



marists 2017
a new beginning



Community Bulletin


Champagnat Marists
DISTRICT OF THE PACIFIC

Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoa, Fiji, American Samoa, Kiribati

May 2016

What is in this edition?

Among other things this edition contains:

- News from the Grove
- Sacred Heart College in Action
- Verdon College's Winning Ways
- Fourviere – Ourselves and all we have
- The May Magnificat from Gerard Manly Hopkins SJ
- 'A Timeless Magnificat' article
- Some Websites to explore
- Gospel commentaries for June
- A Letter from Down South
- 'What are we doing on Earth for Christ's Sake?' - article
- A Passing Thought
- The District Calendar

In 2016 each edition of the *Community Bulletin* will have an article related to the Year of Mercy and Fourvière Year.

Cover image

The image on the cover of the *Community Bulletin* is a model of the "Black Madonna" found in the Chapel at Fourviere. which has always been a popular place of pilgrimage. There has been a shrine at Fourviere dedicated to Our Lady since 1170. On 23rd July 1816 twelve Marist aspirants, priests and seminarians, climbed the hill to the shrine of Our Lady of Fourviere and placed their promise to found the Society of Mary (Marists) under the corporal on the altar while Jean-Claude Courveille celebrated Mass.



Marcellin Champagnat
The Apostle of Youth
A New Beginning for us all

Our experience at The Grove

We are a Mexican family - Estela, Rodrigo, Josue (5 years) and Lucia (1 year). We proudly are Lay Marists of Champagnat who spent three years in Cambodia as missionaries living and working in a Marist Community. We just finished our time there and before coming home we got an invitation from Br. Doug Dawick to visit New Zealand on our way to Mexico.

We had a wonderful fraternal time among the Kiwis. First we arrived in Auckland and the Brothers received us and helped us to reach Wellington. Once in the Windy City we were welcomed by the Community called The Grove. Bros. Kieran, Doug and the Lay Esther were lovely. They took us around and showed us many beautiful places including vineyards and the Zoo.

We had the opportunity to share our experience with other Lay Marists and with the rest of the Brothers in Wellington. In the church and in St. Bernard's College we met friends of the Brothers who love the Charism of Champagnat.



**Esther, Doug, Rodrigo, Josue,
Estela & Lucia, Kieran**

But what we enjoyed the most was the Family Spirit in the Community. We felt like home, among members of the same family. Our children were happy all the time for they were accepted and loved as they are, and we as parents will always be thankful for that. It is a blessing to come from another country after living in a different place and yet be able to speak the same language of love and fraternity. It is wonderful how easy it is to share the life, to understand each other and to be together when you find open hearts.

We have experienced how difficult it is to live in an international mixed Community, and certainly the challenges are not small. But we believe that it is possible if we can

find Brothers and Lay as ready to do it as in The Grove. Then the Marist Family will keep getting a source of life.

Many thanks from the bottom of our hearts. Fraternally,

Estela and Rodrigo Sanchez

Sacred Heart College in Action

From Brother Anthony Walker



**ANZAC
DAY**



SACRED HEART COLLEGE IN ACTION



ASH WEDNESDAY



PREFECTS FAMILY DAY MASS AND PRESENTATIONS





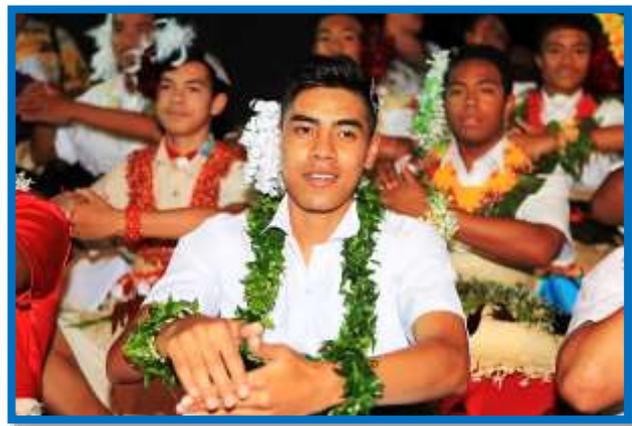
OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND SPORT



POWHIRI - WELCOME



FIAFIA NIGHT



*Verdon College wins first place
at Stage Challenge in Invercargill*
From The "Southland Times"



Verdon College won first place at the Stage Challenge competition in Invercargill on Wednesday for their performance highlighting the refugee crisis in Syria.

Southland schools danced their hearts out on Wednesday night during the 2016 Stage Challenge, with Verdon College taking home the grand prize.

With positive feedback from the judges, Verdon's performance, *No Place like Home*, explored the world refugee crisis, with a particular focus on those displaced in Syria.

Student co-directors Travis Oudhoff and Liam van Eden said were stoked with their performance and said it came out better than they could have hoped. Oudhoff said the energy offstage after they'd won was the best part for him.

"Reuniting with all the cast and crew at the end was just phenomenal. We got the result we wanted at the end."

Adding to their victory were a number of other specialist awards, including excellence in soundtrack, excellence of stage use and the Spirit of Stage Challenge award.

Their focus on the world refugee crisis was something the directors felt needed to be highlighted, emphasising that Syria, where 6.5 million people are internally displaced, once used to be a thriving first world country.

VERDON COLLEGE PRESENTS

"It's very topical at the moment and we want to create awareness," van Eden said. The refugee crisis can happen to anyone, at any time," Oudhoff said.

The performance finished with *Happy Birthday* being sung by a character alone, crying on the stage. Oudhoff said he wanted the audience to be left with something to think about. "It was just a good way to grab the audience and taking them into this world," he said.

Before 2015, Verdon College had not entered a team into the competition for six years. Nabbing second place last year and the much-coveted first place this year had been a great result for the team. "We were speechless," Oudhoff said.

Performance judge Ella Mackie said they had done well to represent such an emotional experience. "[It] made you feel like you took the journey with them. "There [were] so many emotions expressed flawlessly - it was a very moving and spectacular performance."

Second place went to James Hargest College for its performance of *Hargie's Toy Shop*, which explored gender role stereotyping and combating discrimination based on gender identity.

Southland Girls' High School placed third with *Anne Frank*, a performance which focused on Anne Frank's treacherous life during World War Two and whether today's society is heading towards making those same mistakes.

It is noted that the entire show performed by Verdon College was written by the students themselves

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/news/79925370/verdon-college-wins-first-place-atstage-challenge-in-invercargill>



Fourvière - Ourselves and all that we have

A careful examination of the text gives us a feeling of what these young seminarians and priests experienced, lived and brought to fruition.

This poses the questions “What prompted them? What was their motivation? What process of discernment and decision making did they go through? Did this text influence the foundation of the Marist movement, or was the Fourvière event more important than that?”



Here we stop briefly to consider several passages that can inspire. A text dating from 200 years ago can also nourish our activities.

Know what you want

The group expressed their wish three times – twice at the beginning, and a third time towards the middle of the text. It states: “To work for the greatest and unique glory of God and for the honour of Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ”. We can also add two other statements: “We can achieve all that through the one who gives us strength, Our Lord Jesus Christ”, and “because we are true servants of Jesus Christ”.

It is noticeable that the group speak in similar terms to God, to Mary and through Mary to Jesus. Here, Mary occupies second place. The words show the deep motivation that animated these young adults and inspired what they wrote. Words such as the greatest glory, in honour of, unique glory, to be true servants can only be said and written honestly if one is really driven from within to say that God, Mary and Jesus are the centre and the foundation of one’s life. Expressions such as good intention, strong desire, as soon as possible and without reservation truly confirm that these twelve young priests and seminarians were fired up by their ideal and that it was their sole goal. They are young adults with high ideals who express themselves strongly, and whose lives are imbued in them. For twenty year old adults, this conviction is understandable. And, ... from the text, they were in a hurry! Now is the time! It is now that the Spirit works in them.

How motivated we can be if we imagine the inner strength that the group experienced. Not that we must do what they did. But what they did can encourage us, can ask the question, and set us on our way.

Follow a spiritual path By signing up to what they had written in the text, they stated, as a justification and defence of their action, that they had, as a group, followed a spiritual path. The text points out first of all that their decisions and path would NOT be taken

- lightly,
- as children,
- for human reasons,
- for temporary personal reasons

These “nots” appear first. They played a part in the discernment process undertaken by the group. We can feel the struggle that took place as ideas emerged: We are not superficial, we are no longer children, we do not do it for human reasons or for our own interests!

The spiritual journey undertaken as a group is also surprising, fascinating and suitable for creating a Marist movement. This journey as a group is characteristic of the development of the Marist community. Think of the different Marist groups which have emerged and are currently being developed in all forms among lay people in many countries.

Then the experience of the process is described;

- Serious
- Deeply thought out
- Advice taken
- Everything considered before God

This passage ends by recalling the goal for a third time. It is a confirmation of their choice.

Go out

No matter how resolute your choice may be, when you go out with your ideas to put them “into action”, the reactions of others can be harsh. They will say “Look at these children.” “Obviously they have not thought it through.” “They must have their own reasons.” These reactions weaken our resolve. It is perhaps the reason for the ending of this part of the text: “for the unique glory of God”.

The group describe in a long paragraph that they are aware of what the vow means individually, even when they use “We”.

Three verbs surprise us: offer, swear faithfulness, and unite. These words find meaning in the text:

- Offer up the pain, the work, the suffering, and the worries. Adding; if necessary! It is humanly soothing.
- Swear fidelity to the bosom of the Church. In the historical context these words have a particular significance. We know that the group also wanted to be a reaction to what was happening at the time.
- Unite all actions with authority. This passage also has a significant context. The second last sentence of the text says: “everything subject to the judgement of the Superiors”. The accent is put on “wishing to be true servants of Jesus Christ, nourished by the words of faith and of the true doctrine received through His grace”

The Marists of today do not use this language. However the strength of these words can be seen in present day Marists. The Marists are ready to put in the effort. They do not feel the need to place themselves outside the community or oppose the hierarchy. To work for the Kingdom here and now, among and with men, comes from a caring presence that comes from within, reflected on, consulted on, thought about, and discerned before God.

**Source: Marist Brothers West-Central Europe *Bulletin* 2015, number 4 |
Brother Jacques Scholte FMS**

The May Magnificat

Gerard Manley Hopkins SJ



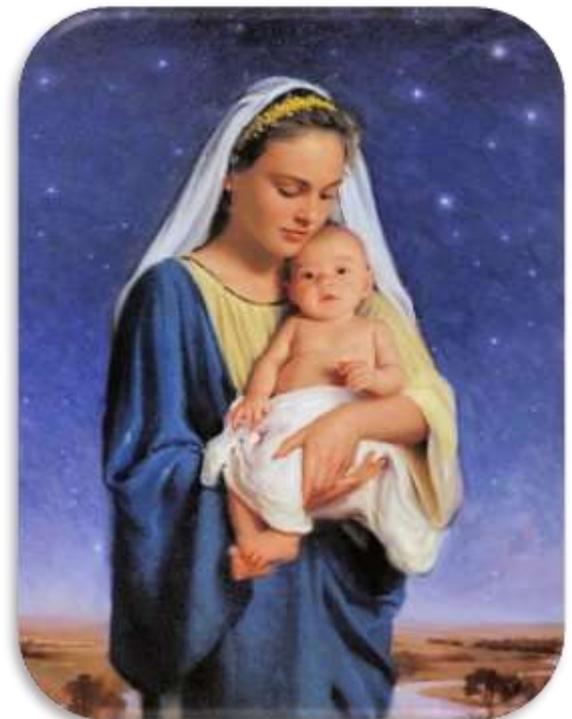
**MAY is Mary's month, and I
Muse at that and wonder why:
Her feasts follow reason,
Dated due to season—**

**Candlemas, Lady Day;
But the Lady Month, May,
Why fasten that upon her,
With a feasting in her honour?**

**Is it only its being brighter
Than the most are must delight her?
Is it opportunist
And flowers finds soonest?**

**Ask of her, the mighty mother:
Her reply puts this other
Question: What is Spring?—
Growth in everything—**

**Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and greenworld all together;**



**Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested**

**Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within;
And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell.**

**All things rising, all things sizing
Mary sees, sympathising
With that world of good,
Nature's motherhood.**

**Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord.**

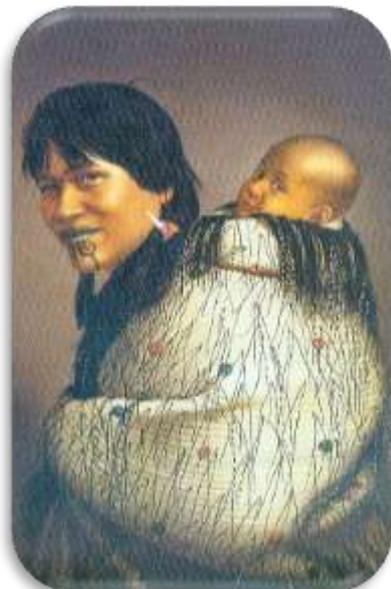
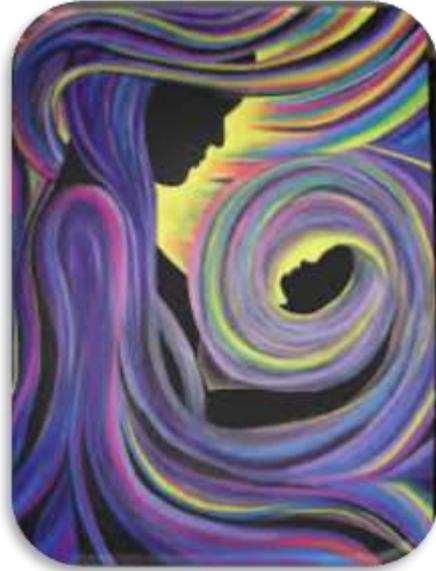
**Well but there was more than this:
Spring's universal bliss
Much, had much to say
To offering Mary May.**

**When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
Bloom lights the orchard-apple
And thicket and thorp are merry
With silver-surfèd cherry**

**And azuring-over greybell makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like
lakes
And magic cuckoocall
Caps, clears, and clinches all—**

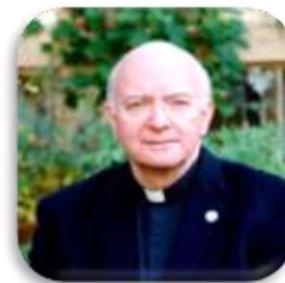
This ecstasy all through mothering earth

**Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation.**



A Timeless Magnificat

The article below by Rev. Dr. James Hanvey SJ is sourced from *Thinking Faith* <http://www.thinkingfaith.org/>. It was first published on 1st June 2012. Fr. James Hanvey SJ lectures in Systematic Theology at Heythrop College, University of London and is Superior of the Jesuit Community at Mount Street, Central London.



‘May is Mary’s month.’ So begins Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem, *The May Magnificat*. As usual with Hopkins, when we think we are in the realm of popular piety he springs a question, presents a metaphor or throws in a step-change rhythm that arrests us. In *The May Magnificat*, after the opening statement he asks ‘and I/Muse at that and wonder why?’ Why May? Why Mary?

Hopkins goes on to answer his question by drawing deep natural and supernatural connections between Mary, the mother of the Lord of Life and the renewal of life in spring. May is not only the month of Mary but of the Church. For Hopkins, there is an intimate and necessary connection between Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit: indeed, the Spirit is the vital ground of all things renewed in Christ, for the Spirit is ‘the Lord and Giver of Life.’ The natural liturgy of the seasons and the liturgy of Christian worship seem to come together in directing us to the abundance of life, both in nature and in grace. [1]

Hopkins is a poet whose work is a form of experimental masterclass in the life, work and expression of the Holy Spirit: the dynamic artistry of grace at work in all that is human; the very life of all creative things, their unique and distinctive energies and their deep *koinonia*. This converges in Mary who exemplifies the action of grace in a human life. It is a mothering action which both brings us to birth, ‘And makes, O marvellous! / New Nazareths in us’. In this sense, she never ceases to incarnate Christ in us because being ‘full of grace’, ‘she shall yet conceive/Him, morning, noon, and eve.’[2] In Mary we see that grace is endlessly creative and recreative and this is the life – that capacity for new beginnings – that Hannah Arendt calls our ‘natality’, though for her it remained a purely human, this-worldly, capacity. Hopkins might remind Arendt that, in fact, Mary shows us that to be truly a human capacity, natality is and must be a graced reality. It is not just an endlessly creative resistance to the inevitable destructions of history, matter and human corruption. ‘Natality’ springs from the divine life within us that constantly ‘mothers’ us into the new life of grace. This ‘natality’ also has a face – it is precisely the way which Christ comes alive in us without diminishing of our own uniqueness. Redeemed in Christ we are coming to our fulfilment, coming to be who we are – who God has created us to be. We become transparent to Him in this world, just like Mary:

Who;

This one work has to do,
Let all God’s glory through,
God’s glory which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so. [3]

In other words, May is the month when, with Mary, we celebrate the work of grace in us and in the world. Through Mary and in her we see the truth of God's promises fulfilled.

No doubt some Dawkins-esque anthropologist will theorise that the pagan rites of spring get 'baptised' by Marian devotions. Underneath the Christian veneer lie the primeval fertility cults and mother goddesses, and Mary somehow absorbs them all. One of the great features of all religions is that they hold collective memories and customs. There is nothing wrong with that. In religious practices, traditions and customs, we must expect to find these ancient memories because they are usually marking the great foundation rhythms of human life, its meaning, place and purpose. Often overlooked by anthropological rationalism and the symbolically impoverished de-mythologising is an appreciation of the way in which religion can not only carry the rhythms and memory of a pagan past but change them, transposing them into a new key of understanding. It is always a distortion to place Christianity within the secular category of religion and tie it to the methodologies and understanding of the social sciences. Of course, Christianity like any other social reality can and must be studied, and we need a variety of disciplines and approaches to do this well. Yet this should never be allowed to suppress the challenge that Christian revelation and self-understanding presents to the presuppositions of these approaches and the methodological theistic neutrality which they claim to inhabit and make normative.

At the heart of Christianity is a shocking claim: that it is not a purely human creation; it is not the result of some great founding insight or a gradually developed system of integrated beliefs about the vast energies and forces of the cosmos, in which the human person is both subject and agent. Christianity lives from the action of the Holy Spirit and person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God whose life, death and Resurrection redeems us from the futility of an existence without or against God and the distortion in our way of knowing and being that this state brings about. It reveals to us the inexhaustible love of the Father and allows us already to participate in the eternal life of the Triune God, even in our finite and temporal existence. In other words, the Christian life lives in a world already under the reign of God, 'charged with the Grandeur of God', which is not just the transcendence of the divine but the glory of the personal love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the world of grace and all the different forms and possibilities of its action. So, how might someone who does not inhabit this world, with its new possibilities and God-given way of understanding and acting, gain some insight into it?

I suggest that they might consider the way in which the Christian faith constantly returns to contemplate Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God. In her they will see both the scandal and originality of the Christian life and reality. It is a vision of an incarnate God, constantly active in his loving and saving self-gift; a personal God who calls us into a free relationship with him, and only in that relationship is our freedom fully realised. Here is that reversal of the Kingdom, celebrated in Mary's *Magnificat*: where the 'yes' is not an act of subjection or subservice, but a self-gift of loving service which lives in the transcendence of God's own self-gift; it is the way in which we choose to live beyond ourselves, not for ourselves, 'but for him.' In this sense, Mary is also the stumbling block for all the atheistic secularisms and their values which can sometimes creep into even Christian life and ways of thinking. Mary, who always draws us into the life of her Son, also keeps us open to the mystery that is God's redemption and sanctification of the human and created order. In this way we can discover the constantly new beginning, the natality of the Spirit which allows us to announce our *Magnificat* not only in May but in every time and season.

Notes

[1] The traditional dedication of May to Mary and the encouragement given to use it as a month of Marian devotions was promoted by Paul VI in an encyclical, *Mense Maio* in 1965. In this he was endorsing a long tradition in the Catholic Church. Although obviously popular throughout the Church's life the current tradition of dedicating May to Our Lady was taken up by the Society of Jesus in the 16th century. It was especially promoted in the Roman College of the Society of Jesus and the Marian congregations founded in 1563 by the Belgian Jesuit, Jan Leuens. These congregations – more commonly known as Sodalties – were mainly designed for students and laity. They offered a 'rule' of life which sought to integrate prayer, regular attendance at the sacraments, the practice of the virtues and service of the poor and sick. They grew very rapidly and were a means of building up the life of the laity according to the Tridentine reforms. They continued with considerable vitality and effect up until Vatican II, after which they developed into Christian Life Communities.

[2] Gerald Manley Hopkins, *The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe*, 59-62.

[3] *Ibid.*, 28-33



District of the Pacific Calendar

June 2016

1	Wellbeing Meeting	Wednesday
2	Proprietors Company Meeting	Thursday
4-11	Dan Dungey to Kiribati and Fiji	
6	Champagnat Feast Day Auckland Gathering of Brothers at Onehunga Queens Birthday	Monday
9-15	Sefo to International Brothers Today Commission in Rome	
10	District Council Meeting in Auckland (Samoa meeting postponed)	Friday
15-21	Kevin Wanden to New Models Project Meeting in Rome	
16	Reflection Hour	Thursday
20	Finance Meeting	Monday
22	Sacred Heart Hostel Company Meeting	Wednesday
24	End Term 2 Samoa	Friday

Some Websites to Explore

The Pope Video

The Pope Video is a global initiative developed by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer) to assist in the dissemination of the Holy Father's monthly intentions related to the challenges the humanity faces.

Every month you may accompany Pope Francis in his prayer requests. We invite you to join us. Visit the "Get Involved" section to learn how. Go to: <http://www.apmej.org/en/>



The project is an idea developed by La Machi, a communication consultant for good causes specialized in religious values and care for creation. Go to - <http://thepopevideo.org/>



Canadian Religious Conference

Go to: <http://www.crc-canada.org/en>



Leadership Conference of Women Religious (USA)

Go to: <https://lcwr.org/>

Greetings from 'The South'

Brother Osmund Macnamara writes,

Now that the first school term is behind us, a moment to inform you how things are progressing here in the South. Alan and I both keep good health and we are busy preparing for Alan's 80th in May with some guests travelling from as far as Australia to witness this major event. Alan, is bursar and 'House-keeper' of all the essential items needed to make a house a home. On many occasions he does arrive home from the supermarket with bargains that need to be seen to be believed.

We both frequent **Catholic Cathedral College** while Osmund frequents **Christchurch Men's Prison** on Mondays and the 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month.

Alan and Mark Oliver work on the grounds at **106A**. **Mark** also helps maintain the gardens at **Pam Davidson's place** about 100m away from 106A Roydvale Ave. Denis Turner works as a chaplain to the city central hospital. The two communities gather for a happy hour each Friday evening in 'The Merrin' at Avonhead for compulsory 'Community Catch-up'. From time to time on Friday nights we share 'Fish-N-Chips' at the other's address.

January 2nd 2016 was an outstanding success with 50 or so accepting the invitation at 106A, to celebrate the 199 year of The Foundation of the Marist Brothers. This will be repeated in 2017.

On the Easter Tuesday 29th March the Brothers in Christchurch, La Valla (Tuakau) Old Boys and friends of the Brothers together with Peter Hopkinson visited the cemetery at Temuka, shared in the readings from the necrology of the 11 Brothers buried there. This was followed by a 'shared meal' in the township with afternoon tea out at Castle Claremont hosted by the owner Mr. Rob Young and wife. Moira Munro, sister of Brothers Vincent and Christopher, Brian Fahey, nephew of Brother Leonard Tobin, Helen Simmons the niece of Br John Schaab, the Master of Novices for many years at Claremont, were part of the group of 19 of both Marist Brothers and Lay people who experienced an enjoyable day together in beautiful South Canterbury.

Twice a year the Brothers are invited to a mid-day meal by the **loyal ex Xavier College P.T.A.** who were so supportive of the College over the years and always keen to learn 'Where is Brother..... now?'

Two meetings a term (organised by several staff who experienced the **Champagnat in the Pacific programme**) are held in the staff room at **Catholic Cathedral College**. **Head students** who participated in the Student Leaders Forum (25th – 28th) February) also **attend** the meetings. The meetings last one hour maximum with some 'Simple Practical Champagnat Task' to activate with all staff and students for that term.

Preparations for the 200yr celebrations are under way in the four places where the Brothers have/had a presence namely **Christchurch, Timaru, Invercargill and Greymouth**.

All except Timaru have Old Boys working towards forming groups to help celebrate the important milestone. We have visited Sacred Heart Primary School (ex-Marist Brothers) in Timaru and worked with the DRS to introduce 'The Story of Saint Marcellin

A LETTER FROM DOWN SOUTH

Champagnat' through the Pillars. We are working on the idea of a **picnic** out at **Claremont** for the senior classes for **both Catholic Primary Schools in Timaru** some time **during 2017**. Dreams are free and I presume Marcellin had many!!

In **Invercargill** some time during 2017 we hope to erect three **Plaques** on or close by the three properties where the Brothers lived and taught. We hope the Brothers will pay for the plaque in **Clyde Street** (foundation site in 1897), the Old Boys pay for the one in **Mary Street** and **Verdon College** for the plaque somewhere on the school grounds.

I have been in contact to-day with a **Laurence Anisy** who owns 'Anisy Funeral Home' in Greymouth. He is in the process of attending to **Brother Arthur's grave** at no cost to the Brothers **'To whom I owe so much.'**

Daniel Dungey invited Osmund to attend the School Leaders' Gathering at **Hato Petera College** in February 2016. I thoroughly enjoyed the return to the College where I enjoyed, among so many other experiences the genuine family spirit. I was surprised by the **lack of support from the Brothers close-by**, over the four days. Presence at the Mass would have been a boost, not only for Dan but **many of the 40 leaders who have never 'Seen a Marist Brother!'** **PRESENCE after all is one of our PILLARS!** now have an invitation to attend the gathering from 7th -10th August. This is 'a live-in time for reflection of the Champagnat charism and the traditions and values of Marist Education.'

Daniel Dungey the **District of the Pacific Partnership Coordinator** is strong on the 'signs of the times' in terms of the presence of the Brothers, where possible in in the next 5-10 yrs. In New Zealand we are on the decrease and the laity **MUST** increase IF the Spirit of Champagnat is to 'Not only survive but to flourish in The District.'

Frequently, **Dan bounces off ideas to Alan and me** as to approach the-Vision, Formation, Support and the On-going Accompaniment of those whom he, Dan, sees who would be part of a 'Frontline Champagnat Spirited Filled' group to carry on what Dan is planting on behalf of the Brothers and Lay.

His vision would be, I believe, to continue and support the Frontline Team living close-by carrying out their ministry in their respective areas.

Dan has yet to meet with a number of Brothers and learn about their strengths. With some of those Brothers who have helped him in the past with their expertise are no longer available (**Barry and I believe Terry Costello**) others needed to be approached.

We wait in anticipation the 80th birthday of Alan next month and the gathering of His Clan.

Blessings. Sincerely

Osmund



Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament - Christchurch

What are we doing on earth for Christ's sake?

The article below by Rev Dr Richard Leonard SJ a Jesuit of the Australian Province is reprinted from *Thinking Faith* <http://www.thinkingfaith.org/>. It was first published on 29th April 2015.



At some time in our lives, we have all asked the question that Australian Jesuit Richard Leonard poses in the title of his new book. He describes how one memorable conversation at 35,000 feet inspired him to address the uncertainties about faith that so many young people have today, including the biggest one of all: what are we doing on earth for Christ's sake?

Depending on your point of view and experience, you might judge that I have been blessed or cursed to do a lot of flying in my ministry as a Jesuit priest. Generally I enjoy it, but I choose to fly under the radar (pardon the pun!); I rarely wear clerical dress on a plane, not least because Australian domestic and international flights are among the longest in the world and clerical collars are uncomfortable. These days, too, that collar repels as many people as it attracts, and indeed in secular Australia it can invite unwarranted attention from some who have no desire for a conversation but simply want to spew forth bile on me.

Nonetheless, even when travelling in mufti, before I can get my earphones firmly inserted in my ears a fellow chatty traveller sometimes asks, 'What do you do for a living?' St Ignatius Loyola was very keen on the art of the spiritual conversation, and so am I, but not in the sky. Ignatius knew nothing about 17 hours in economy class on a plane!

Of all the conversations I have had on planes, however, one of the most memorable led to this book. I was flying from New York City to Los Angeles and as I settled into row 44, the very friendly young man next to me asked me what I did. I told him. He said he had been a Catholic. I noted his emphasis was on the past tense, but said nothing. He wasn't sure about anything to do with faith and spirituality. I told him I was a Jesuit, which led him to tell me he had recently read two books by a Jesuit priest: *Where the Hell is God?* and *Why Bother Praying?* 'Do you know them?' he asked. I looked around for the candid camera. 'Yes, I know them very well – I wrote them.' He would not believe me until I showed him my business card. This scene was unbelievable.

Thomas and I had a long and engaging conversation about the issues my two books had raised for him, and for me. Tom, 30, was a highly educated person, an Ivy League graduate. He was also a serious humanitarian, working in third world countries for Habitat for Humanity during several summer holidays. His wrestling with belief, theology, prayer and the problem of evil came out of personal experiences. He told me that as much as he liked my earlier books and found them accessible and helpful, they did not address a fundamental issue for him and most of his friends: the why of belief. 'We just get worn down by the growing chorus of people who say "religion is all nuts and you can be a good person and make a difference in the world and not believe anything more than that" ... And to say the Catholic Church has made it very easy to leave in recent

WHAT ARE WE DOING ...?

years is an understatement ... I guess what I am struggling with is what are we actually doing on earth for Christ's sake?' As soon as Tom said 'for Christ's sake' he apologised, fearing he had offended me by swearing. Not at all! Everything that every baptised person does is meant to be 'for Christ's sake'.

I got off that plane knowing I had a new book to write and already had the title!

'What are we doing on earth for Christ's sake? - offers some gentle and respectful answers to the questions posed by modern secular culture and especially by our detractors, whose voices are louder than ever. I want to answer some of the major concerns some of our young people have about faith, religion and the Church. And I offer some hopeful way forward in the face of sobering times.

The first third of the book looks at various aspects of the belief and unbelief debate:

There is common ground between believers and non-believers: most people want many of the same things for the world – kindness, truthfulness, care for the earth, justice, peace and love, just to name a few.

Dialogue with atheists can be clarifying, challenging us to greater clarity in our thinking, demanding rationality in our belief, seeking the case for why religious groups should have influence over social policy and law, and placing the spotlight on whether we practise what we preach.

In pluralistic democracies Christians should not only defend religious freedom but the freedom not to believe anything. They are two sides of the same coin. Atheists and agnostics have a right to disagree with everything we hold to be true, but all conversations in the debate about belief and unbelief should be marked by dignity and respect.

Christians are not all the same. For a very important start, most of the world's Christians do not, for example – at least officially, anyway – take the Bible literally.

At the same time, not all atheists are the same. Nick Spencer in *Atheists: the Origin of the Species* argues that we should talk of 'atheisms rather than atheism.' We should know where our critics are coming from. For their part, atheists may not like it but religion is back in the public square – big time.

We do not have to choose between religion and science. Science asks how we came to be here; faith asks why we are here. Science looks at the mechanics; faith addresses meaning. I am respectful of those who do not need to address issues of meaning outside their own existence within the natural order, but I am not one of them.

Within the arguments from science for belief in God, I explore balance, detail, complexity and synchronicity. While others are entitled to believe we emerged from randomness, I am not the only one who is making a leap of faith in this discussion. As Eric Metaxas says, 'the odds against the universe existing are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all "just happened" defies common sense.'

WHAT ARE WE DOING ...?

While we have become used to being told we believe in 'imaginary friends', religious experience indicates that there are different ways for human beings to know things. In this regard, matters spiritual and religious are akin to love, forgiveness, beauty and conscience. These primal human experiences are real, powerful and determinative because we have experienced them.

We believers are not exactly alone. Though appeals to numbers can be a fallacy, of the 7.02 billion people in the world 31.6% are Christian, 23% Muslim, 15% Hindu, 7% Buddhist or Sikh, and 18% all other religions including our Jewish friends. On the world stage, the non-religious and atheist constitute 5.4% of the population. That said, there is no point denying that this last group is now growing quickly in many countries, especially in the West, but the vast majority of the world's people believe in something 'religious'.

When many unbelievers reject God, it is sometimes because of the image of God they hear of and see in action. That God can be worth rejecting. As theologian Martin Borg says in *The God We Never Knew*, 'Tell me your image of God and I will tell you your theology.'

The second section of this book is the fruit of a written Q&A I conducted with 30 young adults about their questions in regard to religion, God, church and belief. I was especially interested in the young adults who had walked away from any belief in God or religion and the questions that led them to depart, formally or informally. I was struck by how easily their many questions could be collected around a few themes:

1. Isn't religion the cause of most wars?
2. Even if Christianity no longer has armies, what about Islam? Doesn't the Qur'an insist on violent aggression?
3. How can anyone believe in God or organised religion when the clergy have sexually abused children, and then church leaders covered it up?
4. Is the Bible true or not? How can anyone base their beliefs on a book filled with such contradictions, incorrect science and time-bound customs?
5. Is there any evidence that Jesus actually lived, and, even if he did, isn't his story just a religious version of the Superman story?
6. How could a good and loving God need and want Jesus to suffer and die on Good Friday?
7. Because of Jesus's life, death and resurrection, Christians believe eternal life is opened to humanity. But how can anyone believe in a loving God who can also damn people to hell? Hasn't this theology just been about religions maintaining their social control over adherents?
8. Given that Jesus was a simple man who advocated for the poor, isn't the Church's wealth and power a major stumbling block to belief?
9. If Christians do not have the morality market cornered, then why follow any religion's moral code? Why not just have your own moral code?

WHAT ARE WE DOING ...?

10. I resent Christians imposing their values on me and the laws of our country. If Christians have to believe in their fairy tales, can they just do so privately and stay out of politics and law?

11. The worst aspect of religion is its moralising. How can such outdated thinking offer anything to modern society?

My answers, although brief, take seriously the truthful dialogue that each of these questions should invite. I hope this book will become a resource for those who want to answer our critics, an invitation for greater conversation and a debating partner for those who disagree with everything upon which Christians stand.

The final third of the book argues that the most eloquent argument in support of belief is not what we say but what we do, so I outline the lives of several saints – those canonised by the Church, and other heroic Christians and great human beings who have inspired me. These people are not just good people – they are most certainly that – but they did what they did, or do what they do, not only because of their love for humanity but also because of their love of God: Father, Son and Spirit.

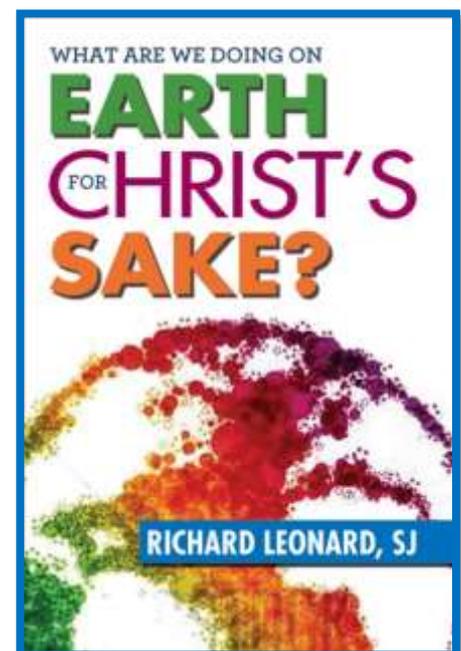
As much as possible, these written pictures of saints do not go over old ground. I try to tell you more about some people who are loved by many, and introduce some figures of whom you may not have heard or whose lives you have not reflected upon for a while. In each case I try to give a new window or insight into their lives and draw out contemporary lessons to be learnt from how they lived out their faith.

The saints include: St Thomas More, St Ignatius Loyola, Venerable Catherine McAuley, St Mary MacKillop, Dorothy Day, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Oscar Romero, Pope Francis, My family, Survivors of sexual and physical abuse by church personnel and the Trappist Monks of Algeria

This group, those who practise what Jesus preached, inspire me to be better and do better. Whenever Christianity strays from Jesus's law in regard to the love of God, neighbour and self, we end up in trouble. This law is the litmus test through which all things must be judged, including our own religious words and actions, and is the guiding principle of our moral code, including how we use our wealth and property to serve the human family. While you do not have to be religious to be moral, some of the most heroic human acts of service in every country in the world are done by people motivated by their religious faith

Christian people I know have taught me that Christianity is not about pursuing happiness, but about being the most faithful, hopeful and loving person I can be. They walk the talk and cannot be easily dismissed as nutters. In the end it never comes down to what we say, but who we are and what we do.

The book “*What are we doing on earth for Christ's sake?*” ISBN: 978-08091-4902-5 is available from Pauline Books or Amazon.





Fratelli Maristi delle Scuole Segretariato Missione

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Koronadal City, Philippines, May 23th, 2016

Dear Brother David, Brothers, Laity, and young people of the Pacific District,

From May 5th to 16th, I had the privilege of visiting some Marist works in the Pacific District, concretely in New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji. I carried out this visit on behalf of the Secretariat for Mission of the Marist Institute, which is presently directed by Brother Miguel Ángel Espinosa Barrera, from the Province of Central Mexico, and myself.

It was an incredible experience for me, in the midst of great vitality, hopes, dreams about the future, and challenges to our Marist mission, not to mention the natural and cultural beauties of each country.

I came back to Rome delighted by the experience. It was great to visit the works and projects in progress, all carried out with much competence and passion. I would highlight the good spirit; the way in which the five Marist pillars inform your work experience; the option to be effectively and affectionately close to children and young people; the desire to keep moving forward and innovating in order to respond better to the calls of God, and to the challenges that children and young people are facing today.

But most of all, I enjoyed the human quality of people. In all the works and communities I visited, I noticed the Marist charism glowing in the eyes of so many Brothers, Laity and young people. Some of them have come a long way, while others are beginning their journey and learning from those who have more Marist experience.

I was struck by the simplicity and kindness of people and the way you care for each other. Yes, we should first experience whatever we want to teach our children and young people, and I think that is precisely what I witnessed during my visit. I saw people seeking to grow in the human and spiritual dimensions, and committed to the education of the children and young people that have been entrusted to us. Some of the people I met called my attention because of their prophetic attitude amidst the circumstances they face.

A THANK YOU LETTER

I was delighted to meet a number of Brothers who, in my opinion, are true “mystics and prophets of our time”. I must confess that I felt touched and inspired, not only by the wonderful work that is being done, but also by the joy and good spirit of the communities, and the welcoming attitude towards our Marist laity. You have energized me, and are a great strength for the Institute. Thank you very much for your selflessness and witness.

I could not help writing this letter to thank all of you – Brothers, Laity and young people – for this witness, commitment and passion for Marist life and mission, and for the excellent work you are carrying out at the service of children and young people in many different contexts and areas. Together we are participating in God’s Mission – which has specific characteristics for us Marists – and helping to build the Kingdom.

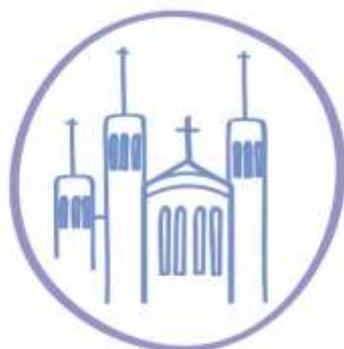
I hope you can hold fast to the faith and hope that are leading you, and that you may go on giving witness to Marist charity in everyday life. Do not forget to pay special attention to Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) and its possibilities – youth groups and vocations ministry in our works and ecclesial communities. I believe that, especially in some areas of the District, these two projects can have great success and be a good response to the challenges of the new Marist century we are about to begin.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and for everything you did to make my visit possible. I am deeply grateful to everyone.

May Mary and Marcellin enlighten and bless you always. May the spirit of our ancestors remain always present in your minds and hearts, inspiring and helping you envision new horizons of vitality for Marist life and mission in your region.

Fraternally,

Brother João Carlos do Prado
Secretariat for Mission
Director



2015 | 2016
Fourvière

Some News from Aleppo

The following article was obtained from the FRANCE 24 News Service. It refers to the work of the Marist Blues Aleppo. The article was submitted to the *Brothers Daily News Australia* by Brother Peter Corr.



Doctor Nabil Antaki distributing food in Aleppo

When the Syrian civil war brutally hit Aleppo, Doctor Nabil Antaki was urged to flee for his life. But he chose to stay. Interviewed by FRANCE 24, the doctor recounts the horrors of war but also the strong solidarity that's sprung up in his hometown.

For the past five years, the northern city of Aleppo has been the scene of un-imaginable horrors, where violent and premature deaths have become a part of daily life. Still, in an interview with FRANCE 24 during his brief visit to Paris, the doctor spoke of hope and why he decided to stay – even as the majority of his fellow colleagues took flight.

“I couldn’t leave,” the gastroenterologist said, noting that even though he did have the means to escape, there were many Aleppo residents who were not as fortunate. “Those who have stayed need care, and they need hope,” he said, recalling how even his children, who now live in the United States, begged him to just pack up and leave. “I live in Aleppo, in the Mouhafaz neighbourhood,” he said with certain pride in his voice, referring to the west of the war-ravaged city that he calls his home.

Responding to the horrors of war

Since the war came to Syria’s second-largest city in July 2012, Aleppo has been divided into two parts: the east, which is held by rebels and armed groups such as the al Qaeda-linked al Nusra Front, and the west, which is now the territory of the Syrian regime. While government forces consistently pound the rebel-held districts, the Islamist militants are firing back with rockets, mortars and deadly gas cylinders. The civilians have been caught in the line of fire. And they are paying a high price. “The city’s west has around 1.5 million inhabitants now. About half a million of them are displaced. Most of them fled the city’s east in July 2012,” he said.

According to the United Nations, more than 8 million people are currently displaced in Syria itself. Although some of them have been lucky enough to return to their homes, the majority of them have lost everything, including their houses and any source of previous

income streams. “The cost of life has multiplied by 13, and there’s no [economic] activity. Such conditions make it difficult – even for those who used to be rich – to make ends meet.

About 80 percent of those who are ill are poor and in need of the food baskets they are given in order to survive,” the doctor explained, noting that the bulk of people who could ever afford to leave the city have, indeed, left. Prior to the war, Antaki had a thriving Aleppo practice. But today, he spends most of his time helping out the Catholic humanitarian aid group **Frères Maristes bleus d’Alep (the blue Maristes brotherhood of Aleppo)**.

Although the NGO has been present in the city for decades, the war has seen the number of people in need soar. Today, the aid group has between 60 and 70 volunteers “depending on the month and the departures”, Antaki joked, adding that the organisation currently runs five rescue projects and five educational projects.

“We supply accommodation and food for those who cannot provide it for themselves. We treat them too, [and] we teach children, and even adults. There’s so much to do,” he said. The group is financed through donations and support from charities, including French aid group the Baroudeurs de l’Espoir.

Even water has become an invaluable commodity in Aleppo, and the Maristes brotherhood do their best to try to provide it. The “I’m thirsty” project, for example, was launched to ensure water access and was accomplished thanks to the group investing in a number of small trucks that carried water tanks.

The western part of Aleppo in particular has suffered several water shortages in the past few years – sometimes lasting for months on end. The main reason is due to the simple fact that the city’s water treatment is located on rebel-held turf, and the militants regularly cut the water supplies to the regime-held sections of the city.

A painful past. An uncertain future.

“Civilians wounded in war” is another project run by Antaki’s aid group. Making no distinction between political or religious affiliations, the project ensures that people who have been seriously wounded in the conflict receive free care at the private Saint-Louis hospital.

According to Antaki, there are now only two public hospitals still operating in the west of the city – both of which are overrun with patients and suffer a significant lack of resources. “When somebody who is seriously injured arrives there, they will die because of the [waiting] times. Although it’s hardly talked about, deadly mortars fall on West Aleppo each and every day and there are periods, like in the past few weeks, when they practically rain down there. Many people are losing their lives.”

The doctor’s eyes darken with pain as he talks about the loss of his own brother who was killed when al Nusra militants attacked the bus he was travelling on as he was returning from Beirut, in Lebanon, to his native Aleppo. With a lack of both clean water and adequate medical equipment, providing medical care in Aleppo is no easy task.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20160520-syria-aleppo-nabil-antaki-doctor-maristes-civilians-civil-war>

June Gospels Commentaries

6th Sunday of Easter (May 1st) John 14:23-29.

The Farewell Discourse moves us closer to the Ascension and Pentecost. Loving Jesus and keeping his word leads to seeing his glory for those who are open to that word. This need for belief is central to John's gospel from its opening, but to it is added the need to love. The revelation of Jesus is not available to a world that refuses both belief and love. Priority is given to the love of Jesus; the disciple who loves Jesus will keep the word of Jesus. The latter flows from the former; the disciple lives in the in-between time. But Jesus comes with the Father through the presence of the Spirit to be with the disciples as abiding presence until the definitive dwelling of the final coming.

John interprets the Spirit as teacher of the community, of all that is yet to be revealed, but he will also remind them of what Jesus has said. Whatever is to be revealed is an extension of what Jesus has already revealed. This is a useful guideline to distinguish what is true from what is false.

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 5th) Luke 7:11-17.

Strengthened by the Spirit, fed by the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, we now return to the ordinary time of the rest of the church's year. We begin with a life-giving action on the part of Jesus, the healing of the only means of life the mother, the widow of Nain, has. The term 'compassion', the word used of Jesus' feelings for her, is a Greek word that literally means, 'his stomach turned at her plight.' As a woman without anyone to care for her, her future was bleak in the extreme. Begging, starvation, and death was all this poor woman had to look forward to.

We need to understand that the first question we ask of a miracle account is what is God saying to us through them rather than our question of "What happened?" A world under the power of sin, the reign of evil, was marked by death, famine, unruly nature, sickness and sin. A world into which Jesus launches the wonderful vision of the Reign or Kingdom of God, is marked by the opposites: giving life, feeding the hungry, calming storms, healing illness, and forgiving sin. Miracles are not tall stories; they are deep ones! Don't miss the depths by taking them at the shallow end!

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 12th) Luke 7:36-8:3.

Jesus rebukes Simon for his ungracious and self-satisfied behavior, but grants forgiveness to the sinner who sincerely repents for her sins. True repentance always brings Jesus' forgiveness. The crucial problem of this gospel is highlighted in the caption: "Her many sins were forgiven her, because she has shown great love." Taken at face value, these words suggest that the woman has earned forgiveness by her act of devotion and so was justified by what she did in the account rather than the faith she has in the person of Jesus. But a closer examination of the story shows that if this is the correct interpretation, it contains a glaring contradiction. The parable of the two debtors, which precedes our saying, makes love the outcome of forgiveness. To the question "Now which of (the two debtors] will love him more?" the answer comes, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more."

Later on it is stated that the person who is forgiven little, loves little. This means that we can only understand the woman's action in one way. Her extravagant act of devotion is a sign that her sins, "which are many," have already been forgiven. How were they forgiven? By Jesus' acceptance of her, sinner though she was. The gospel of today is a reminder of the deep understanding Jesus has for our human struggle and patience with us and readiness always to forgive those who ask for forgiveness from their heart.

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 19th) Luke 9:18-24.

Luke shows us Jesus at prayer before a critical moment in the journey of the disciples of Jesus. Once this recognition of his identity by Peter takes place, the long journey to Jerusalem will begin (the gospel readings for most rest of the year come from the ten chapters of this section of Luke). But the *messiah* is not one in glory or power, one who leads to victory on the political scene, and in whose army one can win recognition. After Peter's reply, 'The Messiah of God', Jesus forbids any presentation of himself as such a *messiah*, and endeavours to correct any misunderstanding. He vividly presents a suffering prophet such as we see in our first reading, one opposed by the political leadership, even to the point of killing him. But God raises up the suffering just one.

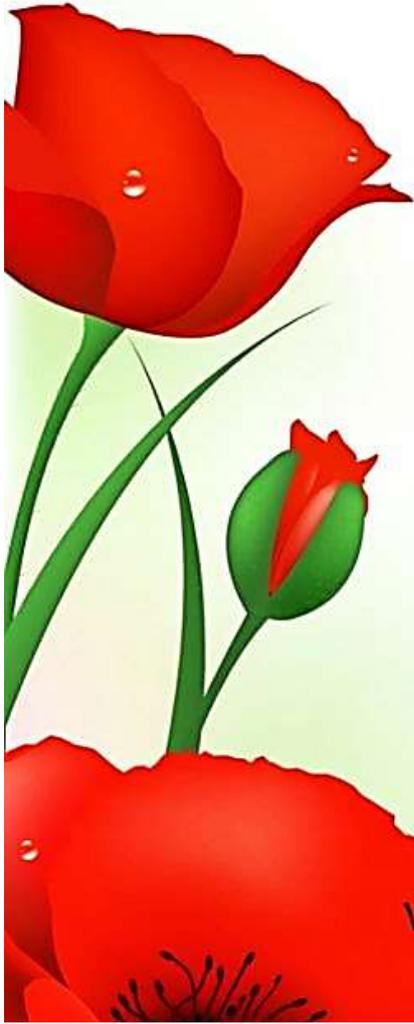
To be a disciple of such a *messiah/Christ* means following behind a cross-carrying Jesus (as Simon of Cyrene does) carrying our own crosses. Only Luke adds 'each day' as indicating not the martyrdom of Mark's version, but the daily struggles of the disciple to be faithful to a cross-carrying Jesus in the every-day of our on-going history. These words are spoken *to all*, the disciples of Jesus' own day and to us, all future would be followers. The motivation for such discipleship is given as 'saving one's life' by giving it purpose in a discipleship that is prepared to hear and act on the word of Jesus. A life lost for Jesus' sake is a life saved, given meaning and value.

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 26th) Luke 9:51-62.

This passage begins the great journey to Jerusalem that runs from chapters 9 to 19. For Jesus it was a resolute and courageous journey. The cost of discipleship is similarly high, costing not less than everything. We are to throw our weight on the plough to work the field for the harvest. The attitudes and values of his followers are surfaced in those who would follow him. Having begun his journey, Jesus never goes back, never retraces his steps, and never even looks back. This model of discipleship life is presented to us.

The inhospitable Samaritans are threatened with fire, as Elijah called down fire on the soldiers of the King of Samaria (2 Kings 1:9-14). James and John have obviously not understood Jesus' teaching on non-retaliation. Three men present themselves as candidates for discipleship. They do not seem to realize that this journey of Jesus is dangerous and the intensity of sacrifice involved. To each one Jesus places the demand for total commitment. To follow Jesus we must be ready to give of ourselves totally. The itinerant life style, the priority of the kingdom as obligation, once called there is no turning back, all these are placed before the three men.

Lest We Forget



In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae
was a soldier, physician and poet.



A Passing Thought ...

Heard recently at a week-day homily. You can discourse about Jesus as being the Son of God. That is an intellectual exercise.

Being with Jesus is prayer.

Brother John E. Fitzgibbon

For Our Recently Deceased

Mrs Shirley O'Donnell: mother of Michael 'Donnell of Sacred Heart Hostel, died on the 16th May at Mercy Parklands

Brothers with Health Concerns

**Brother James McBride
Brother Peter Henderson
Brother Terence Costello
Brother William Lawson
Brother Romuald Gibson
Brother Denis Gallavin
Brother Aidan Benefield
Brother Roger Dowling**

Others to keep in our prayers

**Mrs Linda Kilkenny, of Liston Village, generous friend of many Brothers
Mr Hugh Lavelle, brother of Brother Paul RIP
Pa Tony Brown
Mrs Val Moynihan, sister of Brother Ray Harold RIP
Mr Thomas Brown
Mrs Vitalina Guibreteau
Mr Brendan Cole
Mr Philip Fenn, brother of Brother Kieran, ill with terminal cancer**

Other Intentions

**For our New Era Leadership Projects
For Refugees throughout the Word
For our active part during the Year of Mercy
For our Jubilarians of this year - 2016
Our young Brothers in Temporary Profession
Our Brothers involved in School Apostolates
For our Ad Gentes Projects & Personnel
For our District Leader – Brother David
For our Provincial – Brother Peter Carroll
For the members and work of the FM Connection Community, Auckland**



BIRTHDAYS & MEMORIALS



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June Memorials

1 st	Br Benignus O'Shea 1952
2 nd	Br Ignatius Callan 1967
2 nd	Br Augustine Hartshorn 1970
2 nd	Br Andrew McDiarmid 1974
3 rd	Br Camillus Alyward 2009
4 th	Br Malachy Landers 1893
4 th	Br Giles Waters 2011
5 th	Br Louis Benedict Donnelly 1885
7 th	Hugh Curry [Postulant] 1880
8 th	Br Justin Perret 1871
11 th	Br Valerian Derwin 1924
11 th	Br David O'Connor 1954
12 th	Br Francis Welsh 1960
13 th	Rex Martin [Junior] 1968
14 th	Br Edmund Kyne 2002
16 th	Br Jerome Harroway 1918
16 th	Br Edwin Farrell 1923
16 th	Br Remigius Whitaker 1975
16 th	Br Raymond Welsh 1981
16 th	Br Gregory Ryan 2001
16 th	Br Bertrand Hodgins 2003
17 th	Br Martin Cunningham 1939
19 th	Br Aloysius Philpott 1972
19 th	Br Tibwan Kanono 1999
21 st	Br Herman Mason 1937
21 st	Br Osmund Rice 1953
21 st	Br Peter Pfahlert 2008
23 rd	Br Guibertus Browne 1968
29 th	Br Procope Daron 1900

June Birthdays

1 st	Bernard O'Malley	1947
2 nd	Timothy Leen	1957
4 th	Henry Spinks	1942
9 th	Peter Brown	1946
10 th	Joseph McCarthy	1939
11 th	Bryan Stanaway	1942
13 th	Terence Maney	1933
14 th	Brian Wanden	1925
15 th	Kevin Dobbyn	1953
30 th	Rupert Woods	1925

*Let us take time
to pray and reflect*

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