

# Marist Way Australia



## Cathy's Report

Dear friends in the spirit of Mary,

### This sacred time....

In the midst of the Advent and Christmas seasons, we reflect again on how, like Mary, we bring Jesus into the world. This is our mission as people who bear Mary's name. We have been chosen by a gracious choice for this very undertaking.



It takes a lifetime to hone and refine such a mission, and **Advent** gives us time and a framework to develop and mature our response.

What am I being invited to?..... A new perspective or attitude? A recommitment to serve the needs of others? Opening my heart and home to God's love in a more profound way?



In the **Christmas** season we reflect on God's extraordinary love for us manifested in the most vulnerable way possible: as a child,

small and fragile, dependent on human hands for care.

This is the paradox of the Christian faith: the Creator of the universe, the eternal God, enters the world in the most humble and fragile form.

Christmas calls us to reflect on this humility. It reminds us that God's love doesn't come in grand displays of power or triumph, but in the quiet, hidden moments of life. Just as the shepherds were the first to hear the good news and visit the newborn King, so too we are invited to meet Christ in the ordinary, in the quiet corners of our daily lives.

As we contemplate the profound significance of the birth of Christ, not only as an event in history but as a continual invitation to deepen our relationship with God, we commit to stay alert to see where Christ's light shines – for us and for others.

### Where to for 2026?

Marist Way Australia will make **formation** a key priority into next year and beyond. This will encompass our continuing engagement with the community of **St Patrick's Church Hill**.

It will also inform our goal to make connections and reconnections with **groups and individuals** under the Marist umbrella, within and beyond our shores, with a view to asking them how Marist Way Australia might support and liaise with them.



Additionally, this priority will also underpin making greater connections with schools originally founded by Marist Fathers and Marist Sisters.

### **A Prayer:**

*Lord Jesus, we thank You for the gift of Your birth. May Your light shine brightly in our hearts this Christmas and throughout the year. Help us to be more like You—humble, loving, and full of compassion. May we always remember that You came to be with us, not as a distant God but as one who understands our human experience and walks with us.*

Peace and blessings in this sacred time,  
Cathy Larkin  
National Convenor  
Marist Way Australia

## **Instruments of peace**

*By Andrew Dumas*

We are all deeply saddened by the events that have taken place in Bondi in Sydney, both for our Jewish brothers and sisters and for our Muslim brothers and sisters. We are all Australians. The killing of innocent lives strikes at the heart of our Australian values that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. That each person, both adult and child, is precious.



In 1219, Saint Francis of Assisi travelled to Egypt to end the war between the Christians and Muslims. Francis called for peace. The Christian armies laughed at him. Calling him a

“clown”. Despite this setback, Francis risked his own life by crossing enemy lines. The Muslim armies had been given orders to kill any Christian on sight. Remarkably, Francis survived. Gaining an audience with the lead Muslim, the Sultan Al Kamil. The Sultan recognised Francis as a holy man.



This act reminded me today of the Australian and Muslim Ahmed al Ahmed, who fought to disarm the gunman face-to-face. Ahmed was shot twice. Ahmed, a modern-day Francis of Assisi. Wanting to end violence. Even if it costs him his life.

Today, let us be Francis to one another. To seek peace. To disarm those who cause violence, both in our world and more fully in our hearts. At Christmas and in the new year, where there is conflict and tension within our family, friends, or colleagues, may we be instruments of peace.

Please pray this prayer attributed to Saint Francis and commit to being instruments of peace in our lives. We also pray for those who have died, but also those who suffer at the hands of violence.

Let us pray

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*



*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen*

## St Patrick's Marist Way Core Committee

By Margaret Woods

St Patrick's Marist Way Core Committee was launched on Sunday, 13 and 14 December.



Seven members of the St Patrick's congregation have formed a Core Committee to ensure the Marist Spirit. It is alive and active once the Marist Fathers depart St Patrick's at the end of this year, 2025. Four of the committee members helped to launch the news to the congregation so all masses at St Pat's were covered. Thank you!

In 2025, Marist Way Australia ran a series of monthly meetings at St Patrick's using Marist themes. At the end of the year, we were delighted to have seven people step up and form the Marist Way Core Committee for St

Patrick's, with our first committee meeting held on the 7th of December.



The committee members are fabulous, so let's continue to pray that all will unfold well next year. Our first St Patrick's Marist Way event will be held on 22 February 2026 in the Crypt under St Patrick's Church, and we invite you to attend. The topic will be, The Spirit of Mary through a Marist lens.

We invite you to join us at St Pat's next year to enjoy these monthly reflections on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Blessings for a fabulous Christmas season, as we hold in our hearts all those who have been so tragically hurt in recent events. As Mary modelled to us, let us breathe a loving and compassionate spirit into this world so as to nurture hope, peace and joy! Looking forward to 2026.

## Illawarra Christian Meditation Community Day - By Maria Maden

*"The best way to share the gift of meditation with others is to pray with them. In real presence with others, we sense the more profound truth of our being and so learn to see beyond ourselves. That is why meditating regularly, whether daily or weekly, With the same community, is such a source of sustenance to our pilgrimage"*

John Main OSB Monastery without Walls





On Saturday, 29th November, the three Christian meditation groups – Wollongong, Kiama and Gerringong – came together for a beautiful day of reflection at the Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo. There were 30 of us!

Group leaders, Monica Dowdell, Michele Broad and Maria Baden chose the John Main quote to highlight the power that comes when we meditate together regularly.

The day was facilitated by Sister Magdalen Mather OSB using the Abbey's yurt as our sacred space.

We began with breaking open the quote, Sr Magdalen slowly reading it several times, letting the words and wisdom sink into our hearts. We then broke into small groups, going out into the peaceful grounds of the Abbey with two questions to ponder:

First, where does this quote meet your experience of meditating in community?

Second, what does "real presence with others" feel like in your body/practice?

Returning to the larger group, those who wished were able to share their insights.

A 25-minute meditation followed, and then morning tea.



Sister Magdalen, whose personality is full of joy and humility, was so engaging. Her words of wisdom, so simple and true, touched us all.

Of particular note was the beautiful song by Sara Thomsen, BY BREATH, which expresses so powerfully our connectedness and which echoes the deep mystery of unity among us and within us when we meditate together on a weekly basis.

The other form of prayer used was the WALKING CIRCLE, a symbol of unity. This simple dance is based on the Julian chant using Julian's words and an action:

Allowing – Attending – Accepting. An embodied prayer which shows the power of community bringing us to deep prayer and communion with Christ.

We ended the day with a second meditation.

The wind in the trees, the hurrying clouds and the chanting of birds kept us in union with God's creation.

Sister Magdalen encouraged us to make more use of this precious Abbey. We are all Benedictines in this Prayer of the Heart.



## Anna and Alana Davao Presentation

In December, Alana Leahy and Anna Ramsay presented at Mercy College and St Patrick's Church Hill, sharing insights from their recent five-week mission immersion in Davao, Philippines. They spoke passionately about their time working with the girls at Balay Banag and the boys at Balay Pasilungan orphanages, offering a moving glimpse into the lives of the children they encountered.



Through personal stories and reflections, Anna and Alana helped audiences develop a deeper understanding of the daily challenges these young people face. Yet, amidst the hardship, their presentation was marked by hope, joy, and deep connection. By becoming part of the children's everyday routines, sharing meals, laughter, play, and conversation, they were able to build genuine relationships and bring moments of joy and dignity to the lives of those they met.



Anna and Alana expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Marist Sisters in Davao, who welcomed and supported them throughout their stay. Inspired by their experience, they hope to return to Davao in 2026 to continue this vital work.

Looking ahead to early 2026, Anna and Alana would be happy to visit other communities (parish or school) to share their story and reflections from the immersion. Communities interested in hosting a presentation are encouraged to contact Marist Way Australia.



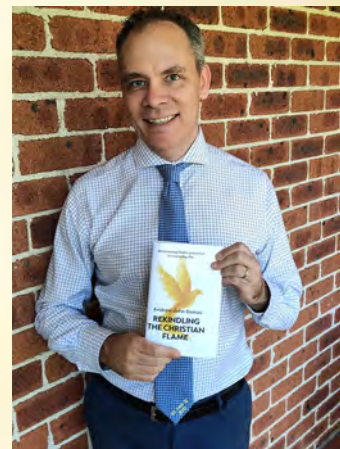
## Marist Way Australia Guidelines Reviewed

During 2025, Marist Way Australia dedicated several days to a careful and prayerful review of its Guidelines, reaffirming its identity as a contemporary expression of the Marist charism lived in everyday life. Central to this review was the significant name change from "Marist Laity Australia" to "Marist Way Australia", a shift that reflects a more inclusive and accessible understanding of the Marist call, one that welcomes all who are drawn to live the Gospel in the spirit of Mary, regardless of formal affiliation. Grounded in the original vision of the Marist founders, the revised Guidelines emphasise simplicity, inclusiveness, flexibility, and a commitment to renewal within the Church, highlighting the role of lay Marists in responding to the signs of the times by bringing God's presence into the ordinary realities of life and society.



## Book Launch - Rekindling the Christian Flame

It is very exciting in mid-December, "**Rekindling the Christian Flame**", a new book by lay Marist Andrew Dumas, was launched online. Written especially for those who may feel disconnected from the Church yet sense a quiet stirring for something more, the book offers a gentle and hopeful invitation to rediscover God's presence in everyday life.



Rekindling the Christian Flame recognises that the **ordinary rhythms of life**, its joys, struggles, doubts, and questions, can become doorways to encountering the divine. Through storytelling, poetry, reflection, journaling, and prayer, the book reveals a God who deeply loves us and meets us within the reality of our human experience. It is an invitation not only to **personal renewal** but to journey alongside others, sharing faith and reflection with trusted spiritual companions.

You can find out more about the book online at [www.andrewjohndumas.com](http://www.andrewjohndumas.com)

Andrew is also seeking Advanced Copy Readers who are willing to review the first part of the book and are happy to share insights online. Those wishing to connect or learn more are encouraged to contact him directly via email - <https://andrewjohndumas.com/contact.php>

### SUPPORT THE BOOK

If you want to support this endeavour, consider **purchasing a copy of the book** for two friends. As the book reflects, and as Jesus reminds us, this journey of faith is not meant to be travelled alone but shared in companionship and relationship. *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am present"* (Matthew 18:20)



The review also clarified the purpose, objectives, and structures of Marist Way Australia, with a renewed focus on formation, communication, collaboration, and outreach. Particular attention was given to strengthening relationships across the wider Marist family, nurturing opportunities for spiritual growth, and supporting evangelisation through a compassionate presence, especially among those on the margins. The updated Guidelines reaffirm the role of the Core Committee in animating this mission and ensuring shared leadership, sound governance, and responsible stewardship. Overall, the review has renewed Marist Way Australia's commitment to fostering "Mary's Spirit active in the world today," as it continues to invite people to follow Christ.

Please get in touch with us if you require a copy.

Also, please contact the Marist Way Australia if you wish to join the Marist Way Australia either as a committee member or an affiliate member who wishes to support us remotely.

Email - <https://www.maristway.org/contact.php>

