

Marist Fathers Australian Province Provincial Circular

No 6 - Dec 2021



From the Provincial

Confreres,

As I enter my second term as your provincial, I thank you for your vote of confidence and I hope and pray that I will have the continuing energy to continue in my role. I trust that you will continue to offer me the fraternal support that I have experienced these last three years. Please continue to pray for me.

In my first circular message to you I expressed my hope that I would be able to assist in the pursuit of the province's mission considering our diminishment in personnel and resources: doing Mary's Work, living and bearing the Good News to the best of our abilities and with the grace of the Spirit.

The province had set me and all of us a task: to initiate a process for new governance structures, to advance the care of the aged and infirm, to care for the corporal and spiritual well-being of my confreres, to oversee the future directions of our mission and ministries and to connect and unite the members of the province. I appreciate the contribution that so many have made in addressing these matters, thank you all.

The central event in the past three years has been our twice-postponed Chapter together with the assemblies

held in its preparation. It fulfilled the mandate given to it by the 2018 Chapter to finalise a transition to a new form of governance for the province meeting our present circumstances of diminishment, ageing and constrained leadership potential.

A proposal for a change in governance structures and associate statutes were presented for approval to Rome, directions were given for the future of our prioritised ministries and the Villa Maria properties. Also, a policy on future vocations was set and the establishment of a Health and Aged Care Committee was adopted.

We still await a response from the Superior General on the governance submission. Only in the last few days we have received the good news that the relevant Vatican Congregation (for Religious) is engaged in drawing up a response to guide the GA in what it can or cannot approve of our "unusual" proposals. We wait expectantly.

So, the Chapter's work is not yet finished. The resurgence of COVID and the slow response from the Congregation of Religious to some of our unusual recommendations has curtailed our having community meetings on the Chapter's outcomes and their implementations.

Above all, the prime task of a provincial is to "strengthen the bonds of unity within the province" (Const 206). I hope that I have done this to some extent (COVID restrictions notwithstanding), or, at least, that I haven't been the cause of the opposite happening. Yet, connecting and uniting remains a task for all of us, by our giving our attention to each other; to give full attention requires that we put aside our prejudices, holding on to past hurts, rather being open to discover each other anew.

As we come to the end of the year, it is good to give thanks for all the blessings we have received, the graces we have been given, particularly those gifts we receive from our confreres and those people we live and work with. Sometimes those gifts may have come in unattractive wrappings. What appeared and felt like a suffering, a set-back, may have been a grace. We are the beneficiaries of the fidelity, generosity and dedication of our confreres, past and present, of colleagues and those we have served, for all let us give thanks, they have all been (and remain) expressions of the love of God for us.

At this time of grace, I wish to thank each and every member of the province for your participation in the life and mission of our little Society, doing Mary's work in this part of God's vineyard. May the peace and joy of Christmas be yours in abundance.

Tony.



A reflection for Advent – On the Servant of Yahweh.

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (*John 3:30*).

This attitude (of the servant) is decidedly countercultural in a period in which self-assertion is valued. The willingness to step back and to make room for others is not always regarded as a precious disposition, but when it comes to cooperating with God, it is unqualifiedly essential.

It is challenging to allow God to act through us, it is even more challenging to allow God to remain inactive – to accept that Providence may judge it wiser to defer the fruition of our labour. Because of separation in space or time, we may not live to see the outcome of our investment. Here the principle is, “One sows, Another reaps” (*John 4:37*). This rule is true regarding missionary activity; it is also true in the life of prayer. We have the word of Jesus that our prayer will certainly yield results, but more often than not the results we envisaged, at the time for which we had been hoping, do not emerge. . . The servant is expected to continue working at the assigned task even when it has begun to seem meaningless. It is not the servant who decides about the value of a particular operation, this is the master’s prerogative. The servant’s role is to be at the service of the master’s directives.

The lack of visible results may well lead God’s servant to exclaim, “I have laboured in vain and spent my strength with no result and for nothing” (*Isaiah 49:4*). Discouragement is a persistent temptation for all who give themselves to god’s service. Because there is no direct causal link between their expenditure of energy and visible outcomes, there is always a lurking suspicion that they are wasting their time. To make things worse, those around them may judge by externals and reinforce the impression of futility.

As a result, God’s servants can often find themselves without much social support in their labour. . . Survival in such circumstances is dependent on constant activation of the relationship with God. . . we need to keep open our channels of communication with God. . . When our best efforts yield no result beyond the eloquent disapproval of others, we need to set our faces like flint and place our hopes in God (*cf. Isaiah 50:7*).

Michael Casey, OCSO: *The Promise of Deliverance – Reading Second Isaiah (2021), 43-44.*



Provincial Diary

- **Jan 4**
Provincial Office opens
- **Feb 9**
CLOC meeting
- **Feb 15**
Provincial Council

CLOC: December

- The Zoom meeting was concerned with the General Administration budgets for 2022.

Provincial Council

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

- Updating on progress of our governance proposals in Rome
- Sharing of resources
- Current Professional Standards matters.
- Draft budget for 2022.
- Patrimony matters.
- Planning for 2022

Appointments

Brian Wilson: appointed Parish Priest of Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill, from Feb 1, 2022.

Kevin Bates: Kev will take up residence at Montbel after completing his 14 years of service as Hunters Hill parish priest.

Paul Pearce: Paul has taken up residence at Montbel.

Peter McMurrich: has been appointed Parish Administrator of St Patrick's while Michael Whelan is on sabbatical leave.

Calendar

Christmas Break

The **Provincial Office** will be closed for Christmas Thu, Dec 23, to Mon, Jan 3.

The **Provincial** will be out of the office from Thu, Dec 16, to Mon, Jan 3, but may be contacted on **0448 986 963** if necessary.

Marist Vocation Year

Last month the Superior General launched the Marist Vocation Year, to reflect, to pray, and to promote vocations for the Church and to the Society.

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.

The Vocation Year will involve the participation at different levels locally and globally through reflections, inputs, online seminars and workshops. The reflection for December is attached to this circular.

Information

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 has devised a simple, flexible process for inviting religious in Australia, individuals and communities, to participate in the synodal journey.

See CRA webpage:

www.catholicreligious.org.au/synodal-journey



New Leader for Australian Marist Sisters

The Marist Sisters in Australia have a new sector leader, Sr Gail Reneker SM, who began a three-year term on Dec 8.

Sr Gail takes over from Sr Catherine Lacey who has served as local leader for the past seven years.

Personnel

Our Elders

A very happy birthday to Fr Jim Esler who celebrated his 99th on Dec 3.

John Hopkinson

John is visiting Australia during December-January. His intention was to join in the Jubilee celebrations on Dec 1 and to be with his sister, Margaret, in her dying days.

He was able to celebrate his Golden Jubilee of priesthood with his confreres, but unfortunately was only minutes late from being present to Margaret at her death.

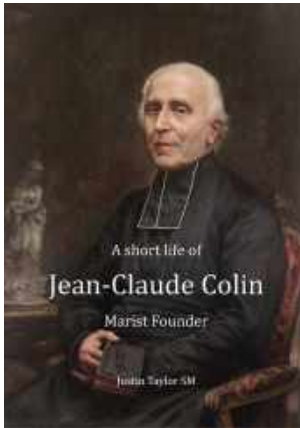
John was able to celebrate mass for her in the chapel of the funeral home with a small group of confreres and family.



Above: John Hopkinson arriving on Nov 27. Left: Srs Cath Lacey and Gail Reneker at the leadership change ceremony, Dec 4.

Publications

Copies of **A Short Life of Jean-Claude Colin** by Justin Taylor are still available from the Provincial Office.



Holiday Accommodation

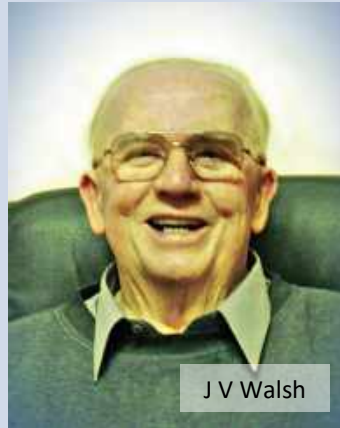
As a twelve-month trial the provincial administration will assist members of the province in obtaining holiday accommodation by way of **rental holiday apartments** at a time and place of their choosing.

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.

Deaths

- **Fr Donald Gagne** (US) who died on 23 October 2021
- **Fr Kevin Cooney** (Europe / Ireland) 2 November 2021
- **Fr John Vincent Walsh** 9 November 2021



J V Walsh

A witness to John's generous availability in spreading the good news of the love of God and doing the works of mercy, especially in the confessionals of St Pat's, comes from the letter Tony McCosker wrote to JV on the occasion of his move from St Pat's to Villa Maria in 1994:

"Let me take this opportunity to thank you for the contribution that you have made at St Patrick's over the years. St Patrick's has needed people who have been prepared to put their nose to the grindstone on a day to day basis and to take on tasks which in some senses less flamboyant but very necessary. I am sure that there are many regular

St Pat's church goes who will miss you and what you have had to offer them over the years. I have only ever heard good comments about your merciful approach in the confessional. I thank you for your commitment and the use of your obvious gifts in this area."

In his unassuming way JV, as an instrument of God's grace, brought to the people the comfort of reconciliation, mercy, and hope, with the result that, as St Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church: *the more grace is multiplied among people, the more thanksgiving there will be, to the glory of God.*

From Tony Corcoran's homily at JV's funeral mass.

- **Fr Barry John O'Connor** 9 November 2021
- **Fr John Pereira SM** 17 November 2021.



John Pereira

- **Fr Seluini 'Akau'ola** (Oceania, Tonga) 29 November 2021.

Provincial website

A reminder that 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



JPICC Corner

Provincial Committee for Justice,
Peace and Integrity of Creation



Marist JPIC
Blog



The province committee has continued its support throughout 2021 of the international Marist Blog coordinated weekly by Ben McKenna. Of the seventy items on the province's JPIC page this year, twenty-five have been written by or featured activity by province members including Kevin Bates, Gerry Arbuckle, Jim Carty, Charlie Randle, Paul Sullivan, Michael Whelan, Ron Nissen and Gerard Hall.

The committee has met several times by Zoom with members of the Marist



Clockwise from bottom left:

- Prior to returning to the Pacific, Dylan Hatobu with Stephen Truscott in Perth.
- Farewell presentation by Gerard Hall at Paddington
- Oct 29 celebration at Kevin & Trish McGrory's, Brisbane.
- Health and Aged Care meeting, including Brisbane participant on Zoom screen.
- One of the many title's in Andrew Murray's web library of Pacific & Mission History.



Clockwise from top right:

- The 'six Pauls': **Mahony, Pearce, Pidcock, Hachey, Glynn and Sullivan.**
- **Tony Kennedy** (partially obscured) with three of his students after their diaconate ordination, Rome, Nov 27.
- Jubilarians with the provincial after Mass, Dec 1: **Gavin Foster, Garry Reynolds, John Hopkinson, Ron Nissen** (David Wilson not pictured).
- **Ray Chapman and Sr Teri O'Brien** in the church of St Bonnet-le-Troncy.
- Display of Marists' publications at 'Celebrate the Word', Montbel, Nov 26.
- In Italy, **Sr Vivienne Goldstein** with the new novices during their Marist Family orientation.

