

Marist Laity Australia



Cathy's Report

Spring greetings!

I am writing this on September 8, the day we celebrate Mary's birth. As Marists especially, we pray in deep gratitude for the gift of Mary to the world, by whom we have been graciously chosen to live the Gospel as she did.



Hail Mary, full of grace..... I was recently drawn to an article by columnist Julia Baird, *I jumped up and down when I heard Michelle Obama utter one amazing word.*

The word to which the headline refers is **grace**. To quote the article, *for years now, I've been trawling different corners of the globe in an attempt to find evidence of grace – of the unassuming, undemanding and often quiet insistence on seeing the humanity in other people, especially enemies, of giving people the benefit of the doubt, a second chance, a shot at redemption, even when it is undeserved.*

The article contains many insights; it is definitely worth a read,
<https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/i-jumped-up-and-down-when-i-heard-michelle-obama-utter-one-amazing-word-20240823-p5k4on.html>

I regularly visit my mother, Pat Phelan, in the John Woodward Residential Aged Care Facility, built on the grounds originally owned by the Marist Sisters in Merrylands. Every Thursday, Fr Paul Gurr OCarm, comes to celebrate Mass with the residents. How fortunate are they! Paul celebrates the liturgy with a beautiful, gentle touch, and always leads the residents in a hymn they would know from decades past. Mum might not remember that I visited her the day before, but she certainly knows the hymn Paul has chosen!

Before Mass, the residents pray the Rosary. I often walk in as they pray the words, *Hail Mary, full of grace*, witnessing the profound faith of this community, steeped in decades of struggle, hope, joy, suffering, endurance, and now surrender. For most of them, their lives have been stripped of much that they once possessed. But joining them in the Rosary. I know that they, like Mary, are full of grace.

Whatever your age or stage of life, may you experience grace, in all its fullness.

Cathy Larkin
 Co-Convenor
 Marist Laity Australia

Fourvière Reflection - A Summary

By Margaret Woods



Greetings to everyone! It is a joy to be with you today as we reflect on the significance of Fourvière. When asked to speak, I initially wondered what I could contribute to such a deeply spiritual gathering. For many of you, Fourvière is a lifetime commitment, while others may be experiencing this celebration for the first time. Today's Gospel reading, centered on a wedding, reminds us of Mary's pivotal words, "Do whatever he tells you." These words resonate deeply with the Marist founders, who, in 1816, dedicated themselves to the spirit of Mary, striving to live as she did – with love, faith, and purpose.

The story of the twelve seminarians and priests who pledged themselves at the Fourvière shrine is one of courage, dedication, and JOY. These men sought to create a new way of living, one filled with love for each other and the mission of the church. This same joy is reflected in moments of deep spiritual connection, such as my own visits to Fourvière. Whether it's through the birth of a child, falling in love, or finding solace in prayer, we all experience moments where our hearts are filled with joy. It is this joy that the early Marists must have felt as they set out to build a society dedicated to Mary.

Today, we are called to continue their mission by nurturing a mystical heart – one that connects us to God and others. Whether through prayer, presence, or acts of love, we

are invited to be living witnesses of the Marist spirit. Like the early Marists, we must embody the spirit of Mary and carry her message of courage and compassion into our lives and communities. The heart is a powerful symbol of love, joy, and transformation, and as we celebrate today, let us remember the joy of this mission and commit to sharing it with the world.

[For full article](https://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Events/1423.php)

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Marists hit the road for a new generation of mission



A day after their ordinations on 23 July 1816 in France, 12 priests together climbed 800 stairs to the shrine of Fourvière, Lyon. Together they established the Marists.

Like those first priests who took to the stairs, down under the members of Marist Laity Australia pilgrimaged across Sydney's Harbour Bridge in late July for a Camino to St Patrick's Catholic Church Hill and on to Holy name of Mary Hunters Hill.

"What really got this going was the idea of Catholic mission," said Marist Laity Australia leader Cathy Larkin.

"Our aim as Marists is to go out into the world and foster that mission. This is a celebration of our origins, our unity and a display of hope for the future."

Marists joined together from Milsons Point, including Marist fathers, sisters, brothers, Marist missionary sisters, the Marist association of Marcellin Champagnat and Marist Laity, with more joining at Hunters Hill.

Co-leader Andrew Dumas last year founded the new pilgrimage. Inspired by the events at Fourvière, Andrew hoped to respond to the church's need for mission.

"Our ultimate founder is really Mary, so we just want to live out her spirit, through simplicity, inclusivity, and with each other, through relationship," he said.

For the full Article
<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/marists-sydney-hit-road-for-a-new-generation-of-mission/>

Eyes of Compassion - Lessons from Street Retreat

By Andrew Dumas



For the past 3 years Mercy College Chatswood has been conducting Street Retreats 3 times a term with homeless people in Sydney's CBD. This immersive experience allows students to walk the streets of Woolloomooloo and Kings Cross, engaging in conversations with the homeless community. Through listening to personal stories, they gain a deeper understanding of the hardships faced by many. "I wanted to learn about people's stories and go out to make a

difference in their lives," shared Hope (year 10). Another reflected, "I was inspired by how they turned their lives around by overcoming addiction," said Bernice (year 12). The retreat emphasizes not only the importance of hearing these stories but also the need to respond with compassion and action. "It's about learning to help others without judgment, no matter their past," (Chloe, year 12).

Many students were deeply inspired by the resilience of individuals they encountered. Nick Brown, a former homeless man who now works to educate students in schools through the street retreat, shared his emotional journey of overcoming addiction and homelessness. His story touched the hearts of students, showing them that even in the most difficult circumstances, hope and transformation are possible. "Nick's story really inspired me; he was so close to our age when he went through those hardships," remarked Cara (year 10). Another added, "Seeing how he pulled through showed me the importance of repentance and taking action, no matter how hard it seems," (Chloe, year 12). Students also saw the importance of small acts of kindness. "Even giving a smile can have a huge effect on someone's day," expressed (Hope, 10).

However, the retreat was not without its challenges. Many students found it difficult to ask questions, fearing they might inadvertently offend or touch on sensitive topics. "I was scared I might ask something that would hurt them," admitted Min in year 12. Additionally, hearing stories of drug addiction, abuse, and isolation was confronting for several participants. "It was hard to believe some of the things they had gone through. I never imagined people could live through that," shared Cynthia year 12. Yet, these difficult moments offered valuable lessons. "I learned that no matter what, people can still be positive and spread kindness," reflected Ella in year 10.



Overall, the Street Retreat left a lasting impact on students, encouraging many to become more involved in social justice initiatives. "I want to go back and volunteer at the youth centre we visited," said Hope (year 10). Many students expressed a deep sense of gratitude and a renewed commitment to service, with Alexandra (year 10) summing it up: "This experience has shown me how even the smallest act of kindness can make a difference in someone's life." The retreat fostered a new sense of empathy and commitment to helping the homeless, ensuring that these students will continue to walk with eyes of compassion. Nick will speak for the first time at Mercy College's Winter Sleep out about homelessness on Thursday September 5th. Many of the 130 students who attend are in year 12, this will give them a deep connection of what it is like to be homeless before leaving Mercy College.

The Other Half Program

By Andrew Dumas



The "Other Half" program is a unique initiative run by Mercy College Chatswood students, fostering a connection between students in Australia and orphans in the Philippines. Through regular ZOOM sessions, students from years 7 to 12 lead and engage with the residents of Balay Banag Orphanage in Davao, sharing stories, games, and cultural insights. Balay Banag has been run by Marist Sisters. The aim of the program is to offer both groups a window into each other's worlds. Australian students gain a sense of what life is like for orphans in the Philippines, while the orphans experience the daily life of a Mercy student. Hannah in year 12 commented, "We're not just learning about each other's cultures, we're learning what it means to walk in someone else's shoes".

Each session is filled with interactive activities that promote dialogue and empathy. Students have played creative games such as Storycube, where they build imaginative narratives from random images, and Reverse Charades, a fun and lively game that brought laughter and joy across the virtual divide. These activities not only foster friendships but also encourage both groups to reflect on their similarities and differences. Sister Lilibeth, Director of Balay Banag Orphanage, noted how the sessions provide an intercultural experience for the orphans, who look forward to every meeting. "It was their first time engaging in something like this, and they had so much fun," (Anabel 12).

The impact of "The Other Half" program goes beyond the games and conversations. It leaves both the Mercy students and the orphans with a sense of belonging and a deeper understanding of each other's lives. As one participant reflected after a recent session, "From this simple Zoom, we gave the girls in the Philippines a real sense of self-worth and showed them that Mercy cares about them" (Louisa 12). The program continues to grow, with future sessions already planned, promising more opportunities for learning, sharing, and strengthening the bonds of compassion and empathy. In early December 2024 Mercy

college year 12 students will travel on immersion to Davao Philippines. The girls will be able to physically meet the orphans they have been zooming with. As Anna in year 12 said "We are so excited"!

Formation program online



A formation program has been made available online, which you can download and use in your school, church, family, or community. The formation program, "Doing the Work of Mary: An Invitation to the Marist Way," first published by the Priests and Brothers of the Society of Mary, Atlanta Province, is available as both a Word document and an audio file. This is a seven-session course that groups can choose to complete either monthly or weekly.

[Please click here for more information...](https://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Formation/1437.php)
<https://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Formation/1437.php>

Mindful prayer



Each week pray this prayer with your family, community, school or friends. Download the prayer. PRINT the prayer for each person. Spend 15 minutes praying through mindfulness. In Drawing, Colouring, Writing,

Sharing, Discussion, and Song. Tell your family. Set a time. Pray mindfully.

[Click here for more...](https://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Small%20Groups/index.php)

<https://www.maristlaityaustralia.com/2030/Small%20Groups/index.php>

Event Cancelled

**- From Darkness to Light
 - an exploration of Domestic Violence**



Thank you for your interest in our event "From Darkness to Light - an exploration of domestic violence" Sunday September 8th At Hunters Hill. Unfortunately, due to a lack of interest we have decided to cancel our event. We do feel very strongly about the issue of Domestic Violence in Australia. We apologise for not being able to offer our event.

Take Care,

Marist JPIC Committee

Upcoming events...

Saturday September 21 - Marist Laity Australia MLA Committee and Marist Branch Leaders Gathering - "Exploring the Dream for the Future".

November - Marist Laity Australia MLA Committee Retreat - Mittagong

December - Marist Laity Australia Immersion to the Philippines