



From the District Superior

Confreres,

I come to my final “column” for the District Circular.

In my first message to you in February 2019 I proposed that leadership cannot be exercised if it is not enabled by the group. “Enable me!” I asked, “Be my support and inspiration. Be truthful and open with me.” Overall, that has been my experience. I have appreciated your fraternal cooperation, support and encouragement. Thank you.

I began my term aware of the challenges that the Marists of Australia were facing primarily because of our diminishment – a diminishment that has only become more evident over these last six years as we moved out of Gladstone, sold Currumbin and Lane Cove, closed Aquinas Academy and RPD, began the preparation for the departure from St Pat’s, and bid sad farewells to twenty-one deceased confreres. And yet, I believe over the time we have also grown – in kindness, support and mutual concern for each other.

All the while each one of us undoubtedly has experienced the consequences of our own life changes. Richard Rohr in *Falling Upward* proposes that the “Losing, failing, falling, sin, and the suffering that comes from those experiences – all of this is a necessary and even good part of the human journey.” (xx) What applies to an individual can also be applied to a group.

Rohr considers each human life in two halves: the first a time for building identity, establishing security and achieving success; the second the time for falling apart, letting go, in order to finally plumb the depths of one’s “truer” self.

Rohr invites us to see that the “falling” that comes with ageing/diminishment as growth for the individual and group: what looks like, feels like, falling apart, of failure, can be the opportunity for spiritual growth, sanctity!. This resonates with Erik Erikson’s (remember his psychosocial theory of human development?) final stage of development “Integrity” with its sense of accomplishment, wisdom and satisfaction, accepting our life in its totality, its successes and failures, with peace with ourselves, others and with God.

“It takes a foundational trust to fall or to fail – and not to fall apart,” says Rohr, “Faith alone holds you while you stand waiting and hoping and trusting.” (xxvi) Here he mirrors James Fowler’s final stage of faith development:

“Universalizing Faith”, when the disciple, after having accepted the complexities and paradoxes of faith, trusts in the truth that *all is grace*, submits to the Mystery of Love, finding peace, joy and fulfilment by transcending self-interest and seeking the well-being of the other, making the greatest commandment the one and only rule of life.

The genius of the Gospel was that it included the problem inside the solution. The falling became the standing. The stumbling became the finding. The dying became the rising. . . Many of us discover in times of such falling the Great Divine Gaze, the ultimate I/Thou relationship, which is always compassionate and embracing, or it would not be divine.

Like any other mirror, the gaze of God receives us exactly as we are, without judgement or distortion, subtraction or addition. Such perfect receiving is what transforms us. Being totally received as we truly are is what we wait and long for all our lives. All we can do is receive and return the loving gaze of God every day, and afterwards we will be internally free and deeply happy at the same time.

The One who knows all has no trouble including, accepting and forgiving all. Soon we who are gazed upon so perfectly can pass on the same accepting gaze to all others who need it.

(Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 159-60)

I welcome Tony, the Younger. I know he brings a wealth of experience of the international Society of Mary, a deep appreciation of our spirituality, and a down-to-earth wisdom about human nature. I pray that we all will give him the love and support that I, myself, have received from you these last six years.

Pray for me,

Tony

District Superior's Diary

- **Jan 21**
District Council meeting
- **Jan 31**
Installation of District Superior
- **Feb 21**
District Council meeting

District Council

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

- District Assembly 2024
- MAP Report
- MMC Quarterly Report
- Professional Standards matters
- Marist Laity Conference report.
- Parish Priest Hunters Hill
- Superior for Maryvale/Montbel
- Draft Constitution for MMC Ltd
- Future of Herston – decision on neighbouring convent
- Herston – role of Local Superior
- Herston: set up of strata plan
- Villa Maria Complex update
- Future Financial “Road-Map” update

Appointments

Michael Carroll appointed Parish Priest of Hunters Hill for three years.

Ray Chapman appointed Local Superior of Maryvale/Montbel for three years.

Pius Jones appointed to the community of Herston and Local Superior for three years.

Brian Wilson appointed to the community of Maryvale/Montbel and to assist in the ministry of St Patrick's until the end of 2025.

Delegation To General Chapter

- Fr Tony Kennedy, District Superior, *ex officio*
- Elected: Frs Gerard Hall and Kevin Redmond.
- First substitute: Fr Ray Chapman
- Second substitute: Fr Pius Jones.

As the Chapter of Election did not elect a substitute for the Major Superior, the District Council agreed to the proposal from the General Administration that, should it be necessary, that position be taken by the first substitute.

Marist Mission Centre

Changes to the Project Advisory Committee

Following the resignation of Br Allen Sherry fms as Chair of the MMC Project Advisory Committee, Sr Jenny Clarke smsm has been appointed at the new Chair of the Committee. Ms Caroline Stewart has been appointed as a new committee member.

Deaths

... of Marists in November –December

Fr John Begg who died on Nov 10, 2024

First and foremost, John was a missionary. He had the heart and outlook of a missionary all his life. He spent twenty years in his beloved Bougainville from 1970 until 1989. For the first fourteen years he ministered in three parishes, followed by six years as Regional Superior. He recalled that when writing to Bishop Leo Lemay as to what he should bring to the missions to help him in his work, the Bishop replied, ‘Just bring yourself: you are the most important item. Other things you can collect along the way!’



In his words of remembrance at John's funeral mass, Jim Carty recalled John describing his experience ministering in Bougainville- “like living in that part of the world where my father had been a soldier.” The island is very mountainous terrain; visiting villages an essential ministry, “we had to trek trails across swollen rivers, through thick rainforests up mountain-goat country” And the high humidity and malaria challenged the fittest. “It affects you terribly and took its toll.” “The physical trials were richly rewarded by the people themselves, with their warm welcome, and happiness expressed when we visited. Their hospitality was so natural and so overwhelming” Fr John recalled.

As a consequence of a heart attack Fr John returned to the Australian province in 1989. He engaged in parish ministry at Hunters Hill and Gladstone and also parish supply in south-east Qld. As a member of the Herston community in Brisbane he continued with supply ministry and retreats for the laity. When age and failing health took their toll, Fr John moved to the Villa Maria Aged Care facility in Brisbane where he spent the last weeks of his life and, after a short period of hospitalisation, he died peacefully on Nov 10, 2024. May he rest in peace.

Fr Paul Fontanier Nov 23, 2024. | **Fr Philip Gage**
Nov 25, 2024. | **Fr Mauro Filippucci** Dec 06, 2024

Death of Mrs Margaret Walker

Margaret died recently, we recognise her long and generous service to the Marist Fathers and the Marist Mission Centre. May she rest in peace.

Invitations from the GA

Invitations have been received from the Secretary General inviting indications of interest to two programs organised by the GA for 2025:

- **Marist Studies:** Jul 09—Aug 01, 2025, Rome
- **Marist Mission Workshop: Inter-Religious & Inter-Cultural Dialogue :** Nov 5-28, 2025, Ranong
Cf. Attachment

JPICC Corner

District Committee for Justice,
Peace and
Integrity of Creation

District website

As 2024 came to an end a total of fifty-six items had been posted on the **JPIC page** of the District website.

Most of these were International Blog items managed from Rome by Ben McKenna and also posted on Facebook according to our *'Social Media Package'* strategy of website, blog and Facebook.

The District website attracts over 400 visits daily and ca 4,000,000 'hits' per annum, the JPIC page being one of the most regularly visited.





Above: Star of the Sea church centenary celebration at Gladstone. | 'Aliko Langi, Michael Carroll and Seamus McMahon. | The church at its 1924 opening.
Below: Livestreaming of John Begg's funeral, The Gap, Brisbane. | ... Jim Carty presiding. | Marist Laity retreat at Mittagong led by Ray Chapman.



Above: Lauro Arcede welcomed to Australia by Gavin Foster and confreres gathered at Villa Maria on Nov 15. Below: Birthdays at Montbel: Rob Hollow and Paul Glynn.



Above: Paul Pidcock at home with Villa Maria Jacarandas. | Gerry Arbuckle at Montbel Eucharist. | Neville Byrne, lunch at Montbel. | Michael Rego celebrating 40th anniversary at Herston.

Right: Comings and goings....
Ben McKenna and Tony Kennedy arriving from Rome.... **Gavin Foster** departing for a break in New Zealand.

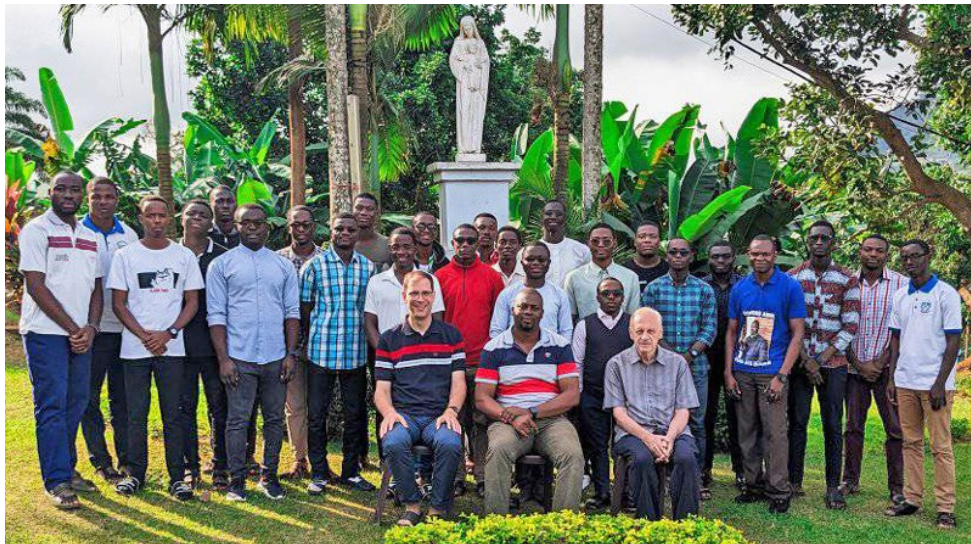
*Below: Ben McKenna at Warragamba Dam with **Lauro Arcede** | ... and at Marayong with **Kevin Redmond** and **Lauro**.*



Above: Women's twilight Advent dinner at Villa Maria.
*Right: **Brian Wilson**, Christmas Vigil parish Mass, Villa Maria. | **Floyd Gatana** and **Lauro Arcede** on a day off from Marayong.*



International



Above: Formation community of *Maison Pierre Chanel*, Yaoundé, Cameroon. | **Clinton Kube** fuelling the MMC-funded brush-cutter, Nkoloman, Cameroon. Below: European Council of the Province, La Neylière. | Marist College community, Suva.



Above: **John Hopkinson** at the conference of Basic Church Communities, El Salvador. | ... celebrating with laity. Below: **Andrew Murray** on the high seas twixt Seattle and Sydney. | Anniversary celebrations for **Pat Muckian**, Digos, Philippines.





Marists with their 2025 Colin calendars. Above: **Donato Kivi**, Samsun, Turkey. | Maison Saint Pierre Scholasticate, Yaoundé. Left: Novitiate community, Davao. Below: St Peter Chanel's formation community, Davao.



Left: **Albert Kabala** and **Tony Kennedy** at Tony's farewell, Casa di Maria, Rome. Below: Asia District members and international novitiate community gather for Christmas, Davao. | **John Hopkinson's** Christmas card from Tarija, Bolivia.

