

MARIST NEWSLETTER

Marist Brothers • Province of Melbourne

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The Pentecost Gospel stories:

“Luke’s account is strong, almost wild with energy and it is about dramatic empowerment.”

“John sees the coming of God’s Spirit as quiet and penetrating. Like good soaking rain, it seeps deep within, to nurture and restore.”

Fr Michael Elligate, PP of St Carthage’s, Parkville

Province News - Santa Maria la Blanca - Fraternal Correccion - Asylum Seekers - In Search of a Great Soul - Human Rights Under Review - Japan’s gods of Nature



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Marist Newsletter of the Marist Brothers Province of Melbourne is a private publication for the dissemination of news, notices and articles of interest among the Brothers, the affiliated members of the Province and our lay associates who serve on Committees of the Province.

Copies are sent to each of the Brothers' Communities in the Sydney Province as well as to the General House in Rome and to some other overseas Marist Communities.

The Editor welcomes contributions and suggestions
from our readers



Our deceased and their families...

- * **Br Alex Moss**, Randwick.
- * **Br Brian Murray**, Lismore.
- * **Fr Patrick Littlewood**, Mill Hill Fathers. Great support to the Brothers and schools at Port Hedland in his time as Parish Priest. Died April 2011 in Kataia, NZ. (Near Auckland).

For those who are unwell ...

- * **Br Charles Howard**, Campbelltown.
- * **Br Austin Stephens**, Netley, Adelaide. Now back in community with a nurse attending four days a week.
- * **Br Kevin Hogan**, Netley, Adelaide. Also back in community under medical supervision and visited by a nurse twice a week.
- * **Br Ambrose Reilly**, SHC Adelaide. Soon to have heart surgery followed by private convalescence.
- * **Br Peter Walsh**, Fitzroy. Being treated for a pulmonary embolism. Expected to return home after about a week.
- * **Br Alexander Moss**, Randwick.
- * **Br Kevin Friel**, Malloy House, St Gregory's Campbelltown.
- * **Br Ken Eaton**, Ashgrove, receiving palliative care. Ex-student of St Ildephonsus, New Norcia.
- * **Wayne Dean**, teacher at Trinity College, Lismore. Seriously injured in a traffic accident.

From the Provincial



May 30, 2011

Dear Brothers and Friends

CHAMPAGNAT DAY 2011

In Champagnat's undertaking we admire his strength of resolve and action, his intrepid pursuit of the dream and his devoted quest of it in the lives of society's marginalized and disadvantaged young people.

As Charles Gay said in his Article in the August 2009 Champagnat Journal: -

"dreaming is not something you do lying on your back; it is not something you do with your head – Dreams come out of the furnace of your belly"

Marcellin's daring yet practical approach was anchored by the dream. He dreamt a big dream because a dream has to be stretched to be credible. The dream was more than simply establishing an Institute or organization. It had to inspire and align people who were yet unborn at the time of Champagnat.

Where is the dream of Champagnat today?

Our General Chapter speaks about the dream.

We desire to carry on his dream: as men and women of God, prophets of fraternity in a dehumanised world searching for meaning and thirsty for God. In the light of this Chapter experience, we feel called to respond, as brothers and sisters, witnesses to the loving and maternal face of God.

But really it is even more than that. All that Champagnat dreamed for Institute has been realised in you, in me, and in the long line of Marists (Brothers and Lay) who have gone before us and who will follow us. We are the dream of this dreamer. We are whom he dreamed of. When we understand that we will better understand our role and identity in today's world.

Fraternally

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Br Julian Casey".

Br Julian Casey
Provincial

NEXUS

Soon you will be receiving **NEXUS** which has been commissioned by both Provinces to keep you informed of the developments associated with forming a new Province in Australia. In this introductory issue, you will find a list of the various committees and commissions which we have established to help us bring about the new Province. There is obviously much work to be done and we have tried to spread the tasks among as many as possible.

VISITATION

By the time you receive this Newsletter, I will have completed visitation in all but the Darwin and East Timor Communities. I have timetabled interviews with the Brothers at Templestowe towards the end of June and this will bring this round of visits to a conclusion. Over the last six weeks I have been away from Templestowe more often than in my office.

Visiting and speaking with the Brothers is the best part of my role. It is always a source of inspiration for me. I thank you all for your welcome, your hospitality and for making yourselves available.

In the next few months the members of the Provincial Council will arrange a visit to your community to try to keep you personally informed about developments in the New Australian Province and to hear of your reactions, responses and comments.

PROVINCE WEBSITE

I hope that you can all find some time to regularly visit the website. This contains quite a lot of news about the various province activities and I do not like to repeat from it. But at www.maristmelb.org.au/news you will find news of the website about such items as:-

- Mission Assembly for the Melanesian District
- “Marcellin the Man” Patrimony Course at the Montagne Centre
- Rex Cambrey at the International Finance Commission
- Return of the Pilgrims
- Alice Springs activities:
 - Living Champagnat’s Vision
 - Maurie Bambridge
 - Opening of the Marian Centre
 - Gathering of the Central Australian Communities

Santa María la Blanca

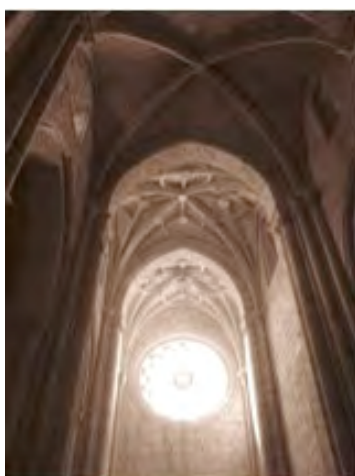
Mike Hansen, Lavalla Catholic College, Traralgon



It was always a deep joy to arrive at a little village and enter the church to pray. Some villages have two and even three churches. In some, the great golden altar panels and side altars are covered with dust and neglected. Confessional boxes are receptacles for fallen stations of the cross. There is an air of neglect and abandonment.

But in most cases there is a wonderful sense of peace in buildings that ring with the last cadences of the dismissal prayer of Sunday mass. It is like walking into a holy vacuum, resonant with the prayer life of centuries. These are sacred places. The sun creates deep pools of shadow across the paved floors, shafts of light that add grace to ancient statues of the virgin and child or rustic wooden pews.

At Villasirga I visited the church of Santa Maria la Blanca (The White Virgin). It is a national monument... a significant church of the Templar Knights. The interior is exquisite. High and cool, the interior is lit by a glorious rose window.



In an enclosure reserved for the burial of patrons of centuries gone by is a small stone statue of Mother and Child. The body of the child Jesus is long gone... only a fragment of arm and leg remains. But the sweet face of the virgin is untouched by the march of time. There is an innocent but knowing acceptance in her young face, an enigmatic smile that reaches from the corner of her mouth to her downcast eyes. Perhaps seven hundred years old, it portrays such a realistic interpretation of the Incarnation event. It remains the most beautiful religious image I saw on the Camino.

Most images of Mary are from a much later time and we see her fully clothed in rich bejewelled fabrics, perhaps carrying a kerchief or handbag. Her face is stylised and stern, gazing out from her elevated position with a solemn expression far too aware of the folly of those gathered for prayer and forgetful of her own maidenhood.

The gold carved facades, whilst telling the story of salvation and the lives of the saints, have occluded the joyous simplicity of the ancient faith ... 'a maiden is with child'. So much has been lost and forgotten under the encrustations of centuries and the layering of cultural appropriations.



Mike Hansen, Camino Journal, 2010

Fraternal Correction

Br Mark O'Connor, FMS



Cardinal Basil Hume OSB once remarked that we have lost the virtue of 'fraternal correction' in the contemporary Church. Amidst the bewildering pace of life and the pluralism all around us, it does seem a daunting challenge (and perhaps

even a bit unwise) to urge people to 'correct' each other.

And yet part of the richness of our Tradition is our duty, at times, to confront evil and call people to 'chose life not death' in their pilgrimage here on earth. St Paul told us to "be angry and sin not" and there are times when it is appropriate to tell people that they are going down the wrong path in their lives with some passion!

The Prophets did it all the time and we know what happened to them. That may help explain our reluctance!

Yet we dare not forget the example of John the Baptist at our peril. If John the Baptist were around today, that fur-wearing, locust-eating, wild-eyed, holy-rolling loudmouthed desert prophet would probably have a few things to say!

He was a little rough around the edges as far as social mannerisms were concerned but he told it how it was and didn't pull any punches. If you were looking for pampering words or a 'Cafeteria type Catholicism', the Baptist would not be the bloke to go to. The Prophet got himself in a bit of hot water for his refusal to consent to Herod's involvement with his brother's wife. The King rewarded John's courage and honesty with a complimentary decapitation.

John the Baptist's noble actions are an example of the work of mercy of admonishing the sinner. His task was rather extreme and rare. Most of us are called to something slightly less heroic. Nonetheless, this can be one of the more difficult works of mercy to put into practice and requires a different kind of personal sacrifice than the other works.

There is, of course, a right and a wrong way for the more ordinary ways of 'admonishing the sinner' to be accomplished, however. Most people are not 'Herod' and will not usually respond to a call to 'conversion' - unless they believe they are deeply loved first. Otherwise, it just produces resentment.

Heaven save us then from ideological zealots and crusaders who take it upon themselves to 'admonish' without ever having met the 'other' and establish a relationship of trust and love first. 'Right wing and left wing "ideologues"' who act in an accusatory and confrontational manner can expect the reaction will always be one of anger and resentment towards the 'preacher.'

But if time is taken for a relationship to be developed and a trust built up (with love, rather than conversion, as the underlying motivation for the development of such a relationship), words of admonition or better, fraternal correction - will be received with more thoughtfulness and will hold more meaning.

An instructing word - even when it is firm and forces the person to face painful personal 'demons' - has more weight coming from a loving fellow Christian sinner than a self-righteous 'stranger.' "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise." (Prov. 13:31)

The old world killed the prophets. The new world simply ignores them. It can afford to do

this because the world is more conducive to self-deception today than ever before.

Some then are especially called to this ministry of 'fraternal correction' in our culture and Church. Frankly, I don't think many people have this gift at a purely human level. Since baptised believers are always on the way to becoming Christians - it takes a wise and holy person then to practise this work of mercy well. Something most us (including me) are a long way from.

On the other hand, William Blake has a salutary poem which shows us what happens, when we completely ignore the need to express our legitimate 'anger' and 'sweep everything under the carpet'. Whilst it may not be our personal charism - we all need to acknowledge that if no one practises this work of mercy - 'the poison tree' can grow in our lives and in our Church.

The Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with my smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree

William Blake

Can we open our minds and hearts?

Sarah Puls, SGS

We need to open our hearts and minds to the bigger story of asylum seekers in Australia and seek out information from a variety of informed sources, rather than accepting generalisations presented in our media,

While community opinion is understandably varied on the issue of asylum seekers, the vigour and passion with which asylum seekers are discussed deserves closer analysis. So often the debate about asylum seekers and refugees in our community is based on half-truths and misunderstandings.

Firstly, Australia has significantly fewer people seeking asylum annually than many other industrialised democratic countries. According to the [UNHCR, the United Nation's refugee agency](#), in 2010 Australia was ranked 15th in terms of the number of asylum seekers it received, while Sweden, Canada, Belgium and Italy all receive vastly more claims.

Secondly, many people are under the impression that all asylum seekers are in detention. This is understandable given that the policy of mandatory detention focuses on those who arrive by sea which is less than half of the total. But the majority of asylum seekers arrive by plane.

It is of grave concern that the situation of thousands of other asylum seekers who have arrived by air and then are living in our



community with minimal support and terrible fear is so consistently overlooked in the media and by activists.

Mandatory detention, particularly of children, is abhorrent and incomprehensible when the people we lock up have not committed any crime. It is important that voices opposing this policy be heard.

To be an asylum seeker is to put your life and your safety in the hands of another. These people are individuals who come seeking protection and are completely vulnerable to the policy, politics, and even the whim of the people who receive them. They are here because it is not safe for them to live in their country of origin.

Any person who comes to Australia seeking asylum is put through a lengthy and detailed process before they have any hope of being deemed a refugee and granted residency. The bar is set extremely high and there is no room for the Department of Immigration to respond with compassion.

The process of applying for a 'Protection Visa' (to be deemed a refugee and allowed to stay in the country) can be a brutal experience for those whose claims are rejected. For example, being able to show that you have been tortured and raped because of your personal or political situation does not mean that you are a refugee, especially if you are deemed to be able to live safely in another area of your country or to be safe if you curtail your activities.

The impact on the mental health of people going through this process is consistently negative, whether they are in detention or in the community. The long period of uncertainty; the renewed trauma of having to tell and retell your story to an immigration department official whose role is to look at its veracity rather than to see the human being; and knowing that sections of the Australian community in which they are seeking refuge do not want you to be accepted, all have lasting detrimental effects.

To be a good neighbour to these human beings, these individuals with unique and yet consistently traumatic stories, is to respond with an open heart. This means opening my own heart and mind to the bigger story of asylum seekers in Australia and seeking out information from a variety of informed sources, rather than accepting the generalisations and simplified versions so often presented in our media.

*Sarah Puls made her first profession as a Sister of the Good Samaritan in 2010. She trained as a social worker and has experience in the areas of mental health, homelessness and domestic violence. This year she is working at the **House of Welcome** in Sydney, which provides housing, financial and casework support to individuals and families who are seeking asylum and are living in the community.*

The Good Oil April 2011: monthly e-magazine of the Good Samaritan Sisters.



The new Principal of Trinity Catholic College, at Auburn/Regents Park in Sydney, will be **JOHN ROBINSON**.

John takes over from Paul Fensom at the beginning of 2012.

John comes to Trinity from Clancy Catholic College, Hoxton Park, where for the last six years he has been the Foundation Principal. He is, though, no stranger to our Marist family, having been Deputy Principal of Marist College Eastwood for a number of years prior to his present appointment.

John's undergraduate studies were completed at

Macquarie University (B.A., Dip.Ed.). He has a Masters in Education from ACU (where he is also currently undertaking doctoral studies) and also Graduate Diplomas in Religious Education and in Theology from Aquinas Academy and the Sydney College of Divinity.

During the consultation with the College community, there was a strong call for a person who could lead Trinity in a Marist way – spiritually, relationally, and educationally – so as to build on the excellent work that has been done by its first two Principals, Brother John Thompson and Mr Paul Fensom, and indeed by all of those who preceded them in the days of Benedict College.

John will be heartedly welcomed back into the Marist Family and Marist Schools Australia.

In Search of a great Soul

Br Mark O'Connor, FMS

Rabbi Abba (the scribe of the Zohar) once sat at the gateway of the Town of Lud.

He saw a traveller sit down on a pile of rocks at the edge of a mountain overlooking a cliff. The man was exhausted from his journey and immediately fell asleep. R. Abba watched this innocuous scene for a bit until, to his dismay, he watched as a deadly snake slither out of the rocks and make its way towards the sleeping man.

R. Abba, who for some reason was immobilized and transfixed by this unfolding drama, suddenly watched as a new turn of events happened. A giant lizard jumped out between the rocks and killed the serpent.

R. Abba continued watching and saw that the man stood up and was perplexed to see a beheaded snake lying in front of him. He quickly gathered his possessions and rose to continue his journey. At that instant the pile of rocks he was sitting on collapsed and fell into the ravine below.

The man was about to wander off when R. Abba ran after him and recounted everything he had witnessed. R. Abba asked the man, "My friend, to what do you attribute all these miracles that just transpired?"

The traveller at first did not want to be bothered but felt the sincerity of R. Abba's question and confided in him.

"Throughout my life I have never let a person harm me nor where I did not pacify him. Never have I gone to sleep without forgiving someone for hurting me in any way. If anyone would hurt me I would endeavour, with all my heart, to resolve whatever animosity was between us. And lastly, I would turn the hateful situation in to doing acts of kindness for the person involved in the misunderstanding."

When R. Abba heard this he burst into tears. This person's actions were greater than Joseph. For Joseph had to deal with his brothers; of course he was going to forgive his brothers. But this man forgives anyone and everyone who has harmed him. It is no surprise that God performs miracles on a daily basis for this blessed man

This Hasidic tale about the man who forgave as a way of life is a wonderful way of showing us that God performs miracles when we forgive.

Yet of all of the 'Works of Mercy' - 'to forgive offenses willingly' - often seems impossible to

me. Blessed with a very good memory, I easily (too easily to be truthful), recall hurts from the past and struggle to let them go.

In short, I have had trouble with forgiveness - forgiving myself and forgiving others - to say

I'm sorry and truly mean it. To truly repent, I have to learn how to forgive.

Rabbi Harold Kushner has helped me understand forgiveness with his teaching, "Forgiveness is not a favour we do for the person who offended us. It is a favour we do for ourselves, cleansing our souls of thoughts and memories that lead us to see ourselves as victims and make our lives less enjoyable. When we understand we have little choice as to what other people do but we can always choose how we will respond to what they do, we can let go of those embittering memories...."

Forgiveness requires what Aristotle called "a great soul" and it demands magnanimity. The Greek philosopher said that this power lies between the extremes of vanity and timidity. That's exactly where I think forgiveness is to be found — that place uncovered when we get over our "too big" sense of self and grow out of our smallness of mind and spirit.

The Greek word for forgiveness actually means release. When we forgive, we release ourselves as well as the other person. We allow life to go on, to bypass our exaggerated sense of virtue and our worry about being offended.

We can't manufacture forgiveness. It rises up from deep within a soul that allows life to flow. If we are afraid of life and hold ourselves and others to a timid, limited view of what is possible, forgiveness will remain locked up. But the haunting question still remains for me

at times: is that really possible for sinners like me?

The liberating Good News of the Gospel is this: it is Christ who gives us the power to forgive - as a free gift. For only Christ can give us this gift of forgiveness, that reaches deep down into our wounds and heals them.

Part of the beauty of the Catholic Tradition, is that this power of the forgiveness of Christ is superabundantly accessible. As one Church Father commented, the sacramental act of Reconciliation is simply the 'unbinding' of the already risen Lazarus! Our God is so full of magnanimity that, amazingly, we are forgiven before we even ask! That is solid Catholic doctrine. In contrast, certain types of Protestantism that have deeply influenced Western culture portray God as a miserly judge, unwilling or reluctant to forgive. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Cardinal Basil Hume OSB once noted that God's 'judgement' at our death simply means this. At that decisive moment, we are each finally able to whisper into the heart of a loving Father, the whole story of our life, a story that we could not tell no one else except Him.

God graces us with the power 'to forgive offences willingly'. If we can accept that gift, as the Hasidic tale assures us - 'It is no surprise that God performs miracles on a daily basis'.



Human Rights Under Review

Br Jim Jolley FMS

Papua New Guinea

The human rights performance of Papua New Guinea was reviewed on 11th May under the UN Universal Periodic Review mechanism with the PNG's *Permanent Ambassador to the United Nations in New York*, H.E. Robert Aisi, heading the government's delegation. Other members of the delegation were Ms. Nanai Puka-Areni of the Constitutional & Law Reform Commission; Mr. Joseph Molita of the Ombudsman Commission and Mr. Sakias Tamero of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The review attracted quite a number of states participating in the interactive dialogue. The key human rights concerns and issues raised during the review were as follows: *governance and corruption, violence against women and girls, impact of mining and other forms of extractive industries to the environment, bad infrastructure and lack of basic services, police brutality, HIV/AIDS, the right to education and the rights of people with disabilities.*

Our Joint Submission (FMSI, Franciscans International - FI and Edmund Rice International - ERI), which focused on the **right to education and the rights of people with disabilities** was first shared with several country delegations to the UN via e-mail, followed by individual lobbying with some of those permanent missions. A one-hour briefing was held at in the Franciscans International Office just prior to the UPR with representatives from six permanent missions attending, namely: *Australia, Brazil, Maldives, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.*



UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Br Jim Jolley with Fr Leonard Tarai, OFM, and the Human Rights Watch representative

'Human Rights Watch' was also invited to speak about their concerns at this meeting. Fr. Leonard Tarai OFM came to Geneva to be present at his country's UPR and at the meeting he offered his views of human rights in the country. Br Jim Jolley also spoke on the education issues raised in our joint report.

A positive aspect of our Joint Submission is that of all the NGO Stakeholders' Reports submitted to the UN, our Report was most used and quoted by the OHCHR's Stakeholder's Compilation which is one of the official documents used for the UPR.

Although many issues were raised during the review, it was surprising that not a single country raised the issue of human rights' violations committed in Bougainville in the past nor did the PNG national report refer to

this relatively recent turbulent history of the country.

During PNG's report to the member states, the Ambassador heading the delegation committed PNG to having an *open door policy* for any Special Rapporteur to visit the country, and that other international HR instruments PNG is yet to ratify will be done in due time.

Whilst several state delegations raised concerns about education (such as ensuring equal access and free, compulsory basic education for all children) and concerns about disability issues, some of the more important ones were not put, for example, the need to have more fully qualified teachers in schools and to ensure that there are enough schools and classrooms for all

children, and that the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of children in secondary schools.



Briefing meeting at the Franciscans International Office

Solomon Islands

On Wednesday 4th May 2011, Solomon Islands' Human Rights record was examined by the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. FMSI had submitted a report for this review, focusing on issues of education for children in the Solomon Islands. Of the nine civil society organizations that submitted a report for the UPR of SI, FMSI was the only group that raised issues concerning education.

Prior to the Review, FMSI had met with several permanent state delegations to the UN, including the Philippines, Mexico, Australia, Slovenia and France, to represent our recommendations at the UPR.

The 6-member delegation from SI was headed by H.E. Mr. Peter Shanel Agovaka, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade. The dialogue between SI and the participating

states was open and frank, with 28 state delegations participating in the interactive dialogue. Key human rights issues raised during the review were governance and corruption, women and gender issues, violence against women and children as well as concerns regarding education.

FMSI's UPR submission on the right to education and related issues were raised by 16 states during the session, many of whom were the countries we had met a few days earlier regarding our report. During the 3-hour session, on matters of education, the SI delegation acknowledged that there were issues of discrimination against girls in schools and that the Government has set as a priority to achieve equal access and a gender balance in schools as well as working towards equal access for children with disabilities. It thanked New Zealand for its support in assisting its efforts towards universal education for Solomon Island children.



At the end of the session, Br Jim met with the SI delegation to congratulate them on their report and to assure them of support from the FMSI network in the Solomon Islands in the follow-up phase of the UPR.

Recommendations made at the UPR of the Solomon Islands relating to the FMSI submission were to:

- ratify and implement the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- include human rights education in school curricula;

- take the necessary measures to ensure a supply of water of good quality to all informal settlements including the provision of water tanks;
- take measures so as to ensure that all children can enjoy their right to free and compulsory basic education, and establish a school programme on human rights education and training;
- provide for free, compulsory education, accessible to all, with particular care paid to disabled children by allocating sufficient financial and human resources to the education system;
- end all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings, including in the home and in schools, by enforcing its prohibition.

In summary, six of the nine recommendations made in our submission were raised by participating states in the UPR of Solomon Islands. We hope that these will help improve the situation of education for all children in the Solomon Islands in the coming years.



*Happy 90th Birthday
to Br Dacius Reilly
at Templestowe*

Plaques erected to honour the Sisters of Mercy and the Marist Brothers in Broken Hill

The Marist Brothers and Sisters of Mercy have been honoured with the placing of two plaques at the Cathedral in Broken Hill.

The Marist Old Collegians thought it was time that their old teachers were recognised for their work.

The plaques are tributes to the Marist Brothers, who taught there from 1928 - 1987, and the Sisters of Mercy from the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese whose ministry was carried out from 1889 to 2009.

“We thought there should be some recognition of their time here,” said one of the Old Collegians, Pat Victory, who had attended the Marist Brothers’ school (now Sacred Heart Primary) from Year 4 to Year 10.

“We arranged for two bronze plaques to be erected at the grotto in the Cathedral grounds.”

The plaques were officially unveiled and blessed by Bishop Kevin Manning, the relieving Bishop during his visit in April.

Pat Victory further said that there were only five Old Collegians left and that they wanted to

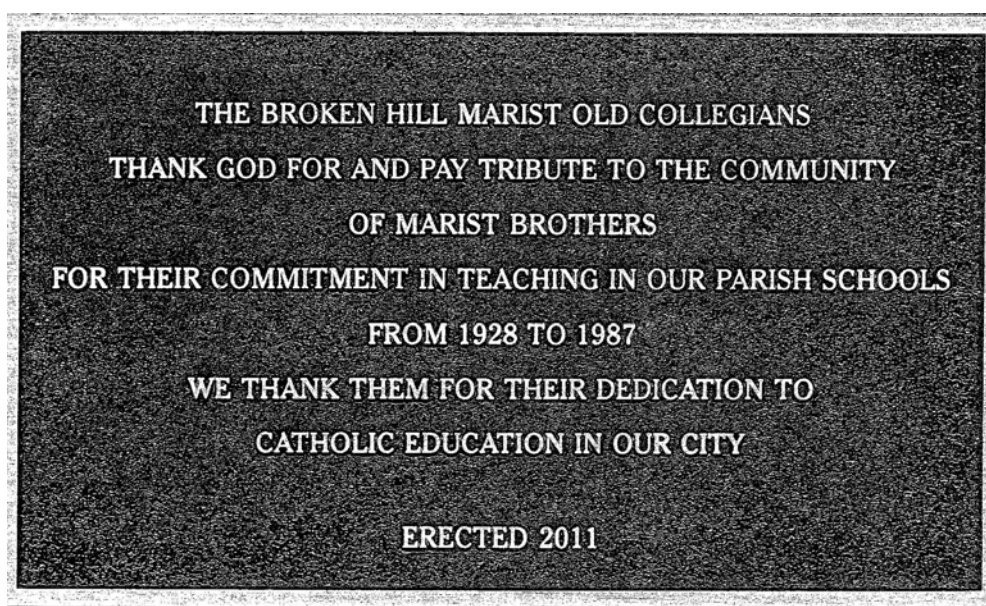


Bishop Manning, Pat Victory, Les McQuillan, Frank Davis, Pat Leonard & Pat Mythen.

make sure that people knew about their teachers and the good work they did.

The main ministry for the Mercy Sisters was teaching but they also conducted an orphanage as well as visiting the sick and people in jail.

The Marist Brothers had come to Broken Hill in 1928, initially teaching at an all-boys school.



Japan's gods of Nature

Catherine Marshall, *Eureka Street*: March 21, 2011



A typhoon was bearing down on Tokyo. As we sped along an expressway 250 km to the south-west, late last year, my guide, Yoshiko, was gentle but determined in the face of potential disaster.

'It will hit the centre of Japan tomorrow night. It will hit while we are sleeping,' she reported. 'If I get any more information I will introduce you to it, but it is out of my control. All I can do is make a prayer and kick that typhoon out of Japan.'

It was a scenario all too familiar to Yoshiko and her countrymen. Strung out like a levee alongside Asia's distended midriff, Japan faces the full wrath of the vast and mercurial North Pacific Ocean.

And the fault line that runs beneath the Japanese archipelago is as inescapable as an error written into the genes: there is no knowing when it will unzip and send the islands above it tumbling into themselves, and no telling whether the ocean will respond to these tectonic antics, pouring

itself over the land like some hateful monster.

As we neared the city of Hamamatsu, Yoshiko pointed out Lake Hamanako, whose broad, fresh waters were turned to brine by an earthquake-induced tsunami in 1498. Today, eels thrive in these brackish waters, and the city has built its culinary reputation on the popular, nutritious foodstuff.

Not much of a silver lining, but enough, perhaps, to mollify a nation that has suffered its share of humiliation and tragedy: occupation, atomic bombings, recession, typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis and, now, potential nuclear fallout.

The natural disasters — those events that Yoshiko says are 'out of my control' — must surely leave the Japanese with the feeling that they are living in an abusive household; they can never be certain that their unreliable motherland won't turn from love and beauty towards anger and violence.

But Yoshiko's calm, pragmatic approach might hold a clue to the workings of a nation squired by moody geography and shaped by conflict both foreign and internal. To the casual observer, the Japanese seem to carry the demeanour of a people resigned to catastrophe, and ever alert to the exquisite tension between pleasure and pain.

Here, goodness seems to organically inhere in everything, a notion informed by Shinto, the indigenous religion to which more than

80 per cent of the population adheres.

'Shinto is a nature religion: we give thanks to everything we have,' said Yoshiko as rain pummelled the earth and hats flew in all directions. 'For example, today we are giving thanks to the god of wind, the god of rain.'

A hotel manager expressed a similar sentiment a few days later, in the alpine village of Kamikochi, where mist obscured an active volcano, Mt Yakedake. 'When we are lucky we can see the fumes,' he said.

This expression of respect — gratitude, even — for the natural coexistence of good and bad is foreign to most of us raised in the west. So too is the unconditional acceptance of personal responsibility, an attribute which is sacred to the Japanese.

I discovered this when Yoshiko was forced to leave behind a journalist from our party who was running late. He caught a taxi to our next meeting point, and Yoshiko confided that she would have to pay the fare from her own pocket. 'It is my responsibility to ensure that everyone is on time,' she said. 'I might get fired if anyone is late.'

It is this remarkable attitude that comes to mind when I try to make sense of the scenes of resignation and capitulation that have seared our television screens since Japan's north-eastern coast was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami just over a week ago.

To be sure, grief and disbelief are etched on the faces of survivors huddled in evacuation centres and those roaming obliterated streets looking for God-knows-what.

But the shouts of blame and accusation so redolent of other disasters are strangely absent; there is no news of looting or violence, no demands for immediate evacuation and coronial inquests. People form orderly queues for scarce petrol and inadequate food parcels. From the outside at least, the conduct of a people trapped in an apocalyptic nightmare is nothing short of exemplary.

Perhaps the people of Japan tread softly and with deliberate respect in the hope that they won't disturb the god of geology, the god of the sea, the god of the fiery mountain. Perhaps, as Yoshiko did in the face of that typhoon, they put faith in their *tera tera bozus*, tissue or fabric dolls which ward off bad weather, unless you turn them upside down, in which case they invite the typhoon or tsunami right into your living room.

And perhaps, when the gods decide to show their wrath, these people simply accept that there is no human being big enough to shoulder the blame.

In Yoshiko's case, her *tera tera bozu* did the trick, for the typhoon made a u-turn and headed for Hawaii instead. But she was careful not to insult the natural forces that had set it in motion in the first place.

With bowed head she said, 'Thanks to the god of cloud and the god of rain.'



Catherine Marshall is a journalist working for Jesuit Communications.

News from Forbes

Special Sports Day

An Annual Event held at Red Bend Catholic College is the **Forbes Special Sports Day**. This year marked 30 years of providing people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in sports. This popular gathering accommodated in our gymnasium attracted participants from Dubbo, Orange, Condobolin, Cowra, Young, Parkes and Forbes.

Dianne Decker from OCTEC Services has organised these days for many years and with a generous band of supporters has seen the event grow in success.



A special medal was struck to mark the 30th anniversary and this is now a treasured possession of all who participated.

Our school community's involvement included providing a very suitable venue,



some catering, 25 volunteer students who facilitated the running of the day and some staff who took part in a wheelchair basketball match.

The success of the day was obvious and immeasurable - evident in the excitement of the participants, the pride of the winning team as they accepted the trophy, the joy of scoring a basketball goal and the delight in the face of the man who rode in the police car with sirens blaring and lights flashing. (This caused a few moments of anxiety to some of our more regular inhabitants).

New awareness and appreciation was deeply felt by our student assistants. For our whole school community, the day deepened our awareness of special and supportive groups active in our wider community and expressing in an inspiring way our value of Family and Caring for Others.



Student helpers on the day

Royal Easter Show - Sydney

In this year's **Royal Sydney Easter Show**, dedicated Red Bend students prepared, presented and paraded cattle and poultry and participated in Junior Judging. Results were outstanding with two of our steers being awarded First Place Silver Medals in Carcase categories as well as Second and Third places in Live categories.



Student poultry presenters join Postulant Gerard Barklimore

In the Poultry section the College was awarded a very rare 'Royal Agricultural Society President's Silver Medal' for the quality of our entries in the Waterfowl exhibit. Championship ribbons were awarded to our geese in the Waterfowl Pair and Breeding Pair sections.

We credit our success to the significant input from **Brother Tom Hughes** and thank him for his encouragement.



Br Anthony O'Brien, aka Tony, Tex and now Chris, catches the mobile chair lift to attend the Friday evening community meal.



Br Julian Casey visits the community recently, welcomed by Ken, Bryan, Aidan, Laury, Gerard and Brian.

Simplifying our Spiritual Vocabulary

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Somewhere near his 75th birthday, Morris West wrote a series of autobiographical essays entitled, *A View from the Ridge*. In the Prologue of that book he suggests that at age 75 you need to have only one word left in your spiritual vocabulary, gratitude, and that maturity is attained precisely at that moment when gratitude begins to drown out and cauterize the hurts in your life. As he describes it: Life has served me as it serves everyone, sometimes well and sometimes ill, but I have learned to be grateful for the gifts of it, for the love that began it and the other loves with which I have been so richly endowed.

I agree with West, though it is necessary to add that the fruit of that maturity is forgiveness. Just as smoke follows fire, forgiveness follows gratitude. Gratitude ultimately undergirds and fuels all genuine virtue and is the real basis of holiness, and the source of love itself. And its major fruit is forgiveness. When we are grateful we more easily find the strength to forgive.

Moreover, just as gratitude undergirds genuine virtue, forgiveness undergirds genuine religion and morality. Thus, as we get older, we can trim our spiritual vocabulary down to three words: Forgive, forgive, forgive! To age into and then die with a forgiving heart is the ultimate moral and religious imperative. We

shouldn't delude ourselves on this. All the dogmatic and moral purity in the world does little for us if our hearts are bitter and incapable of forgiveness.

We see this, for instance, in the sad figure of the older brother of the prodigal son. He stands before his father protesting that he has never wandered, never been unfaithful, and that he has stayed home and done the family's work. But, and this is the issue, he stands outside the father's house, unable to enter into joy, celebration, the banquet, the dance. He's done everything right, but a bitter heart prevents him from entering the father's house, just as much as the lustful wanderings of his younger brother took him out of that same house. Religious and moral fidelity, when not rooted inside of gratitude and forgiveness, are far from enough. They can leave us just as much outside the father's house as sin and infidelity. As Jesus teaches forcefully in the Lord's Prayer, a non-negotiable condition for going to heaven is forgiveness, especially our forgiving those who have hurt us.

But the struggle to forgive others is not easy and may never be trivialized or preached lightly. The struggle to forgive, I suspect, is our greatest psychological, moral, and religious struggle. It's not easy to forgive. Most everything inside of us protests. When we have

been wronged, when we have suffered an injustice, when someone or something has treated us unfairly, a thousand physical and psychological mechanisms inside of us begin clam-up, shut-down, freeze-over, self-protect, and scream-out in protest, anger, and rage. Forgiveness is not something we can simply will and make happen. The heart, as Pascal once said, has its reasons. It also has its rhythms, its paranoia, its cold bitter spots, and its need to seal itself off from whatever has wounded it.

Moreover, all of us have been wounded. No one comes to adulthood with his or her heart fully intact. In ways small or traumatic, we have all been treated unjustly, violated, hurt, ignored, not properly honored, and unfairly cast aside. We all carry wounds and, with those wounds, we all carry some angers, some bitterness, and some areas within which we have not forgiven.



The strength of Henri Nouwen's greatest book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, was precisely to point out both the hidden cold places in our hearts and the mammoth struggle needed to bring warm and forgiveness

to those places. So much of the lightness or

heaviness in our hearts, most every nuance of our mood, is unconsciously dictated by either the forgiveness or the non-forgiveness inside us. Forgiveness is the deep secret to joy. It is also the ultimate imperative.

Andrew Greeley, writing a review of Frank McCourt's book, *Angela's Ashes*, praised McCourt for being brilliant, but challenged him for being unforgiving with words to this effect: Granted, your life has been unfair. Your father was an alcoholic, your mother didn't protect you from the effects of that, you grew up in dire poverty, and you suffered a series of mini-injustices under the Irish social services, the Irish church, the Irish educational system, and the Irish weather! So, let me give you some advice: Before you die, forgive! Forgive your father for being an alcoholic, forgive your mother for not protecting you, forgive the church for wherever ways it failed you, forgive Ireland for the poverty, rain, and bad teachers it inflicted on you, forgive yourself for the failures of your own life, and then forgive God because life isn't fair ... so that you don't die an angry and bitter man, because that's really the ultimate moral imperative.

How true and how challenging!

29-05-2011

Children in Detention

The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project Newsletter, April, 2011.



Almost half of the children currently held in immigration detention reached Australian shores without their parents. The numbers are: As of 4 February 2011, there were 6659 people in immigration detention, including 4086 being held on the mainland and 2573 on Christmas Island. Of these, 1027 were children. More than 3000 persons had been in detention longer than six months. Some of the children are orphans; some are fleeing war and persecution. Others are sent by family in the hope they will find not only safety in countries like Australia, but also a financial foothold for relatives. Most are Afghan boys.

At last count, over 1000 children seeking asylum were in detention - higher than the peak figure reached under the governments of Kevin Rudd and John Howard. Of them, about 465 arrived alone. We do not have figures for families in detention but obviously it is significant.

There is a legislative principle that minors should be in detention only as a last resort. Immigration Detention Policy states that all

decisions taken by members of the immigration detention network in relation to minors must be in the best interests of the minor.

Children arrive in Australia alone for many reasons. Department of Immigration and Citizenship figures show that in 2010, 98% of unaccompanied children were boys. Almost all of them are ultimately determined to be genuine refugees.

Last October, Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Immigration Minister Chris Bowen promised to move most children and vulnerable families out of locked, guarded facilities and into community detention by June 2011. But at the three quarter mark, according to the latest departmental figures, 256 people have been moved into community detention. We don't know how many of these are children.

The Australian community was obviously shocked by the story of nine-year-old Seena who was orphaned when his parents were killed in the asylum boat wrecked on rocks off Christmas Island in December. His plight has put sharp focus on the policy of moving unaccompanied children into the community. This may well be the moment in history that changes the practice of putting children in detention in this country.

Many of the children in detention are being held in overcrowded facilities. Once unaccompanied minors are granted permanent protection, they can apply to have their parents join them in Australia with split-family visas. This takes a long time because there is such a backlog.

Smile Awhile

Out of the mouths of babes ...

Six year old grade ones each complete a proverb
for the teacher

Don't change horses...
until they stop running.

Where there's smoke there's...
pollution.

Strike while the..
bug is close.

Happy the bride who...
gets all the presents.

It's always darkest before...
Daylight Saving Time.

A penny saved is...
not much.

Never underestimate the power of...
termites.

Two's company, three's...
the Musketeers.

You can lead a horse to water but...
How?

Don't put off till tomorrow what...
you put on to go to bed.

Don't bite the hand that...
Looks dirty.

Laugh and the whole world laughs with
you, cry and...
You have to blow your nose.

No news is...
impossible

There are none so blind as...
Stevie Wonder.

A miss is as good as a...
Mr.

Children should be seen and not...
spanked or grounded.

You can't teach an old dog new...
Math

If at first you don't succeed...
get new batteries..

If you lie down with dogs, you'll...
stink in the morning.

Get out of something only what you...
see in the picture on the box

Love all, trust...
Me.

When the blind lead the blind...
get out of the way.

The pen is mightier than the...
pigs..

A bird in the hand...
is going to poop on you.

An idle mind is...
the best way to relax.

Better late than...
Pregnant



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