

Marist Fathers

Australian Province



Provincial Circular Feb 2017

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From the Provincial

Although the first two months of this year, for a number of reasons, have been very tough there remain grounds for us to have great optimism for our 2017, but that ultimately remains up to us.

Darkest days

Perhaps the darkest days our Province has ever had to face have been during these two months when the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* has impacted on us greatly. Over the last four years, because we have not been under the direct spotlight of the Royal Commission, as a group we have perhaps not felt that deep sense of shame which has occurred in other sectors of the Australian Church. While someone else was taking the real heat many of us were able to stand at arm's length and nod lip-service platitudes to the terrible crimes perpetrated by the Church. In the weight of numbers we were able to hide and deny the reality that we are the Church.

At our Assembly in 2015 we were all shocked when we were told the extent of the abuse committed by Marist Fathers against children. We only learned of that situation because the Royal Commission asked all dioceses and religious bodies to provide data on reported and known cases since 1950. But because that figure of around 10%

remained in-house we did not have to acknowledge our shame to others.

On 6th February that silence and anonymity disappeared when the Royal Commission released for all to see the extent of the crimes against children for each diocese and group of religious in the country. The Marist Fathers were named among the worst group of offenders in the Church. Our adjusted figures found that 13.9% of our men abused children.

How deeply we have hurt ourselves and people dear to us. We have shamed our confreres internationally and tarnished our good name. We avoid talking about the situation with outsiders and

even among ourselves because of our shame. For the moment, many of us would prefer not to be identified as a priest, as a Marist.

We are grateful to family and friends who have supported us at this time.

Dignity and healing

However, we, the Marist Fathers, should not be looking for sympathy and understanding for ourselves. We must not be the focus of this tragic situation. It is the victims of our abuse who must be the focus. How can these people have dignity and healing restored to them? How do we face the victims of those abused by Marist Fathers and express our deep sorrow for what occurred? This will not be easy but it must be done.

Over the coming months and years, we the Marist Fathers, now aware of our sinfulness, must work for conversion. There can be no more seeking anonymity and hiding behind the group.

The Royal Commission's aim is to unearth the crime and see that it will not happen again. They will look to systemic failures in the Church and demand corrections.

The Royal Commission will expect solid scrutiny within the Church as a human institution and demand serious changes across all aspects of its life, correcting aberrations, such as clericalism, which have grown up and become contributing factors to the culture that has generated



abuse of children. The hierarchical pyramid of the Church, with clergy at the top and lay faithful forming the base, must be inverted. The Church is not the clergy and bishops!

The way of Mary

We Marists must do the same. Over our history, we have prided ourselves on the relevance and beauty of the spirit of Mary and we have claimed that this spirit is what we want to live out in our lives and ministries. The way of Mary is the opposite of what we have been. Gentleness, simplicity, loving and caring are qualities of Mary's way. The abuser, among other things, is cunning, exerts power over the vulnerable, exploits others, and is narcissistic.

The majority of our crimes occurred a few decades ago. Meanwhile, over the last few decades we have been blessed with the research and gifts of Coste, Larkin, Lessard, Marc, Drouilly, Hall and others, exploring and explaining the Marist way to us. We Marist religious and lay companions have so much available to help us live after the model of our Good Mother. It is time for us to try and interiorize the Marist way and not the way and values that were present in our darkest days.

More courageous steps

Having to face public humiliation when recently named as among the worst offenders against children is not the end of it for us. We cannot lay low and wait until this goes away. We must take it to our hearts. To be forgiven we must truly acknowledge our fault, seek pardon, conversion and give restitution as best we can. Perhaps we can start by talking to our brother Marists and owning this sin of ours to one another. After we have managed these first steps on our path to conversion we can and will take bigger and more courageous steps as time moves on. This will be goal for us this year and something we will work on as a province. It is up to each and every one of us to address this matter in our own heart.

Although dark clouds surround us at the moment there are silver linings. The cloud of the Royal Commission has been a terrible moment for us and the whole Church but it can be a blessing. Abuse of children should never have happened but because it did it had to be uncovered by a very thorough and probing Royal Commission and the evil addressed. Out of this situation our Church can become better for children and everyone. We too can become better Marists because of this terrible experience.

Restructuring

Another tough moment for us in recent weeks has come from our regional meetings. We need to have a serious re-think in our restructuring with the District of Asia according to the proposal presented to us. This matter will be followed up at future regional meetings.

From the Australian side while there was little support for the proposal as presented there was a willingness for ongoing and deeper cooperation between Asia and Australia. The two main problems with the proposal presented to the province were absence of a clear rationale underpinning the proposal and the timeline that was considered far too rushed.

Our appropriate dealing with what comes from Royal Commission is a priority for the province in 2017. The other priority concerns what we must do to secure our Marist future as a province group and internationally.

Most critical Chapter?

We have a General Chapter of the Society in September of this year. This could arguably be the most critical chapter in our 200-year history. Our Marist future depends so much on it. This Chapter won't be more of the same. It can't be. If this Chapter is not quite revolutionary and prepares us for, in many ways, an unknown and completely different future our Colvinian Marist branch will die out very quickly.

Have the coming General Chapter in your prayers, and participate in any other ways that emerge in preparation for the Chapter.

Similarly, our Province future is at a serious crossroads. Having confreres who can take on jobs is the key area of concern. We are diminishing quite rapidly and to make any difference in the Church and our society we need to be united and working together. Please think about that.

In two years' time?

Have you thought about who can be our provincial leader in 2 years' time? Have you contemplated what our Province will be like in 2 years? Are our current province structures enshrined in the present statutes and protocols sufficient for the province in two years and into the future?

Since the last Chapter over and over again we have taken as our goal: *being more focused; more overtly Marist in spirituality and community life; more international; more collegial and more courageous.*

This is still, and even more so, our goal for the future

Faternally



Bob Barber sm
Provincial

Provincial Diary

March 5-9

Marist Charism In-service, Hunters Hill

March 7

Provincial Finance Committee meeting

March 9

National Professional Standards Information Day, Sydney

March 10

FMS Regional Council meeting

March 21

Provincial Council meeting

April 18

Provincial Council meeting

Appointments

Paul Sullivan: appointed Executive Officer of the Marist Mission Centre for a period of three years as from 1/1/2017. The change of title from the former position of "Director" recognises a change in the job description, as well as reflecting legal advice that the term "Director" may create difficulties under existing Company laws.

Personnel

John Thornhill is acting on a suggestion that he establish a website to make his publications available to a wider audience. A member of the Hunters Hill parish, Richard KorKor, will collaborate with John to establish the site.

Gerry Arbuckle returned to Australia after an extended visit to Oxford University for a period of research (13/1-20/2). He is preparing a sequel to his *Fundamentalism at Home and Abroad* (June 2017). While there he was invited to give several lectures on the theme: *An Anthropological Analysis of Contemporary Fundamentalist Movements*.

Gerry emailed us early in his time at Oxford:

"It is hard to believe, but we have had two days of chilly sunshine... My study this time overlooks the spires of the ancient college of Christ Church...a beautiful sight. It is the

college built by the ill-fated Worsley".

Michael Whelan appeared from 6 February on two of the panels created by the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse as part of its final public hearing into the Catholic Church.

One of the panels looked at cultural influences which may have contributed to the high rate of abuse in the Catholic Church; the other panel of which Michael was a member looked at issues related to ongoing formation and professional supervision.

John Hopkinson was back in Australia in the December-January period on leave, and was able to spend time with family and friends, and to catch up with a number of confreres.

Michael Jacques: all the runways were cleared on 16 February at Sydney Airport for a priority landing for Michael's plane. A keen follower of Australian politics, he is looking forward to scrutinising the performance of new NSW premier, Gladys Berejicklian.

Hayden Kennedy: in mid-February Hayden left Brisbane to take up residence in the Marist Formation Community in Auckland and to attend Good Shepherd College.

After two years as a member of the Paddington House of Welcome community it is good to see Hayden able to move forward in his desire to hopefully embrace Marist religious life and the priesthood.

Hayden joins Hayden Powick sm, and Seremia Turagebeci (also beginning his seminary studies), in the Marist formation community.

Ekuasi Manu sm: Welcome to the province to Fr Ekuasi Manu from the Province of Oceania. For the last nine years Ekuasi has been Principal of St John's College, Cawaci, Fiji.

He joined the Marist Community of Welcome at Paddington in mid-

February. Ekuasi is enrolled in an 18th months (3 semesters) Master in Educational Leadership program through Australian Catholic University. The program is based at the Brisbane ACU campus but includes a number of intensive workshops which are held at ACU campuses interstate.

Michael Young: welcome back to the Province to Michael, who is currently spending several months assisting at St Patrick's while Fred Kado is back in Fiji for several months.

Kevin Stewart will be heading north to Gladstone shortly to fill in for Kevin Redmond while Kevin Redmond is overseas at the Marist renewal programme at La Neylière.

Deaths

Fr Kevin Francis Mears sm, d.24.12.2016, Wellington, NZ
Fr Eugene van Acker sm, d.8.1.2017, Hulst, Netherlands.
Fr James Johnston sm, d.9.1.1917, Castlebellingham, Ireland.
Fr Timothy Kenny sm, d.2.2.2017, Mullingar, Ireland.
Fr Fred Bliss sm, d.15.2.2017, Silverstream, NZ

Beryl Worthington, John's mother, died on 29 January at Murwillumbah. Her Mass of Christian Burial was held at Sacred Heart church, Murwillumbah on 2 February.

Hisagi Koyama's mother, **Mrs Fumi Koyama,** died on 8 February at Santa Maria nursing home, at Nara. Her Mass of Christian Burial was held in Nara on 13 February; **Oscar Ichiba** represented the Province at the funeral Mass.

Jack Reilly, father of **Ants Reilly,** was buried from Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on 27 January. Bob Barber, Michael Whelan, and Peter McMurrich represented the Province.

Sick

John Thornhill was in Royal North Shore Hospital for a short period from 8 January with a bowel obstruction and bladder infection. He later spent an extended period of respite care at Hunters Hill Private Hospital

John Burke was also in Royal North Shore hospital in mid-January for several days with heart-related issues; he is now back at Montbel.

Paul Cooney reported towards the end of February that he was travelling well, being pain free and having abundant energy. He is still receiving regular treatment; he experiences periods of sleeplessness at night.

Kevin Bates: Kev has been having ongoing issues with asthma and lack of lung power, leaving him substantially enervated. He spent a week in hospital to enable his specialist to address the problem, but it has been a case of two steps forward and one step back. A change in medication has seen some recent improvement.

Tony Biddle was recently in hospital at the Mater Private for knee surgery. He is making a good recovery.

News

Oceania House: Brian Wilson and Peter Somers moved out of Oceania House last year; Brian joined the Villa Maria community, and Peter Somers went to Maryvale/Montbel. It was originally intended to make the house available for a refugee family, but the location in Hunters Hill proved unsuitable. Accordingly, the house was made available to a Tongan family who moved in at the beginning of this year.

Oceania Education Review: During the latter half of 2016, Andrew Murray, working with Br Tony d'Arbon FMS, Emeritus Professor of Education at ACU, undertook a study of the secondary education apostolate in the province of Oceania. The study entailed Andy visiting each of the colleges and interviewing all confreres involved in the apostolate. The study reported very favourably on the apostolate and made 26 recommendations. Andrew attended the Oceania Provincial Chapter in Fiji in January as an observer, where he presented the review to the Chapter.

Secondary Education Workshop: On 5-6 February five of our confreres involved in secondary education in the province took part in a workshop at Currumbin under the direction of

Glenn Roff, former Principal of Woodlawn (2001 - 2012) and currently the Chair of the MCC (Marist Charism and Culture) committee.

Fr Rob Taria sm, currently in Sydney, and who works in secondary education in the Solomons, joined the group and made an excellent contribution. A long time in the planning, and a follow up to a workshop some years ago, this gathering was a great success. The confreres who attended were: Pius Jones, John Gillen, Chris Ketsore, Gerry Hall and the evergreen Paul Pidcock.

Colinian Renewal Program: Gathering in France at the moment are eleven confreres who will be taking part in the Colinian Renewal Program organised by the General Administration. The five-month program, beginning on Ash Wednesday, 1st March, includes **Kevin Redmond** as a participant and **Tony Kennedy** as the Director.

Marist Charism and Culture Committee: For the last four years **Kim Evans**, has worked on a contract basis with the committee to organise Marist Charism workshops and in-services; **Glenn Roff** has been involved in a consultancy role. As from the beginning of this year, they will swap their roles, with Glenn doing the organising, and Kim providing advice and information.



Oceania House

Secondary education workshop, Currumbin





St Patrick's, Church Hill: Next year, 2018, will be a significant year for St Patrick's, with two important anniversaries occurring: the bicentenary of the leaving of the blessed sacrament in the Davis cottage by Fr Jeremiah O'Flynn when he was deported from the colony (1818); and the sesquicentenary of the Marist Fathers being given care of the church and parish (1868). Michael Whelan is assembling a committee to begin planning for the anniversaries, and the committee will meet for the first time on February 28.

Royal Commission Data Survey: conferees will have noted that our figure of 13.9% was several points higher than our own internal estimate of approximately 10%. Many dioceses and religious orders experienced the same sort of variation between their own internal estimates and the percentages issued by the Royal Commission.

Obviously in response to a number of enquiries, the Commission issued an explanatory document last week outlining their statistical method. The Commission's statisticians gave a proportional weighting which increased according to the number of years an alleged abuser was in ministry.

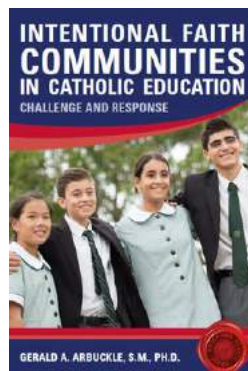
In our case the explanatory document gave 10.5% as our raw or unweighted figure, and 13.9% as our weighted figure. In other words, both 10.5% and 13.9% are correct figures for the Marist Fathers,

depending on how you crunch the numbers.

Publications

The January, 2017, number of the *Australasian Catholic Record* contains an article by **John Thornhill** entitled "*Trent and Modernity*". Contemporary scholarship shows how in the aftermath of Trent, a distorted understanding of the intentions of the Trentine Fathers led to problems which have burdened the Church until our own time.

Juan Carlos Scannone, an Argentinian Jesuit, is cited discussing the way that the Church can enter into a new relationship with the culture of the modern world.



Gerry Arbuckle's latest book is entitled **Intentional Faith Communities in Catholic Education** St Paul's Books, Sydney, 2017.

"Using the lens of cultural anthropology, Fr Gerald Arbuckle SM PhD, describes the nature of intentional faith-based communities in education, how they can be developed and vibrantly sustained.

Though the focus is primarily on schools, the theory and conclusions are applicable to any educational institution, including universities and training colleges for teachers".

Advertising

Archdiocese of Sydney: Issuing of faculties. The archdiocese has indicated some significant changes in the way it will deal with faculties. Up until relatively recent times, faculties were issued by the

archdiocese permanently, and "until revoked".

This meant that a religious priest might be appointed away from Sydney, but still retain faculties, and can exercise them again when he returned to work in the archdiocese.

In future, faculties will lapse whenever a clerical religious ceases to live and work in the archdiocese: "they are automatically revoked when one who is not incardinated in the Archdiocese takes up permanent residence outside the Archdiocese, or when he terminates his service, occasional or regular, in the Archdiocese.... it is the intention of the Archdiocese not to issue permanent faculties going forward."

Provincial Retreats: Dates and arrangements for this year's Provincial retreats are:

- **Nov 5-10 (Sunday to Friday):** Maryvale/Montbel;
- **Nov 12-17 (Sunday to Friday)** St Joseph's Retreat and Conference Centre at Kincumber.

Booking forms and further information will be sent out later in the year, but those interested might like to pencil in the dates in their diaries.

Both retreats will be preached by **Fr Michael Fallon MSC**, who will speak on St John of the Cross.

The **Jubilarians Mass & Dinner** this year will be on the evening of **Friday 10 November**, in Holy Name of Mary church and at Montbel

Provincial Council

Provincial Council meetings for the remainder of this year are:

Mar 21
April 18
May 15-16 at Currumbin
[MAP 12-13 June, NZ]
June 20
July 18
Aug 15
Sept 12
[General Chapter 20 Sept – 11 Oct]
Oct 17
Nov 21
Dec 19



Provincial Directory

Most confreres should have their copy of the 2017 Province Directory by now.

Apologies to Paul Hachey, who was omitted from the Index; and to Patrick Kervin, whose mobile number is 0418 383 987 (and not 0418 283 987).

If you spot any other errors, let us know so we can log them for next year.

Currumbin

The self-contained flat at **Currumbin** is available for bookings for Marists and their families.

Bookings are made through the provincial office. Current bookings:

March 26–April 8:

Jim Hargrave

April 13–April 17:

John Thornhill

April 28–May 1:

John Thornhill

May 13–17:

Provincial Council Meeting – all of Currumbin

June 23–July 4:

Ray Chapman

July 5–July 15:

Gavin Foster



July 16–August 4:

Bob Barber

August 25–September 9:

Peter McMurrich

September 20–October 12:

Tom Fulcher.

Enclosures

- Prayer card for 2017 General Chapter

JPICC Corner

Provincial Committee for
Justice, Peace and Integrity of
Creation

JPIC issues on the web

The committee continues to encourage posting of current J&P issues on the province web site.

Latest is the Refugee Council's *'State of the Nation'* report on the situation of refugees and migrants in Australia.



'BIMP'

A fruit of the Bridge Program, BIMP ('Bridge Program in Myanmar Project') is breaking new ground by offering young Burmese in remote areas of Myanmar a chance to prepare for higher studies.

Pictured: BIMP applicants and their mountain-top Internet access.



And also...



Clockwise from top left:

- **Sr Clare Francis SM** celebrates 70 years of Marist life in the company of visiting Superior-General, **Sr Grace Ellul**.
- Marist Charism & Culture meeting
- **Alois Greiler** visits **Kevin Kerley**
- **Kevin Redmond** and **Tony Kennedy**, preparing for the Colinian Period of Renewal, La Neylière, France. (brrrr...)

