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# The Archbishop's sermon at Lourdes

Posted By: George Pitcher at Sep 24, 2008

Passed on to Newsletter by Br Bertrand Webster in Fiji.

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*Dr Rowan Williams, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, preached at the International Mass at the Sanctuary of Our Lady at Lourdes on 24 Sep 08. He took as his text Luke's record of Mary visiting Elizabeth, the former carrying Jesus, the latter John the Baptist, and proceeds to explore our mystical experience of the Christ through the stories of Bernardette's vision of Mary at Lourdes and our own encounters with joy.*

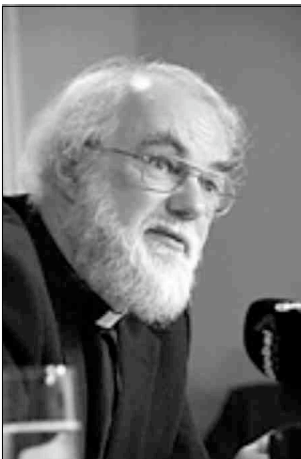
## *'The babe in my womb leaped for joy.'*

(Luke 1.44)

Mary comes to visit Elizabeth, carrying Jesus in her womb. The Son of God is still invisible - not yet born, not even known about by Elizabeth; yet Elizabeth recognises Mary as bearing within her the hope and desire of all nations, and life stirs in the deep places of her own body. The one who will prepare the way for Jesus, John the Baptist, moves as if to greet the hope that is coming, even though it cannot yet be seen.

Mary appears to us here as the first missionary, 'the first messenger of the gospel' as Bishop Perrier of Lourdes has called her: the first human being to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to another; and she does it simply by carrying Christ within her. She reminds us that mission begins not in delivering a message in words but in the journey towards another person with Jesus in your heart. She testifies to the primary importance of simply carrying Jesus, even before there are words or deeds to show him and explain him. This story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth is in many ways a very strange one; it's not

about the communication of rational information from one speaker to another, but a primitive current of spiritual electricity running from the unborn Christ to the unborn Baptist. But mission it undoubtedly is, because it evokes recognition and joy. Something happens that prepares the way for all the words that will be spok-



en and the deeds that will be done. The believer comes with Christ dwelling in them by faith, and God makes that current come alive, and a response begins, not yet in words or commitments, but simply in recognising that here is life.

When Mary came to Bernardette, she came at first as an anonymous figure, a beautiful lady, a mysterious 'thing', not yet identified as the Lord's spotless Mother. And Bernardette - uneducated, uninstructed in doctrine - leapt with joy, recognising that here was life, here was healing. Remember those accounts of her which speak of her graceful, gliding movements at the Lady's bidding; as if she, like John in Elizabeth's womb, begins to dance to the music of the Incarnate Word who is carried by his Mother. Only bit by bit does Bernardette find the words to let the world know; only bit by bit, we might say, does she discover how to listen to the Lady and echo what she has to tell us.

So there is good news for all of us who seek to follow Jesus' summons to mission in his Name; and good news too for all who find their efforts slow and apparently futile, and for all who still can't find their way to the 'right' words and the open commitment. Our first and overarching task is to carry Jesus, gratefully and faithfully, with us in all our doings: like St Teresa of Avila, we might do this quite prosaically by having with us always a little picture or a cross in our pockets, so that we constantly 'touch base' with the Lord. We can do it by following the guidance of the Orthodox spiritual tradition and repeating silently the Jesus Prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me, a sinner'. And if we are faithful in thus carrying Christ with us, something will happen, some current will stir and those we are with will feel, perhaps well below the conscious surface, a movement of life and joy which they may not understand at all. And we may never see it or know about it; people may not even connect it with us, yet it will be there - because Jesus speaks always to what is buried in the heart of men and women, the destiny they were made for. Whether they know it or not, there is that within them which is turned towards him. Keep on carrying Jesus and don't despair: mission will happen, in spite of all, because God in Christ has begun his journey into the heart.

And when we encounter those who say they

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*For Reflection...*

would 'like to believe' but can't, who wonder how they will ever find their way to a commitment that seems both frightening and hard to understand, we may have something to say to them too: 'Don't give up; try and hold on to the moments of deep and mysterious joy; wait patiently for something to come to birth in you.' It certainly isn't for us as Christians to bully and cajole, and to try and force people into commitments they are not ready to make - but we can and should seek to be there, carrying Jesus, and letting his joy come through, waiting for the leap of recognition in someone's heart.

Of course, as often as not, we ourselves are the one who need to hear the good news; we need people around us who carry Jesus, because we who call ourselves believers all have our moments of confusion and loss of direction. Others fail us or hurt us; the Church itself may seem confused or weak or even unloving, and we don't feel we are being nourished as we need, and directed as we should be. Yet this story of Mary and Elizabeth tells us that the Incarnate Word of God is always already on the way to us, hidden in voices and faces and bodies familiar and unfamiliar. Silently, Jesus is constantly at work, and he is seeking out what is deepest in us, to touch the heart of our joy and hope.

Perhaps when we feel lost and disillusioned, he is gently drawing us away from a joy or a hope that is only human, limited to what we can cope with or what we think on the surface of our minds that we want. Perhaps it's part of a journey towards his truth, not just ours. We too need to look and listen for the moments of recognition and the leap of joy deep within. It may be when we encounter a person in whom we sense that the words we rather half-heartedly use about God are a living and actual reality. (That's why the lives of the saints, ancient and modern, matter so much.) It may be when a moment of stillness or wonder suddenly overtakes us in the middle of a familiar liturgy that we think we know backwards, and we have for a second the feeling that this is the clue to everything - if only we could put it into words. It may be when we come to a holy place, soaked in the hopes and prayers of millions, and suddenly see that, whatever we as individuals may be thinking or feeling, some great reality is moving all around and beneath and within us, whether we grasp it or not. These are our 'Elizabeth' moments - when life stirs inside, heralding some future with Christ that we can't yet get our minds around.

It's very tempting to think of mission as something to be done in the same way we do - or try to

do - so much else, with everything depending on planning and assessments of how we're doing, and whether the results are coming out right. For that matter, it's tempting to think of the Church's whole life in these sorts of terms. Of course we need to use our intelligence, we need to be able to tell the difference between good and bad outcomes, we need to marshal all the skill and enthusiasm we can when we respond to God's call to share his work of transforming the world through Jesus and his Spirit. But Mary's mission tells us that there is always a deeper dimension, grounded in the Christ who is at work unknown and silent, reaching out to the deeply buried heart of each person and making the connection; living faithfully at the heart of the Church itself, in the middle of its disasters and betrayals and confusions, still giving himself without reserve. All that we call 'our' mission depends on this; and if we are wise, we know that we are always going to be surprised by the echoes and connections that come to life where we are not expecting it.

True mission is ready to be surprised by God - 'surprised by joy', in the lovely phrase of C. S. Lewis. Elizabeth knew the whole history of Israel and how it was preparing the way for God to come and visit his people - but she was still surprised into newness of life and understanding when the child leapt in her womb. Bernardette's neighbours and teachers and parish clergy knew all they thought they needed to know about the Mother of God - and they needed to be surprised by this inarticulate, powerless, marginal teenager who had leapt up in the joy of recognition to meet Mary as her mother, her sister, bearer of her Lord and Redeemer. Our prayer here must be that, renewed and surprised in this holy place, we may be given the overshadowing strength of the Spirit to carry Jesus wherever we go, in the hope that joy will leap from heart to heart in all our human encounters; and that we may also be given courage to look and listen for that joy in our own depths when the clarity of the good news seems far away and the sky is cloudy.

But here today, with Elizabeth and Bernardette, we say, in thankful amazement, 'Why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' And we recognise that our heart's desire is met and the very depth of our being stirred into new life. : Amen •

*George Pitcher is a journalist, author, public relations pioneer and an Anglican priest. He was appointed Religion Editor of Telegraph Media in May 2008, covering the Daily and Sunday Telegraphs and the on-line output.*

*For Reflection...*



**Marist Brothers College Staff 1914 • Bendigo**  
 Back: Br Ildephonsus, Br Columban, Br Edmund, Br Xaverius.  
 Front: Br Marcellus, Br Louis (Director), Br Gonzales.

## Day in the Life of a Marist Brother

From *Catholic College Bendigo*  
 • *The Good News* • April 2009 •

The way of life of the Brothers and their school routine remained virtually unchanged from the 1890's to the end of the Second World War. Annual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were made at the end of the novitiate for five or six years at the most. After that time, the young Brothers took the three vows for life.

The dress worn at all times in school and house consisted of a soutane or loose black robe, a clerical band called a rabat, a crucifix and a cord. Street or going-out wear was a black suit, stock and roman collar with a black stripe to differentiate it from that worn by priests.

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## THE FORCE OF HABIT

*Brother Romuald Gibson in Musing Mode*  
 NZ Marist News • April 09

**Remember the days** when we rose in the morning and after the initial ablutions etc, reached for the habit and heaved it up over our shoulders murmuring 'Clothe me o Lord with the new man whom thou hast created in justice and sanctity' ? Buckled on the cross and girded ourselves with the cord and we were ready to face the world garbed unmistakably as Marist Brothers. Witnesses, clearly defined witnesses, to the religious life, to the concern for kids that came from Marcellin, to brotherhood and the importance of Jesus and Mary.



The Brothers rose at 5.25am each morning and were given twenty-five minutes to get ready for the day. Then followed fifty-five minutes of morning prayer, meditation and the recitation in Latin of part of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mass was celebrated at 6.45am. Breakfast at 7.20am was accompanied by a reading from the lives of the saints. There was a visit to the Blessed Sacrament just before the Brothers went to school at 8.45am to prepare for classes at 9.00am.

The evening programme was just as full. The remainder of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary was recited at 5.15pm, followed by spiritual reading until dinner at 6.00pm, and afterwards community recreation. There was religious study in community at 7.30pm when school catechism lessons were prepared and prescribed religious programmes followed. Time for secular study was from 8.30-9.30pm, when night prayers were said.

Much of the secular study time was spent in preparation for the next days' classes or the completion of Teacher Certificate work. By the mid 1900s, some Brothers were also doing university studies part-time. Silence was observed at all times except during recreation. Saturday morning was a time of fast. This must have been almost impossibly difficult, especially for Brothers doing manual work or spending a great part of the day supervising sport.

Many things taken for granted by lay people were forbidden to the Brothers. There was no wearing of wrist watches, no football playing, no bicycle riding. Morning tea, later night suppers and the use of tobacco were forbidden, as also were evening papers, weekly secular papers, Sunday newspapers and attendance at picture shows. The simplicity and poverty reminded the Brothers of their origin at La Valla.

*Mrs Lisa Wheeldon, CCB Archives Officer*

What made us abandon, so quickly, the habit, cloak and the "clergyman" suits of sombre black?

Whatever it was, maybe it is time to rethink our stance on distinctive clothing.

We have, on the whole, opted for invisibility and anonymity - there is little, outwardly, to identify us as Marist Brothers. The bronze cross, with the M outsert has not taken on, and indeed, such symbols do not mean much in our present society. Much more telling is what you wear. It is clothes that tell us a man's calling (uniforms or work gear), his interests (messages on Ts), his affiliations (clubs, gangs, race, sporting preferences, cultural tendencies). There is hardly a sporting group that does not have its distinctive jersey/blazer, hardly a choral group that does not

show up in smart uniform, and attendants show their company's colours. And this builds the sense of unity and cohesion in the group. They look good, they feel good in their smart outfit, they belong, they have the confidence of making an impression, of being noticed and recognized. They attract outsiders, drawn by the group's unity and purpose, clearly seen.

Sometimes I am asked, "Where have all the Brothers gone?" and when I point out that there are some still around and still doing the Marist work, the comment usually is, "Well, that may be, but we don't see them."

How become visible again (presuming that we want to be noticed and recognized for what we are) - a return to the habit and trappings that we formerly wore with thanksgiving and pride seems out of place now. The young people would probably not understand them or accept them.

But there are other alternatives that we could take up that fit in well with the present tastes and yet be distinctive, be a strong witness to our brotherhood.

Looking around we see that the groups that use the clothing gambit to proclaim their purpose rely on

- shirts bearing the logo of the group, and uniform in colour
- frequently a jersey similarly carrying logo and of the same colour
- a blazer
- a group tie.

The really enthusiastic run to scarves and beanies (football fans dote on these) or tattoos or hair dyes ... but seriously is this a way for us to express our group identity? A Marist Brother's outfit?

A couple of years ago, Brother Doug Dawick was proposing something along these lines, and to be honest, I didn't see the point of it at the time. But time can gently lift the veil and show what benefits there are in looking at it again. What think you?

What do you think?



## Mary MacKillop statue unveiled in SA

March 22, 2009

A bronze statue of Mary MacKillop, the former nun and teacher who could become Australia's first Saint, has been unveiled in Adelaide.

The statue, of Mary holding hands with two children, is the centrepiece of the new Mary MacKillop Plaza adjacent to the city's St Francis Xavier's Cathedral.

Archbishop Philip Wilson on Sunday carried out the official blessing and dedication ceremony of the statue.

Four of the most senior members of the Josephite order, founded by Mary MacKillop in 1867, assisted with the unveiling.

Archbishop Wilson said the statue was a sign of the Church's continuing affection for Mary.

"Mary was a familiar figure in this part of the city in the late 1860s with her first school being the St Francis Xavier's Cathedral Hall school, which was located on the eastern side of the Cathedral," he said in a statement.

Sister Marion Gambin, leader of the South Australian Province of the Sisters of St Joseph, said the blessing and dedication of the statue was the first of a number of events being held to celebrate the centenary of Mary's 1909 death.

"The blessing of this statue will create a focal point for the life and work of Mary MacKillop as we



**New statue of Mary McKillop installed at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide.**

**Inscription:** "Let us rejoice and thank God that He has given us such solid proofs of His love."

Photo provided by Br Leo Kavanagh, one of Newsletter's Adelaide photographers.

work towards her much anticipated canonisation," she said in the statement. •



# Advocacy Officer for Children's Rights

A word from *Brother Jim Jolley* 24.4.09



Earlier this year I had a taste of things to come! I attended a two-week program in Bangkok conducted by Franciscans International (FI) on an Introduction to the United Nations Human Rights Systems.

Whilst it has been in the back of my mind over the last few months, the course enabled me to begin thinking seriously about what it may mean for me as the Institute's Advocacy Officer for Children's Rights with the UN in Geneva.

Fourteen of us attended this introductory course. All other participants were from the Franciscan Family (bar one Christian Brother from India) - Sisters, Brothers and Friars - coming from the Philippines, Pakistan, India and Thailand. It struck me how similar the Franciscan family was to our own in things like family spirit and a concern for the marginalized.

I must say that the two weeks went very quickly. We were given a general overview of how the UN works, its various level of committees, how best to submit a document to raise a concern where human rights are being denied or ignored by a member state. One hundred and ninety two countries have signed up to the Declaration of Human Rights and out of that most



are also party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a fascinating world, the UN - one to which I will become more accustomed over the next few years I'm sure!

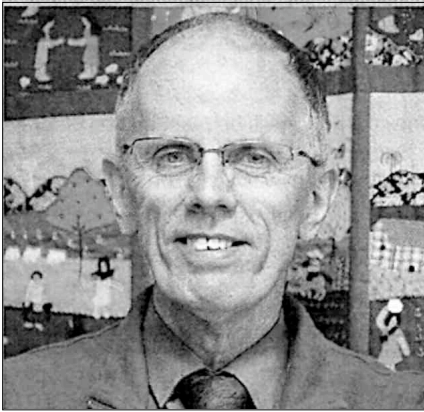
In the meantime I have enrolled in the Alliance Française class here in Darwin to prepare for my immersion into a French-speaking community in Geneva. I hope to take a language course for six weeks or so in France or Belgium before taking up my job in Switzerland and so my weekly course at Charles Darwin University is a gentle way of getting me started. It's not an easy job to learn a (relatively) new language for a 61 year old, but it is exciting too.

I head off to Europe in the middle of July, via Bangkok once again for another two-week course at the FI Centre there. That particular course will be more focused on the Rights of the Child. I finish up at the CEO in Darwin near the end of June and hope to take a couple of weeks' holiday down South before my new adventure. Hopefully I may catch up with a number of the Brothers during that time. •

*Brother Jim Jolley, 2nd from left.*



## It may be of interest ...



### Combining Faith and Music

Listening to his Dad play the saxophone at country dances in the Yarra Valley was the beginning of Brother Michael Herry's long love affair with music.

Br Michael, who was in Adelaide to conduct liturgical music workshops and promote his latest CD *God of Surprises*, said his love for music grew from "sitting in those draughty dance halls of a Saturday night, and later giving the regular pianist a break and sitting in with the band".

He believes he has been very

fortunate to be able to combine his faith with his love of music in his life as a Marist Brother over the past 46 years.

"Not everyone relates to God through music but for many people, music can be a wonderful way to enter a very sacred space where God is at home and seems naturally present," he said.

In composing liturgical music, Br Michael said that for him, "generally the words come first, with the music then suggesting itself". He has particular interest in writing Scripture-based chants based in the Taizé style and is currently involved in a long-term project, writing chants for the Sunday gospels over the three-year cycle of readings.

"They are simple and prayerful - a way to spend time with the Word of God," he said.

Although raised in Victoria, Br Michael has strong links to Adelaide, completing an honours degree at the Elder Conservatorium in 1975, his main instruments be-

ing piano and flute. Although he had no formal training in singing, he loved his three years in the Bach Choir at the Conservatorium. He had previously picked up the guitar, which was "an essential in the class room".

From 1975-84 he was head of music at Sacred Heart College and has fond memories of the wonderful Friday evening singing practices where he would lead 100 boarders in "robust" preparation for Sunday Mass in the College chapel.

Since leaving SHC, Br Michael has worked in Marist schools in Melbourne and Perth and from 2001 spent six years teaching music in East Timor, "a wonderful experience, where we were made to feel so welcome as the country got back on its feet".

Today he is based at the Marist Brothers' Province Centre in Templestowe, Melbourne and describes himself as a "pastoral musician".

Adelaide • *The Southern Cross*  
April 2009

**The opposite of talking isn't listening.  
The opposite of talking is waiting.**

*Fran Lebowitz*



*This Easter, I invite you to look forward, rather than back.*

*In the words of Leonard Cohen, the Canadian poet and songwriter who has recently visited Australia:*

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.  
(Anthem)*

*Cohen has experienced his own crosses including depression and being the victim of misappropriation by a former employee. He attributes the lifting of his depression to his religious beliefs and practices. While in Australia he made a substantial donation to those affected by Victorian fires.*

*2009. Thursday 26th March 2009*

*Let In The Light: An Easter Message from Bishop Michael Malone [Maitland - Newcastle]*

## *It may be of interest ...*

### **US celebration for Carmelite priest**

**South Australian** born and bred priest, Father Peter Byrth, recently celebrated 50 years as a Carmelite priest at his parish in New York.

Fr Byrth was brought up in Maitland on the Yorke Peninsula and boarded at Sacred Heart College before being ordained at the age of 25 (pictured right).

He was elected Provincial of the Australian Carmelites at the age of 31 but after suffering health problems went to the United States where he has remained ever since.

A number of his Adelaide friends including Michael Jelly, Virginia Partington, Henry DAssumpcao, Alice Byrth and Bernie Wadsworth attended his Golden Jubilee celebrations in New York.

Fr Peter has been in poor health recently but was able to participate in the concelebration of the Eucharist and to mix with a large group of friends, parishioners and other members of the Carmelite community in New York.



*Adelaide Southern Cross May 2009*



**Congratulations to Br Paul Murphy of the Sale Community in Gippsland.**

*Paul Murphy captained the Collegians' Thirds Cricket team this summer and received the 3RD GRADE CHAMPION award.*

*619 pts; 15 wickets @ 12.1 / 479 @ 53.2*

### ***Farewell Ray***

**Raymond Garby**, Cohuna boy who graced Assumption in the 1930's: the glorious years as we called them. We were mainly "bush" boys then of the Great Depression whose parents made enormous sacrifices to give their sons a Christian education. How we appreciated the opportunities – about 300 of us, nearly all boarders, mainly from Murray towns and NE Victoria. Fellowship among us was rock solid. All our teachers were Marist Brothers.

I have known Ray for over 70 years – as a hotel keeper at Cohuna, a notable Carlton VFL player, a survivor of WW2, an activist for community good wherever he lived. Ray retired to Sorrento some years ago to be with his respected family. I might add that I played with Ray in Assumption's first 18 in 1939 where my memory tells me, that after all these years he still holds the record for goal kicking.

Throughout life Ray has been a strong contributor, to his family, to his Faith, to his old school and to his community. The large numbers who crowded St. Mary's Star of the Sea at Sorrento for Ray's Requiem on Wednesday 20 March '09 are testimony to the esteem in which this good man was held.

God bless you old mate.

W. K. Allen, Sorrento



From "Hymn of the Universe"

- Teilhard de Chardin

*When the erosions of age  
begin to leave their mark on my body,  
and still more on my mind;  
when the ills that must diminish my life  
or put an end to it  
strike me down from without  
or grow up from within me;  
when I reach that painful moment  
at which I suddenly realize  
I am a sick person  
or that I am growing old;  
above all at that final moment  
when I am feeling  
that I am losing hold of myself  
and becoming wholly passive in the hands  
of those great unknown forces  
which first formed me:  
at all these sombre moments  
grant me, Lord, to understand that it is  
YOU  
(provided my faith is strong enough)  
who are painfully separating the fibres  
of my being  
so as to penetrate to the very marrow  
of my substance  
and draw me into yourself.*

*Do not stand at my grave and weep,  
I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am in a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the softly falling snow.  
I am the gentle showers of rain,  
I am the fields of ripening grain.  
I am in the morning hush,  
I am in the graceful rush  
Of beautiful birds in circling flight.  
I am the starshine of the night.  
I am in the flowers that bloom,  
I am in a quiet room.  
I am in the birds that sing,  
I am in each lovely thing.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry,  
I am not there. I do not die...*

Mary Elizabeth Frye



**Our deceased and their families**

- Mr Peter Schlitz, Affiliated Marist.  
28.04.09

**For those who are unwell ...**

- Noel Granger, cancer patient; cousin of Br Kevin Langley.
- Melanie Meehan, cancer diagnosis; prayers through Mary McKillop continuing. Wife of Br Linus' nephew, Matthew.
- Bert Murphy, father of Br Paul, Sale.
- Br Des Hornsby, complications following eye surgery.

**And also for ...**

- Blessings to come from our General Chapter in Rome - September 2009



*May the departed and their dreams  
ever dwell  
In the kind and faithful shelter  
of the Trinity*

*John O'Donohue*

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