

Marist Laity Australia



Cathy's Report

Marist Laity Australia is beginning to discern our **priorities for 2024** and beyond.

Two of our most significant priorities are:

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



Do you have any input/feedback/ideas in relation to these priorities? Feel free to get in touch via our website!

Stay tuned to the website and future newsletters for our plans for 2024.

One definite item for your 2024 calendar is another **Marist Camino!**

Our 2023 experience was such a highlight, that we're intending to give it a bit of fine tuning and celebrate the anniversary of Fourviere in the same way, on Sunday, July 21, 2024.

We have added articles in the newsletter on this year's event, and you might also wish to check out the Marist Fathers' site:

<https://maristfathers.org.au/news/news-2023/july-2023#jul-17>

We now have only days before **the referendum on The Voice to Parliament**.

The Marist Family Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee hosted an event facilitated by renowned Australian journalist Kerry O'Brien. In case you missed it, we

recorded the event and have made the audio available in two parts:

First part

<http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Act%20Local/1154.php>

Second part

<http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Aboriginal%20Spirituality/1153.php>

Marist Feasts

Marist across the world have recently celebrated the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary. Thank you, Fr Kevin Bates SM, for your article, *Mary – Just a Glimpse*, written for the Feast a few years ago.



Synodality

As we approach the Synodal Assembly to be held in Rome in October, let us pray that the purpose of the synodal process, to open horizons of hope for the fulfilment of the Church's mission, will indeed be fulfilled. This is a link to a Marist Father's reflection on the Synodal Way

<https://jpicblog.maristm.org/a-marist-reflects-on-the-synodal-way-un-mariste-reflechit-sur-le-chemin-synodal>

Please keep in your prayers:



Br Des Murphy FMS, who died on Sunday, October 1. Des was a wonderful Marist Brother and great support for Marist Laity Australia. Thank you, Des, for all you've given

many people over many decades and may you now enjoy eternal rest.



Barbara Ashwell: Barb was a founding member of Marist Laity Australia and a dynamic contributor to so many initiatives, especially the newsletter and the Marist Lay group at

Bexley. Barb returned to her homeland, Aotearoa New Zealand some years ago. Barb is very unwell and, in a great spirit of serenity, preparing for the next life. Barb has told us that she is 'very much at peace'. Barb, go well dear friend.

Finally, today's reading from St Paul's letter to the Philippians profoundly captures the essence of the Christian life,

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind.

At this time of great division and conflict in our world, and indeed in our country, let's pray for deep unity.

Cathy Larkin
Co-Leader of Marist Laity Australia

Mary – Just a Glimpse

Through the pages of the gospels, we get little glimpses of Mary. An event or two here, a crisis there, her presence added as a sort of footnote elsewhere. Much is left to our imagination as to her character, her story, and her place in the life of the Church. Her story has been overlaid with the piety of centuries. Much of this piety lives on in various forms and some of it finds its way into the Church's Liturgy by way of the many Feast Days which honour Mary.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, let's visit Mary for a little chat, a cuppa and a moment's reflection.

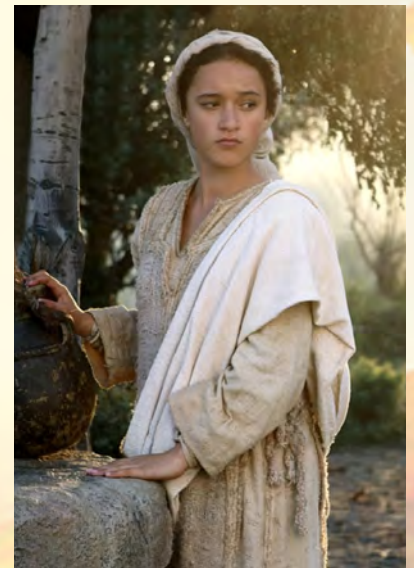
Pregnant – Me? At my age?

Whatever the circumstances of Mary's life at the time, we know she became pregnant, that God through the Holy Spirit played a defining role in the event, and that Joseph was probably very surprised.

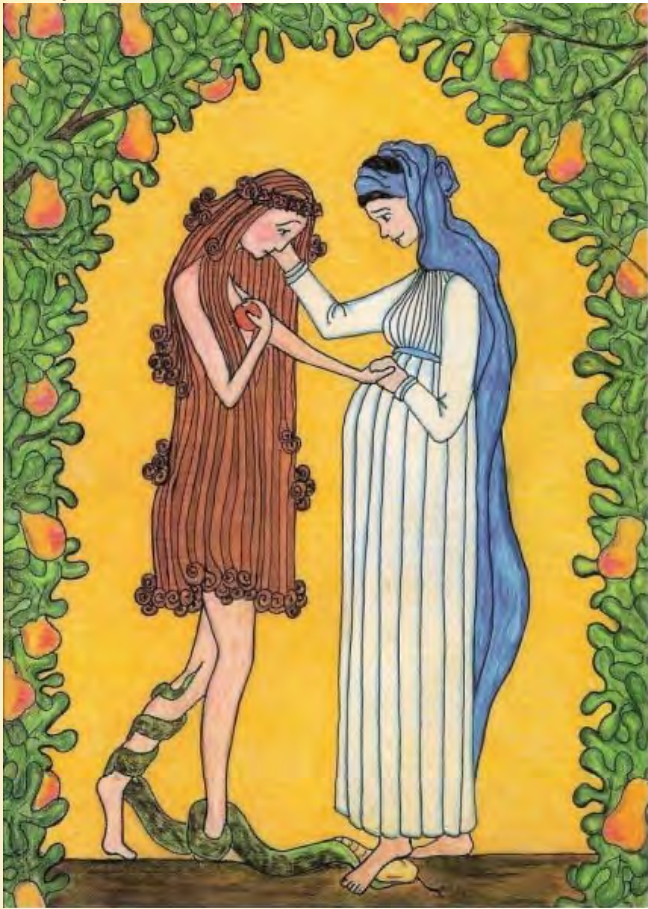
We also know that Mary took the news with some questions in her heart, with some doubts and with some awareness of what this news would mean for her socially.

We also know that she said "yes" without any strings attached.

We can often be faced with situations that put us on the outer with family, work colleagues, church, or society, and which we know are situations to which we must



respond. We pray for the same intelligent, questioning acceptance that marked Mary at this point in her life.



Off to Egypt

The world in which Joseph and Mary lived was every bit as dangerous as the world in our time. Like millions of people today, Mary and Joseph were displaced people for a time, fleeing from danger and without a home to call their own. They travelled bravely and perhaps in isolation at times.

When I'm lost where do I turn? Who gives me direction and tends my aching heart? When I see others lost, seeking refuge, do I use the law as an excuse not to respond to them or can I see beyond the law to the heart that cries out for my acceptance and welcome?

Party Time

Six stone water jars at Cana. A hundred gallons each. That's some party! Mary here becomes the means for God's overflowing love to be broken open and shared when it

seemed that the party was all but over. God is never done with us. Where are the signs of my abundant self-giving?

By the cross

The old cliché that no parent should see the death of a child comes to mind.

Here is Mary standing by as Jesus suffers and breathes his last. She holds his body tenderly and only a grieving mother will know what is in her heart at this time. We could well

suppose that her attention was on him at this time rather than on her own suffering, although at some time she must have allowed her own heart to break.

In my own times of grief, I need to be alone with my own heart and often enough at the same time accompany the grief of those around me. Am I able to hold these two needs in balance and do I have access to the help I may need at these times?

Does the image of Mary at the foot of the Cross have something to say to me here?

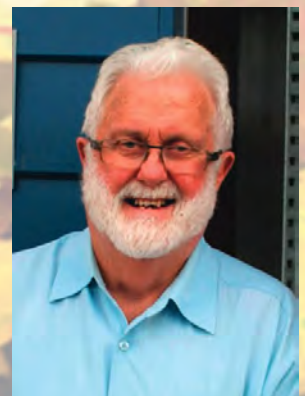


Bring on the Spirit

The Acts of Apostles notes that Mary is present when the Holy Spirit enlivens and releases the disciples. Just as the Spirit moved at the time of Jesus' conception, so now at the conception of the Church, Mary is there in the midst of the action, giving birth if you like, to the Body of Christ.

As we celebrate the Feast Day with her and each other, let our hearts be full of thanks as we "give birth to God's Word "in our turn.

*Marist Father Kevin Bates
sm*



Marist Camino 2023



Yesterday 23rd July our Marist Laity led by Cathy Larkin and Andrew Dumas and their committee organized the best Fourviere Day I have ever attended and I have attended all these days when I have been in Australia. Yesterday was a very special day for many reasons, one being that it was exactly 207 years to the very day when five priests (ordained the day before) and 7 seminarians walked up nearly 800 steps before dawn and left a signed document at the Church of the Black Madonna dedicating their lives to Mary the mother of God; the beginning of the Marist movement.

My Camino began yesterday when I picked up my Ursuline friend Colleen just before 8.30 a.m. and left the car at Rooty Hill station and waited for the bus to take us to Seven Hills, where we waited for the local bus to take us to Macquarie University Station to get the train to Chatswood. At Chatswood we walked across the platform to get the train to Milsons Point where we met my friend Therese and lots of others at Bradfield Park. We were all given a Marist Camino 2023 badge.

After Cathy gave us a talk, standing on a park bench, we walked to the steps of the Harbour Bridge and started our walk across the bridge. What a glorious day, no rain (which was predicted) no wind and glorious sunshine. When we arrived at The Crypt at St Pat's our delicious meal of beef and pork sausages, fried eggs, saveloys and many

delicious salads and bread rolls were put on the tables for us. For dessert there was fruit salad and different cakes etc. as well and tea, coffee, and other drinks. Sr Fidelis an 81-year-old, with her helpers, had been at St Pat's to prepare the breakfast for the Mass goers and then this delicious meal for us. Fidelis stayed behind to clean up afterwards before driving to Hunters Hill – what an incredible woman. We then had talks on the Marist branches which Fr Paul Mahony repeated in Portuguese for the big contingent of Portuguese and Brazilian people. Two buses had been booked to take us to Hunters Hill. I was sitting behind the driver but just as we were leaving, I stood up and turned around and reminded everyone to please wear their seat belts. Some already had them on but a lot didn't. We had an incredibly efficient driver who we thanked when we arrived at Hunters Hill.

Unfortunately, the second bus didn't turn up. Somehow those left behind did eventually get themselves to Hunters Hill. If we had known the bus wasn't coming, I think they could have fitted on to our bus as it was very big. At Hunters Hill there were lots of Marists already in the hall including an excellent Tongan choir from Campbelltown. There were so many young lay Marists there – it was wonderful. We had a beautiful paralyturgy during which Cathy and Chris' 26-year-old daughter gave the reflection. Cathy told us that for the 2000 Fourviere gathering she gave the reflection. Their older daughter was sick on the day, so Chris stayed home to look after her. Chris always looked after the girls' hair, so he had put ribbons and clips in Johanna's hair that morning. When Cathy started to give her reflection, Johanna – not yet 3 years old - wanted to be picked up so with Johanna on her left hip, Cathy's reflection on the lectern Johanna decided to take every ribbon and clip out of her hair and put them into Cathy's right hand. Cathy said she doesn't think anyone was listening to a word she said! When Johanna got up for her reflection yesterday, she started by saying she did not have a child on her hip. It was a deep and moving reflection and hopefully we



will be getting a copy of it. Johanna had come for Fourviere yesterday from Canberra where she lives and works. Afternoon tea was very lavish, and we sat around round tables beautifully prepared and enjoyed lots of conversations. Most of us who had been to The Crypt didn't eat or had very little. Hopefully the Tongans who sang quietly while we chatted were able to take home lots and lots of delicious food for their families. Janice dropped Therese at her home in Parramatta. Jenny very kindly dropped Colleen and me at Strathfield Station. The train took us to Granville. We had to wait a very long time for our bus to Rooty Hill which stopped at every station to Penrith. I would have had to stand for half of the trip if a young lady hadn't offered me her seat. There were many young men on the bus but no gentlemen!!!! I arrived home six minutes late for Compass, but I was there in time to hear about the singing of our wonderful aborigines at the time of Governor Phillip. They used to sing from morning till night thanking the birds and the animals for providing their nourishment etc. I was in bed by 7.36, exactly an hour after arriving home, but I heard the rain start just before 11.00 p.m. and shortly afterwards went to sleep. I woke up early this morning reflecting on the wonderful day we had yesterday.

Andrew Dumas, who was the brainchild of our day yesterday, was not able to attend because of ill health. However, Cathy took a video of us at the end of the paraliturgy and sent it to Andrew.

So, thanks to Fr Ron Nissen's counting, as well as taking photos we were 70+ who walked over the bridge, 80+ in the Crypt and 150+ at Hunters Hill.

We are so fortunate to have such an alive lay Marist group in Sydney and in other parts of Australia and the world. May Mary's name be honoured for all eternity. Amen.

*Marist Missionary Sister
Margaret Tisch smsm*

Fourviere Reflection – A leap of faith By Johanna Larkin

I would first like to acknowledge that we meet today on the lands of the Wallumedegal people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge that sovereignty over these lands was never ceded and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Engaging in this reflection is a bit of a leap of faith for me. When my Mum asked me to give this reflection, I was quite anxious. I'm sure many of you know much more than me about Marist charism and theology.

And thinking on the theme – a leap of faith... as I pondered it, I really had to wonder, had I ever taken a leap of faith? What exactly is a leap of faith? Sure, in my personal life or my career or school, I'd taken risks and chances. But a leap of faith is

something different. And honestly, I don't think I have taken the opportunities or chances in my life to take such a leap of faith yet, not deeply or in a transformative way.

That's what I want to explore and reflect on today – what does it really mean to take a leap of faith authentically, and what might we be being called to take a leap of faith into?

And while I am not a theologian or philosopher or anyone with deep knowledge or Marist charism, I think these things are so intrinsic and integral to all of our human experience so I hope there are still elements that will stand out.

So, a leap of faith – what is it for us in 2023?

Initially, to me the idea of a leap of faith seemed quite remote and distant, not something that I have the time to do while keeping up with life and work and family. But perhaps I've deliberately kept it at a distance. The transformation a leap of faith requires is uncomfortable and scary.

From our point of view, it seems simpler for the men of Fourviere or other radical thinkers and activists to take a leap of faith than it is for us. As the passage says, they were burning with a vision, men on fire. It was not a question of commitment. If only I had that same vision or fire or were that kind of person, it would be so much easier!

But it's important that while we recognise their great vision and purpose and commitment, we don't forget that all these people are essentially like us – just

people; people who can be afraid; people who can be uncomfortable; people who can be hesitant and resistant and fallible.

These people were deeply in their community and their world, with the same responsibilities and struggles many of us might have. Taking a leap of faith would have been just as much of a struggle for them as it could be for us. They would not have necessarily known it would work out or even that they were on the right path.

And that's a critical part of a leap of faith – the faith: the trust that this is the thing I am called to do, that I have to do, this is what is right. And critically, this isn't a blind trust or naivety. It comes out of a process of discernment and reflection and even if we don't know if this is the exact right path or if it will work, we know it is better than doing nothing or being passive bystanders. We trust in ourselves to learn and grow along the way, and be guided towards a more just, authentic, compassionate way.

And that's the same thing that Joseph, Mary and even Jesus experienced – questioning, uncertainty, fear, but ultimately, trust and faith and acceptance.

Importantly as well, the men of Fourviere were not only on fire, they were available. They were open to a call to the more, ready to answer, even if they



were afraid or even skeptical. In the same way, in the reading, the mustard seed did not just appear. A man took it and sowed it in the field.

Taking a leap of faith requires that we be open and available to take action, be moved and respond to a call. Even if it is scary or even if the change is small. As in the parable again, from a mustard seed can grow the largest tree.

So what might we be being called to do, what are we taking a leap of faith towards?

Looking at the passage, what really resonated with me was the idea that we are being called to be a servant and pilgrim people, to bring a new sensitivity and compassion. That's quite a radical and counter-cultural idea, especially when we look around and see so much polarisation, communal and political fracturing, anger, and inequality.

Compassion and sensitivity and being of service should not be confused with being weak or passive. Indeed, it can actually be the hardest thing to commit to. It means to stand with and importantly, behind marginalised and disempowered people and communities to understand, learn and offer our service, and actively resist injustice. It means trying to connect to hearts and minds, also to understand. It means challenging our ego and learning where we might be complicit in systemic inequality, and committing to changing that. It can even be in the quiet everyday interactions to help people know they are welcome and valued.

And this is a uniquely Marist way of seeing things. It isn't about moving fast and breaking things or flying in and presuming we have all the answers. It isn't about being the hero or the saviour.

It is about letting go and taking on, being hidden and unknown.

And that is a real leap of faith for today's world. Taking on the mindset of a servant or pilgrim, being committed to listening, learning and being of service, means we might be rejected or ridiculed. It may not sit well with our ego. We might get things wrong sometimes and have to be humble about what we do and don't know and where we need to learn and grow.



But this sort of mindset, this leap of faith, is deeply needed in this moment. I think the passage is still correct today in "seeing the skepticism of the time a desire of people to be authentic, to cast off all masks and illusions."

Today, there is a crisis of loneliness across our society, there is a dearth of meaning and purpose, and increasingly we try to fill that gap with ever growing consumption and consumerism. We feel we can't trust our politicians or institutions, and it is hard to trust that we are heading in the right direction – that the future will be better.

Underlying all of this despair though, there is I think a deep yearning for connection and meaning and community built on compassion and justice. And that might be what we are being called to take a leap of faith on. To trust that we can build a fairer, more equitable, more just world. And to act on that trust, to make it a reality and work in our communities to achieve it, and resist the pervading cynicism or nihilism.

And eventually, in the same way the mustard seed grew into a tree that birds could shelter in, the way we live our lives, the openness and kindness we show, can be a doorway for someone to also consider making their own leap of faith.

That's what the men of Fourviere did, and it's why we're here today. Their leap of faith was active and transformative for their lives and for their communities. They didn't shut themselves off, they went out and tried to build something new within the world they were in. We need to be deeply in the here and now in our community to be able to take a similar leap of faith.

As I reflected on this, I thought, **"What might be the injustice in our community, the call that we are being asked to hear and respond to, to take a leap of faith on?"**

Well, as I said, part of my leap of faith was coming here today and opening myself to this reflection. That might resonate with some of you as well. We have come together in this room from so many different backgrounds and experiences but with a shared desire to find and build community, and to learn and live in the image of Mary – as a servant and pilgrim people. This might be our first step into a leap of faith.

But where do we go from here? We will all leave here today and go back to our lives, our pressures and responsibilities. As individuals, we all hear so many different calls and needs. There is so much work to do, so much that needs to change. It is important that we don't become shut off to these calls, that we don't become skeptical or disillusioned. From here, we need to take away the spirit of hope and transformation the men of Fourviere had, even in spite of the obstacles they faced.

So I would like to open a doorway for us to consider, speak to a call within our community today. I think the greatest call we are asked to respond to is the call for

sovereignty and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are all gathered here today on stolen, unceded land, the land of the Wallumedegal people. And we will go home to land that always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

This country is built on legacies of racism, colonisation, genocide and dispossession. We are complicit in the ongoing intergenerational trauma that perpetuates these violent legacies. It is our duty to face, recognise and dismantle this legacy, particularly as we come towards the referendum on the Voice.

We need to recognise the facts. 23,000 First Nations children are currently living in out of home care and there are record rates of child removal. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still being locked up and dying in custody at hugely disproportionate rates. Sacred sites, including the Juukan Gorge, are being destroyed in pursuit of profit. This is happening now.

There is strength, power and fearlessness within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They are calling for truth-telling, for treaty, for an end to dispossession and violence, for land rights.

If we are to be a servant and pilgrim people, if we are truly authentic in listening to and being open to change, we need to listen. And we need to respond.

It may be challenging. It may require accepting harsh truths. We will need to listen and accept that what we have accepted as true may be steeped in historical silences and falsehoods. It requires giving up the privilege and wealth we have inherited. This is the leap of faith we are called to make, to be open to the call to transform our communities.

And it is important I say here, that I can talk about taking a leap of faith from a position of privilege. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people, struggle and resistance to colonisation has never been a choice. And I acknowledge and humbly pay my respects to those histories.

So what do we do now? Well, critically, I am not the one to say. What I can say is that we must listen to the community, ask what we can do, and act. We must step

back to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the space and voice to determine their own lives and futures. We must commit to no longer being complicit in this colonial violence and we work for treaty, truth and sovereignty.

We can take a leap of faith to transform as individuals and as a community, knowing it may be a struggle, to respond to this injustice in our community and build a society on compassion, truth and justice.

To embody the spirit of a leap of faith that the men of Fourviere took, and that Jesus took, we need to first listen – what are we being called to do? And step back – how can we be compassionate servants in our community? Even in the smallest acts, even if we are afraid, this is how we make a difference - grow from seed to tree. And this is how we keep the spirit and fire of Fourviere alive.

“Be Still & Know That I Am God”

Where? / When?

Two questions these days all too often at the forefront of my mind.

Words of hunger and thirst, sitting within my heart and soul.

Like many other people most of my days begin and end in a state of constant busyness.

Often, come evening time, I am left wondering if and where there was stillness (a God moment or two) during my day.

Over recent weeks I have come to realize that the stillness I seek is not in the watering of my vegie patches or flower pots. Rather it is found in the awareness of:

- The newly planted seeds shooting up through the soil,
- The orchids budding, and soon to bloom,
- The ferns bearing new delicate fronds. Then I recall a story I heard many years ago while on retreat. A story that had a farmer (God) bending close to each seed he had planted and whispering with much love and gentleness: “grow, grow”.

And so each of us grows a little more each day into Christlikeness with God whispering: “grow, grow”.

*Marist Missionary Sister
Vicki Wilson smsm*



A conversation with Kerry O'Brien



On September 3rd Marist Family JPIC committee and MLA hosted Kerry O'Brien former ABC journalist discussing the Aboriginal voice, emphasized the critical need for Australia to move closer to genuine reconciliation by understanding its true history. He highlighted the rich contributions of the indigenous population and their long-standing desire to be genuinely heard and acknowledged by the nation. This craving for acknowledgment is rooted in their historical experiences and is a reflection of the country's failure to recognize their true essence. Kerry O'Brien asserts that the journey for indigenous recognition goes far back, with efforts to create a voice for indigenous people tracing back to the 1920s. These efforts persisted through the years, leading up to the 1967 referendum. However, the repeated refrain, "we just want to be heard," underscores the neglect and indifference shown to the indigenous community.

Kerry further delved into his personal experiences as a journalist and the encounters he's had with the indigenous community, which provided him with a firsthand view of the racism and discrimination they faced. Despite significant milestones in the fight for indigenous rights and representation, such as the '67 referendum, there were still many inadequacies in policy implementation and overall understanding by the state. He critically assesses the failures of past policies, stating that many of them failed because indigenous voices weren't genuinely heeded.

He cites examples of well-intended bureaucrats who would take notes, ask questions, and make promises, yet these often didn't translate into effective policies. Indigenous history and the recurring plea for genuine acknowledgment and inclusion, according to Kerry O'Brien, should be central to the nation's discourse.

Please watch and SHARE the fall presentation here.

<http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Act%20Local/1154.php>

FAQ 101 - Why is the Aboriginal Voice so important?

Marist Laity Australia produced a short video explain why the Aboriginal Voice is so important.



Please **like** the video and **share** this.

<http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Aboriginal%20Spirituality/1161.php>

Add us on Facebook

Please **ADD** us to your Facebook Account
Go to



www.facebook.com/marist.laity.Australia