



MARIST FATHERS AUSTRALIA

DISTRICT CIRCULAR

NOV
2022

From the District Superior

Confreres,

We have passed-over from Province to District. Did the earth move for you?

Our transition to a District has involved the Superior General's consultation of the membership and his appointment of me as the District Superior for a period of three years.

I appreciate the confidence shown in me by him, his council and the confreres of the District. I hope we can continue our journey together, as before, in mutual respect, support and openness.

District Council

The new District Statutes refer to the District Council as follows: (11) The District Superior will have the assistance of a District Council for the effective leadership and governance of the District. (14) Three members from the perpetually professed members of the District will be appointed to the District Council by the District Superior, following a consultation with the members of the District. He may also consult among the laity exercising administrative roles and responsibilities in the District and members of the District's committees. Other persons may be co-opted when their particular expertise/experience may be of assistance. (15) Membership of the Council will be for three years, once renewable. No one can serve for more than two consecutive terms.

Currently the council members are Kevin Bates, Gerard Hall, Paul Sullivan and Brian Wilson. Prior to the Sep 23, Paul's term had already expired but I requested that he continue on the council until the change-over; Kevin and Gerard's terms were to finish towards the end of 2023, Brian in Mar 2024. Now, in order to facilitate the transition, I have asked Kevin, Gerard and Brian to serve on the council until the expiry of their original terms. Also, I have requested Paul, as the District Bursar, to remain on the council as a non-voting member. A consultation on the appointment of two members of the Council will take place in the latter half of 2023. I am grateful Paul, Kevin, Gerard and Brian for their generous contribution to the Council.

Council of the Society

The tasks set by our *Decreta Capitularia* for the Council of

the Society are manifold. The first task is "to assist the superior general in fostering the unity of the Society while promoting its international character". CS22 fulfilled this well: there was a good spirit amongst us assisted by the warm welcome from the community and staff of Montverde. The first days were taken up with reports from the Superior General and the major superiors. It was very evident that the Society is experiencing an overall diminishment. While vocations have shown a slight increase, thanks particularly to the District of Africa, many units are faced with declining numbers of active men able to serve in the various ministries the Marist Fathers already have. Of concern is the lack of confreres able and willing to take on leadership roles, both at the unit and general level. Connected with this is the challenge faced by the GA in staffing of the international works of the Society, including formation.

Another task of CS22 was to review and evaluate the implementation of the results of the previous general chapter and their effect on the life of the units. Highlighted was the positive effect on the life and work of the units from the implementation of the recommendation emphasizing the contemplative dimension of the lives of Marists and their communities; the overall benefits of the internationalizing of formation; the successful implementation of decisions on financial matters.

A substantial part of our time was taken up with reports from the GA or arranged by it on a number of matters relevant to our present mission and significant for our future planning: formation, vocations and Marist Youth Gathering 2023, the *Omnes Gentes* communities, the Colin Cause, Lay Marist formation, Safeguarding, *Laudato Si'* projects.

The Superior General's hopes to expand the range of the *Omnes Gentes* ministry into Turkey received special attention. A final decision is still to be made following a visit by John Larsen and Juan Carlos Piña to Turkey.

The general bursar Fr John Harhager had to spend the first week of the Council in isolation thanks to Covid, however he finally was able to inform us of a significant development in the finance office with the establishment of the role of First Assistant to the Bursar General (CFO). In his report the Bursar General underscored the need for future planning, sustainability, a succession for the Bursar General beyond the reorganization that has already taken

place, allowing the Office to function with minimum input from the future Bursars General.

The General Finance Committee had met immediately prior to the Council meeting. In its report it highlighted the interconnectedness and interdependence between the units of the Society in the management and distribution of our resources both personnel and financial, in the choices made in what ministries to sustain or to withdraw from, what projects to advance and what dreams to abandon. This demands the next General Chapter addressing governance structures of the Society.

The Council also renewed the term of office of the Vicar General, John Harhager, and assistants, Ben McKenna and Juan Carlos Piña. Christian Abongbung was replaced by Setefano Mataele, Provincial of Oceania.

Many other matters were covered by CS22. It is expected that, as on previous occasions, a much fuller report on the Council of the Society 2022 will come from the Superior General in due time.

Hope that even though we experience our limitations this little society has its role to play in the vast story of salvation doing Mary's work provided we work closely in unison, listening to each other, respecting each other's local histories and challenges, while at the same time as brothers, united in the one endeavour, being open and generous in sharing our resources – personnel, finances, talents and expertise.

General Chapter

The next General Chapter has been scheduled for Sep-Oct 2025.

In preparation for the Chapter CS22 advised the Superior General to set up a committee to carry out an investigation on possible changes to the Society's governance structures as well as establishing a Preparatory Committee for the General Chapter and engaging a facilitator.

Assembly

The District's legislation provides for an Assembly of the District to be held every two years, "in order to address core issues concerning the life, mission, ministries, finance and governance of the District". As there has to be an Chapter of Election to choose our representatives at the General Chapter in 2025, the District council and I agreed that the most suitable time for an assembly would be in Sep 2024. In order to involve all in its preparation, during the first half of 2024, community and regional meetings will be arranged to review how the District is proceeding and to prepare for the General Chapter.

May the peace of Christ be our gift to each other this Christmas,

Tony.

District Superior's Diary

- **Dec 6**
District Finance Committee
- **Dec 8**
Inauguration of the Marist Brothers' *Star of the Sea* Province.

- **Dec 13**
District Council
- **Dec 15**
Professional Standards & Safeguarding Panel
- **Dec 18-31**
Christmas break

District Council

At its September and November meetings the Council treated the following:

- Report on the Council of the Society
- Report on the Marist Mission Centre
- District retreat 2023
- Villa Maria Complex
- Professional Standards matters
- Marist Culture and Charism Committee
- Superior General's Visitation
- Planning for 2023-4

Superior-General's Visitation of the District

Fr John Larsen accompanied by Fr Ben McKenna will carry out his visitation of the district from Feb 1-14. Their itinerary is:

- **Jan 31**
Arrive in Brisbane
- **Feb 01-03**
See confreres for 3 days
- **Sat 04**
Free
- **Sun 05**
Arrive in Sydney
- **Mon-Wed, 06-08**
Hunters Hill – Maryvale/Montbel.
- **Thu 09**
St Patrick's
- **Fri 10**
Admin, Parish and Villa Maria
- **Sat-Sun, 11-12**
Free
- **Mon 13**
Haberfield *et al.*
- **Tue 14**
District Council
- **Feb 15**
Leave for Rome

Personnel

At this time of year let us call to mind our brothers in nursing home care.

At *Southern Cross Aged Care*, 16 Vincentia St, Marsfield:

Tony King, this year has gradually lost his mobility and is now confined to his room and is moved from bed to chair

Deaths

Br Daniel Connell (NZ)

Died on Aug, 26

Fr Mika Paunga (Oceania/Tonga)

Died on Sep 3

Fr Ramón Monasterio (Europe/Spain)

Died on Sep 16



Fr Joseph Rooney (Europe/Ireland)

Died on Sep 19

Joe (b. 1933) was the first Marist from outside Australia to join the Japanese mission. He volunteered immediately after his ordination in 1964. Joe was a charming and compassionate man who related extremely well with people. His work in Japan,

especially amongst the marginalized of society, showed his compassion as something very practical. He established facilities to assist families with children learning disabilities of Downs Syndrome or autism. Joe was closely associated with the L'Arche movement. In 1992 after 28 years in Japan, Joe returned to Ireland where he continued his association with L'Arche. In Nov 2020 sent the following message to his brothers in Australia:

'I thank you for the province newsletter, delighted to get the news from my old province. I know more people in the Australian province than I do in my home province. My times in Japan and in Australia have been very significant in my journey. And I am very grateful. This email is proof that I am still alive. I am in Nazareth House nursing home, Dublin, since March. I had two falls in January and decided it was time for me to come to the nursing home before I became too dependent. The plan was not to wait until I was too dependent and have difficulty settling into a new residence. It has worked out very well. I am keeping very well have no aches or pains, eating and sleeping well. I am very much at home here with my new community, beyond my expectations. . . The food is excellent and the company wonderful! I am very much enjoying the contemplative stage of my life. A wonderful blessing.'

Fr Tito Muavesi (Fiji)

Died on Oct 10

Fr Michael McVerry (NZ/Oceania)

Died on Oct 21



Fr Lou Molloy

Died on Nov 9

Lou's life was a long and reflective one which drew deeply from the Scriptures and his own Marist spirituality. It was the lens through which he viewed the world. His ministry was always touched by a profound sense of compassion.

It was especially obvious in his work in education when he was Principal of St. Paul's College

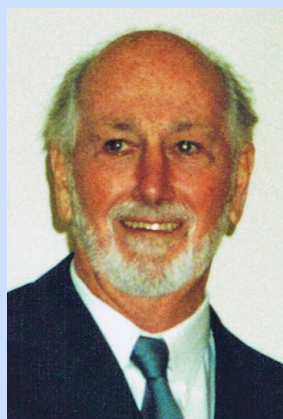
Bellambi and afterwards at St John's College Woodlawn.

Going beyond the three R's he had a remarkable talent in helping students to understand themselves and be confident in who they could become in life.

Later in his ministry this compassion would extend to his pioneering work in the AIDS ministry at the invitation of the Archbishop of Perth. It was a compassion which enabled men and women to engage with the healing processes they sorely needed in their lives

Hand in hand with this compassion went Lou's great capacity for friendship. When his formal ministry came to an end there was his informal ministry of friendship. Lou was able to reach out to many people as he himself progressed towards the final stages of ageing. He had an extraordinary empathy that could liberate people of their fears and anxiety.

From the homily of Michael Mullins



Fr Allan Connors

Died on Nov 30

means of a hoist. His hearing aids provide a challenge but when they are working he enjoys a conversation, though indications of developing dementia are becoming evident. Tony is in Palliative care. This means that the aim of medications and treatments is to keep him comfortable.

John Burke, has been confined to his bed for a number of years. Most often he can be found in good spirits and enjoys a short visit. The medication of his palliative care seem to give him a more positive outlook. He enjoys a chocolate from time to time.

Bill Ryder. His dementia becomes more and more evident. At times he is at loss for a word, but at other moments he can finish off a thought which reminds of the sharp wit of Billy. He does not complain of pain or discomfort. Bill is under palliative care in a closed ward.

Jim Harding. Life has not been easy for gregarious Jim. His move to Marsfield at the height of the pandemic when visitors were not allowed and phone link up was delayed for some months added to the pain of being uprooted from Montbel. His hearing is a problem and hearing aids

are not a great help. Jim carries on very bravely and philosophically.

As we accompany our brothers with our prayers, mail and visits, we might give thanks for the gifts they have been to the Society and all that they have contributed in many and various ways to the building of God's kingdom – God love them.

Information

Business Manager's Office hours

We have all been beneficiaries of the generous service given to us by **Andrew Biddle**. Andrew is ready to help out at the drop of a hat. In appreciative recognition of this, please ensure that (except in an emergency) you contact Andrew only between **9.00am and 4.00pm weekdays except Thursdays**. Leaving Andrew free on Thursday permits him to get into the books undisturbed. Avoid, wherever possible, calling him over the weekend.

Inauguration of the Marist Brothers' Province of the Star of the Sea.

The new Province will be inaugurated on Dec 8, 2022, during the first Chapter, that will be held in Mittagong, Australia, from Dec 8-15, 2022.

On May 10, 2021, **Br Ernesto**, Superior General, communicated to the Brothers of the Province of Australia and District of the Pacific that, from Dec 8, 2022, the two Administrative Units will be the Marist Brothers Star of the Sea Province. The new Province will be formed by ten countries, with all Marist presence in the Oceania continent.

St Patrick's

In Jan 2021, the Provincial Chapter made the decision to relinquish the entrustment of the Parish of St Patrick's. We decided that five more years – 2021-2025 – would be manageable.

The Provincial, Tony Corcoran, met with Archbishop Fisher to inform him of our decision soon after that. The Archbishop announced publicly at a Mass at St Patrick's on Sun, Aug 21, 2022, that the Marists would be relinquishing the entrustment of the parish on Dec 31, 2025.

The announcement gave us all – Marists and all other stakeholders – three and a half years to engage as well as possible in the process of transition to a new situation at St Patrick's.

The Parish Priest, **Michael Whelan**, established a Process Group to help guide us all through the transition: **Paul Bullen**, **Sr Therese Carroll RSJ**, **Br Ian Cribb SJ** and **Fr Gerry Gleeson VG**.

The people were invited to attend any one of four forums, facilitated by members of the Process Group. The purpose of those forums was threefold. Firstly, to give people an opportunity to express their feelings about the decision; secondly to clarify any details they might want clarified; thirdly to begin opening ourselves to a new vision, a "new way of being St Patrick's". A total of about 40 people attended the four forums in the crypt at St Patrick's.

The responses of the people attending the forums have, at



Christmas Greetings

All at the District Office send you our warmest Christmas greetings and pray that the Prince of Peace will bestow on you his many blessings for the coming festival and the new year.

The District Office will be **closed** for the Christmas period from **Fri, Dec 23, at 4pm until Tue, Jan 03 at 9.00am**.

times, been quite moving. For example: "There is a spirit at St Patrick's. I can't put it into words. But it is real."

A special forum was set up for the people at St Brigid's. Fifteen parishioners attended. The Archbishop has let it be known to us that he would like the Marists to close St Brigid's before Dec 31, 2025. This caused some distress with the St Brigid's community. Given that it is the oldest place of Catholic worship in Australia, it is deeply symbolic. Paul Bullen is working on a brief survey to involve as many as possible in the process. He will then develop a report – including the views of the St Brigid's people – and submit that to the Archbishop early 2023.

One of the major themes to emerge in the process so far is that St Patrick's cannot be reduced to functions – eg Reconciliation, Masses etc. It is ministry in a special kind of way. It is a culture and a spirit.

Villa Maria Complex Committee.

Town Planner, GAT & Associates have been engaged in a review of relevant planning controls for the site, including broader strategic plans and statutory controls and meeting with HH Council authorities.

They will present the result of their preliminary findings and their advice on the development options to the Committee on Wed, Dec 15.

With this information the next step will be to engage with various interested parties as we seek out the best way to move forward and who best to walk with on the journey.

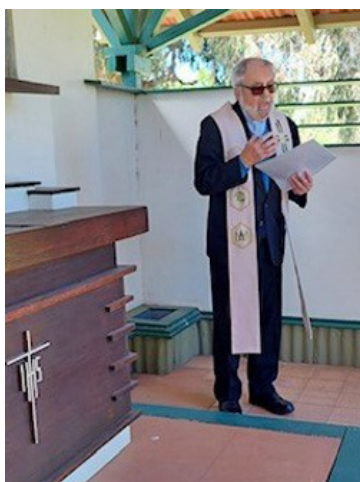
JPICC Corner

District Committee for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



The Committee has met with Marist Family members by Zoom several times throughout 2022 and in person at an end-of-year luncheon at Silverwater on Nov 05.

Focus for 2023 will continue with practical ways of implementing *Laudato Si* goals in our communities and in Pacific regions and further developing our engagement with Marist Laity.



*Clockwise from top left: **Tony Corcoran** speaking at the Sep 23 dinner for the transition from Province to District and for jubilarians. | Jubilarian, **Kevin Bates**, responding. | **Paul Glynn** being interviewed for a documentary on Marists in Japan. | Oct 29 celebrations for Brisbane Marists and associates at the home of **Kevin & Trish McGrory**. | **Marist Charism & Culture** groups in Brisbane... | ... and Sydney. | Brazilian visiting chefs at Montbel. | **Jim Carty** blessing the reconstructed Changi chapel at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. | **Tony Corcoran** en route to CS22.*



Above, clockwise from top left: **John Larsen** speaks by video to Sydney Marists during Nov 15 Colin anniversary celebration at Villa Maria. | At the Marayong parish centre, **Floyd Gatana**, **Kevin Medilo** and **Kevin Redmond**. | **Pius Jones** and **Gerard Hall** with **Lou Molloy** some weeks before Lou's death. | **Paul Glynn** with **Sr Clare Francis SM**, celebrating her 100th birthday. Below (International): **John Hopkinson** and **Misioneros Maristas** co-founders, **Xavier** and **Gilberto**, during 32nd anniversary celebrations in Bolivia. | **Paddy O'Hare**, eulogist at **Joe Rooney's** funeral Mass, Dublin. | South America District's new leadership team: **Leandro Martins**, **Miguel Contreras** (District Superior), **Renivaldo de Souza** and **Arnaldo da Silva**. | General Council after CS22 elections for Assistants: **Juan-Carlos Piña**, **Ben McKenna**, **John Larsen**, **John Harhager** and **Setefano Mataele**. | **CS22 members** at Mass at St Peter's.

