

STATEMENT OF THE OCEANIA SHARED FORMATION EXPERIENCE 2011

The Hermitage, Mittagong

22-27 November 2011

We, a group of Champagnat Marists, Brothers and Lay, from Timor Leste, The Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand gathered at The Hermitage Mittagong from 22 to 27 November, 2011 to explore Marist life and mission. We appreciated the presence and participation of Agnes Reyes from the Ad Gentes community in Bangkok and Fr Bob Barber SM, Vice-Provincial of the Marist Fathers of Australia. Coming together from diverse cultures as Brothers and Lay, we listened to one another, shared our faith journey and were enriched by the experience of Marist life, of the Spirit alive in us.

As we interacted we discovered that the Spirit has called us to a deeper personal relationship with God and one another. This also means sticking with it, though it may seem a struggle at times. Forgiveness and acceptance are important parts of this journey together.

We found we all have a place at this table in equality of presence, acceptance and service.

Recognizing the diversity of experience and drawing together the wisdom of all participants provided a particular challenge. We are called to cherish the giftedness of one another and to enrich one another's calls, trust in the Spirit and Mary's influence in our lives.

We are called by God to God, through our relationships with each other and the young, by following the invitation to live in the apostolic way based on the Marist spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. This invitation challenges us to explore Marist spirituality in our own time and the deepening of faith in communion with others. We are called and challenged to bring Christ's life to birth in the lives of the young and each other.

This experience has affirmed our commitment that meaningful relationships are central to the past, present and future expression of Marist life and mission. We are together on this journey building our Marist community through meaningful relationships. It is in creating and nurturing shared space for relationships with God, ourselves and each other that we grow together in spirituality, shared life and mission.

Responding to the needs of marginalized young people is our Marist mission. Montagne is not an isolated incident. We Champagnat Marists are urged to seek out our Montagnes not just where we expect to find them, but in unsuspected places too.

The Oceania Shared Formation Experience 2011 has confirmed that a vocational Marist life is a gift from God and open to all. It has confirmed that our inspiration for Marist life has and continues to come from the lived reality of our communal relationships.

It has provided us with a space for creative options for experimenting with the diverse possibilities of Marist life in the future.

We respect highly the interdependence and complementarity of all Marists across the region and look forward in hope to supporting one another with confidence and energy.