



Newsletter

Flexibility Inclusiveness

As we near the Christmas Season we take time to reflect Upon the wonderful blessings and challenges we have received This year. Whilst there have been many I highlight a few of the outstanding!

A new Marist laity group was formed at St Patricks and the European model of formation was adapted to assist in developing people's knowledge, love and desire to be Marist in the world. This group will continue into 2017.

With the wonderful support of both the Hunters Hill and Bexley Marist Laity groups, MLA this year hosted the MLA May 2 day conference to celebrate the 200 Years of Marist Charism. This was a festive gathering including visitors From NZ, Philippines and interstate, South Australia and Queensland. The beautiful Marist laity tapestry made by our Bexley ladies was taken To Fourviere' and carried as a highlight at the end of the Celebration Mass in France.

The culmination for the Marist Family was the combined mass on Fourviere at Villa Maria Hunters Hill followed by a delicious lunch at St Joseph's College on the 21 July. The making of new banners reflected the dynamic move forward As each branch's banner spoke to the heart of the Marist charism.

A very warm THANK YOU to all involved in making this year an outstanding year of celebration, growth and love.

The Hunters Hill group help varied activities to raise generous amounts of monies to support the work of the Marist Fathers in the Philippines and in the new year a group of 7 lay Marists will engage in an immersion program to support children off the streets as they find home, support, education and hope in the orphanages run by the Marist Fathers and Sisters. We also look to connect more deeply with our Marist laity counterparts in the Philippines.

As the Christmas Season begins I would like to offer, on behalf of the MLA Committee, blessings to each of you for the season. May the time together create opportunities for relaxation and rest with family and loved ones.

Andrew Dumas, our wonderful IT expert, launched a formation program that Included interviews with Marist Australian Leaders from each branch of the Family. Early in the year Andrew hosted a group at St Patricks Sydney to initially explore this material and then uploaded the formation program to enrich the opportunities for other groups across Australia to access.

As we end this year I place little Noah (my new Great Grand Nephew), a new arrival in the Woods Family before you, with the poem by Francis Webb...as indeed new life is a reflection of the Giver of Life and Love ! As a friend said ' the closest thing to the divine' we can hold and marvel at.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Margaret Woods
Coordinator Marist Laity Australia

Five Days Old Francis Web

Christmas is in the air.
You are given into my hands
Out of quietest, loneliest lands.
My trembling is all my prayer
To blown straw was given
All the fullness of Heaven

The tiny, not the immense,
Will teach our groping eyes.
So the absorbent skies
Bleed stars of innocence.
So cloud-voice in war and
trouble
Is at last Christ in the stable

Now wondering engrossed
In your fearless delicacies,
I am launched upon sacred
seas,
Humbly and utterly lost
In the mystery of creation,
Bells, bells of oceans

Too pure for my tongue to praise,
That sober, exquisite yawn
Or the gradual, gem
Nervous dawn
At an eyelid, maker of day;
To shrive my thought to perfection
I must breath old tempests of action.

For the snowflake and face of love,
Windfall and word of truth,
Honour close to death.
O eternal truthfulness, Dove,
Tell me what I hold.
Myrrh? Frankincense? Gold?

If this is man, then the danger
And fear are as lights of the inn,
Faint and remote as sin.
Out here by the manger,
In the sleeping, meeting weather
We shall all kneel down together.



Marist Reflection Day ~ Nov 26

" I don't know who – or what- put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone- or Something- and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal" Dag Hammarskjöld

Last Saturday 26 November a group of Marist Laity joined to hear Dominic Arcamone speak of his reflections after walking the Camino.

The day was rich with insights and sharing as Dominic led the group through 5 themes that he found reflected his experience in walking the Camino.

The themes of '**Responding to the Call**' reflected so beautifully in Dag Hammarskjöld's quote above began the journey of the day. The arrows or shells marking the route along the Camino, though at times hard to find, raised the question of whether pilgrims were moving in the right direction. Therefore **the way of trust** is not always easy and Dominic invited us to reflect on : What arrows or shells will we trust in our own lives?

As with all long journeys on foot, pain emerges as blisters, tired feet, dehydration and the sun take their toll. We explored the **meaning of suffering** in the pilgrim experience. Dominic beautifully enriched this theme with insights from Fredrick Nietzsche and invited us to face the Avoidances of our lives . " It's about reconnection with You, with the speech of the heart." Reconnecting with the inner self he stated, can also be 'bitter when we come face to face with avoidances."

Connecting with others, nature and yourself was the fourth theme that was again enriched by quotes from Jane Redmont, Pieg Sayers and Alfred Squire. The final theme **Pray without**

Ceasing continues to shape our 'sprints to have the mind of Christ'. This theme led us into mass celebrated so generously by Fr Paul Mahoney. We experienced a very rich day with wonderful insights, time for contemplation, for sharing and for joining together in the Eucharist to give Thanks for all that Dominic and the year had given to us.

We hope you join us in May 2017 for our next Reflection Day!

Keep an eye on our emails and newsletters.

Cheers

Margaret Woods Coordinator
Marist Laity Australia.



Some 23 years ago, a group of committed lay people from the Marist parish of Hunters Hill, began an outreach to these Aboriginal folk who were being ministered to by Josephite, Sr Naomi Smith. Twice a year, they would come to Gerringong down the South Coast, to prepare the Friday night meal, which was the start of a weekend away from the suburbs of Western Sydney.

This year, on the weekend of 4-6th November, Mary Ann Knoblanche, Cecilia and Michael Brungs and Vicki Fraser, from Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill, came again, to prepare the Friday evening meal for some 70 Aboriginal people. But wait! There's more!

Members of the Social Justice group of the Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill have been assisting Sr Naomi for the past 3 years by providing the lunch for the Saturday, taking the children to the beach for the morning to swim and explore the rock platforms of Warri beach. In the afternoon, they enjoy chatting with the aunties and playing with the kids back at Chittick lodge. This group have helped, where possible to provide for any needs of the Baabayn community. People who help with this outreach include: Fr Kevin Bates SM, Nikki Grech, Caitlin Pfafflin, John and Leah Won, Matt and Fehon, Marnie Butler, Linda Lucy, and David Macedone.



Barbara Ashwell (centre) holds the gift from the Bexley ML Group to the ML Australia Committee to celebrate the 200 yr. Marist Anniversary. Much thanks and appreciation for such a beautifully painted icon for us to display at each of our ML events in the coming years. Thank You! - the MLA Committee Members.

The Marist Thread - Connecting Babaayn

By Maria Baden

There is an interesting thread connecting different Marist lay people with an Aboriginal group from Mt. Druiitt, called BAABAYN.

But wait, there's more!

Our Social Justice group of Kiama, for the past 5 years, have been offering a morning tea or sausage sizzle for Baabayn. This year, we opted for a sausage sizzle which was much appreciated by our Koori sisters and brothers. Gabrielle Fogarty, Mary Raftery, Denis Quinn, Helen McDermott, Marie Milne and myself provided the food and rolled up our sleeves to prepare the meal. And finally, students from Marist Sisters Woolwich have on several occasions, gone out to Mt Druitt with Mr Andrew Dumas, raising money and interacting with the Baabayn group.

A big thanks must go to Sr Naomi Smith RSJ, who has guided and nurtured this group. It is now a fully independent **Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation**. (www.baabayn.org.au)

Mary Mother of God

Year 4 Students at St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Kiama, were given the following Religious Literacy Assessment.

I am called to listen and respond to God in my life. Throughout her life, Mary, Mother of God, showed us how to listen, reflect and trust in God.

Demonstrate your knowledge of Mary's life and how the Church honours Mary. Show your understanding of ways in which you, like the saints, can listen and respond to God in your life

I was invited by one of the mums as she knew I was a Marist. And what a wonderful, exciting and engaging display of students' efforts it was! All were keen to "show and tell" what they understood of Mary and how they could identify with her. The computer-generated

tasks were excellent – far beyond my



capabilities on the computer.

The following are just some of the images I captured and hopefully they also capture some of the enthusiasm of the students.

Mary is alive and well in our Catholic schools if this example is anything to go by.

Congratulations students, teachers and parents!



Marist Laity.....St Gabriel's Parish Bexley



On 10th November, the Bexley group of lay Marists celebrated their end-of-year Mass with Fr Paul Mahony, sm as chief celebrant. It was a special event for two reasons.

Firstly, Five new members were officially welcomed into Marist Laity Australia: Tina & Maria Dal Mas, Carmen Borg, Jessie Balk & Pauline Low. They each received the Marist medal, a candle and certificate presented by Maria Baden and we then all joined in a prayer of Dedication to Mary.

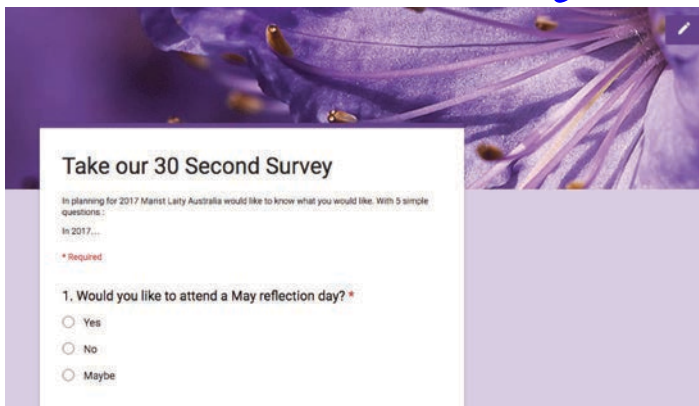
Secondly, Maxine King took it upon herself to hand-paint the MLA symbol – "a tree with several branches" as a bi-centennial gift for the National Committee. Maxine has been a member of the Bexley group since its inception. Her beautiful hand painted famed image will be used at our reflection days and other MLA events. **Thank you Maxine!**

The Bexley group has been guided and nurtured by Barbara Ashwell since September 2005. Several women in this group are referred to as "**Gabbie's Angels**" as they have produced thousands of items of clothing for children in developing countries. So it was fitting as we sang the words of Marist Fr. Chris Skinner's song:

**Mary Mother of the Poor, champion of Justice
Single mother, refugee, you fully understand.
Mary bearer of the Son, Jesus, Saviour of the broken
Virgin daughter, chosen one, we all honou**



Please take our 30 second survey



In planning for 2017 Marist Laity Australia would like to know what you would like. With 5 simple questions :

In 2017...

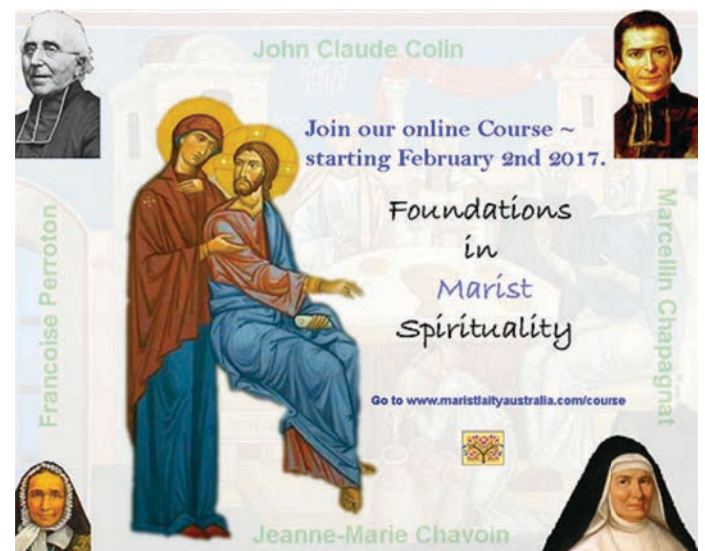
1. Would you like to attend a May reflection day? **YES/NO**
2. Would you like to attend a Retreat? **YES/NO**
3. Would you like to attend an immersion to the Philippines? **YES/NO**
4. Would you like to join a Lay Group? **YES/NO**
5. Do you seek further formation as a lay person? **YES/NO**

Please click here to complete the survey....
<http://www.tinyurl.com/mla-2017>

Online Course ~ Foundations of Marist Spirituality

Marist Laity Australia is running an online course in February 2017 entitled "foundations in Marist Spirituality". Would you like to join? The course focuses on 4 Marist founders (John Claude Colin, Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, Francoise Perroton and Marcellin Champagnat) for 6 weeks. Each week participants will be required to watch 4 short videos and respond by answering a question via an online discussion.

For more information go to
<http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/course/>



Please pray for....

Please pray for the sick in our family:

Maddi Delaney (15 year old daughter of Renee a teacher at Marist Sisters Woolwich)
Tony Warren (Lay Marist from Gladstone)