

Marist Fathers

Australian Province

Provincial Circular Dec 2017

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From the Provincial

Dear confreres

Encouraging and uplifting

The season of Christmas is a reassuring reminder of Christ being with us and the infinite love of God for us.

Our liturgical readings during Advent – Christmas are encouraging and are uplifting for us in so many ways. The Old Testament readings at this time constantly remind us that God's promises in the Old Covenant will be fulfilled.

The stronger New Testament readings convey the message that Christ (Emmanuel) has come, demonstrating God's faithfulness to fulfilling his promises, and this Divine love for us will continue until all is complete.

The hope of things better

Many of us are often keen to welcome the new year because it enables us to leave negative aspects of the past behind us and to proceed forward in the hope of things better. If the future looks good for you, go for it.

Some things we would like to leave behind us in the new year we can't.

Unfortunately, serious health issues, for example, not just in our senior confreres but also in some of our youngest and most able confreres, will stay with us.

To all confreres experiencing hard times due to health problems please know that the rest of your brothers in the province are holding you very much in their prayers and we will do whatever we can to support you.

Aging and anxiety go hand in hand. We notice this in individuals, in groups, and in ourselves.

Anxiety is an insidious enemy that strongly affects all of us, paralyses us and does not let us step confidently into the future.

Be safely led

The gospel reading that came around in a weekday Mass a couple of weeks ago was applicable to us in these circumstances. In Luke 21: 12 – 19 Jesus was warning his disciples of the trials and hardships that would challenge his disciples.

The advice of Jesus was that we should not fear but place ourselves into his hands, into God's hands, and we will be safely led through our ordeals and difficult times.

Some will claim that this advice is being pietistic and avoiding reality. My concern is that we really don't believe and trust enough in God.

The same advice, to let go and trust in God, is pertinent to our group as we encounter the need for change in our province over coming months.

We should not continue to doggedly hang on to the steering wheel trying to control every iota of our future fearing that someone could lead us in unknown waters. We are already in unknown waters.

Extra-ordinary Chapter

The second stage in the voting for delegates to our Extra-ordinary Provincial Chapter to be held from the 13 – 15 March is underway.

The responsibility on the shoulders of those confreres we elect to this Chapter is extremely important.

We must pray for these delegates that they will lead us well and they must bring themselves up to speed with what is on the agenda here.



This Chapter has a very specific purpose, the governance and leadership of our group in the future. It could well be the last opportunity for us to determine our own legislation and organizational structures for the future.

And, if anything, the future is going to be at least as difficult a time to negotiate our way through as the present is, or the past has been.

Today we are a much smaller group with less emphasis on mission than we have had but coping with our current situation is tough.

The recent round of regional meetings held as a lead up to our Chapter next March have demonstrated how complex this matter is for us to deal with.

While the regional meetings are essential, they highlight some of our difficulties: the diversity of opinions and understanding around the matters; jumping to discuss peripheral questions; the reality that some voices are not being heard.

There are inevitably some inherent weaknesses in a more democratic approach which at its best enables all of us to be involved in discovering the solution.

Crunch time

Politicking and maneuverings are enemies to our cause in this instance and if they dominate our lives over the next three months this may well prevent us achieving what our province needs for its future.

Our experience over the last couple of decades, when faced with attempts to restructure / reconfigure, has been the inclination to be cautious, maintain the 'status quo', and keep things as they have been in our little world.

Once more a crunch time has come.

Ninety percent of the work to determine our future has to be done before our Chapter begins.

It seems that we may be looking at holding a second round of regional meetings before the Chapter begins.

This will be a time when the rank and file of the province can express their thoughts and when the delegates can discern how we should move.

The blueprint

We will all shortly receive a copy of the *Statements and Decision of the 2017 General Chapter*.

Individual copies are being printed and will be sent to everyone. In the meantime, an electronic copy is accessible through the province and the Society websites.

It is a short document, only 44 pages, and if you wanted to you could read it in an hour. By all means do that, but afterwards read it slowly and prayerfully over a couple of weeks.

This, after all, is the blueprint for how we live out today our Marist lives as seen by the Chapter.

As you read the document prayerfully try to see how it relates to you and the situation you are in today. Some things, at first glance, you may be inclined to dismiss.

Take your time and try to understand what the Chapter wanted us to value and place in our lives at this time.

Contemplation, a lynch pin

The Superior General recently gave his first reflection to us and emphasised 'contemplation' as a lynch-pin in our Marist life.

A number that it is worth spending time on is No 19, that begins the section on Ministries of Hope.

It is a rich number because it specifically mentions a number of key themes that are woven through the whole Chapter tapestry – justice and peace, planetary health, safeguarding. Elements that belong to our Work of Mary.

Respond and renew

The next few months will be difficult time for the Church as we accept the findings of the Royal Commission into the sexual abuse of young people in Australia's institutions. Marists, with the whole Church must accept with shame our failures towards children, work towards healing for victims, and ensure that this same evil will never occur again.

Let us not shy away from this situation.

The Catholic Church was decimated 500 years ago when Luther's action brought on the Reformation. The same happened two hundred years ago when the French people revolted and overturned a rotten Church in France.

The Church responded to both these crises and renewed herself. The same can happen in Australia today, and the Royal Commission can be the agent to trigger this.

We must not look upon our current situation as death but as need to weed out what is bad and un-Christlike in our Church and refound here in Australia a really Christian Church.

Our specific contribution will be to bring, as much as we can, a Marian face to our Church

May God bless us all this Christmas time and be with us throughout 2018.

Bob Barber sm





Provincial Diary

Dec 19

Provincial Council meeting

Dec 20-Jan 4

Provincial Office Closed

Jan 16

Provincial Council meeting

Jan 24

Chapter Preparatory Committee

Feb 15

Professional Standards Panel meeting

Feb 20

Provincial Council meeting

Santa's elves in the **Provincial Office** are putting up their hands for a slice of the Christmas action, so in order not to unduly antagonise the elves and allow them some well-deserved time off, the Provincial Office will:

- Close: **Wed, 20 December, 4 pm**
- Reopen: **Thu, 4 January**

For any emergencies which may arise the Provincial's mobile is 0418 260 686; the Vicar Provincial is 0419 271831 (leave a message after the beep if the phone isn't immediately answered).



Appointments

John Worthington: appointed a member of the Maryvale/Montbel community as from 1.1.2018.

Michael Carroll: appointed Superior of the Herston community for twelve months.

Ray Chapman: appointed to the Herston Community.

Personnel

Gerry Arbuckle has received a letter of thanks from Pope Francis, via the Secretariat of State, for the gift of his recent book. "...The Holy Father wishes me to express his gratitude for your kind letter and gift of your book, *Fundamentalism at Home and Abroad: Analysis and Pastoral Responses*. He appreciates the sentiments which prompted this gesture..."

Meanwhile, Gerry has been off and running on a new project, and has just received word from Orbis Books that they will publish his new work on Loneliness during 2018.

Gerry Hall led retreats for the New Zealand Province in Auckland and Wellington during November on the 'hidden God' and the role of the 'hidden Marist'.



Brian Conaghan with Paul Pearce at Brian's recent farewell



'alert and cheery'

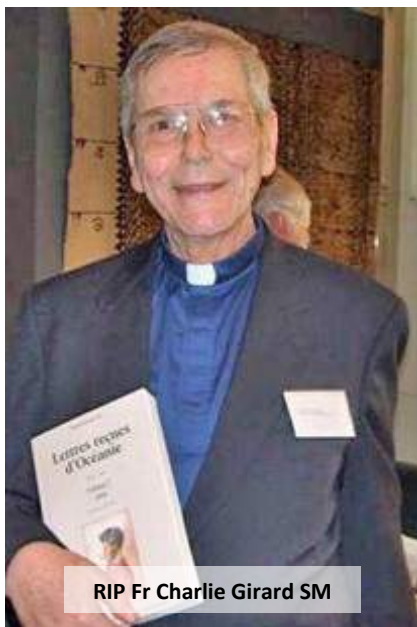
Brian Conaghan moved to St Catherine's Nursing Home on Monday 27th November. This is the same Nursing Home where Fred Limeburner, Keith Shepherd and John Hill lived for their last days.

Brian will be in St Joseph's wing (this is different from where the other confreres were) that is found closest to Balaclava Road, in Room 36.

Jim Esler: there were candles and cake at Montbel on Dec 03 when Jim celebrated his 95th birthday. Despite some visual and aural impairment, Jim is an alert and cheery presence at Montbel, and the oldest Marist priest in Australia, second in age in the province to **Br Colin Campbell**.



Gerry Hall in Wellington



RIP Fr Charlie Girard SM

Deaths

Fr Charles Girard sm

d.11.11.2017, Algiers, New Orleans, USA

Fr Brendan Bradshaw sm

d.10.12.2017, Milltown, Ireland.

Fred Dirou: Paul Pidcock recently notified us of the death in Lismore on 21 November of Fred Dirou, who was married to Rachel (Maloney), sister of Steve and Tom.

Paul attended the funeral Mass at Alstonville on November 27.

Sick

John Jago was recently admitted at the SAN hospital at Wahroonga for pain management.

Peter Somers was diagnosed last week with lesions in the brain. He had a further scan at Royal North Shore hospital on Monday, December 11, which indicated that the lesions had further multiplied.

He has been admitted to hospital at Royal North Shore while treatment options are being considered.

Bill Ryder was admitted on December 12 to Ryde hospital with intestinal issues.

Jack Soulsby has now been discharged from hospital in

Brisbane, but is facing ongoing health issues.

Paul Cooney: Paul is continuing with his regular treatment regime. He felt well enough to drive to Sydney on December 12 to have lunch with members of the Province Finance Committee, following their final meeting for 2017.

Robert Hollow: following his diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease, Robert will complete his commitments at Longreach at the end of the year, and will then move to the Sunshine Coast area.

Jim Esler's sister, Madge, was operated on at Macquarie University hospital on December 11 for a broken hip, following a fall.

News

Retreat season: Fr Michael Fallon

MSC recently led two retreats in the Province. The first was from 5th to 10th November at Maryvale/Montbel and the second, from 12th to 17th, at the Sisters of St Joseph's Centre, Kincumber.

Fr Michael's retreats were based on the writings of 16th century mystic St John of the Cross.

In all about 40 confreres attended the retreat. Some were surprised at how much they got from the retreat,

due to an ignorance of St John of the Cross, but in all cases delight was expressed at the insights and guidance they received.

St Patrick's Reconciliation Room: In the renovations of 1999-2002, the Reconciliation Room at St Patrick's had one door by which both priests and penitents entered the room.

That door had some glass panels – the only glass in the room. There was another door, one metre to the left, but it had neither hinges nor handles so was not useable.

In 2016, in the wake of the Royal Commission, hinges and handle were added to that other door plus glass panels matching the main door.

Apart from giving more light, this also gave the priest an exit door should that be necessary.

Just recently, the wood panels in the wall between the two doors were replaced with the same matching glass.

The result is aesthetically pleasing and very functional.

There is much more light in the room and a good balance is struck between transparency and privacy.

The sound-proofing is good.



Michael Fallon MSC



Reconciliation room at St Pat's



Jubilarians' dinner, Montbel



Ben McKenna leaving for Rome

Jubilarians' Mass & Dinner: Our jubilarians (**J.V.Walsh, Lou Molloy, Chris Austin, Tony Corcoran, John Jago, and Tony Kennedy**) were celebrated on the evening of Friday 10 November.

Bob Barber presided at the Mass and also preached the homily; **Tom Ryan** proposed the toast to the jubilarians.

Province Professional Standards Panel: current appointments to the panel are due to expire at the end of this year. All existing members of the panel were recently invited to continue, and with one exception, have agreed to do so.

Elaine Rickart, who has served on the panel since its inception in 2004, has decided to retire, and we thank Elaine for her years of generous service.

Assistant General appointed: the Superior General has announced that **Ben McKenna** will be the designated Assistant General for the Australian Province.

Gladstone Parish. From the 20th – 21st November the Provincial Council met in the presbytery of Star of the Sea parish Gladstone with the three confreres working in Rockhampton diocese (**Aliki Langi** and **Kevin Redmond** – Gladstone, and **Rob Hollow** – Longreach).

Bishop McCarthy joined us on the Monday afternoon and for dinner that evening.

In the presence of Bishop McCarthy, and with his support, the Provincial

Council was able to come to a plan covering the future of the Marist presence in Gladstone.

With a severe shortage of personnel at our disposal the question of how long Marists could maintain a presence in Gladstone has been a concern.

We are very grateful to Kevin Redmond who is willing to see out the remaining two years of his appointment as parish priest, during that time leading a transition from a parish staffed by a religious congregation to a single priest more directly under the diocese.

Bishop McCarthy understands our predicament and is grateful that he has two years in which he has Kevin available to make the huge transition.

Parishioners were quite disappointed at hearing the news as Marists have cared for Gladstone parish for the last 116 years.

Nobody remembers a time when there were not Marists at Gladstone.

As for the Marists, over 75 have worked in the parish since 1901; and many of those have appreciated very much the welcome and friendship of the priests of the diocese, and the acceptance and support of the people of Gladstone parish.

It is anticipated that 'Aliki will leave Gladstone in mid-2018 to go on spiritual renewal before being reassigned elsewhere in the province.

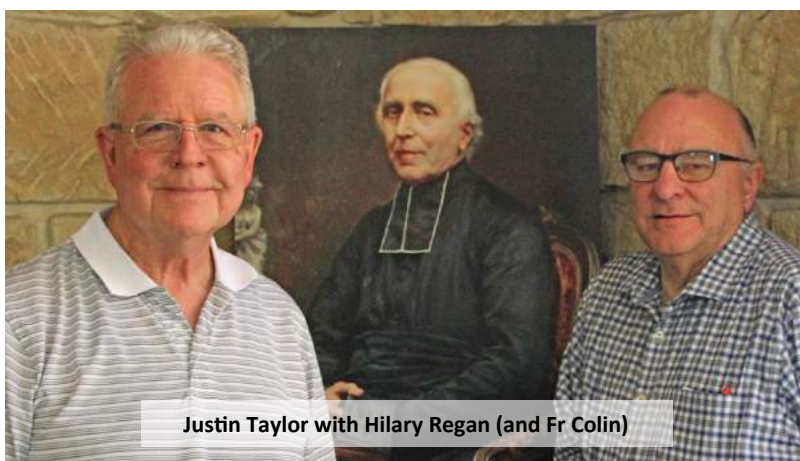
This will be when Kevin has to work on the transition of the Gladstone parish.

Publications

Biography of the Founder: Author **Justin Taylor SM**, met on Dec 08 with ATF publisher, **Hilary Regan**.

The meeting at Villa Maria focused on illustration of the 900-page work as well as editing and distribution details.

The biography is likely to be published in mid-2018.



Justin Taylor with Hilary Regan (and Fr Colin)



Provincial Directory

New addresses:

Brian Conaghan

St Catherine's Aged Care
PO Box 111
Eastwood NSW 2122

Charlie Randle

Azure Blue Carina
117/455 Richmond Road
Carina Qld 4152

Allan Connors

Bayswater Gardens
65 St Albans Street
Abbotsford NSW 2046

Currumbin Bookings



The self-contained flat at **Currumbin** is available for bookings for Marists and their families. Bookings are made through the provincial office. Current bookings:

2017

Dec 1-25: Ray Chapman

Dec 26-31: Michael Carroll

2018

Jan 1-14: Michael Carroll

Jan 15-22: Tom Ryan

Feb 25-Mar 10: Jim Hargrave

Mar 30-Apr 1-20: John Begg

June 1-30: Ray Chapman

Sep 23-Oct 13: Peter McMurrich

Oct 15-Nov 4: Bob Barber

Enclosures

- Toast to the Jubilarians 2017 – Tom Ryan
- Homily 2017 Jubilarians' Mass – Bob Barber

JPICC Corner

Provincial Committee for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Bridge Program and Australian Catholic University graduate, **Muriel Valles**, was one of the guests of honour attending an Endeavour Australia ceremony at Sydney's Government House on Oct 23.

Hosted by His Excellency, **General David Hurley**, and **Mrs Hurley**, Muriel and fellow exchange students from Japan, China, Australia and Myanmar were encouraged in their studies and immersion in different cultures and making friends from different parts of the world.

The Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong award program was established in 2004 to enhance partnership between Australia and Asia and to support educational exchange opportunities.

Muriel's educational journey began with the Bridge Program in Thailand's Mae La refugee camp. She recently completed studies at Wollongong University on exchange from Hong Kong's Institute of Education, with a distinction and three credits. Well done, Muriel.

Muriel returns to Hong Kong after Christmas.



Muriel Valles with His Excellency, General David Hurley

... and also



Clockwise from left:

1. Michael Carroll at Herston writing his next icon.
2. Holy Souls evening prayer, Villa Maria mission cemetery
3. Coming soon.
4. Music at Montbel.
5. Paul Glynn and retreatants at Uji, Japan.

