

# Marist Laity Australia

## Cathy's Report Greetings!

### Plans for 2024

In our last newsletter, we indicated that two of our key priorities for 2024 are:

1. Engagement with young adults
2. Engagement with *anyone* seeking opportunities for silence, stillness, reflection, and meaningful conversation.



In preparation to fulfil these goals, a rich and fruitful conversation was held at St Patrick's Church Hill in October. About a dozen young professionals brimming with ideas and strategies gathered in the Crypt! Thank you, Sr Fidelis and Cathy Bertulfo, for harnessing such wonderful energy!

We will follow up with another meeting at St Pat's on Sunday, February 4, to consider our next steps and ways we may bring to life the hopes and desires expressed. ALL interested young adults are very welcome to attend. For everyone.... stay tuned for information regarding reflection opportunities in 2024, including a day in May, our celebration of the origins of the Marist Story on July 21, and a couple of weekends that will provide more sustained opportunities for prayer and reflection.

### Christmas Reflections

As we move through Advent towards Christmas, we are sadly mindful of the conflict and violence within that part of the

world where Jesus lived, died, and rose again.

I invite you to read and ponder these poignant words from Fr Jim Carty SM.

*An article in The Australian newspaper described the Palestinian and Israeli children as "the lost generation", traumatised because they are reared on a diet of violence. Psychologists fear they may be damaged for life.*

*The article describes in distressing detail the impact, both physical and emotional, the ongoing violence is having on these children and concludes with the chilling prediction, based on their research, that many of these traumatised children will become violent adults. Childhood trauma is the key-underlying factor in perpetuating conflict. And without treating trauma in children, violence will continue and tear apart the lives of yet another generation.*

*Palestinian and Israeli children and their suffering and pain is but one example of children throughout the world who suffer because of war and exploitation.*

The fact is, **Jim wrote these words as part of his Christmas message at the end of 2001, 22 years ago.** How profound....

Jim's final words offer a message of hope, with some help from Pope Francis,

*What message of hope, what message of compassion, what message of tolerance can I offer that will sustain and uplift, and bring us*



*a deeper appreciation of God's incomparable and unencumbered love expressed in the event of the birth of his son so many years ago?*

*Pope Francis suggests:*

*"Christian hope is no facile optimism, no placebo for the credulous: it is the certainty, planted in love and faith, that God never abandons us and remains faithful to his promise: 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me'."*

Thank you, Jim, for permission to use your words.

### **Thanks, and best wishes!**

Andrew and I extend deep gratitude to the brilliant members of the Marist Laity Committee! Your generosity, creativity and good humour have generated some wonderful events in 2023.

Finally, we farewell one of our members, Michael Evison, who is looking forward to retirement! Michael has most recently been working with the Marist Association of Marcellin Champagnat. Thanks for your contribution, Michael and enjoy the time ahead!

Peace and blessings to you, your families, and communities,

*Cathy Larkin*

*Co-Leader of Marist Laity Australia*

### **In Memoriam**

Dear Marist friends,  
As 2023 comes to a close, I want to remember three wonderful Marists who passed into Eternal life very recently. We need to remember and honour them for the gifts they were to Marist Laity Australia. All three were on the original core committee of MLA which came into being twenty years ago in July 2003.

*Maria Baden*

**Brother Des (Terence) Murphy**  
**March 1933 - 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

**31<sup>st</sup>**



Des Murphy FMS was our original Marist Brother Liaison for MLA. Even before MLA existed, Des was on a committee called The Wider Marist Family, which was made up of a member from each of the 4 Religious branches and a handful of committed lay Marists. Their brief was to nurture MLA into a living entity.

Brother Des did his job well! In 2003 he remained with us on the core committee for many years, encouraging us, giving practical and spiritual advice and keeping the Marist Brothers informed on this fledgling branch of the Marist family. He brought the spirit of Marcellin Champagnat to our group and always participated in our regular reflection days. He facilitated some of our events and helped us to secure the beautiful Mittagong venue for several MLA events. Des never waned in his passion for MLA. He was our staunch supporter.



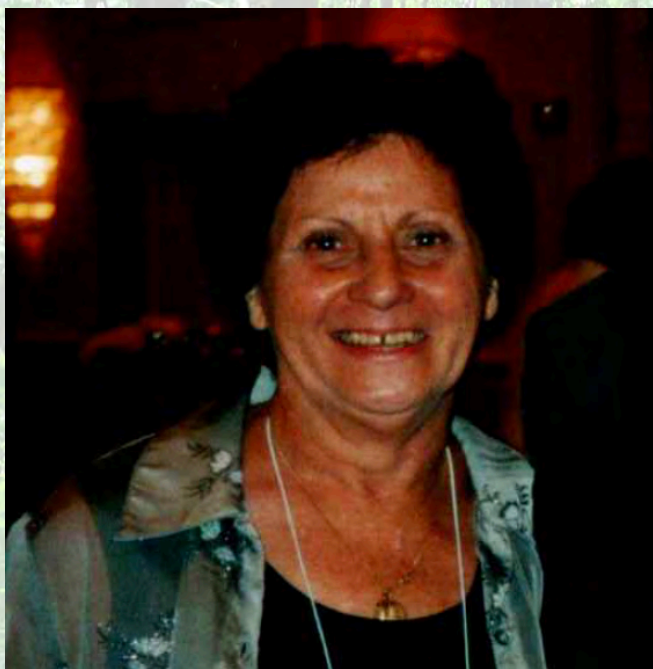
In July this year, when he heard about MLA organising the Harbour Bridge Walk to celebrate Fourviere, he was thrilled. "What brilliant idea!"

Des was a creative, passionate person, always positive, always optimistic, always full of JOY!

Des, we will miss you greatly. THANK YOU for believing in us.

***"Alone with none but thee my God  
I journey on my way.  
What need I fear when thou art near,  
O King of night and day."***

### **Beryl Prescott entered Eternal Life on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**



Beryl was a member of the original MLA core committee.

A long-time resident of the Rocks area in Sydney, she worked as a volunteer at St Brigid's church, which was ministered by the Marist Fathers who lived at the nearby Marist parish of St Patrick's Church Hill. Beryl, and her long-time friend Dawn Caruana, were involved in many ministries at St Brigid's: Eucharistic ministry, visiting the sick, elderly and lonely, preparing the church for weddings and Baptisms and organising the Christmas functions with the Marist team from St Pat's. She was involved with fund-

raising and a plethora of other community services like helping locals with child-minding and household chores when needed – all signs of a close-knit community.

But Beryl never saw herself then as a lay Marist. She just naturally loved being involved and helping out where she could. When the opportunity arose to go on a Marist pilgrimage to France, England and Italy in April 2003, she enthusiastically grabbed it! Fr Ray Chapman SM led our group through this most wonderful Marist immersion and that changed everything for Beryl. She willingly agreed to join MLA and was on the committee for many years.

She attended a Marist Laity Conference in Boston in 2004.

In 2008, when MLA held an International Lay Marist Conference in Sydney, Beryl was in her element, taking charge of Hospitality for local and overseas participants.

In later years, Beryl volunteered at the St Pat's Coffee shop.

Beryl was a faithful lay Marist and she attended nearly every MLA event over the years. She came to realise she'd always had the Marist spirit.

In the words of her friend Dawnie: "She loved people, loved parties and loved the David Jones Oyster and Champagne Bar!" Beryl, we will miss you and your fun-loving personality. THANK YOU, for being a vital part of MLA!

### **Sr. Mary Keegan SMSM                      21<sup>st</sup> February 1933 – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Sr Mary Keegan was our original smsm (Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary) liaison for MLA and, like Br. Des, was on the Wider Marist Family Committee, which encouraged lay Marists to fulfil the dream of Fr Colin SM, to create a Marist Lay branch.



Mary Keegan, along with her dear friend Sr Marie-Berise Nash SM, were lovingly named the GRANDMOTHERS of MLA!!

As a missionary sister, Mary spent many years in the Solomon Islands, a few in Papua New Guinea and a short stint in Bangladesh. Mary was totally committed to the creation of a lay branch in its own right and couldn't wait for this new movement to get going. In the year 2000, a few of us put forward the idea of celebrating the July Fourviere out in the wild western suburb of Westmead! Up until then, Fourviere had always been celebrated by the Marist Family at Hunters Hill with Mass followed by afternoon tea. I can clearly remember Mary saying "Go for it!" This was something NEW, DIFFERENT, a breath of fresh air. Our own Cathy Larkin gave the homily, followed by an Aussie BBQ! Mary stayed with us on the core committee for several years and the SMSM's helped our new, little branch grow over the years.



There was never any time that Mary wanted to tell us what to do or how to do it! None of this "Sister knows best" stuff! She had

complete faith in the ability of lay people to DO THE WORK OF MARY (ie. Mary, the Mother of Jesus). She knew that lay Marists could THINK, JUDGE and ACT as Mary did. When Sr Marie-Berise and I visited two weeks before she died, she was "on fire" with the Spirit. Colour in her cheeks, a crystal clear mind and an energy that was electric. Lying in her bed in the palliative care ward in Mt Druitt hospital, her farewell words to us were

*"This is what I was born for!"*

Mary Keegan, Rest in Peace and THANK YOU for believing in us.

O MARIA, MATER AMABILIS

O Maria, my loving Mother  
I am entirely yours.

By your all-powerful prayer to God  
Assume my life eternal

### Lay people caring for the poor

Recently, I had a conversation with someone who was heavily involved in bringing a prominent Catholic lay movement for couples to Australia in the early 1990s. He was very passionate about evangelization and bringing the good news of God to people who may not have come into contact with it or whose faith had waned. I asked him, 'Why did you stop being so passionately involved?' He explained that the direction had moved away from his own values of caring for the poor. The Catholic lay group wanted to focus heavily on prayer rather than on works of social justice. As I listened, I thought that serving the poor and prayer or contemplation go hand in hand. He reminded me of Pope Francis' call in his document 'Fratelli Tutti' to see each person as our own brother and sister and to care for the poor. But this is easier said than done. Going to the margins, caring for the poor, and helping those most in need requires great risk. Jesus never said, 'Blessed are those who are safe and comfortable'; rather, 'Pick up your cross and walk.' This challenges our Western way of doing things, our climbing of the corporate ladder, and instead calls us to do exactly the opposite. Blessed are we when we are poor.





In my role as a Youth Ministry Coordinator, I've been honoured to guide young minds on Street Retreats, a transformative initiative where students encounter the realities of homelessness firsthand. Thrice a term in 2023, groups of 12 to 15 students have traversed the streets of Sydney's CBD, not as mere observers but as listeners and learners of the profound stories that lie beneath the surface of homelessness. These narratives of addiction, family strife, mental health challenges, abuse, and financial suffering offer invaluable lessons on the impact of life's choices.

These encounters have left indelible marks on the hearts of our students, igniting within them a profound commitment to compassion. The faces we often overlook in our daily hustle are no longer just part of the cityscape but individuals with rich histories and a deep-seated yearning for connection and love.

### **A Call to Reflect and Act**

As we continue these Street Retreats, it is our hope that more individuals will be moved to not just hear, but act—to see beyond the statistics and recognize the inherent dignity in every person. We are called not to the safety of the sidelines but to the frontlines of love and service, where we truly live out the beatitudes. In this journey, we find that it is not we who change the lives of the homeless, but they who change us, teaching us the essence of humanity. This is the heart of evangelization, not just in word but in deed.

*Andrew Dumas*

## **2024 Marist Prayer Booklet**

Dear Marists,

Marist Laity Australia is putting together a special 2024 Marist Prayer Book rather like this one where my son goes to school.

<https://tinyurl.com/prayer-booklet-2023>

However, we would like to make Marist in flavour and Marist in Design.

This booklet would contain different parts: **Different Definitions of Prayer**, **Favourite Scripture verse**, **Scripture Prayers we could pray**, **Prayers with a theme we could pray**, **A poem or a quote we could reflect on**, **Inspirations from our Marist charism and spirit.**



### **2024 Marist Prayer Booklet Activity**

Marist Laity Australia would like to create a "Prayer Booklet" for the beginning of 2024.

This booklet would contain different parts:

- **Different Definitions of Prayer** - As a Marist, Christian, Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, etc - where ever we are at with our faith.
- **Favourite Scripture verse**
- **Scripture Prayers we could pray**
- **Prayers with a theme we could pray**
- **A poem or a quote we could reflect on**
- **Inspirations from our Marist charism and spirit**

Here is an example of what a Prayer booklet might look like

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MZL6RgHJOSd61TwkRvTSMoKDUh6BLnc/view?usp=sharing>

However, our booklet will have a Marist flavour and be designed a little differently....

Can you spend maybe 20 to 30 minute research the following questions

We would love you to contribute.

Please **CLICK** on this form.

<https://tinyurl.com/2024-prayer-booklet>

**Please contribute to our Marist Prayer booklet by January 31 2024.**



## Add us on Facebook

Please **ADD** us to your Facebook Account



Go to [www.facebook.com/marist.laity.Australia](https://www.facebook.com/marist.laity.Australia)

## 2023 Top Web Pages

December

### [What is Spirituality from a Marist Perspective?](#)

Father Michael Whelan's presentation on spirituality from a Marist perspective, titled 'Do As He Tells You' The Way of Obedience, delves into the concept of obedience as a central aspect of spiritual life. He starts by emphasizing the human ground of religious behaviors and practices, aligning with the idea that the incarnation of God in human form confirms the significance of human experience in spirituality.



November

### [Marist Sisters General Chapter - Opening Liturgy](#)

The opening liturgy of the Marist Sisters General Chapter 2022.



September

### [Prayer - The Birth of Mary](#)

Share this prayer with your family, community or class exploring the Gospel from John 3 through song, gospel, reflection, discussion and common prayer. Allocate readers before you start. Opening Prayer. Gospel. Gospel Reflection. - Common Prayer. Final Prayer - 2 people .



August

### [Kerry O'Brien Discussion and Aboriginal Voice](#)

Join us for an engaging and thought-provoking Q&A session with esteemed former ABC journalist, Kerry O'Brien, as we delve into the topic of the Australian Aboriginal Voice to Parliament.



July

### [Fourviere 2023 - Marist Camino](#)

We invite you, your school, community and family to commemorate the Marists who took the first Marist Fourviere Pledge in France 1816. The 12 seminarians walked the stairs at Fourviere France on July 23rd 1816. In 2023 we will walk the Harbour Bridge. We begin by acknowledging country... People can enter at any stage of the journey.



May

### [Event - Embrace the Wind - May 28](#)

Will you help us celebrate 'Embrace the Wind – Marist Pentecost Prayer Event' through an online Zoom prayer? We would like to invite you to join us together with Marist Laity Australia on Sunday May 28 at 7.30 pm (Sydney time) to celebrate in person. We will pray, sing, reflect and discuss together. This online zoom forum enables us to enter conversation and dialogue with each other.



March

### [Song - I Am Australian in Yawuru Aboriginal language](#)

Watch a very special performance of 'I Am Australian' by the students of Broome Primary School. The ABC would like to thank the Mabu Yawuru ngan-ga language team and Yawuru Traditional Owners of Broome for providing the translation of the song 'I Am Australian' and for assisting us in the making of this video. To find out more and share your ABC stories visit

