



From the District Superior

Confreres,

Although today, even the youngest of us, is some distance away from our formation, every day we can be open to the forming, reforming grace of the Spirit. Lent can be an opportunity to be docile to the Spirit who continues our ongoing formation in the context of our present circumstances as religious and priests.

Following are extracts from an address by Pope Francis to participants at the International Conference for the Ongoing Formation of Priests (8 February 2024).

‘Let yourselves be inspired by the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to Timothy that has provided the theme for your Conference: “Fan into flame the gift of God that you possess” (2 Tim 1:6). Revive that gift, rediscover that anointing, rekindle that flame, so that your zeal for the apostolic ministry will not fade.

‘How can we fan into flame the gift that we have received? Let me point out three paths to take in the process of priestly formation: the joy of the Gospel, a sense of being part of God’s people, and service as “generative”.

‘Firstly, the joy of the Gospel. At the heart of the Christian life is the gift of friendship with the Lord, which sets us free from the dreariness of individualism and the risk of a life without meaning, without love and without hope. ‘The joy of the Gospel, the Good News that accompanies us, is precisely this: God loves us with a tender and merciful love.

‘We in turn are called to make this joyful proclamation resound throughout the world by the witness of our lives, so that all may discover the beauty of the saving love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 36). Let us keep in mind the words of Saint Paul VI: we need to be witnesses before being teachers (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41), witnesses to the love of God, the only thing that truly matters. When someone is unable to be a witness, it is truly sad.

‘Only if we are and remain disciples can we become ministers of God and missionaries of his Kingdom. Only by welcoming and preserving the joy of the Gospel, can we bring this joy to others. . . let us remember that we are always disciples and wayfarers, and that this is the most beautiful thing that has ever happened to us, thanks to God’s grace!

‘Grace, however, always supposes nature, and this calls for an integral human formation. Indeed, being disciples of the

Lord is not about exterior religiosity but about a style of life, and this calls for the cultivation of our human qualities. . . We need priests who are fully human, who play with children and look after the elderly, are capable of healthy relationships . . . so that the consolation of the Gospel may reach the people of God through their humanity transformed by the spirit of Jesus. Let us never forget the humanizing power of the Gospel! Conversely, a bitter priest, a priest who has bitterness in his heart is an “old bachelor”.

‘A second path involves the cultivation of a sense of being part of God’s people. We can only be missionary disciples all together. We can carry out our priestly ministry well only if we are fully part of the priestly people, from which we ourselves have come.

‘Realizing that we are part of a people – never feeling separated from the journey of the holy faithful people of God – preserves us, sustains us in our efforts, accompanies us in our pastoral concerns and keeps us safe from the risk of growing detached from reality and feeling all-powerful. Let us be attentive to this, because it is also the root of every form of abuse. . .

‘Finally, a third path to take is that of service as “generative”. Service is the identity card of Christ’s ministers. The Master showed this by his entire life, and particularly at the Last Supper, when he washed the feet of the disciples.

‘Seen in this light, formation as service is not simply the transmission of a body of teachings, but also the art of concentrating on others, bringing out all their beauty and all the good that they carry within, shedding light on their gifts but also on their shadows, their wounds and their desires. . . ‘

A peaceful Lent and joyful Easter,
Tony

District Superior’s Diary

Mar 5

District Finance Committee

Mar 19

District Council

Apr 16

District Council

Apr 29

Departs Sydney for ARC meeting, Rome

District Council

At its February meeting the Council treated the following:

- The informal visit of the Superior General to the District Superior and MMC
- Financial Risk Management Planning
- Villa Maria Complex Strategic Plan
- Professional Standards matters
- Revision of Marist Mission Centre structure
- District Assembly 2024
- Received reports on the Internet & Publications and the Spreading the Fama of the Founder ministries conducted by Fr Ron Nissen.

Publications

Tom Ryan: 'One Hundred Years of Catholic Moral Theology: Continuities and Changes', *The Australasian Catholic Record* 100:4 (2023): 401-415.

Calendar

Mar 28 – Apr 1

Office closed for the Easter break

Apr 21-28

Novena for Vocations

Deaths

Fr Kevin Bates

who died on Jan 31, 2024.

From the Words of Remembrance of Kevin's brother, Michael, given at Kevin's Funeral Mass:

'I'd like to talk briefly about Kevin's Ministry, even though others here are much more capable of detailing that than I possibly could. . .

'Firstly his love for children, and their love for him. There are so many photos around of Kevin in schools, teaching, running student (and adult) retreats all over Australia, and with our family, his 15 nieces and nephews, his 24 and 3/4 great nieces and nephews, and heaps of cousins. It must have been especially difficult during the recent abuse crisis that afflicted our church, but Kev stood firm. His love for children was immense and proper, and he showed his care for them by trusting them and respecting them, and in turn, they adored him. I know this because of the way our own children responded to him. . .

'Throughout his ministry he developed some wonderful friendships with people from all walks of life. He counted Doctors, Nurses, Accountants and Finance wizards, Teachers, various Tradesmen as his very best friends. I think he may have even formed friendships with Lawyers, he definitely did with Politicians. It didn't matter to Kev; you were his special friend. . .

'I will finish by talking about his communities. As just mentioned, wherever he went he made new friends, and groups of friends. If a community appeared strong and



vibrant, he enjoyed it for a few moments and moved on. There wasn't much there for him to do.

It was in communities that were fractured or damaged that he thrived. Back in the day, a favourite buzz word in industry was to be a Change Agent.

I didn't see Kev as a Change Agent, because everything he tackled was new. He nurtured, he prodded and provoked, he gave people responsibility and confidence, he built faith and trust in others, and showed them that they in turn could have faith and trust in him.

He believed in people, and he allowed, encouraged communities to thrive. There is probably no better example of that than in your own parish here."

Fr Lawrie Whiting (NZ)

who died on Feb 12, 2024.

Lawrie began the many years he spent in Australia, 1978-2022, ministering in our parishes of Burnie, St John's Wood/The Gap, and Claremont (Tas). However, for most of time, while remaining a member of the NZ Province he made himself available for supply work in Queensland, Western Australia and NSW.

He retired to Brisbane in 2011. Lawrie kept in contact with the confreres in Brisbane, who gave their Marist confrere a warm welcome and support as his health deteriorated.

In 2023 the New Zealand Province persuaded him to return home. They found a place for him to live and he was amazed how well his Kiwi confreres were welcoming to him. Tim Duckworth recently wrote of Lawrie:

'Lawrie could be difficult and even irascible. He was argumentative. He wrote more epistles than St Paul and he had an opinion that was often contrary to the majority.'

'I loved Phil Cody's eulogy reminiscence of Lawrie at a major planning and review meeting of those involved in Māori Mission. Lawrie was appointed secretary. After day one Lawrie was replaced, largely because he had recorded what others should have said more than what they did say. Lawrie could be difficult! But he was one of us.'

Fr Tom O'Connor (NZ) who died on Dec 17 2023.

D. Pio Ravu (Oceania/ Fiji) who died on Dec 18, 2023.

Fr John Weir (NZ) who died on Dec 27, 2023.

Br Columban Hagen (Europe/Deutschland) who died on Jan 17, 2024.

A POST-SCRIPT from NZ's *Friday Flash*.

Fr Brian Prendeville received this message when he asked *Universalis* why some of the titles of the Prayer of the Church hours are in English and two are in Latin:

'... it is a question of what words are considered to be English. *Vespers* does seem to be a comprehensible English word, so that calling it 'Evening Prayer' sounds just a little bit condescending. On the other hand, *Lauds* is where you play cricket in Middlesex, *Terce* is what you are when you aren't being long-winded, *Sext* is something adolescents do on their phones, *None* is nothing at all and *Compline* is what whingers like doing.' But you're right that it's a delicate linguistic balance, and there is no perfect solution!

Fr Kevin Bates' Requiem Liturgy at Holy Name of Mary church, Feb 06, featured family participation, overflows crowds and a guard of honour of children and mourners...



JPICC Corner

District Committee for Justice,
Peace and Integrity of Creation

*Prelude to a
forthcoming Blog
article by **Jim Carty**...*

Lest we forget

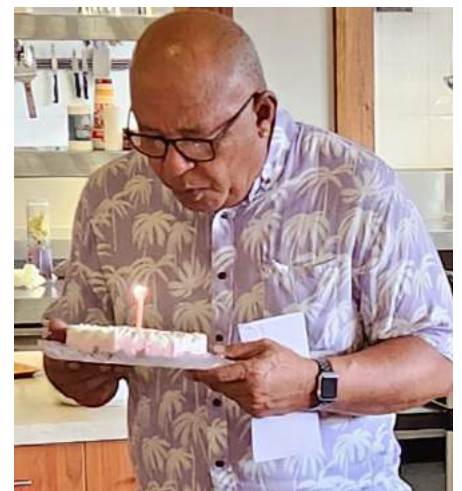
In the U.S. Thanksgiving celebration in 1968 marked fifty years since the American military embarked on the biggest bombing campaign in history in its war with North Vietnam, decimating the small south-east Asian country of Laos by dropping more than two million tonnes of bombs on it at the height of the War.

‘They “fell like rain” on the supply lines in Laos, a network of paths and tracks known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and most of the east of the country.

‘This hugely redoubled effort to shut down the trail saw a planeload of bombs dropped on Laos every eight minutes, 24 hours a day, for nine years.

‘Now, some 80 million unexploded bombs and air-dropped cluster munitions left over continue to maim and kill Laotian men, women and children. (Al Jazeera)
Half a century on, innocent lives are still being lost as the country struggles with the leftovers of the conflict. UK-based NGO focused on bomb clearance says data suggests there have been 50,000 casualties since the war ended.

Recall Princess Diana’s efforts to have mines banned especially those that looked like little toys for children to play with. Reprehensibly, nations still make them and Putin is ruthlessly using them in Ukraine. According to estimates, as much as 174,000 square kilometres have been mined, mostly in the east, making Ukraine the most mined country in the world. Apart from killing and maiming for years to come, arable land, until cleared, cannot be used for food production- (grain from the bread basket of Ukraine) prices go up and the poor especially in Africa suffer again.



Clockwise from top left: Happy Birthday, ‘Aisake Vaisama! | Paul Mahony and Bernie McFadyen with Sr Noreen Dunne SMSM. | Charlie Randle visiting Villa Maria. | Kev Head about to return to NZ. | New Year’s Marist Family gathering at Montbel.... including farewells to Paul Mahony. | MMC’s 75th anniversary logo. | Paul Glynn with niece and husband at St Pat’s. | Terry Garrett at work.





Clockwise from top right: Retreat Day at Villa Maria for Marayong team, **Kevin Medilo, Floyd Gatana** and **Kevin Redmond**. | **Gerard Hall** with **Jim Hargrave** at Ashgrove. | Guest cook, Pancake Day, Villa Maria. | Kiwi Marist, **Carl Telford**, and Marriage Encounter leadership team in Sydney for 50 years of M.E. | At Montbel, **Paul Glynn** with newly-ordained, **Fr Kenji MSC**, his mother **Nobiko** and friend, **Michi Sugimoto**. | Local confreres gather for **Tony Corcoran's** 60th profession anniversary, Feb 02. | Hunters Hill **Marist Laity** group and birthday cake for **Sr Marie Berise SM**. | **Jim Carty** and **Pius Jones** visiting **Jim Harding** on his 99th birthday.

International



Top row, from left: Latest batch of aspirants at St Peter Chanel's formation community, Davao, with formators, **Gil Casio** and **Lauro Arcede**.
| Vietnamese aspirant, **Joseph Nguyen Dinh Vu**.

Second row: Filipino novices, **Raul Angelo Bautista** and **Paterno (Jun) Bernadio**. | Myanmar aspirant, **Htun Htun Win (John)**. | 'Going Beyond the Borders' enquiry session in Davao.

Third row: Marist Family members in Davao with Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, **Archbishop Charles Brown**. | **Lionel Mechavez** with interested young men at 'Going Beyond the Borders'.

Row below: Profession ceremony on Feb 02 at 'Eden', Marist International Novitiate, Davao. | Four newly-professed with novitiate staff and Asia District members.





Clockwise from top right:
John Hopkinson
 celebrating 33 years of
 Misioneros Maristas with
 his young team and local
 bishop, then and now... and
 in the garden recently. |
 Renewal of vows, *Casa di
 Maria*. | **Tony Kennedy**
 with the community of
Casa di Maria. | 2024
 Colin calendars and novice
 master, David Sanchez,
 with novices... Michael
 Carroll featured on the
 cover at La Neylière... CdM
 students in Rome.

