

# Marist Laity Australia

2017



Simplicity

Flexibility

Inclusiveness

Dear Marist Laity Members,

Thank you for your support and response to the events held by Marist Laity Australia during 2017.

It has been a very busy year with MLA hosting the Fouviere' Celebrations this year that were colorfully shared in our last newsletter. We have also held 2 wonderful reflection days, one in May and "Awaken" in October this year. Val, one of our participants at the October reflection day shares with us later in this newsletter. You will see the dates for the 2018 reflection days below and I encourage you to place these in your diaries and come along. We have a wonderful speaker Br Graham Neist next year. He has shared with us in previous years and provided very rich and thought provoking resources which we have very much enjoyed.

Small group sessions on the Marist charism, history and journey have been held at St Patrick's Crypt during the year. Thank you to those that attended and continued to share their insights into the gift that the Marist Charism has been for them in their lives.

We have also have begun discussions and planning for a Marist Laity Conference to be held in 2019...more exciting news on that later.

As Christmas approaches I share these thoughts below with you from one of my work colleagues and add the poem at the end of the newsletter for your reflection. Thank you again for your wonderful support

and encouragement as we strive to bring Mary's presence, love and spirit into our world.

## A Christmas Reflection

On Christmas Day, we celebrate together with family and friends a special occasion which is enacted by the offering of presents to one another.

Today, as we reflect on the Christmas story, let us consider the meaning of giving to one another. Presents or gifts have the power to bring such joy and show how much we value another. Sometimes, when someone has very little, even a small gift can be so meaningful.

The reading from Matthew 2 tells the story of Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus, who were sought out by three Wise Men from another land with a gift offering. Mary and Joseph were young, disadvantaged. They were misunderstood by their community because of the news of the child before marriage. However, God had sent an Angel to tell them both that this child was to be Christ, the Messiah. At the time of the baby's arrival, they were required to travel for a census and were caught without a place for the birth. There was no room in any house for them but they were offered a stable where the baby Jesus was born.

When the Wise men came to bring gifts, this was a sign from the Divine God that He was providing for this young family. As the child grew up, Jesus became known for his kind

acts towards the needy and his love for those most rejected by others. Jesus Christ began his life receiving presents from strangers, and at the end of his life, he became a gift to the world.

“For this is how much God loved the world – he gave his uniquely conceived Son as a gift.”  
John 3:16



**As we share  
this wonderful Christmas time,  
Let us consider  
the Presence of those who Love us,  
Let us consider  
the Presence of Christ amongst us,  
And let us consider  
being Present for others.  
Let us enjoy  
this season of giving and receiving  
Presents!**

**May the Lord's gracious gift of peace  
and love be with you and your families  
over this wonderful Season.**

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Margaret Woods  
Coordinator of Marist Laity Australia.

## Marist Laity Reflection Day October 2017

An invitation poster for 'Awaken' Reflection Day. The poster features a woman carrying a baby on her back, with a large blue handprint graphic overlaid on the image. The text on the poster includes: 'Your invitation to', 'Reflection Day', 'St Patricks Church Hill', 'October 21', '10 am to 2 pm', 'marist laity australia', 'Tea/Coffee Provided', 'BYO Lunch', 'Cost by donation', and 'call or sms to rsvp on 0417 682 822'. The word 'AWAKEN' is written in large, white, stylized letters across the top of the image.

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On Saturday 21st October 2017 we saw a group of lay Marists gather in the crypt of St Patrick's cathedral in the city to share in the reflection day ably presented by one of our leaders, Andrew Dumas.

The day was entitled "Awaken" and all were invited to Awaken to the possibilities and opportunities we have to do things differently, to be witnesses and wake up the world.

We were asked to reflect on the picture of the Annunciation by Fra Angelico – to ponder how Mary inspires us, how she was "awakened" in the picture and how Mary's life can shape us.





Another session looked at the parables of Jesus, and the way their simple language was used to awaken us to the mystery of God and life.

We also looked at Mary as the first disciple, the Good Mother, sharing her spirituality with the world.

For our final reflection, we were asked to look at some beautiful images of hands, to choose one and then to share how that picture spoke to us. The hands were seen as symbols of community, comfort, support and love with no words needed to convey their message.

In each session we had time to hear Andrew's input, read and reflect on the resources he provided and then to share – first with our neighbour and then with the larger group.

Andrew's thoughtful presentation and beautiful handouts gave us much to think about and the messages and times of sharing left us all feeling refreshed, Awakened, and ready to face our hectic lives.

## DATE FOR UR DIARY

### Our Next Reflection Day

**March 10 2018**

**A conversation about**

**“How to live a more contemplative life”?**

**Please come along!**

**St Patricks Church Hill**

## The Marist Thread Continues....

For yet another year, Marist laity continue to support a group of some 80 Aboriginal people from the Mt Druitt area, a suburb of Sydney. They belong to the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation founded by 5 Aboriginal Elders from Western Sydney. ([www.baabayn.org.au](http://www.baabayn.org.au))

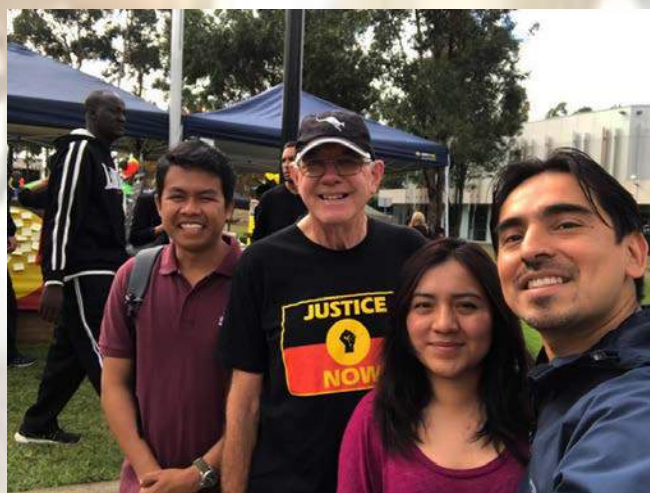


**Their purpose is to connect with individuals and families in a welcoming environment, providing them with supports and links to services that help them heal from the past and nurture their sense of confidence and pride in the future.**

Each year in November, they look forward to staying in Gerringong for a weekend to rest, play and absorb the natural beauty of the South Coast of NSW.

For the past 24 years, the Friday evening meal has been prepared by a small group of Marists: Maryanne Knoblanche, and Cecelia and Michael Brungs. They belong to the Hunters Hill parish led by Fr Kevin Bates SM. This year they were helped by Marist Brothers Lawrie McCane from Australia, Brother Jonnel Sisneros from the Philippines and a young lay Marist couple, both teachers from Mexico, Argelia Hernandez Mendoza and Roderigo Gris Castro. These 4 Marists live together in a new community in Mt Druitt.

They have responded to a call from the Marist Brothers' Superior General, Brother Emili Turu to create International Communities for a New Beginning. Rodrigo explains:



"Our place at Mount Druitt is located 45km west of Sydney CBD, New South Wales, Australia. Our suburb has been identified as the most disadvantaged area of Sydney. It is also the most culturally diverse and has the highest population density of indigenous people in the country. Unemployment, family violence, crime, homelessness and drug use are an issue. Many children are disengaged from schooling. Some are of indigenous background, or refugee children from Africa or the Middle East.

We will be targeting young people who are not at school by establishing a new pathway for disengaged youth to re-connect with education, other forms of training or employment. In partnership with Local Catholic Education Authorities we aim to begin a centre, Marist Learning Zone, where each young person will be given fresh educational opportunities, and the hope of a more promising future.

We pray that Mary will accompany us in this project and, at her side, we will be confirmed in our shared vocation, contributing to the creation of a better society, in which the weak and the marginalised are valued and loved.



We will be working for three years. Our mission MLZ Marist Learning Zone is a cooperative learning program partnership between Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) and the Mount Druitt Lavalla200> community. MLZ is not a school but offers a temporary re-location for young people enrolled in a CEDP school who have disengaged from their education. It connects them back into their learning, building skills in communication, collaboration and general life readiness. It prepares young people to re-engage with learning in pathways that suit their needs. MLZ is offered at no cost to participants Marist Learning Zone

Back to our Baabayn friends! For the past 4 years, the Saturday evening BBQ has been organised by the local Catholic Social Justice group, of which I am a member.

And this year was no different! On the menu were Wagyu beef sausages, eggs donated by a local farmer, food donated by local IGA and a Woolies gift voucher as well as generous donations from local parishioners of Ss Peter and Paul Parish, Kiama.

As Marists, we feel privileged to be part of the Baabayn group through a ministry of hospitality and friendship and our Aboriginal brothers and sisters send a resounding THANK YOU to all who helped make their stay so enjoyable



## A Christmas Prayer

Heavenly Father,  
we celebrate the birth of your Son,  
Jesus, remembering the words of  
the angels on the night of His birth,  
"Peace on earth to all of good will."  
Today, as never before, Almighty God,  
we pray for Your loving peace.  
May Peace be the guiding force in the hearts  
of our world leaders. May peace reign in  
every corner of the globe and  
in the hearts of every person upon this earth.

This Christmas and always,  
may we embrace Your wonderful gifts  
with courage and conviction.

In so doing,  
we will also be embracing  
Your greatest gift to us,  
Your Son,  
the Prince of Peace!

Amen.



Please pray  
for our friends  
and neighbours  
in Davao  
the Philippines.  
For the recent  
fire of the nccc  
mall and storm.