



Marist Camino 2023

Sr Margaret Tisch SMSM

Yesterday 23rd July our Marist Laity led by Cathy Larkin and Andrew Dumas and their committee organized the best Fourviere Day I have ever attended and I have attended all these days when I have been in Australia.

Yesterday was a very special day for many reasons, one being that it was exactly 207 years to the very day when five priests (ordained the day before) and 7 seminarians walked up nearly 800 steps before dawn and left a signed document at the Church of the Black Madonna dedicating their lives to Mary the mother of God; the beginning of the Marist movement.

My Camino began yesterday when I picked up my Ursuline friend Colleen just before 8.30 a.m. and left the car at Rooty Hill station and waited for the bus to take us to Seven Hills, where we waited for the local bus to take us to Macquarie University Station to get the train to Chatswood. At Chatswood we walked across the platform to get the train to Milsons Point where we met my friend Therese and lots of others at Bradfield Park. We were all given a Marist Camino 2023 badge.

After Cathy gave us a talk, standing on a park bench, we walked to the steps of the Harbour Bridge and started our walk across the bridge. What a glorious day, no rain (which was predicted) no wind and glorious sunshine. When we arrived at The Crypt at St Pat's our delicious meal of beef and pork sausages, fried eggs, saveloys and many delicious salads and bread rolls were put on the tables for us. For dessert there was fruit salad and different cakes etc. as well and tea, coffee, and other drinks. Sr Fidelis an 81-year-old, with her helpers, had been at St Pat's to prepare the breakfast for the Mass goers and then this delicious meal for us. Fidelis stayed behind to clean up afterwards before driving to Hunters Hill – what an incredible woman. We then had talks on the Marist branches which Fr Paul Mahony repeated in Portuguese for the big contingent of Portuguese and Brazilian people.

Two buses had been booked to take us to Hunters Hill. I was sitting behind the driver but just as we were leaving, I stood up and turned around and reminded everyone to please wear their seat belts. Some already had them on but a lot didn't. We had an incredibly efficient driver who we thanked when we arrived at Hunters Hill.

Unfortunately, the second bus didn't turn up. Somehow those left behind did eventually get themselves to Hunters Hill. If we had known the bus wasn't coming, I think they could have fitted on to our bus as it was very big.

At Hunters Hill there were lots of Marists already in the hall including an excellent Tongan choir from Campbelltown. There were so many young lay Marists there – it was wonderful. We had a beautiful paraliturgy during which Cathy and Chris' 26-year-old daughter gave the reflection. Cathy told us that for the 2000 Fourviere gathering she gave the reflection. Their older daughter was sick on the day, so Chris stayed home to look after her. Chris always looked after the girls' hair, so he had put ribbons and clips in Johanna's hair that morning. When Cathy started to give her reflection, Johanna – not yet 3 years old - wanted to be picked up so with Johanna on her left hip, Cathy's reflection on the lectern Johanna decided to take every ribbon and clip out of her hair and put them into Cathy's right hand. Cathy said she doesn't think anyone was listening to a word she said! When Johanna got up for her reflection yesterday, she started by saying she did not have a child on her hip. It was a deep and moving reflection and hopefully we will be getting a copy of it. Johanna had come for Fourviere yesterday from Canberra where she lives and works. Afternoon tea was very lavish, and we sat around round tables beautifully prepared and enjoyed lots of conversations. Most of us who had been to The Crypt didn't eat or had very little. Hopefully the Tongans who sang quietly while we chatted were able to take home lots and lots of delicious food for their families.

Janice dropped Therese at her home in Parramatta. Jenny very kindly dropped Colleen and me at Strathfield Station. The train took us to Granville. We had to wait a very long time for our bus to Rooty Hill which stopped at every station to Penrith. I would have had to stand for half of the trip if a young lady hadn't offered me her seat. There were many young men on the bus but no gentlemen!!!! I arrived home six minutes late for Compass, but I was there in time to hear about the singing of our wonderful aborigines at the time of Governor Phillip. They used to sing from morning till night thanking the birds and the animals for providing their nourishment etc. I was in bed by 7.36, exactly an hour after arriving home, but I heard the rain start just before 11.00 p.m. and shortly afterwards went to sleep. I woke up early this morning reflecting on the wonderful day we had yesterday.

Andrew Dumas, who was the brainchild of our day yesterday, was not able to attend because of ill health. However, Cathy took a video of us at the end of the paraliturgy and sent it to Andrew.

So, thanks to Fr Ron Nissen's counting, as well as taking photos we were 70+ who walked over the bridge, 80+ in the Crypt and 150+ at Hunters Hill.

We are so fortunate to have such an alive lay Marist group in Sydney and in other parts of Australia and the world. May Mary's name be honoured for all eternity. Amen.

Margaret Tisch SMSM

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