



Superiore generale dei Fratelli Maristi

LET'S BE CHAMPAGNAT TODAY

Bro. Charles Howard (1924-2012)



Dear Marist Brothers and Lay Marists:

Brother Charles Howard, who was our Superior general from 1985 to 1993, passed away on Saturday 14 January 2012 in Campbelltown (Australia). He was 87 years old.

The lamp of his earthly life had been dimming little by little in the community of elder Brothers where he spent his last days. Presently, Charles' lamp is eternally shining with the whole Marist community in heaven.

Bro Charles was born near Melbourne (Australia) on October 29, 1924. As a teenager, his family moved to Sydney. Charles studied at the Marist School, Randwick, and through his contact with the Brothers there he discovered his vocation. At 18, Charles received the religious Habit.

After some years of studies and formation, Br Charles ministered in various schools and in the juniorate at Mittagong. He excelled in his ministry through his intelligence and pedagogical know how. In 1961 he was sent to France to complete his religious formation. Returning to his country, he was appointed headmaster of St Joseph's College, Sydney, a big centre with 1000 boarding-students. Charles proved to be a good leader with serenity, consultation, humor and compassion. In 1968 he pursued studies in catechetics at Louvain, Belgium. Subsequently, he went to Dublin, Ireland, for further studies in psychology.

In 1972, at 48 years of age, Br Charles was appointed Provincial. During this challenging post-Vatican II period he gave priority to pastoral work.

In 1968 he participated at the General Chapter as delegate; in 1976 he did so as Provincial. It was during this Chapter that Br Basilio Rueda was re-elected as Superior General. Br Charles was elected General Councilor. During the next 9 years, Br Charles had the chance to visit the Marist world. He was touched particularly by issues and implications arising from the call to social justice

At the General Chapter of 1985, Br Charles was elected Superior General. Together with Br Benito Arbués, Vicar general, and the other Councilors, they determined the main priorities for their ministry leading the Institute. These priorities are beautifully reflected in the Circulars Br Charles wrote:

1. The new **Constitutions**, adapted to the Council requirements, were approved. Br. Charles encouraged the Brothers to pray them, love them, and live them. (Circular *Our new Constitutions*, 1986)

2. **Vocations**- Based on a serious theological foundation, Bro Charles encouraged Brothers and communities to commit themselves to vocation promotion, a field in which we are all responsible. (Circular *Vocations*, 1987).

3. **Discernment** was, for Bro Charles, a key attitude in the process of decision-taking, in our personal relationship with the Lord and in our personal growing. He invited all to personal and community discernment and promoted the Review of the Day. (Circular *Discernment*, 1988).

4. Meeting **Champagnat**. Since his youth Bro Charles felt attracted by the personality of the Founder and that experience consistently evolved in him. He began to see him as leader, friend, companion, and father. Based on his own experience, Br Charles challenged his Brothers to get closer to Marcellin especially during the 200th anniversary of his birth. He invited all of us to be Champagnat today. (Circular *The Founder challenges his Brothers*, 1989).

5. **Hope**. At the end of the Champagnat Year, celebrated throughout the Institute, Br Charles launched a message of hope to all the Brothers. Addressing the big changes affecting our society, Br Charles unmasked false interpretations of hope and encouraged the Institute to live a genuine hope with serenity, audacity, patience and creativity. (Circular *Sowers of hope*, 1990).

6. **Love for the poor**. The issues of social justice were very much at the heart of Br Charles. He struggled to share his passion with the whole Institute out of fidelity to Champagnat and to our charism. During his mandate he established an international commission to deal with these topics. (Circular *An urgent appeal: Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1990).

7. **Laity**. Br. Charles referred to our time as the era of Laity. Therefore he fostered the openness of the Marist charism and mission to the world of lay people. He launched and promoted the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. (Circular *The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family*, 1991).

8. **Marist Apostolic Spirituality**. In Br Charles there had always been an inner desire to unify and harmonize his own life and the life of his brothers. His response to this desire emerged through a deepening of Marist Apostolic Spirituality, a deepening that encompassed consecration and mission, prayer life and community life. (Circular *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*, 1992 y 1993).

Major undertakings for Br Charles during his mandate included the creation of the International Finance Commission, the new Marist presence in Eastern Europe and the establishment of international scholasticates for Africa (MIC) and for Asia (MAPAC). Charles paid a visit to our Brothers in China and also participated in the Synod *Pastores dabo vobis*.

After his Generalate was over, Br Charles, then 69, was still strong and dynamic. He spent years in two novitiates: Kutama (Africa) and Lomeri (Pacific). He was the delegate Visitor for the Sector of India. When his memory started to fail, he came back to his Province living in different communities. Finally, he went to Campbelltown, where he had been receiving medical care until his death.

I invite all the Marists of Champagnat to join me in a thanksgiving to God for the marvelous gift of Br Charles' life and vocation. He coined the expression "To be Champagnat today". And this is what he really was for all of us; a heartfelt Marist, a truly genuine son of Champagnat.

May this faithful Little Brother of Mary rest in the peace of the Lord!



Emili Turú

Br. Emili Turú

Eulogy for Br Charles Howard

October 29, 1924 - January 14, 2012

Superior General, 1985 - 1993

Br Seán Sammon, former Superior General

I must confess that during the last few days I have struggled to find just those recollections that would capture the Charles Howard that I and others knew. For we have all gathered here this morning to commemorate a life, knowing full well that a person's legacy is never the message etched into their headstone. No, the true heritage of any one of us is found in the memories that reside in the swelling of the heart. So many of us here have remembrances of Charles; we must search among them for those that speed the blood, for they will stand the test of time.

For a few moments, then, in the name of Brother Emili, our Superior General, and all of us who make up Charles's Marist family, I want to share something of the man who, while always our brother and friend, was also our leader as well as a source of inspiration and challenge, and a model of what it means to be a Marcellin Champagnat for today.

He served so well in many roles: as headmaster and community leader, student and teacher, Provincial, General Councilor, and Superior General. He was also a builder and the Director of the Juniorate as well as a writer and lecturer on topics as varied as religious life and its future, justice and peace, vocations, and the essential role of lay men and women in the Church.

Yes, Charles strode across the landscape of life with boldness, courage, daring; he had formidable talents and was gifted by God in so many ways. But in the end he was always Charles, a man of unusual faith, a person in whom you could confide, someone who listened



well, was loyal to friends, enjoyed a drink and a conversation, understood human weakness, helped you to believe in yourself, and challenged us all to take some responsibility for the human community.

Charles lived during a time in history that will be described, years from now, as an age of tremendous change, not only in terms of scientific and technological advances, but also in a deepening of faith and an understanding of the human person. He had passed sufficient years in the world prior to Vatican II to understand the need for radical change in our Church and lived long enough to be a midwife to the fundamental transformation called for by that historic gathering. For he was one of those rare men given a chance to help shape the age in which he lived. Never one to do things half-heartedly, he seized that opportunity without hesitation.

Elected Superior General at an age when many men are entertaining thoughts of retirement, he set out, with Benito and the

members of his Council, on a journey that would bring about many initiatives that today we take for granted. They were not won easily but came about through hard work, negotiation, and the building of consensus. However, like any true leader, he did not search haphazardly for consensus but rather molded it to a vision and, in so doing, he made a genuine difference in the world in which he lived and left a legacy to our Institute that remains evident today.

And, yet, throughout it all he remained always self-effacing. I remember well him telling me once that, shortly after writing his last circular letter, he received a message from one of the brothers in his Province. The text read as follows: "Dear Charles, I just read your last circular. Not bad. As a matter of fact, I might just go looking for some of the others that you have written and read them."

Charles was the first English-speaking Superior General. Coming from a language group never well-known for its strict observance of the ascetical life he, by word and deed, demonstrated what it meant to live a practical Christianity, not unlike that of Marcellin himself. In time, he convinced all who would listen that faith in action was also an essential part of the message of that fiery prophet and Messiah who walked the roads of first century Israel preaching a passion for God and for humanity.

What were the events that helped shape this remarkable man, who were the people who formed this brother of ours, how can we appreciate better the faith that nurtured him, the hope that sustained him even in the most difficult of times, the love of his God and of others that was at the heart of all he said and did?

Known in his early years as Brother Elias, Charles was referred to as "the boy" by his students in Adelaide as he took up his duties there in 1945. And it was no wonder for he had just turned 21. Nevertheless, within a short time, his gift for leadership became evident. While Director of Juniors, for example, he invited the

parents of his charges to become more involved in the place, established a library, built a grotto, and abolished outdated practices while also bringing new life to many of the essential activities that had characterized this stage of formation for more than a half-century. Charles was a man who respected the past, but also had a gift for anticipating what lay ahead. These traits were to serve him and the Province well during the tumultuous days that followed the close of the Vatican II.

In 1967, and then again a year later, he travelled to Rome with Othmar and others as a delegate to the extraordinary Chapter of renewal mandated by the Council. Ever after, Charles described these two sessions as passionate, complex, very rich.

The years that followed were a heady time of change in Marist life, in the Church, and, indeed, in our world at large, filled with new insights and understandings. Charles spent the first part of them as a student at Lumen Vitae in Belgium and then later at University College, Dublin. The studies he undertook in both places, combining faith and the human sciences, were to prove invaluable when he returned to the Province for, after a few short-term assignments, he was named Provincial in August of 1972.

With the support of his brothers, he set about transforming a number of areas of Province life but spent a considerable portion of his time and energy visiting the communities and meeting individually with the brothers. Pastoral work was more important to Charles than ceremonial appearances. He used his time on planes to read and became a life-long learner.

There were difficult moments also for these were years during which vocations began to decline and brothers started to leave the Institute in considerable numbers. Throughout it all he always put the person first: doing what he could to ensure that an honest discernment was carried out, and supporting each man in the final decision that he made.

At the same time, he worked hard to bring together the men and women religious of Australia, and fostered collaboration between all branches of the Marist family in this country, making many friends in the process. These relationships lasted for years and far beyond his term as Provincial.

Nineteen seventy-six saw him back in Rome for another General Chapter. This time, however, he ended up not coming home. The delegates to that gathering re-elected Basilio Rueda as Superior General and Charles as one of his Councilors. Though many in attendance would have known him from the previous Chapter, it was his passion for justice and peace that brought him to the wider group's attention. He had a major hand in writing the Chapter's document on that subject, as well as its text on Prayer, Apostolate and Community, in addition to the letter entitled Today's Marist Brother.

Charles spent the next nine years travelling throughout a world that was changing rapidly. He witnessed the struggles of many emerging nations on the African continent, as well as the crisis of faith affecting Europe, North America and parts of the Pacific region. South Africa was of particular concern to him and he was strong in his support of our brothers there as they challenged the scandal of apartheid and defied the government's regulations about the separation of races.

Charles was a networker long before the term was coined or the practice became fashionable. In word and by deed he drew people together. Be it through a conversation, or by means of an article that he shared, or as the result of a bold move that he made, he got us to consider points of view other than our own and to look beyond the differences that might divide us and to consider so much more that we shared in common.

Such was his contribution during those years that delegates to the 1985 General Chapter looked to him to take up the mission of Superior General. As he began that work, it was as though all that had come before was a preparation for the eight years that would follow. His skill as a communicator quickly became evident through the many circular letters he wrote and talks that he gave, and in the notes and letters that he sent to so many, always brought to a close with these words, "Union of prayers, Charles."

He travelled widely, had an uncanny ability to remember names, demonstrated his skill as a natural story teller, built centers of formation on the African continent and in the Asia/Pacific region that brought together all of our young brothers in those areas. He became the first Superior General to visit our brothers in the People's Republic of China, giving hope to men who had suffered imprisonment, hardship, and deprivation for so many years.

He also renewed the Institute's missionary spirit, encouraging new foundations in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, and supported the recently established Hermanitas, a group of women who came together to form a religious congregation around the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. He made us so much more aware of our obligation to the poor and reminded us time and again that Marists were meant to be where the Church was not. He was among the first, too, to recognize the importance of lay partnership and did all he could to promote it.

During these years he also came to know Marcellin Champagnat in a new and more profound way. Years later, he said that he began to see the founder as a human being with his faults and inner conflicts, griefs and failures, rather than a faultless paragon. "These insights helped greatly," he wrote, "to build a

rapport between us; I felt now that he could understand and share in my own problems.”

For Charles the founder was a “man of the heart”, a person who loved passionately and deeply, a leader who was a friend, companion and father; someone who lived the sufferings and joys, the trials and dangers, the successes of his men. But couldn’t the very same have been said about Charles himself? Absolutely, for during his mandate there was never for a moment any doubt that it was Marcellin Champagnat who was leading our Institute.

His love of Mary also deepened during this period; this fact was all the more evident when he brought the 1993 Chapter to a close by reciting a prayer that he had written to the mother of Jesus, the woman whom Marcellin so often referred to as our Good Mother and Ordinary Resource.

After his years in Rome Charles remained quite active, initially sharing his talents and experience with those in the novitiates in Kutama in Zimbabwe and Lomeri in the Pacific. He was also delegated as Vicar for India and did all he could to support the newly emerging mission there. Though no longer a citizen of the Eternal City, his world continued to remain wide and complex: he was appointed as an official observer of South Africa’s first democratic elections that saw Nelson Mandela win the Presidency of that nation.

On finally returning to Australia he initially took up residence at the Province house in Drummoyne but eventually moved to Blacktown in western Sydney. He delighted in living in a place where he could come to know his neighbors, take his turn at cooking, and simply share life with men and women of different backgrounds and faiths. And, as we all know, he spent his final days in the care of the community at Campbelltown.

With all that said, for me there will always be three traits of Charles that

immediately come to mind: his passion, his love for our young brothers, his commitment to helping restore lay men and women to their rightful place in the Church.

First, his passion. Charles was passionate about so many things in life. He had a heart for the poor, was unbending when it came to issues of justice, believed deeply that those of us in religious life were meant to be the conscience of the Church. He challenged us to live this call in life in such a way that it was evident to all that it was well worth the gift of one’s life.

He was also passionate about his God as well as his family, his friends, his brothers. He reached out to one and all. He loved us and understood our imperfection, was tolerant of our mistakes, helped us to face our fears.

Next, his love of our young brothers. Charles had a special place in his heart for our younger men. In fact, he was always at home with young people. They took to him, sensing somehow that he had he cared deeply about them and had their best interests at heart. He never hesitated to provide the means necessary to help our young brothers to grow, to widen their perspective, to come to understand just how much Jesus Christ loved them. And he wrote to them regularly. I remember, for example, visiting a Province in Latin America, during the years that I served as Superior General, and meeting a young brother who told me proudly that he had received a note from the Superior General. I smiled but thought to myself that I could not remember having written to him. No worry; later that day as I passed his room I noticed that there above his desk was a note from Charles. For this young man, Charles Howard would always be his Superior General.

Finally, his determination to give lay men and women their rightful place in our Church. Charles was one of those thoughtful Churchmen who truly believed that it was the Holy Spirit who was behind the workings of Vatican II, and he never hesitated to make the

work of that Spirit his own. Like John Paul II, he was convinced that this millennium was meant to be the age of the laity and he challenged his brothers to do all in their power to make that belief a reality.

For Charles though, an age of the laity did not mean the end of religious life. No, he saw it as ushering in a new era of collaboration and co-responsibility for mission. To his way of thinking, as lay women and men took their rightful place in the Church, those of us in religious life would also be better able to be who we were truly meant to be.

Having written about the Champagnat movement of the Marist Family and taken steps to foster its growth within the Institute, he made the bold move of inviting a number of laity to our 1993 General Chapter. This had never been done before and Charles knew that their ability to attend sessions of that meeting was actually dependent upon a positive vote on the part of elected Chapter delegates. Perhaps following the old adage that it is easier to ask forgiveness than permission, he took the step of inviting them prior to any vote being taken and depended upon the good will of those assembled to do the right thing. And he was right. Chapter delegates quickly approved the presence of this first group of laity at the Chapter and the practice has continued ever since.

But now Charles, it is time to let you fly away. We have been blessed by the years that you have been among us; we are far richer because of your presence, wiser because of your insights, more aware of our responsibilities because of the way in which you have lived your life. Continue to pray for us, as you always have, and never cease to be among us in new ways: challenging us to be the best that we can be: generous and loving men and women in love with God and on fire with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And for those of us who are your brothers, assist us in making our own the dream of this simple country priest and Marist Father who is our founder: to do ordinary things exceptionally well and to love with an extraordinary love. Yes, continue to show us what it means to be Champagnats for today: men of faith, with hearts for the poor, ever eager to evangelize young people.

Charles, you number now among the Communion of Saints; you have earned your place with God, and though from time to time you may still have the impulse to write one of your famous notes to one or another of us, may you rest always in that same good God's everlasting peace. Amen.

Seán D. Sammon, FMS



Brothers Benito and Charles

REFLECTIONS ON BR CHARLES

Paul Brock

My first Headmaster, Br Elias (known later as Br Charles Howard) was the best Principal I ever knew: a superb educator and one of the very few people I have worked with who displayed lateral-thinking brilliance. Soon after leaving St Joseph's College Br Charles Howard became Provincial of the Sydney Province of the Marist Brothers. His talent was later internationally recognised when he was elected Superior-General of the Order throughout the world.

Through sheer hard work, Br Charles Howard was able to memorise the Christian name of every boy in the College and their parents – without exception. I personally watched him as he built up that skill. He was driving the car on our way from Brewarrina to Bourke to attend yet another fund-raising dinner. I was sitting beside him with the names of the 100 or so who were also attending. We went over and over the Christian name and surnames, and then he had me test him until he made no mistakes. Few things demand so much discipline as planned spontaneity. The subsequent impact upon the attendees, as he effortlessly greeted each by name, was powerful. As the Old Testament puts it somewhere, 'Yahweh knows me because He knows my name'.

Br Charles scrutinised every comment on every report card. He had no time for meaningless

comments such as "could do better" and any unfortunate Brother who wrote such drivel would be handed back the offending cards for rewriting!

(Paul Brock, *A Passion For Life*, ABC Books, 2004, pp 71-72)

To leave the Order I required approval from the Vatican to be dispensed from my life-long vows. I made my case and the Provincial, who was now Br Charles Howard whom I have mentioned earlier, sent it off to Rome. Some weeks later he rang me to say that my Dispensation had arrived. That afternoon in Br Charles' office in Drummoyne I turned over the document. On the back, in Latin, was a handwritten note from a Vatican official which invoiced the Order for the sum of twelve hundred pounds sterling in legal costs. Shocked, I expressed my regret to Br Charles that I had cost the Marist Brothers so much to leave. "Give me a look" he said. Then he roared with laughter. "That symbol in front of the 1,200 is not British pounds sterling. It's Italian lire. You've cost us only about one Australian dollar". I now actually felt a little deflated. "Is that all I'm worth", I thought.

(Paul Brock, *A Passion For Life*, ABC Books, 2004, p 107)



Eulogy for Br Charles Howard

October 29, 1924 - January 14, 2012

Clare Howard - niece of Br Charles



This man who lies before us, Charles Howard, has long been a legend in our family and we are proud to claim him as our own. Despite our faith that he now enjoys eternal life with his God, we are very sad to be saying farewell to him.

My name is Clare Howard and Charles is my uncle.

On behalf of his brothers, Jim & John, my siblings & their families, it is a privilege to share a little of Charles' early history & some reflections on him as a family member, our Uncle Charlie, a person we love & admire.

Born in Melbourne in 1924, Charles McKean Howard was the first of three boys born to Mollie & Charlie. His middle name McKean is his mother's maiden name.

Charles often spoke of his parents, readily acknowledging the role models they were for him. Their involvement in parish, school, St Vincent de Paul, their friendships and loyalty to people embedded values in him which lasted throughout his life.

Charles was educated by the Good Samaritan Sisters in Thornbury, Melbourne. We still have an original Grade 5 school report from 1934 where he earned 100% for every subject with the comment 'excellent student' written across it from Sr Wenceslaus, perhaps a prelude to his later academic capacity and achievements.

There was only 18 months difference between Charles and Jim so they were a formidable pair in the things that kids get up to. They would share a bike, Jim sitting on the cross bar, Charles on the seat and each with a pedal. The other kids couldn't keep up with them! Jim recalls an instance where it was Charles who was in trouble and he was threatened with "You wait till your father gets home". Subsequently, Charles was nowhere to be found, though Jim remembers an unusual object appearing in the middle of the backyard.... Charles hiding in a hessian bag.

Mollie, or Nanna as we called her, was an avid Fitzroy supporter and so Charles and Jim attended many matches at the local football ground with her. When older, they sold lollies at footy matches but apparently were easily distracted by game highlights which allowed other kids to pinch some of their stock. Consequently they never made a profit!

The family moved to Sydney in 1937 when John was just a baby. Charles was due to begin high school and his father, or Poppy as we called him, was advised that CBC Waverley was the place to go. He became aware, however, that Marist College Randwick was closer, so Poppy made enquiries on a Saturday morning during a working bee. He was introduced to the principal, Br Ignatius, who was in overalls and pushing a wheelbarrow. Poppy, being a handyman, had a respect for manual labour so was impressed. Charles and Jim were enrolled at Marist Brothers Randwick and, as they say, “the rest is history....”

I’m sure you’d be surprised to know that Charles engaged in a spot of boxing for a time. Both he and Jim were in the school’s boxing squad with Charles showing enough talent to win through to the finals.

Charles was aged 14 when he went to the Marist Brothers Juniorate at Mittagong. In recent years, he reflected on how hard that must have been for his parents, particularly his mother, and questioned the wisdom of boys leaving their families at such a young age.

His early life as a Marist meant that our family knew him intermittently & only glimpsed snippets of his life. The schools he taught in and positions of responsibility are well documented. But it was the person he was that impacted us.

Charles was a master at keeping in touch and communicating a unique message to whomever he wrote. For our family, postcards or small mementos sent to the nephews & nieces, then to their children, of travel tales, birthday wishes or just 'thinking of you' were regularly received. My brother Phil recalls acquiring a significant key ring collection, and the next generation, Chris and Jo’s son Ryan, began his piggy bank saving with a million dollar note from Peru.

My sister, Maureen noted how the style of his cards to her always reflected the things she

liked, and how he was able to communicate something unique to the person in all of his correspondence. Postcards and letters were received by many people, so many of you here today, as well as people all around the world. His Christmas letters are famous, his correspondence would have measured in the thousands.

As a result of his positions of responsibility, he spent so much time away from Australia. Keeping connected was important to Charles. He valued friendship, perhaps because he lived so far from home and travelled so much. His family & friends in Australia were important to him. When home he was keen to connect whether it be sharing a meal, a walk, or a movie. Since his return to Australia, Charles appreciated that he and John were finally living in the same city, and able to spend regular time together, both of them having lived overseas for long periods.

It was wonderful to see him relax on Christmas days & family gatherings of the Geaney and Stackpool families. He laughed & enjoyed company around the table & watching the grandchildren of Maggie, Meg & Frank, and most recently, John’s friends from Sierra Leone with little N’Nadie.

He’s the only person I know who didn’t like Maggie’s caesar salad!

I know that, at the Stackpool family gatherings, he loved a big pile of dirty dishes because of the communication opportunity it provided.

He was an interesting and stimulating person to have a conversation with. Politics, the state of the Church, experiences in Africa, the missions of the Brothers in various places around the world; films he’d seen, books he’d read. He made our world broad.

His global experiences brought a great contribution to our family's awareness of social justice issues, particularly in the 1970's & 1980's when 'middle class conservative Catholics' were unaware of such issues and their relevancy to faith:

- Brothers murdered in various parts of Africa: Algeria, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo as a result of being Christian, or in solidarity with the people of the area;
- The Brothers in China who had been unable to be in contact with the Institute since the Cultural revolution, and had publicly lived without their Marist identity for many years,
- These stories made us aware of what it means to lose or risk one's life for faith.

His stories brought to life issues of apartheid, structural inequality & oppression and political tyranny. And yet he could just as easily hone in to the ordinariness of life, or the challenges faced in daily living – relationships, finances, children, work. We all noted Charles capacity to ask, listen and really get to the heart of what was important to us.

Charles friendship with Br Kieran Geaney, or Col as we know him, is one which exemplifies all he values. Charles accompanied Col home from Rome after his stroke 27 years ago. Then, when Charles returned to live in Australia, he regularly visited Col, taking him out for drives, and meals and, in the last couple of years, buying him a chocolate or ice cream, knowing he had a sweet tooth. Seeing them together, it was obvious they had a special bond borne through the suffering Col has endured.

He was well read & intelligent: An avid reader of "The Tablet," and many religious and spiritual journals, as well as local and international newspapers. So many of us received photocopies of articles of interest, with a brief note from him. Similarly, his generosity

with books & articles encouraged people to think about the God aspect of our lives.

He always had a word of affirmation, recognising unique qualities of the person, whether it be the role of mother, teacher, father, businessman, student. He saw & reminded us of our potential - The gift of being affirmed & noticed: a rare experience in today's world. My sister Denise recalls the lasting impact his notes to her as 'special one' has had on her.

His theology was strongly incarnational...and he gently extolled to many the God presence in their lives...identifying aspects of ourselves that perhaps we didn't recognise or dare to link to the grace and blessing of God. He often quoted Zephaniah in my cards, "God delights in you, as I do", he would write.

He spoke simply & honestly, even when having to say hard or difficult things. He had a unique capacity, though, to see beyond the weaknesses & failings of an individual or an institution. What he saw – and he could see through you at times to your core – or should I say my core - never overrode his loyalty and affection to the person or the institution. What an extraordinary gift that is to receive!

Charles had a particular appreciation for the role of women especially mothers: as a Marist, he was obviously influenced by the model of Mary, but he spoke often of his love & admiration of his own mother Mollie, as well as his exposure to the experiences of women in developing countries. Our sister Trish recalls he so often used the word 'lady'. His involvement in the organisation WATAC - Women and the Australian Church - on his return from Rome attests to his appreciation of the role of women in the church.

Charles' final year of ill health was a cruel & debilitating time for a person of great intellect. We are appreciative of the loving care provided to him at St Greg's, the Brothers in the

community, the medical, nursing and personal care staff.

On the occasion of Charles' death, the world is diminished without his presence yet it is a better place because of his life.

He was a remarkable man:

- Strong yet gentle
- Gracious & sensitive
- A Man of principle

How privileged the Howard, Geaney and Stackpool families & so many others are, to have known such an extraordinary person, a global citizen, a man of enormous integrity, knowledge, wisdom. And most importantly, a man of God. We have lost a person of significant goodness but we are richer in having known Charles & experienced his friendship, affection, affirmation, intellect, and faith.

The experience of knowing and loving Charles, and being loved by him, has changed me, stimulated me to be more than I could be without him in my life, as I'm sure it has for you and so many others around the world who mourn Charles' death.

Trish reminded me of this Celtic blessing for death from John O'Donohue's book "**Anam Cara, Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World**".

"I pray that you will have the blessing of being consoled and sure about your own death.

May you know in your soul that there is no need to be afraid.

When you come to die may it be after a long life.

May your going be sheltered, and your welcome assured.

May your soul smile in the embrace of your anam cara (your soul friend)."

When I read it I could hear Charles saying it and blessing those of us who are still here. We believe Charles has already received these blessings.

Thank you Charles for the many blessings your life has brought to us and our world. You will always remain in our hearts.



Br Charles (Elias) Howard
1924 - 2012