



Simplicity

Flexibility

Inclusiveness

Newsletter

Christmas Season

"Situations can change; people can change. Be the first to seek to bring good. Do not grow accustomed to evil, but defeat it with good."

Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy



This coming December Pope Francis is declaring a Year of Mercy for the forthcoming year.

Christmas time is often a time we reflect on gifts – those we receive and those we give. This Christmas you are invited to reflect on the gift of Mercy, Compassion and Forgiveness

Isaiah 49: 15-16

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me."



Luke 2: 7

"And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn".

Today women and men in all cultures treasure the life and potential of their new born child. The life of their child is inscribed in their hearts and Isaiah likens this to our lives engraved upon the hands of God.

Traditionally God's love and mercy for men and women is recognised and celebrated through the birth of Christ as God's ultimate gift to humankind. This abundance of love is what we are asked to continue through our acts of mercy compassion and forgiveness this Christmas.

May the celebration of Christmas foster in our hearts a desire for love that brings mercy and forgiveness, peace and joy!



Throughout history humans display an enormous capacity to forgive, show mercy and compassion. This has been illustrated over and over again in the lives of others and in the lives of our family members and friends. This capacity reflects the depth of the human spirit which in a Christian context reflects the Mercy, Compassion and Forgiveness of the Creator, God.

This Christmas we are invited to deepen our capacity and embrace another with the gift of mercy and forgiveness. Those in our lives with whom we may have had conflict, tension, arguments or strife, as Mercy begins with me.

This Christmas...

Mend a quarrel / Seek out a forgotten friend
Share some treasure / Give a soft answer
Encourage someone / Keep a promise
Find the time / Listen / Apologise if you were wrong
Be gentle / Laugh a little / Express your gratitude
Welcome a stranger
Gladden the heart of a child or adult
Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth
Speak your lovespeak it again.....
.....Speak it still once again.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

By Margaret Woods

Mercy Begins with ME

On 28th November, Marist Laity Australia held its November Reflection day, leading us into the season of Advent. Fr Ray Chapman, a Marist priest who has given MLA such wonderful support over many years, was asked to facilitate this day. Fr Ray will be finishing his time as Parish Priest of St Patrick's Church Hill at the end of this year. Our hopes were answered when he graciously agreed to give us this parting gift.

Ray chose as the theme, MErcy begins with ME, in step with the Jubilee Year of Mercy beginning on 8th December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Some 50 people turned up, many of whom were wanting to tap into Ray's wisdom before he leaves for France.



We were NOT disappointed!! Ray began with Pope Francis' words on this Holy Year of Mercy: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's Mercy.

In small groups, we were invited to share our understanding and experience of Mercy and then, expand out to where, in the world today, Mercy is most needed.

Ray gave us great input, teaching us about Divine Mercy in the Hebrew Scriptures, looking at Isaiah and Hosea.

"The biblical concept of mercy includes the tangible presence of love that is faithful, freely given and able to forgive."

In the gospels, we realise that "everything in Jesus speaks of mercy... he himself IS mercy."

Mercy is part of God's nature. God will never forget or abandon us!

Ray gently led us from our heads to our hearts, where Mercy is found; from the surface to the depths, where Mercy abides; from theory to living reality, where Mercy is enacted! He spoke with knowledge, authority and passion.

"Mercy must be freely given: therefore, I need to be free to give."

With single-pointed focus and drive, Ray led us to a place of freedom.

We then moved to a key Marist characteristic : "Instruments of Divine Mercy".

Jean-Claude Colin SM always saw Mary as the Mother of Mercy.

"When Colin asks Marists to be 'Instruments of Divine Mercy', he is asking them to portray the feminine features of God and to help build a church which is not perceived in terms of power, planning, control, administration and competitiveness, but rather in terms of community, compassion, simplicity, mercy and fellowship."

We then moved again into small groups to reflect on how we can be obstacles to Divine Mercy – to myself, others and the world. And then, to discern what I can do, this year, to enter into the spirit of



Mercy. Ray summed up some of Pope Francis'

practical suggestions in this Year of Mercy: "The Divine Mercy message is a very specific life plan because it



involves action. One of the most obvious works of mercy, and perhaps the most difficult to put into practice, is to forgive those who have offended us, who have done us wrong or whom we consider to be enemies. At times, how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence and revenge, are necessary conditions to living joyfully." (Misericordiae Vultus, 9)

The day ended as powerfully as it had begun. We all moved from our places through the Door of Mercy leading to our Eucharist. Today, let us bring to our Eucharist a deeper understanding of how it makes present to us the compassionate and merciful heart of the Father so that we can become "merciful like the Father."



By Maria Baden

MARIST to MARIST Immersion 2015



On December 15 seven ex-students from Marist Sisters College with Andrew Dumas and Laura Musolino will take part in a Marist to Marist Immersion. Over the past few months we have been preparing to go. In early November three Marists came to the school to talk about Marist Spirituality and Marist Ministry in the world today. Participants will be challenged to look beyond their own reality to see a people needing care.

During the Immersion we will be part of the Marist Fathers Orphanage Balay Pasilungan. Balay Pasilungan cares for homeless boys aged between 5 and 15. These boys have come from the street. When we were there last time we met 3 triplets who had been recently living in a large rubbish bin. These boys were so happy yet although they were five years old their bodies were the size of a three year old. Because they were malnourished for so long their bodies did not grow. The Marist Sisters also run a pre-school for Refugees. Without this school the students would be begging on the street. The pre-school feeds these children and provides them with a level of education in English which is sufficient to attend school.

Please have a look at philippines2015mscw.blogspot.com.au to follow the immersion.

The hope for the Immersion is to discover what it is like to live as a Marist in a second world or third world context. The Immersion goes from December 15 to 25th.

By Andrew Dumas

MARIST SPIRITUALITY

THE LIVEABLE SPIRIT PROGRAM

St Patrick's, an inner-city Marist parish in Sydney, held a Marist Spirituality day for the lay volunteers who work there. Many of these



volunteers are attracted to this church because of the presence of the Marist Fathers and Sisters, but many would not know about our wonderful Marist history and spirit. This program was offered to share the history and spirituality of the Marist "tree of many branches."

The day began with a reflection and introduction to the Marist story based around the image of a tree of many branches which was at the heart of the original Marist vision. Five presenters gave the story of their particular branch, covering its history and spirituality, beginning with Fr Ray Chapman for the Marist Fathers, Brother Greg McDonald for the Marist Brothers, Sr Janice Ruff for the Marist Missionary Sisters, Sr. Fidelis McTeigue for the Marist Sisters and Maria Baden for Marist Laity. The afternoon session, led by lay Marist, Dr Liz Lamb, took us into the personal realm of Marist Spirituality in our lives.

We looked at the powerful poem by Francois Marc SM called *THE MARIAN CHURCH*, linking key words and ideas in the poem with scripture quotes where Mary is present. The day ended with a personal reflection around the Marist idea of creating "a new Church, a Church that is different."

The day was a great success. The volunteers were very keen to know more about Marist Laity as they all have a deep love of Mary and her Son. It was a day full of joy and hope!

The Liveable Spirit was so successful it was repeated on the 15th October, with different speakers, and shall become a biannual event. For those interested in attending, please contact Sr. Fidelis for details. Mob 0484312598

By Maria Baden

MARISTS MARCH FOR OUR COMMON HOME



At the end of November, thousands of people across Australia marched in solidarity with millions across the world – a mass demonstration demanding that world leaders, at the Paris Climate Summit reach agreements whereby global warming can be limited to less than 2 degrees by the end of the century.

In Sydney, some 45,000 people from many different walks of life marched for our sacred earth. Torres Strait Islander peoples, scientists, grandmothers, healthcare workers, children, unionists, students... AND MARISTS!

This world-wide march was organised to coincide with the Paris Climate Summit.

I marched with members of the Kiama Social Justice, Peace and Ecology group I belong to. We had been well prepared, having several weeks before, invited Professor Neil Ormerod and his wife Thea Ormerod, to Kiama parish to break open LAUDATO SI, Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter on Ecology and Climate. Thea is President of ARRCC – Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. (chair@arrcc.org.au)



As we stood with thousands of people, creative banners and colourful outfits, I looked around. To my left, I saw a familiar face – Sr Janice Ruff SMSM. Then, behind me I saw a banner – YOUNG MARISTS – some 25 young people organised by the Marist Brothers – Robert Hayes, Mark Murphy, Doug Walsh, and a Marist Brother from Nigeria, Br. Christian. Somewhere in the huge crowd, lay Marist Barbara Ashwell and Sr Marie Clark SM added to the Marist presence.

Fr Paul Fyfe SJ highlights important aspects of the Pope's Encyclical

- The urgency of Francis' language and his demand for action to avoid the worst outcomes for humanity
- Francis' consultative and inclusive approach
- Francis' embrace of Franciscan and Orthodox spirituality to proclaim how we must love the Lord's creation in a very personal way – as our sister, our brother, our neighbour. He links "the earth herself, burdened and laid waste" to the lot of the poor of

the world: "she is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor."

As I marched in communion with so many others, I noticed the many banners, words calling out to save creation. But the one face I noticed, the ONLY face in that vast crowd, rising and smiling above all others, was the face of our dear Francis!!

"Laudato Si, mi' Signore...Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us.."

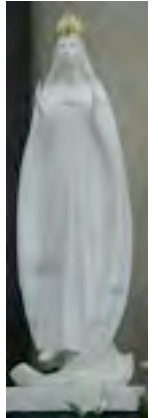
By Maria Baden

Bexley Marist Laity 2015



Our group met on the second Thursday of each month from February until November 2015. Our theme for the year – Saints of the Reformation - opened the eyes of those not from a British background, to the horrors instigated by Henry the Eighth and his henchmen under Oliver Cromwell. The destruction (or as English history calls it the "Dissolution") of the Monasteries created hundreds of martyrs – monks, nuns and lay people who refused to accept Henry as Head of the Church and were slaughtered.

Barbara, who accompanied a Harvest pilgrimage through England, Ireland and Scotland in 2014, shared her pictures of the ruined monasteries and Abbeys, such as Our Lady of Walsingham (pictured), Tintern Abbey, Our Lady of Glastonbury, Blarney Abbey, as well as shrines to the Saints and Martyrs throughout England, Ireland and Scotland. Highlights in Ireland were scenes from Our Lady of Knock (pictured) and Croagh Patrick which revealed that the faith is alive and well in these parts of the world.



We also looked at the religious congregations who came to Australia and built schools and hospitals: the Christian Brothers from Waterford and the Mercy Sisters from Dublin.

This year it is 175 years since the Sisters of Charity came from Dublin to care for the poor and developed schools and the world renowned St Vincent's hospitals in our capital cities.

We finished the year with a lovely Mass celebrated by Fr Paul Mahoney sm

We look forward to resuming our meetings in February 2016. Our Theme for the year will be that given to us by Fr Ray Chapman: "Mercy begins with ME."

By Barbara Ashwell



Marist Laity Hunters Hill

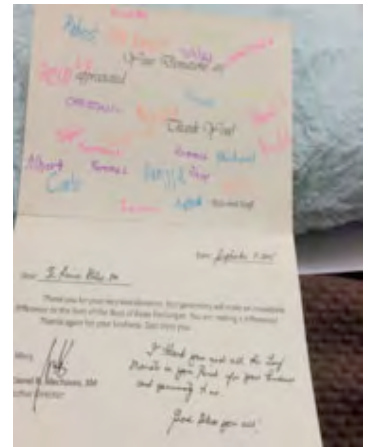
Since the last newsletter, we have been busily involved in implementing our programme of support for our "adopted Fathers"- Father Eneriko with his parish work in an impoverished part of Vanuatu and Father Long with his work with the orphans and homeless in Balay Pasilungan, The Philippines. With the \$10,277.10 raised so far, Father Long has hired another Social Worker so that he has been able to increase the number of children in the orphanage from 30 to 38, and Father Eneriko used his funds towards the construction of a water pump for his village and the provision of a tap to each house in the village, thereby saving the residents an hour long walk to the nearest water supply to get water.

Our fundraising has ignited enthusiasm and support from our families, our Parish, schools and the wider community. We are so gratified to have been joined by so many Marists in action.



Members of our group have commenced a Padre Pio Prayer Group which is conducted at St Peter Chanel Church, Woolwich, on Wednesdays at 12.15 with Mass followed by the Rosary and Padre Pio Prayers when all in need of prayers are included. All Welcome!

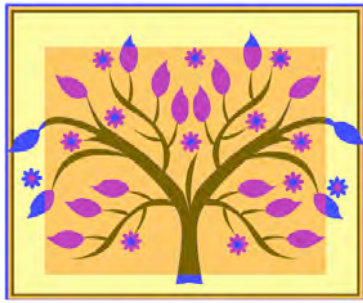
Since June, Hunters Hill Marist Laity is now online! We now have a page on the Holy Name of Mary Parish website where we have posted details of our meetings, news and contact details, together with the reflection material for each meeting.



We rounded off a very busy year with a meeting reflecting on Pope Francis and the Year of Mercy and saw the parallel with our common Marist mission, doing God's work Mary's way. With such inspirational leadership, we look forward to the Year of Mercy, its challenges and joy and all that it will bring.

By Jen Bolster





Marist Encounter Program 2016 Coming Soon...

**You are invited to come to a weekly program
"Exploring 4 Marist founders" and "Marist
Spirituality"**

Speakers –

Father Ray Chapman SM
Sister Gail Reneker SM
Brother Tony Butler FMS
Sister Marilyn Farley SMSM

Location –

St Patrick's Church Hill Sydney
within the Crypt.

Time -

Thursday – 6pm to 7.15 pm
February, March, April and early May

PRAYER

Please pray for the following people:

Father Paul Cooney SM