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# On not being too disappointed with Others

**Br Mark O'Connor**

Robbie Burns once famously cried out:

*“O would some Power the gift to give us  
To see ourselves as others see us!”*

That’s a useful bit of human wisdom for each of us to take on board. For anyone with a little self knowledge knows only too well about the extraordinary capacity of each of us for hidden biases and ‘blind spots’.

Supervision, therapy, spiritual direction and prayer - are all avenues that aim to help free us from these ‘traps’ - or at least ensure that those of us who are called to service of others - ‘do no harm’.

Or at least do as little damage as is possible!  
For it is so easy to be insensitive and judge others and do great damage.

The ‘train wreck’ our Church has gone through over the issue of professional misconduct highlights how we are all vulnerable, so easily can we mistake our own needs for the real needs of the people we are serving.

Actually, ‘seeing the other’ is not as easy as it sounds, for we all engage in projection, transference and counter-transference. I have come to the conclusion that most issues in the Church (and in community life) have very little to do with ‘theology’ - and a lot to do with ‘personality’!

For it is far easier to evaluate others, offer critiques, bemoan the lack of leadership of others (especially high officials in the Church or Province!), disagree with other people’s views etc. and generally observe and (usually secretly) take pleasure in their frailties. The Germans have a word for it - *Schadenfreude*)

At least for me!

No wonder Jesus warned us not to ‘Judge others’. Such judgement is usually in the supposedly benign form of gossip. Yes, we all do it (including me) – but who can deny that there is profound truth in the Freudian observation that what we most dislike and talk about in others is saying as much about ourselves as them?!

Come to mention it, the media these days seems to be full of people who are disappointed in the Church. One more ‘report’ about the future of the Church and I’ll need a drink!

To tell the truth, however, I am sometimes more disappointed in myself, deep down, than in the real or imagined failures of others in the Church or elsewhere. For I can so very expertly avoid the demands of the Gospel in my life and waste my life thinking about how others are the ‘problem’. Read Bishop Morneau below – I think he’s onto something you and I could all learn from.

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# Gossip

*“gossip n gossyp; also godsip;  
late As. godsibbe, baptismal sponsor, godparent;  
see God & Sib” – Mr. Webster*

**The town gossip is no godparent,  
surely not one’s baptismal sponsor.  
Rather, he/she indulges in idle talk,  
in rumors about others,  
often with an edge of superiority,  
if not disdain.**

**I sat for years on a personnel board.  
For three hours, once a month,  
we chatted and chatted and chatted about others.**

**Idle talk?**

**Rumors?**

**Responsible dialogue?**

**Smart-ass remarks?**

**Perceptive analysis?**

**Sound evaluation?**

**Snide, cutting jibes?**

**I hope Peter  
(the one at the gate)  
works alone, sans personnel board.  
I hope that Peter and God  
have dispensed with peer evaluation.**

*Kyrie eleison!*

**The Colour of Gratitude  
And Other Spiritual Surprises**

**Bishop Robert Morneau**

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# Champagnat Day Celebrated at Netley

Br Leo Kavanagh FMS



We are delighted to report that our two elders, recently confined in hospital, are now back in community.

**Austin Stephens**, who suffered a stroke in the first week of February, has returned and is back to his old self, able to join in community activities. Each day he has a nurse to help him with showering and exercises.

**Kevin Hogan** has returned after a serious bout of pneumonia. He is sharp of mind, interested in many things but needs continued care due to debilitating arthritis and pressure sores. He has a nurse attending to his needs three days a week.

**Leo McVeigh**, a true gift to our Community, is solicitous of Kevin's needs. Please keep these three elders in your prayers.

Champagnat day celebrations were something special. Except for **Ambrose Reilly** still recuperating in hospital, all other Adelaide Brothers came together at Netley for the feast day.

It was timely that **Julian**, on visitation, was able to join us as did **Paul Herrick** and **John Mullins**, an ex-student of Austin Stephens and the famous SHC football team of yesteryear.

Our affiliated member, Monsignor **Rob Egar**, was our Mass Celebrant.

**Leo Kavanagh** welcomed everyone and presented an introduction to the celebration with a talk on the significance of the Feast, especially on the essential interconnection of the Table of the Eucharist with the Table of Champagnat's Charism.

The celebration of the Eucharist was followed by a community meal prepared by our cook **Margaret Valaderes** with the assistance of **David Christian**.

We pass on our greeting to all our Marist confreres and Lay partners and have no doubt that you, too, would have celebrated this Feast in an appropriate manner.



**Monsignor Rob Egar celebrates Mass**



**The Brothers enjoy a celebratory meal**

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# *Sharing Champagnat's Vision*

## *New Norcia*



Fourteen Marists gathered from 12-14 June at the Benedictine Abbey in New Norcia, north of Perth, for this year's Sharing Champagnat's Vision Program in Western Australia. Participants came from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia and entered enthusiastically into the Program. Participating in a Marist program in a Benedictine Abbey helped remind participants that a charism, be it Marist or Benedictine, is a particular way into the Gospel and a relationship with Jesus.



*The group gathers on the stairwell outside St Ildephonsus College,  
administered by the Marist Brothers from 1913 to 1964*



*St Ildephonsus College  
and  
the College Chapel*



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# The Divine Beauty

Br Mark O'Connor FMS

The great theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, saw beauty as a joyful experience that calls us out of ourselves to connect with others, and most importantly to connect us with the mystery of God.

Beauty is a bridge to God. For von Balthasar, when we see a beautiful work of art, or a radiant sunset, we are confronted with the mystery of its otherness. Every person has an aching need for beauty; in beauty we discover the face of God.

As David Bentley Hart has so eloquently pointed out : "God's pleasure - the beauty creation possesses in his regard - underlies the distinct being of creation, and so beauty is the first and truest word concerning all that appears within being; beauty is the showing of what is; God looked upon what he had wrought and saw that it was good." (The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth)

No wonder then that the human soul is hungry for beauty; we seek it everywhere -- in landscape, music, art, clothes, furniture, gardening, companionship, love, religion, and in ourselves. No one would desire not to be beautiful. When we experience the Beautiful, there is a sense of homecoming. We feel most alive in the presence of the Beautiful, for it meets the needs of our soul.

And yet, there is so much ugliness that we have to endure and allow on our pilgrimage. The media generate relentless images of mediocrity and ugliness in their talk-back radio shows and 'reality' type television- all full of frenetic gratification.

We can't seem to help ourselves. In our rush to do more and expand more, the blindness of development creates rooms, buildings, and suburbs that lack grace and mystery. Thus we are turning more and more of our beautiful earth into a wasteland. (Thank God there is a recovery of a Franciscan sensitivity to ecology underway in our times and - whilst it does require discernment - it is surely one of the 'signs of hope in our culture).

And in such a culture based so much on 'image', we tragically fail to see the beauty of the human person. When it comes to people, we can so easily make a basic mistake. We are encouraged to look at the 'outer' appearance and make a general opinion about a given person. Such a way of thinking may be very misleading. Think of the famous novel: *'The Picture of Dorian Gray'* by Oscar Wilde. The story shows us how external attractiveness influences people's behaviour and corrupts inner beauty.

It is timely then to recall St Augustine's words: "People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the seas, at the long course of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering."

We should be in awe then of the beauty of Christ's Mystical Body – made up entirely of human persons! I love the story once shared with me of an elderly priest. He used to preside at weekly evening Eucharists in a poor inner suburban parish. He was fond of quoting Karl Rahner's aphorism that: "each human being is

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the unique and unrepeatable expression of the creative love of God.”

During the Great Thanksgiving of the Eucharist, he would often pause over the words “take these gifts; make them holy; may they become for us the body and blood of Our Saviour Jesus Christ,” taking care to enunciate the words “these gifts...make them holy... may they become for us...” and as he did so, his eyes and hands would drift from contemplation of the uplifted host to gaze upon the small rag-tag assembly of old nuns,

young children, newly arrived refugees, and all the other jagged edge of the mosaic of the Body of Christ. His intent was clear: what we were about to eat was sacred, and equally so was each person partaking in this great mystery of Love incarnate.

And if human beings share so much in the Divine Love and are hence so beautiful - then just imagine what God must be like! St Augustine’s prayer captures that amazement in store for all of us in the Parousia.



***Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you.***

***In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you, they would not have been at all.***

***You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you.***

***I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.***

***St Augustine***



# *Founders' Day at St Josephs, Northam.*

St Joseph's, Northam, brought together the students from its two campuses for a Mass, celebrated in the Parish Church, followed by an Assembly in the nearby Pat Kirby Hall to honour the founders of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition (St Emily de Vialar) and the Marist Brothers (St Marcellin Champagnat).

Guest speaker at the Assembly was former student, Brittany Hunter, now studying Science at UWA.

A special morning tea and afternoon of tabloid sports capped off the celebration for the students.

Appointed Principal in Term 3, 2010, Kevin Sheehy proved an amiable host to the visiting guests and proudly showed off the new Arts/Drama building taking shape alongside the original Fermoy building where the Brothers commenced teaching in 1948.



*Neville McManus, former Principal, Sr Monica Kirby, Sr Anne Marie Hughes, Kevin Sheehy, current Principal, Br Terry Orrell, former student, and Brittany Hunter*



*The old Fermoy hospital, which became St Paul's College,  
now enhanced by the emerging Arts/Drama building*

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# *Little Children's Learning Place*

## *Alice Springs*



On Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011, several very distinguished guests visited the Little Children's Learning Place (A program that prepares indigenous children for mainstream schooling) at the Bath Street campus of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Alice Springs.

The Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mrs Jenny Macklin, and the Mayor of Alice Springs, Mr Damien Ryan, spent about forty five minutes with the children and were also introduced to

many of College staff and the parents of the children.

Ms Marni Milankov and Mrs Margaret Palmer, who coordinate the Learning Place, led the children in a number of songs, to the amusement and pleasure of our visitors.

The visit certainly produced a buzz around the College; it's not every day that the Prime Minister drops by.



*Awaiting the Prime Minister at the Bath Street Campus*



*Br Paul Gilchrist greets the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard*



# *The Size of our Hearts*

**Ron Rolheiser OMI - June 6, 2011**

It's common, particularly among religious commentators, to describe the human heart as small, narrow, and petty:



## ***How small-hearted and petty we are!***

I find this distressing because religious thinkers especially should know better. We are not created by God and put in this earth with small, narrow, and petty hearts. The opposite is true. God puts us into this world with huge hearts, hearts as deep as the Grand Canyon. The human heart in itself, when not closed off by fear, wound, and paranoia, is the antithesis of pettiness. The human heart, as Augustine describes it, is not fulfilled by anything less than infinity itself. There's nothing small about the human heart.

But then why do we so often find ourselves relating to the world, to each other, and to God, in fact with hearts that are small, narrow, and petty?

The problem is not the size or the natural dynamics of the human heart, but what the heart tends to do when it is wounded, fearful, disrespected, paranoid, or self-

deluded by greed and selfishness. It's then that it closes itself to its own depth and greatness and becomes narrow, petty, fearful, and selfish. But that behavior is anomalous, not the human heart at either its normal or its best. At its normal and at its best, the human heart is huge, generous, noble, and self-sacrificing.

The early Church Fathers had a simple way of expressing our struggle here. They taught that each of us has two hearts, two souls:

In each person, they affirmed, there is a small, petty heart, a ***pusilla anima***. This is the heart that we operate out of when we are not at our best. This is the heart within which we feel our wounds and our distance from others. This is the heart within which we are chronically irritated and angry, the heart within which we feel the unfairness of life, the heart within which we sense others as a threat, the heart within which we feel envy and bitterness, and the heart within which greed, lust, and selfishness break through. This too is the heart that wants to set itself apart from and above others. And this is the heart that is most often described by religious thinkers when they describe human nature as small and petty.

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But the Church Fathers taught that inside of each of us there was also another heart, a *magna anima*, a huge, deep, big, generous, and noble heart. This is the heart we operate out of when we are at our best. This is the heart within which we feel empathy and compassion. This is the heart within which we are enflamed with noble ideals. This is the heart where we inchoately feel God's presence in faith and hope and are able to move out to others in charity and forgiveness. Inside each of us, sadly often buried under suffocating wounds that keep if far from the surface, lies the heart of a saint, bursting to get out.

Thus on any given day, and at any given moment, we can feel like Mother Teresa or like a bitter terrorist. We can feel ready to give our lives in martyrdom or we can feel ready to welcome the sensation of sin. We can feel like the noble Don Quixote, enflamed with idealism, or we can feel like a despairing cynic, content to settle for whatever short-range compensation and pleasure life can give, rather than believing in deeper, more life-giving possibilities for ourselves and others. Everything depends upon which heart we are connected to at a given moment.

If that is true, then our invitation to others in terms of moving towards nobleness of heart will be most effective when, rather

than emphasizing their faults and narrowness, we instead invite them to try to access what is best, highest, within themselves.

And this is not a simple variation on the axiom that you attract more bees with honey than with vinegar. It's a variation on the dynamics of repentance and healing as the great mystic, John of the Cross, describes them. For him, the most effective way to move towards healing is not by focusing on the moral and spiritual areas within which we particularly struggle. For him, we heal and grow and eventually "cauterize" our faults by fanning the flames of what is already virtuous, best, inside us. As we fan our virtues to full-flame, those fires eventually burn out our selfishness and our wounds. Our virtues, when fanned to full-flame, leave no room inside us for pettiness and small-heartedness. Fanning what's highest in us eventually moves us more and more towards living out of our big hearts rather than petty hearts.

Not everything can be fixed or cured, but it should be named correctly. Nowhere is this more important than in how we name both the size and the struggles of the human heart. We are not petty souls who occasionally do noble things. We are rather noble souls who, sadly, occasionally do petty things.

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# Madang Marist Partners

**Br Michael McManus FMS**

The Marist community has been situated on the campus of Divine Word University since 1986. At that time we were invited to join the SVD fathers and brothers as teachers, student services personnel, administrators and formators at the former Divine Word Institute. Times have changed, and in 2011 many religious congregations are represented at Divine Word University as staff and students, including Divine Word Missionaries, Christian Brothers, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Passionists, Spiritans, Sacred Heart Brothers, Patrician Brothers, and numerous congregations of religious women. They are all counted amongst our friends, partners and colleagues with whom we work, share the Eucharist, meet informally and generally get on with the business of everyday life. We all work towards achieving the goals of the university in teaching, learning, research and community engagement in a Christian environment.

Our annual gathering takes place around Champagnat Day. This year, on Sunday June 5, a group of about 35 people gathered in our house for Marial prayer and a lunch that was a team effort, with community leader **Br Frank Hough** making everyone welcome. Here is some information about some of those we call our Marist partners in 2011.

Our chaplain **Fr Ed Meli MSC** lived with the Enoggera community while he was completing his Education studies at ACU. He has special memories of Easter at Mittagong, the student retreats on the Gold Coast, and the Marist ways of education at Mt Maria. He is pleased to

continue his association with the Marists at DWU, especially on occasions such as Champagnat Day.



*Fr Ed Meli, Sr Irene Kuan, Sr Marceline Pokah*

**Fr Robert Laka SVD** and **Fr Dons Onyeke CSSP**, both lecturers in the Social and Religious Studies department, joined us too.



*Fr Robert Laka & Mr Peter Smyth*

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**Br George Kuzma SVD** is an orthopaedic surgeon and a most valuable member of the DWU staff. **Christian Brothers Andrew Simpson and Alfred Tivinarlik** are experienced educators.



*Br Brendan Neily, Br George Kuzma,  
Sr Hendrina Sinipo*

A good number of student sisters and brothers enrol in Social and Religious Studies, where they are taught by the Marists. They look up to the Marists as people who see the need for Melanesian religious to be well educated and well prepared for ministry in a variety of fields. They have a great respect for our Marist ways of caring for their educational needs by being available and open to all. They enjoy the opportunities to meet with the less fortunate in our society when they visit the juveniles at Madang's Beon prison once a week and the Madang hospital on Thursdays.

The Madang version of Marist partnership necessarily involves these religious. It is good for us Marists to find out more about their charisms, just as they marvel at the idea of a male congregation that is Marial in character. We have much that is common in our spiritualities, our origins, our ministries and our commitments to the kingdom. Yet we are

conscious of the need to maintain our separate identities.

**Patrician Brothers Matthew Aiwe and Ludmer Pindau** from Aitape live in our Marist community. They are both studying in the Department of Social and Religious Studies. They feel that they are quite at home in the Marist community at Divine Word.

**Sister Betty Singamai PBVM** comes from Aitape where the Presentation Sisters have 23 PNG nationals and 3 expatriates in 4 communities, mostly involved in teaching, nursing and pastoral work. She sees that Mary is the clear link between our congregations, as well as the ministry of teaching.

**Sister Anna Karuai SSCJ** joined the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Chimbu. Their congregation was founded in Brittany in 1816, so they have a French connection to the Marists. She hopes that the Marists can help her to be a good teacher.



*Sr Anna Kiruai, Sr Rosalia Milur,  
Sr Heline Senft, Sr Teresa Waine*

**Sister Rosalia Milur MFIC** and **Sister Marceline Pokah MFIC** belong to the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception based in the Aitape diocese. They see that our two congregations share a Marial

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connection and a ministry involving teaching, pastoral work and formation. According to them, the Marists are dedicated teachers who also share their own spirit of joyful simplicity. When Sister Rosalia completes her studies she will be moving to a new community at Kiunga in the Western Province.

**Sister Bernadine-Marie Yabimini SND** is a Notre Dame Sister from Mt Hagen. Her congregation was founded in France in 1815, giving our two religious families both a Marial and a French connection. Their Sisters are involved in teaching, in conducting a resource centre for women and a care centre for HIV patients. One Sister works at Trinité FM Catholic Radio in Mt Hagen.

**Sister Irene Kuam** is a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate, generally known as PIME sisters who are in Vanimo and Milne Bay dioceses. They too have Marial connections with us and are devoted to teaching, nursing and pastoral work.

**Sister Hendrina Sinipo SSps** comes from Bougainville and she is the sister of **Br Rodney Pauru** of the Tenaru Marist community.

**Sister Teresa Waine SMSM** is a recent Social and Religious Studies graduate who is now looking after the Alexishafen training centre for catechists and pastoral workers in the Madang Archdiocese.

At the university many other staff and students share their lives with us. **Dr Jerry Semos** (former brother), his wife **Dr Maretta**, sons **Marcellin** and **Jerry** moved to Madang in 2010. Jerry loves his teaching and he attributes this to the Brothers who taught him back at St Joseph's Rigu. He regards himself as Marist in his outlook on life and his service to the young people in his weekend sports program.



*Dr Jerry Semos, Marcellin and Dr Maretta Semos*

Young **Marcellin Semos** and the more mature-aged **Br Bill McCarthy** shared the task of cutting the two Champagnat day cakes this year, illustrating the collaboration that exists between the generations of Marist partners.



*Marcellin Semos and Br Bill McCarthy cut the two Champagnat cakes*

**Peter** and **Elaine Smyth** are PALMS volunteers from Canberra. They have connections with the Brothers at Pearce and naturally enjoy continuing this contact with the Marist community while they are in Madang for a two-year appointment.

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**Alfred Suaimbau** was taught by the Marists at St Xavier's in Kairiru and then later at Divine Word. He has a great love of his work in the Finance office at the university. He is grateful to the Brothers for showing him how to live with the Marist values of generosity and hard work.

Our Marist communities undergo changes each year. Likewise our partners change in

personnel, as students complete their studies and others transfer in and out of DWU. We were pleased to celebrate our companionship and support for each other this year as 'brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church' (*Vita Consecrata*, 60), bearing in mind that we are all mutual partners to each other, as every congregation needs partners these days.

