

Marist Fathers Australian Province Provincial Circular



*No 1
Feb 2022*

Confreres,

We have come to the first anniversary of the 2021 Provincial chapter. While a number of its recommendations have already been approved by the Superior General, we still await the Vatican's judgement on our proposals for changes in governance. However, this holdup has not prevented our proceeding with some of the other recommendations.

With regard to the future of Villa Maria Monastery and the surrounding buildings and grounds, the Chapter acknowledged that:

- a) The "Hunters Hill Complex", for the purpose of this framework for action, includes land and buildings currently held by several entities, including Australia Province, Oceania Province, and the Holy Name of Mary Parish (Archdiocese).
- b) The Hunters Hill Complex embodies a long, rich history of both Marist heritage and charism, and is a focal point for that heritage.
- c) Values that are important when considering the future of the Hunters Hill complex include:

- i) Consistency with Marist heritage and charism.
- ii) The place being a spiritual heart for the local, and wider Marist and Catholic community.

- iii) Environmental values and sustainability.

d) There are multiple complexities about the site and multiple regulatory frameworks applying to parts of the site, including heritage, foreshore protection and local Council regulations.

e) The Australian Province will maintain community residence on the Hunters Hill Complex for the longer term.

f) The Australian Province will maintain the Holy Name of Mary Parish ministry for the medium to long term.

g) Having clarity in relation to the future of the Villa Maria sections of the property is a medium-term priority.

Consequently, the Chapter made the following decision to adopt the following framework for action:

- That a long-term strategic plan for the Hunters Hill Complex (initially to 2035), consistent with site's spiritual heritage, and in accord

with environmental values and a commitment to sustainability, be in place by December 2024.

- That the Province Administration take whatever necessary decisions are appropriate, consistent with the governance restructure and associated statutes, and the decisions of this Chapter, should decisions regarding the Hunters Hill Complex need to be made along the way.

With the advice of my council, I have established a committee to put into effect the above decisions: Peter McMurrich, Michael Mullins, Garry Reynolds, Paul Sullivan and Richard Korkor, a parishioner of Hunters Hill and member of the Provincial Finance Committee. The committee had its first meeting on February 16, to begin defining tasks and parameters for their future important work for the province. The meeting was facilitated by Paul Bullen, who had already facilitated last year's chapter.

Tony.



I invite communities and individuals to reflect on the following extracts from Pope Francis's homily to *members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on the Feast of the Lord's Presentation, 2 Feb 2022*.

Two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, await in the Temple the fulfilment of the promise that God made to his people: the coming of the Messiah. Yet theirs is no passive expectation, it is full of movement. Let us look at what Simeon does. First, *he is moved* by the Spirit; then *he sees* salvation in the Child Jesus and finally *he takes him* into his arms (cf. Lk 2:26-28) . . .

First, *what moves us?* Simeon goes to the Temple, "moved by the spirit" (v. 27). The Holy Spirit is the protagonist in this scene. He makes Simeon's heart burn with desire for God. He keeps expectation alive in his heart: He impels him to go to the Temple and he enables his eyes to recognize the Messiah, even in the guise of a poor little baby. That is what the Holy Spirit does: he enables us to discern God's presence and activity not in great things, in outward appearances or shows of force, but in littleness and vulnerability. . .

We can also ask, who mostly moves us? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of this world? This a question that everyone, consecrated persons in particular, needs to ask. The Spirit moves us to see God in the littleness and vulnerability of a baby, yet we at times risk seeing our consecration only in terms of results, goals and success: we look for influence, for visibility, for numbers . . . The Spirit, on the other hand, asks us to cultivate daily fidelity and to be attentive to the little things entrusted to our care. . .

A second question: *What do our eyes see?* Simeon, moved by the Spirit, sees and recognizes Christ. . . This is the great miracle of faith: it opens eyes, transforms gazes, changes perspectives. As we know from Jesus' many encounters in the Gospel, faith is born of the compassionate gaze with which God looks upon us, softening the

hardness of our hearts, healing our wounds and giving us new eyes to look at ourselves and at our world. New ways to see ourselves, others and all the situations that we experience, even those that are most painful.

The eyes of the elderly Simeon, albeit dimmed by the years, see the Lord. They see salvation. What about us? Each of us can ask: what do our eyes see? What is our vision of consecrated life? Are our eyes only turned inward, yearning for something that no longer exists, or are we capable of a farsighted gaze of faith, one that looks both within and beyond. To have the wisdom to *look at things* – this is the gift of the Spirit – to look at things well, to see them in perspective, to grasp reality . . .



The Lord never fails to give us signs that invite us to cultivate *a renewed vision* of consecrated life. We need to do this, but in the light of the Holy Spirit and docile to his movements. We cannot pretend not to see these signs and go on as usual, doing the same old things, drifting back through inertia to the forms of the past, paralyzed by fear of change. . . Nowadays the temptation to go back, for security, out of fear, in order to preserve the faith or the charism of the founder... is a temptation. The temptation to go back and preserve "traditions" with rigidity. Let's get this into our head: rigidity is a perversion, and beneath every form of rigidity there are grave problems . . . Let us open our eyes: the Spirit is inviting us amid our crises – and crises there are, our decreasing numbers and our diminishing forces, to renew our lives and our communities. And how do we do this? He will show us the way. Let us open our hearts, with courage and

without fear. Let us look at Simeon and Anna: although they were advanced in years, they did not spend their days mourning a past that never comes back, but instead embraced the future opening up before them. Brothers and sisters, let us not waste today by looking back at yesterday, or dreaming of a tomorrow that will never come; instead, let us place ourselves before the Lord in adoration and ask for eyes to see goodness and to discern the ways of God.

Finally, a third question: *what do we take into our own arms?* God has placed his Son in our arms, because embracing Jesus is the essential thing, the very heart of faith. Sometimes we risk losing our bearings, getting caught up in a thousand different things, obsessing about minor issues or plunging into new projects, yet the heart of everything is Christ . . .

When Simeon took Jesus into his arms, he spoke words of blessing, praise and wonder. And we, after so many years of consecrated life, have we lost the ability to be amazed? Do we still have this capacity? Let us examine ourselves on this. . . Ask the grace of amazement, amazement before the wonders that God is working in us, hidden, like those in the temple, when Simeon and Anna encountered Jesus. If consecrated men and women lack words that bless God and other people, if they lack joy, if their enthusiasm fails, if their fraternal life is only a chore, if amazement is lacking, that is not the fault of someone or something else. The real reason is that our arms no longer embrace Jesus. And when the arms of a consecrated man or woman do not embrace Jesus, they embrace a vacuum which they try to fill with other things, but it remains a vacuum. To take Jesus into our arms: this is the sign, the journey, the recipe for renewal. When we fail to take Jesus into our arms, our hearts fall prey to bitterness. . . If we embrace Christ with open arms, we will also embrace others with trust and humility. Then conflicts will not escalate, disagreements will not divide, and the temptation to domineer and to offend the dignity of others will be overcome. So let us open our arms to Christ and to all our brothers and sisters. For that is where Jesus is.

Francis

Provincial Diary

Mar 1

Provincial Finance Committee

Mar 7-11

Visitation of Montbel/Maryvale community.

Mar 8

Health and Aged Care Committee

Mar 15

Provincial Council

Mar 17

Professional Standards and Safeguarding Panel

Mar 18

Villa Maria Complex Committee

Mar 30-31

Visitation of St Patrick's community

Apr 8

Marist Brothers Sesquicentenary Celebration of arrival in Australia

Apr 22

Villa Maria Complex Committee

Apr 27

CLOC

Apr 28-30

Visitation of Brisbane confreres

CLOC: February

The Zoom meeting discussed a possible Colinian Renewal at La Neyliere in 2023, Marist education, regional CLOC meetings for April.

Provincial Council

At its February meeting the Council treated the following:

- Quarterly report from Marist Mission Centre
- Updating on progress of our governance proposals in Rome
- Current Professional Standards matters.
- Patrimony matters.
- Villa Maria Complex Committee
- Maryvale/Montbel
- Ministry report of Ron Nissen
- 2022 Financials

Appointments

Kevin Head appointed assistant parish priest for St Patrick's. Initially, Kevin will be supplying for six months while Michael Whelan is on 'sabbatical' leave. Kevin comes from the New Zealand Province.

He has been the editor of the Marist Messenger and had previously ministered in schools in New Zealand and Samoa, then in Maori pastoral care and parish ministry, 5 years in the Cook Islands, parish work in parishes in NZ, and in the youth and family services agency, Challenge 2000, in Wellington.



Calendar

Apr 8 – Sesquicentenary of the arrival of the Marist Brothers in Australia, establishing their first school St Patrick's, at Church Hill.

Easter Break

The **Provincial Office** will be closed for Easter for the period Apr 14-18.

Information

Marist Vocation Year

First of all, the Vocations Year is intended to encourage Marists to reflect on the mystery of our own vocation and our call to personal holiness.

The aim is also to find and share creative forms of vocational ministry

in order to inspire young people in discernment of their own vocation.

Seventy-five Marists gathered by Zoom on Jan 28/29 for an online seminar on vocations. Presentations focused on the Marist Vocation Year's three objectives, **'to enrich, encourage and assist'**.

The next seminar is planned for Apr 29.

During this special year focused on our Marist vocation, a series of reflection sheets has been prepared. The one for February is on the theme of Nazareth and Marist spirituality: <https://bit.ly/mvy3EN>

Colinian Renewal Program 2023

The General Administration is hoping to run a Colinian Renewal Program in 2023 at La Neylière.

It is expected to take place for six months in the first half of the year.

Should you be interested would you please inform the Provincial of your interest by Monday, Feb 28.

Synodal Journey

The Synodal Journey in preparation for the **XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 2023**, was officially launched by Pope Francis on Oct 10.

CICLSAL, the 'Congregation for Consecrated Life etc.', has issued an invitation for religious to involve themselves in the synodal process.

In response to CICLSAL's request for religious involvement, CRA had devised a simple, flexible process for inviting religious in Australia, individuals and communities, to participate in the synodal journey.

Recently, CICLSAL changed the timing and manner of receiving submissions. Religious are now being asked to send



submissions in the first place to their diocese by **13 March**.

It may also be sent directly to CICLSAL (by 30 June). CRA will also continue to receive submissions (to end of February) and create a response to send to CICLSAL and the ACBC See CRA webpage:

www.catholicreligious.org.au/synodal-journey

Plenary Council

The celebration of the Plenary Council began with the commencement of the First Assembly on Sunday Oct 3, 2021. Over the following week, nearly 280 members from across Australia gathered online with observers and theological advisors, in plenary sessions and in small groups.

In December the fruits of the Assembly's discernment were published. (Cf. *Plenary Council First Assembly Proposals from Small Groups and Individual Members* - Plenary Council website – 110 pages!).

It draws together the proposals that emerged from the small groups that met each day, along with formal proposals submitted by individual members.

As much as possible, the report retains the "original voice of those



who spoke, without attempts to produce a harmonised or homogenous account".

In his Introduction the President of the Council, Archbishop Timothy Costello writes:

'Plenary Council members will have an opportunity to engage with these proposals at "coffee conversations" during December. I encourage the wider Catholic community to consider these proposals as a significant indication of our local context when participating in the local consultation currently underway for the 2023 Synod "For a Synodal Church: Communion,

Participation and Mission", which has the fundamental question: How is the "journeying together" to announce the Gospel happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"? (visit www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch)

'Further reflection on these proposals is already underway, to identify thematic focuses for propositions that might be developed for consideration by the Second Assembly in July 2022. This work will be coordinated by the Council's Drafting Committee, drawing on a range of theologians and other contributors.

'As initial drafts of propositions become available, they will be shared with Members, Advisors and other Church and Agency leaders for ongoing discernment and feedback. In this way, the writing process will be informed and guided by the ongoing prayer, conversation and discernment of the Members and the wider people of God in Australia.

'The Australian bishops will gather for their regular biannual meeting in May and will have a particular focus on the progress in drafting propositions for the Plenary Council. Following this meeting, the Drafting Committee will work towards a final version of the propositions. These propositions will form the agenda for the Second Assembly, which is expected to be published in June, so that Members have an opportunity to reflect on the various documents and to prepare responses that can be presented at the Second Assembly, where there will be further discussion and spiritual conversation, leading to the final discernment and voting.'

Personnel

Confreres celebrating jubilees in 2022

- **70 Years**
Allan Connors, Jul 6
- **65 Years**
Louis Molloy, Dec 13
- **60 Years**
James Hargrave, Jul 7

- **50 Years**

Kevin Bates, May 20
Michael Whelan, May 18
Brian Wilson, Jun 18

Publications

The following have been or will soon be distributed:

- Index
Societatis
Mariae 2022
- 2022 Directory
for Australia
and New
Zealand



Deaths

Fr Jim Esler, who died on Dec 18, 2021.

'For all his academic prowess there was something even more remarkable



about Jim and that was his gift for engaging with others at a deeply human level. Having a conversation with Jim you knew that you had his full and complete attention: at that moment you were the only person in the world who mattered. It was an encounter simple, respectful and authentic.

It was this gift which enabled Jim to be so pastorally effective in his ministry. There was always that genuine encouragement which enabled one to dig deep and to go the extra mile when required.

This flowed over to his students who never failed to respond to his quick wit and charm with real enthusiasm.'
(From the homily of Michael Mullins)

~

Br Stuart Cuttance (New Zealand) who died on Dec 24, 2021.

RD. Robin Leamy (New Zealand/Oceania) who died on Jan 01, 2022

Holiday accommodation

Guidelines for booking serviced accommodation:

- The cost of renting the apartment needs to be consistent with the values of our Marist religious life.
- Confreres planning their holidays will contact the provincial administration nominating the intended holiday location and be assisted in finding suitable accommodation, arranging the booking and paying for the accommodation.
- Provincial financed accommodation covers the period of annual leave, i.e. a maximum of four weeks. These may be taken together or in shorter periods according to need.
- Living expenses, holiday allowance and travel are normally provided by the individual's community or himself.
- Family members are not included under this arrangement – unless a cost sharing arrangement is negotiated prior to the booking.
- Road trips: arrangements for covering the cost of accommodation on a road trip may be negotiated with the administration.

More news...

... of the Australian Province and the wider Society may be found on the provincial website <https://maristfathers.org.au>

Members' Page

This contains current and past issues of the Provincial Circular, SM Bulletin and other Marist newsletters and documents. Access:

Username: sm | Password: colin



Thanks to Ben McKenna's dedicated work, the weekly Blogs for the province's JPIC page have started off strongly with Monday postings on a variety of social and environmental issues.

Pictured above: Some of the images accompanying January and February Blogs.

Below: Several members of the province JPIC Committee participated in the international Zoom session examining *Laudato Si* goals in February.



JPICC Corner

Provincial Committee for
Justice, Peace and
Integrity of Creation



Clockwise from top: Marist General Councils gather in Rome | **John Larsen** farewells **Sr Vivienne Goldstein SM** | **John Larsen, Ben McKenna, Juan-Carlos Pina** at St Peter's | **John Hopkinson** and **Gerard Hall** at Paddington | General Council at Orvieto | International novitiate community arriving in Tuscany / **Paddy O'Hare** with **David Sanchez** (novice master) and **Sione Hamala** (socius)





Clockwise from top left: Jim Esler's funeral | Bob Barber's first anniversary | Lou Molloy and Gerard Hall at Ballina | Pio Fong and friends celebrating Kevin and Trish McGrory's 60th wedding anniversary at Herston | Plumber Luke Hannan at Villa Maria, underground pipe issues, before and after | Charlie Randle cycling for MMC / with Ron Nissen in Brisbane | Kevin Medilo and Kevin Redmond with Bishop Bishop Vincent Long at Marayong.

