

Marist Laity Australia



A Big Thank you

Dear All,

Thank you for your ongoing support of MLA during this, another challenging year.

A huge thank you to All who supported our online prayer reflections and provided such depth of sharing, they were rich exchanges and wonderful times to reconnect across the world.

To the MLA team members, a BIG THANK YOU, especially Andrew for the support, work, and generosity of spirit in keeping our reflections and IT up to scratch.

May the spirit of Christmas provide for you and those you love ongoing love, joy, peace and hope.

We look forward to connecting again in 2022. Merry Christmas!

Marg Woods
on behalf of MLA Committee



A Christmas Message

By Andrew Dumas

Two years ago, in the summer of 2019 to 2020 Australia experienced the worst fires in modern history.

Estimates of up to 3 billion animals have died according to the WWF. Whilst 17 million hectares were burnt down according to government estimates.



For the past 2 Christmases Australians have been blind-sided by the COVID pandemic. We have been asked to isolate and this year epidemiologists recommended us to isolate again.

Before the Christmas break, I was speaking to the gardener of the school I teach in. He was saying that in early 2022 he would have to quit his job as he can no longer afford to live in Sydney. With astronomical living costs. It called me to question "how are we treating families and how are we treating the poor in our decisions"?

Whilst speaking to one of the year 9 students, she questioned me, "sir, are we going into another lockdown? I don't know how I will survive another 3



months in lockdown?" I sensed a great fear in her.

As Marists, and as Christians, we are called to respond. To actively listen to the plight of the world and our own community. Not with magical answers that will sweep away our sufferings, but with patience and an openness that brings a sense of God's presence.

Over the past few months, I have been coming to the land of the Darug Aboriginal people of the Great North Walk on the edge of Sydney in the mornings. Calling people to join me in prayer and meditation.

For Aboriginal people the land is sacred. It is a living force. They term the land "their Mother". It provides healing. It provides life. It reminded me of the Marist sense towards God. As a mother.

The senior Australian of the year, Dr Miriam Rose, Aboriginal Elder, teaches the wisdom of Dadirri. Of Deep listening.

Miriam Rose says

"To know me,
is to breathe with
me.
To breathe with
me,
is to listen deeply.
To listen deeply,
is to connect.
It is a sound.
The sound of deep calling to deep.
Dadirri.
The deep inner spring inside each of us.
We call on it,
and it calls on us.
We are river people.
We cannot hurry the river.
We need to move with the current
and understand its ways.
We wait for the rain to fill our rivers.
and water our thirsty earth.
We watch our bush foods,
and wait for them to open,



before we gather them.
We wait for our young people
as they grow.
The time for re-birth is now.
If our culture is alive and strong ,
and respected,
it will grow,
it will not die.
I believe that the spirit of Dadirri
that we have to offer,
will blossom and grow.
Not just within ourselves
But in our whole nation".

May we seek and wait like Mary for Jesus to be born in us today this Christmas.

May we bring all our gifts that God has given us to dream big. God's dream for us, in our community, in our family and in our Earth.

Pour out your gifts upon us Lord. May we be like the people of Pentecost. Daring enough to learn different languages and different ways of doing, and different ways of being. May we share these gifts this Christmas.

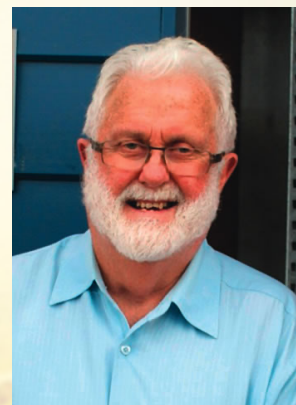
What's happening at HH

By Jen Bolster

*News From Villa Maria,
Hunters Hill Excerpt
from Parish Bulletin 28th
November, 2021 (by Fr
Kevin Bates sm):*

"Marist Fathers Provincial, Father Tony Corcoran has received correspondence from Archbishop Anthony Fisher accepting Father Kevin's retirement as parish priest from 31 January next. The Archbishop has appointed Father Brian Wilson sm as our new parish priest. He will take up this role from 1 February.

Dear Parishioners, My retirement has been necessitated by my increasingly fragile health. I'll be living in the Marist community at Montbel, adjacent to Holy Name of Mary



Church, and so will still be in the neighbourhood and may pop up in the life of the parish from time to time not to mention other popular meeting haunts!!

Father Aliko will continue as Assistant Priest. I acknowledge his gentle, pastoral presence among us and thank him for his unfailing kindness and care for me. Without him I would never have been able to continue to this point in time. I will always be thankful for the three years we have shared. For myself, I feel a mixture of sadness and relief at this time and some enthusiasm for the next stage of my life. I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of being your parish priest since 2008."

A huge change in the Parish life of Villa Maria. We thank God for the pastoral leadership and care we have received from Fr Kevin and all the Marist Priests who have guided and nurtured the life of this Parish since its inception. We thank the Marist Fathers for their unfailing commitment to the Parish and are so grateful that they are able to maintain the Marist presence in Our Lady's own Parish, Villa Maria.

More News From Hunters Hill:

Well, the Chinese Curse "may you live in interesting times" has struck with a vengeance all over our country, including our Marist Laity Group at Hunters Hill. All our activities curtailed by the covid restrictions for the better part of the last two years, affecting our fundraising support for our orphanages in The Philippines- Sister Lilibeth's Girls and Fr Long's Boy's at Balay Pasalungan and Father Eneriko's mission in Vanuatu. We have struggled along, mostly from our own donations, but hope to be able to return to community involvement in the New Year. God Willing.

Our Whatt's App Group has been a lifeblood initiative in these times. We maintained daily contact, shared special prayers, novenas, our Padre Pio Prayer Group intentions, and generally kept tabs on each other and our Parish. The Whatts App Group- called 'Friends

for Mary'- is our Marist Laity vehicle whereby we keep in daily contact. Anyone can join the group- Cathy Gallo is the administrator and you just need to contact her to get on. Father Paul Mahoney sm has been providing the daily Gospel reading as well as his reflections. A great way to start the day!

We have recently resumed our monthly meetings- the Second Saturday of each month in the Chapter Hall at Villa Maria- at 9.00am. All Welcome.

There have been many changes in our group. Some have moved to other parts of Sydney- but through Whatss App their contact is maintained. Some have spent the better part of the last two years in other countries, stranded by the closed international barriers. The Watts App Group – and its free international calls- kept them in daily contact, and sane (to a degree!). We are so pleased to have them back. Things were quite grim for a long time; they were sustained by the hope and prayers of the group. Always under Mary's protection.

Judith Craig, a long time member of the group passed away. Some of our members have lost loved ones and the Group has been able to support them through their difficulties.



Josieanne and Francoise are moving to Newcastle, but in this day and age with the internet, and whats app we don't see this as an end to their involvement in the co-leadership with Cathy Gallo. Just another thing to find a new usual.

So that's it for Hunters Hill Laity for now. We hope next year to resume our hosting for the healing masses, and one or two Garden Rosary Mornings. And continue our involvement with the Ukulele Group, Sr Fidelis' Feeding of the Homeless, the Work of the Eucharistic Ministers and our First Friday Adoration from 7.30 am in the Villa Church. We thank the Leadership Team of Marist Laity Australia for their Zoom Meetings, local and international and their hosting and maintaining the MLA internet presence. New times, new initiatives. Mary's work drives us forward.

A Loving and Empowering Presence - In Conversation with Fr Kevin Bates sm

Listen to the POD Cast with Fr Kevin Bates
Click here

<https://ripples.dow.catholic.edu.au/>



Kevin Bates sm is the Parish Priest of Holy Name of Mary Parish in Hunters Hill in Sydney. He was born in Geelong, Victoria and was ordained as a Marist Priest in Melbourne in 1972. Over the years he has been involved in a broad and exciting range of ministries. He has been a lecturer, a facilitator, a retreat leader and was the Director of the Marist Centre in Toongabbie and later the Aquinas Centre in Sydney. In the early 1990's he lived in community at Holy Spirit in Bellambi (Wollongong) and travelled extensively around Australia and

beyond conducting retreats for primary and secondary school students, staff groups and parish-based groups. Over these years Kevin has also composed, published and recorded beautiful music which has been shared at countless Masses, Weddings and Funerals.

Throughout the years Kevin's ability to walk with others, to listen to their pain and to empower them to use their gifts has been so clearly evident. It is a story which reflects the power of offering others a loving and encouraging presence.

Marist Missionary Sisters - how are we keeping connected?

By Sister Vicki Wilson smsm

Personally, I have found these past almost 2 years of the Covid pandemic both interesting and challenging in regards to connecting or staying connected with others people.

For myself freedom in many ways has been the most difficult element of trying to live in and with the pandemic. Pre-pandemic it was easy to visit and be with others, especially our elderly smsm Sisters here in Sydney. With the onset of isolation and social distancing new ways have had to be found in how to keep such relationships alive and growing. Before it was so easy to stand in the garden and discuss the pros and cons of where to plant something, or the best part of a book we were both reading.

More phone calls, emails and text messaging became the common way to keep many relationships alive and nurtured. At the same time zooms and webinars offered opportunities to gather with others beyond our local "neighbourhood" and known groups. Such technology has enabled many of us to reach state-wide, Australia-wide, and even world-wide.



As time goes on and we learn how to better live with Covid may we be able to compliment both the old and the new ways of relating in our lives of being Good News and Gospel people for self and others. Amen.

Living St Marcellin's Dream – The Marist Association

By Michael Evison

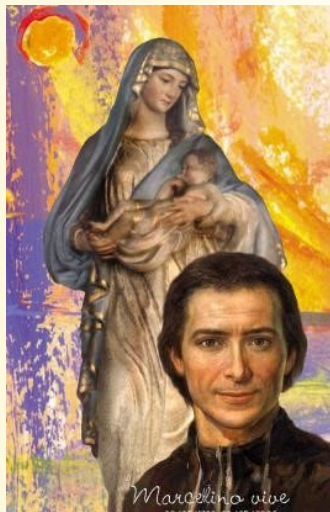
Marcellin Champagnat was a man of strong conviction! His passion was to make Jesus known and loved, and his special concern was to do this for and amongst youth – particularly those at the margins. All Marists, Brothers and lay, share in this mission. There are many ways of living out such a

commitment. As readers would be aware, one way to express this in the Australia of today is through membership of the Marist Association.

This vibrant and growing movement seeks to embody Marcellin's vision. It does so in several different dimensions and is a great way of being Marist in the world.

There is a rich vein of Marist spirituality to be tapped. There is the experience of family spirit and community that is so central to Marist identity. For those who work with our young people, there is Marcellin's approach to pedagogy – which emphasises the love and care of each individual. Finally, for those involved in mission – that is to say everybody – there is the practical, can-do Marist approach to serving others.

Over the past few months, it has been particularly impressive to see this calling lived out in the face of the challenges thrown up by COVID. Several Local Groups have



gathered virtually when they could not do so physically. Online events involving the whole Association have proven popular and have provided a great sense of connection. All of this, of course, contributes to the Marist presence and charism in our schools. It also provides tremendous benefits to Association members themselves.

I would like to commend all in the Association, and particularly Local Group leaders, for the way they have ministered to those around them and to their fellow members. May we continue to make St Marcellin proud!

“The Other Half” Program 2021

By Andrew Dumas



During 2021 a small group of high school students in years 10 to 12 from Mercy Catholic College led by lay Marist Andrew Dumas have zoomed with refugees living on the Thailand and Burma border. “The Other Half” program was built from “The Marist Bridge” program which Marist Father Ron Nissan led from 2010 to 2020. “The Marist Bridge” program sought to develop refugees’ confidence in English to seek further study or employment.

The aim of “The Other Half” program was to learn what it is like to live in the shoes and culture of “The Other Half”. Thus, a cultural exchange. Throughout 2021, students met 8 times learning about various cultural themes like language, food, festivals, and music. Participants developed Soft Skills like active listening, questioning, reflection, cooperation,

leadership, and critical thinking. They did this through discussion, playing games, small group meeting, and acting.

At the beginning of this program 4 other high schools were invited to join. Including 2 Marist schools. But because of various reasons, they were not able to do so. However, the program itself was able to continue throughout 2021, despite COVID restrictions. The hope in 2022 is for "The Other Half" Program to continue. In 2022, the 2021 students will take on more leadership of the program as they have developed a good sense of the structure of "The Other Half" program, but also confidence in leading.

Please contact Marist Laity Australia if you would like to get involved.



Marist Online Prayer

A voice in the wilderness

Sunday December 5 @ 7 pm



Register at
www.maristlaityaustralia.com

2021 Marist Prayer Online

Throughout the year Marist Laity Australia has hosted 5 Marist Prayer ZOOM online events. They included the July Fourviere Celebration, in August the Assumption Feast, in September the Holy Name of Mary Feast, in October focused on the care of the environment and finally in December an Advent gathering. Each gathering provided a great opportunity to gather, listen to inspirational speakers, pray, discuss, reflection and sing in the Marist ways. Thank you to all those who participated. This was a great avenue for the different Marist Branches to join together from across the world. Registrations for each event ranged from 30 to 60 participants. When we gather as Marists, there is a fire inside of us seems to blow more strongly which reminds us of our common call from Mary and God. Thank you to the various Marists who contributed as speakers, facilitators, readers, and participants. We hope to continue this tradition of gathering online in 2022. Please let us know if you have any ideas for 2022. Stay tuned for future events.

