

## Chapter Nine: Decline and Rise 1970-2000

Fr Edmund Campion quotes Professor O'Farrell's 1978 comment to the effect that 'the Vatican Council, plus state aid, has changed (Australian Catholicism) from an episcopal church to a bureaucratic one.'<sup>1</sup> And although O'Farrell's own, fuller treatment of the 1970s shows that the bishops did not surrender their authority to the clerical and lay-staffed bureaucracies quite as quickly or completely as this comment might suggest, the temporal co-incidence of State Aid and the changes wrought by Vatican II does provide a useful framework for this final chronological chapter on the evolution of Marist education in Australia.<sup>2</sup> In 1970, the schools of the Marist Brothers' Sydney Province were entirely led, and almost seventy-five percent staffed, by Marist Brothers. By the year 2000, when this narrative ceases, although there were several additional schools and considerably larger school enrolments, more than half of these Marist schools had lay principals and the brothers constituted no more than five or ten per cent of any teaching staff. In 1970, Marist education could have been described accurately, if inadequately, as education provided by Marist Brothers. By 2000, Marist Education had become a much more exhaustively analysed concept; but it no longer implied the presence or participation of any actual, active Marist Brothers. Our focus school in this study, St Patrick's, is reasonably typical. In 1992, it formally changed its sub-title from Marist Brothers' College to Marist College and, though it still had a Marist Brother as Principal in 2000, there were by then, only two other brothers on the teaching staff of more than fifty.

This precipitous decline in the number of actively teaching brothers, was matched by an equally dramatic rise in the size and influence of the various diocesan Catholic Education Offices, throughout Australia. And although the philosophical and theological bases, for this transformation of the peculiarly Australian dependence on Religious teachers, were laid by the Second Vatican Council, the smooth transition to majority lay control would have been practically and financially impossible, without the re-introduction of state aid. Soon after per capita funding was phased in, by the State and Federal governments, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Australian Catholic bishops moved to ensure that the government money which, in effect, paid the salaries of the burgeoning ranks of lay teachers, would be channeled to the individual schools through the Catholic Education Offices. Even at the primary school level, where the Parish Priest had always been regarded as the canonical 'proprietor' of the school, this change caused some dismay.<sup>3</sup> At the secondary level, where the various teaching orders had traditionally

<sup>1</sup> Campion, E. *Australian Catholics*. (Melbourne, 1987), p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> O'Farrell, P. *The Catholic Church and Community*. (Sydney, 1992), pp. 409-417.

<sup>3</sup> Br John Luttrell's M.Ed Thesis (Sydney, 1993), on the development of the Sydney CEO from 1939 till 1987, takes its title 'You've Taken Our Schools Away!' from the cry of a deputation of Parish Priests to Cardinal Gilroy when this process began. *op.cit.* p. 93.

been masters of their own financial fate, the development was even more controversial. Yet the Marist Brothers, who were, by now, more heavily involved at secondary, than at primary level, were busily adapting, quite earnestly, to Vatican II.

### Vatican II and the ‘Revisioning’ of the Marist Tradition

Fr Campion’s and Professor O’Farrell’s accounts of the implementation of Vatican II in the Australian Catholic Church differ considerably in tone and emphasis, although not in actual detail. Campion’s version, published in 1987, while acknowledging some ambivalence in the early stages and even into the 1980s, emphasises the positive view.<sup>4</sup> O’Farrell, on the other hand, stresses the cautious, almost reluctant, attitude of the Australian bishops and the bemusement and apathy of the majority of the laity, early on in the process and, writing his revised version in 1992, takes a much more pessimistic view of the outcomes.<sup>5</sup> It is well beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis to adjudicate between these two views, or to harmonise them with, for instance, Sr Naomi Turner’s version, also produced in 1992.<sup>6</sup> These ‘variant readings’ are mentioned here only to provide a background to the Marist Brothers’ adaptation and implementation, which went steadily ahead, via General and Provincial Chapters, in the two decades following 1968. For the first decade, most of the changes seemed to have more to do with the ‘Religious Life’ of the order and it was more in the second decade, from about 1978 onwards, with the rising numbers of lay teachers, and the increasing authority of the Catholic Education Offices, that the changes began to impinge, more obviously on the ‘Apostolate’ or the actual teaching tradition of the Marist Brothers.

The contrast between lay uncertainty and Religious Order activism in implementing Vatican II is easily explained. Adult members of the Catholic laity were almost entirely dependent on weekly sermons from the parish clergy for information and explanation as to why, when, and how the Conciliar changes would be implemented. And if, as we have noted, the Australian hierarchy were in two minds about the Council, the bulk of the diocesan clergy, albeit with some honourable exceptions, were even more at sea.<sup>7</sup> The Religious Orders, on the other hand, had a chain-of-command and lines of communication which by-passed diocesan boundaries and committed them to a program and timetable for renewal. The XVIth General Chapter of the Marist Brothers, formally required by Vatican II, was held in two sessions during November 1967 and 1968. In the first session, a new Superior General, the Mexican Br Basilio Rueda, and a new Vicar General, the former Director of St Joseph’s, Provincial of Sydney, and Master of Scholastics at Dundas, Br Quentin Duffy, were elected. In addition, Br Hilary Conroy, also a former Sydney Provincial and the incumbent Assistant General for Oceania was

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<sup>4</sup> Campion, *op.cit.* pp. 203-249.

<sup>5</sup> O’Farrell, *op.cit.* pp. 406-452.

<sup>6</sup> Sr Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia* (Melbourne, 1992). Sr Naomi’s treatment is more thematised than the other two; but her chapters on Catholic Education and Religious Education (Vol.II. pp. 95-137) will be referred to later in this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Anne O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980* (Melbourne. 1999) p. 25. Ms O’Brien claims there was ‘a core of qualified priests’ associated with the Melbourne Catholic Education Office and Fr Campion makes the same claim for Fr Roger Pryke and the Living Parish Group in Sydney. (*op.cit.* pp. 203-215). These were some of the honourable exceptions, to which I refer.

re-elected. Thus, Australia was well represented on the new Marist General Council. At the second session of the Chapter, twelve months later, a newly drafted set of interim and experimental *Constitutions* were promulgated, to supersede the earlier *Constitutions* and *Common Rules* and, in September 1969, the first Provincial Chapters were held, in both Melbourne and Sydney. The latter would determine exactly how and when these new directives would be implemented, in Australia.

Although the members of the XVIth General Chapter acknowledged that the new '*ad experimentum*' *Constitutions*, which they produced at the end of the second session, 'may seem quite different'; they also claimed that 'a careful study would reveal that all that is essential in the old ones is maintained.'<sup>8</sup> Certainly, the chapter headings and scope of the new version are similar to those of its predecessor. But whereas the 1935 revision of the *Constitutions* was succinct, authoritative and legalistic, the new edition was more discursive, explanatory and exhortative in tone. Where the older version makes much use of 'is,' 'will,' 'shall,' 'must,' 'should,' the later one relies more on 'should' and 'ought' and rather less on 'will' and 'must'. Where the 1935 revision sets out a list of prayers and pious exercises for each day, week, month and year and enjoins the Brother Provincial and the Brother Director to ensure these are observed, the experimental version, while still maintaining a similar list, recommends that:

By means of a review, made in community, and with the help of the directives from the Superiors, each (brother) will find, both for prayer in common and private prayer, a suitable rhythm which takes account of the differing circumstances of life.<sup>9</sup>

As regards the Marist 'Apostolate' or teaching tradition, the 1935 revision says simply that:

The secondary end of the Institute is to procure the salvation of souls by the Christian instruction and education of children, chiefly in rural districts.<sup>10</sup>

And, later:

Besides religious instruction and Christian education, the brothers shall impart to their pupils primary instruction and knowledge in keeping with their station in life.<sup>11</sup>

The interim *Constitutions*' version, on the other hand, is a good deal more prolix and seems open to a broader definition of the 'Apostolate':

The Catholic School, which has a privileged place in Christian education is always the first field of apostolate for us.

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<sup>8</sup> *Constitutions of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools* (Rome, 1968). Foreword p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitutions* (1968) p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> *Constitutions* (1935) Article 2. pp. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* Article 198 p. 80.

At the same time, the work of Catechetics is our great concern and we are not unaware of other forms of apostolate among youth.

The proper use of leisure time calls for a special formation in the modern means of communication and of culture ...

... we must collaborate with the diocesan and parochial authorities ...

Since we share in the work of national education, we do so, as far as possible, in a spirit of mutual co-operation ...

It is, above all, with the parents that we must co-operate in the work of education. Even after our students have graduated from our schools, we should continue to help them ... By encouraging and directing our ex-students to live in the service of the Church and of society, we carry out a real apostolate.<sup>12</sup>

As well as thus re-defining this 'apostolate' or 'active' part of the Marist tradition, the new *Constitutions* also re-defined the main thrust of the vows Poverty, Chastity and Obedience which constitute the structural foundation of all Religious Life, Marist or otherwise. Where the old *Constitutions* had dealt with the vow of Chastity in less than two hundred words and defined it largely as the obligation of celibacy and the practice and prudent protection of 'interior' chastity, the new version devoted a short, five or six-hundred word essay to the subject.<sup>13</sup> While not resiling from the sacrifice of the right to marriage and children, or from the need to practise the virtue of chastity, the new version expanded on the 'eschatological witness' value of the vow and how it could free the individual to love God and his fellow man, more fully.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the treatment of the vow of Obedience was more expansive in the new, interim version, than it had been in the earlier one and, perhaps, left some room for exercising greater personal responsibility and more mature consideration in one's Obedience.<sup>15</sup>

However, it was the new 'note' in the interim *Constitutions'* redefinition of the vow of Poverty which was, arguably, to have the biggest impact on the teaching tradition of the Marist Brothers in Australia. As regards Poverty, the old *Constitutions* had confined themselves, quite legalistically, to what the individual brother could own, earn, or receive as gifts, for personal use, and with the Superiors' obligation to see that the Order, as a whole, avoided 'ornamentation, superfluity and luxury.'<sup>16</sup> Historically, in Australia and, indeed, since the days of Fr Champagnat, this had led the brothers to practice Poverty as an ascetic virtue involving detachment from worldly goods, simplicity of lifestyle and a fairly stringent domestic economy.<sup>17</sup> This, in turn, had proved of great practical value in providing schools for the children of poor families, especially during times of economic depression - such as rural France, in the 1830s, and Australia, in both the 1890s and 1930s. The new *Constitutions* did not de-emphasise the implications of simplicity of lifestyle, even in the face of a contemporary Western society which was

<sup>12</sup> *Constitutions* (1968) pp. 61-63.

<sup>13</sup> *Constitutions* (1935) Ch..X pp. 27-28.

<sup>14</sup> *Constitutions* (1968) pp. 25-30.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Constitutions* (1935) pp. 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> Br Owen Kavanagh, a dedicated and thorough, but amateur, historian of the Australian Marist Brothers, and of their French antecedents, wrote a striking essay on the Founder and early French brothers' practice of Poverty in the *Marist Monthly*, Sept., 1982.

increasingly more affluent and consumerist; but they did add a motivational note to the definition, which was to have considerable ramifications in Australian Marist schools in subsequent decades. This new 'note' was struck in the section on 'Collective Poverty' and reads, in part:

At all levels the Marist community must endeavour to put into practice, the concept and example of the Blessed Founder:

- giving preference to the apostolate of the poor ...
- accepting foundations in which we are not proprietors, where this is possible and when it enables us to be available for any new demands ...
- being readily disposed to share what we have with communities and Provinces that live in greater poverty ...
- helping those we know to be in need, whether they are close to us or, simply known to us, from what we know of the world.<sup>18</sup>

Stated thus, the change in emphasis seems unremarkable; but to appreciate its full significance, it is necessary to follow this development through to its final formulation, at the end of the 'experimental' period. In the drafting of the 1968 *Constitutions*, the most frequently cited references, apart from those to the New Testament and the *Life* of Fr Champagnat, are the official documents of Vatican II, especially those on *The Church*, *The Church in the Modern World*, *Christian Education*, and *The Renewal of Religious Life*. Between the interim Constitutions of 1968 and the re-drafted and Vatican-approved final version, produced by the XVIIIth General Chapter in 1985, however, the new international Synod of Bishops and the Vatican, itself, published a number of what could loosely be called 'social encyclicals' which took this development in the understanding of Poverty, a good deal further.

The most striking of these was the 1971 Synod of Bishops' statement called *Justice in the World*, the most quoted paragraph of which reads:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the Human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.<sup>19</sup>

And this was followed, and partly echoed, by Pope Paul VI's 1976 'Apostolic Exhortation' *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Proclaiming the Gospel) which agrees that:

Evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospels and man's concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves an explicit message ... about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development – a message especially energetic, today, about liberation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Constitutions* (1968). pp. 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor*. (New York, 1983). p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (Sydney, 1976), p. 34.

‘Liberation Theology,’ in other words, had appeared on the Vatican’s agenda and had received firm, albeit cautious, approval. Closer to ‘home’, the Marist XVIIth General Chapter, held in Rome in 1976, produced its own document on *Poverty and Justice*.

As a result of these developments, the finalized and Vatican-approved version of the Marist *Constitutions*, for the interim article quoted above read:

To be true to Christ and to our Founder, we love the poor. They are God’s blessed ones; they draw down his gifts upon us and evangelize us.

Attuned to the voice of the Church and in touch with our vocation, we stand in solidarity with the poor and their just demands. We give them the first preference wherever we are ...

Concern for the poor impels us to search out the root causes of their wretchedness and to free ourselves from prejudice or indifference towards them.

Our mission as educators of youth commits us to work to promote justice.<sup>21</sup>

This sort of emphasis was to have a considerable impact on Marist priorities in Australia over subsequent decades.

A second significant and relevant example, of evolution between the interim and the finalized edition of the *Constitutions*, was the emergence of the word ‘charism’. Vatican II’s *Perfectae Caritatis* document (On the Renewal of Religious Life), directed Religious Orders to return to the spirit of their respective Founders:

Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders, who were raised up by God within his Church. Thus the Council rightly insists on the obligation of Religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this, it finds one of the most secure criteria for judging what each Institute should undertake.<sup>22</sup>

This statement effectively re-launched the term ‘charism’ into modern discourse about Religious Life. The interim *Constitutions* did not actually employ the word, but they did have a section headed ‘Our Distinctive Features’ and listed these features as:

‘a Marial Spirit’ i.e. a devotion to and imitation of the Blessed Virgin as a model Christian.

‘a Spirit of humility, simplicity and modesty’, virtues which the Founder inculcated and Our Lady exemplified.

and ‘a Family Spirit’, of brothers living in harmony together.

And in the final version, the sub-heading ‘Charism of the Founder’ does appear, with the listed ‘distinctive features’ appearing as subsequent sub-headings. The only additions to

<sup>21</sup> *Constitutions and Statutes*. (1986) pp. 34 – 35.

<sup>22</sup> Flannery, A. (ed.) *Vatican Council II* (Dublin. 1975). p. 685.

the earlier list are a reference to the Institute being founded ‘for the Christian education of the young, especially those most in need’; and to the brothers, themselves, as disciples of Fr Champagnat ‘called to live the brotherhood of Christ with everyone, especially young people.’<sup>23</sup> As can be seen from this brief description, even the evolved and expanded definition of the charism, is a good deal stronger on spiritual direction than on pedagogical prescription.

Our final example of evolution, between the interim *Constitutions* and the approved version of 1986, focuses on the area of recruitment and training (or ‘formation’ as religious orders tend to call it.) The interim version had honestly accepted the responsibility to cultivate greater maturity on the part of novices and the junior professed brothers, before final profession; and also legislated for a substantial scholasticate program which would balance professional, university, or technical qualifications with spiritual, theological and catechetical studies. It also envisaged continued recruitment, at the teenage level, by the time-honoured means of juniorates.<sup>24</sup> By the final version, however, references, to both juniorates and scholasticates, had been dropped. A post-novitiate course of at least two years, in a specifically designated ‘house of formation’, was stipulated; but the juniorate stage had been discarded, being replaced only by the offer of counseling and ‘accompaniment’ for later teenagers and young men considering seeking admission to the order.<sup>25</sup> By 1986, the scholasticate program was still operating in Australia, albeit in a more attenuated form than the glory days of Dundas; but both of the juniorates – the historic foundation at Mittagong and the new Melbourne Province establishment, purpose-built at Bendigo, as late as 1970 – had been closed.

As should be clear from the foregoing account, this Marist re-visioning process in the wake of Vatican II, was conducted on the theological and religious plane, rather than at the immediately educational or operational level. And to rehearse how these ideas were discussed, debated, interpreted and implemented in the Australian context would be a complex and tedious task, fraught with the risks of unproductive controversy. Suffice to say, that there were often vigorous debates at the triennial Provincial Chapters. After Vatican II, the Brother Provincial was still appointed by the General Council; but only after a *sondage* had been taken among the professed brothers of the Province, with short-lists of three names being sent on to Rome. Provincial Chapters, an entirely new structure for the Marist Brothers, whose delegates were elected, by province constituencies, on an age and/or regional basis, determined the stages of implementation and also elected the Provincial Councillors, who served for three years in an ‘advise and consent’ role, to assist the Provincial in his administration. In an era of rapid and substantial change and, given the age-range, the different educational backgrounds and even the geographical spread of the brothers in Australia, this was a structure that almost guaranteed some intensity of debate. Rather than attempt to describe the ebb and flow of this discussion, however, the writer proposes to examine only the outcomes – for the Marist teaching tradition – and at only two levels: the systemic and the individual. That is to say, firstly at the national, provincial and diocesan level and secondly at the individual and operational

<sup>23</sup> *Constitutions and Statutes* (1986) Ch. I Arts 2 & 3 pp. 13-14.

<sup>24</sup> *Constitutions* (1968) Ch. IV pp. 83-102.

<sup>25</sup> *Constitutions and Statutes* (1986) Ch. VI pp. 64 -75.

level of our focus school, St Patrick's: by now, very much part of the Australian Marist mainstream, and re-located from The Rocks in central Sydney, to suburban Dundas.

## **Implementation at the Systemic Level**

### **I: School Administration**

Although the commitment of the interim *Constitutions* to working co-operatively with diocesan, parochial and national authorities may have invoked the post-Vatican II style, it was not new in substance.<sup>26</sup> Apart from Br John Dullea's attachment to Marist published text-books, his resistance to diocesan inspection of teachers and, perhaps, the expulsion of the brothers from the parish school at St Mary's Cathedral, the history of the Marist Brothers in Australia, as we have seen, had been marked by a spirit of ready co-operation and compliance with both the Catholic hierarchy and with the requirements of colonial or state education authorities.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, even prior to the re-introduction of State Aid and the expansion of the Catholic Education Offices, there had been several indications of the Marists' continuing this co-operative and accommodating attitude. Mention has already been made of their co-operation in the rationalization of the Sydney Catholic schools network, which had been precipitated by the post-war baby boom, the increased public expectation of secondary education and the implementation of the Wyndham Report. All of this was well in keeping with the traditional Marist pattern.<sup>28</sup>

Another pre-Vatican II development, however, the introduction of co-education into Australian Catholic schools, could perhaps be seen as indicating a willingness to co-operate, in ways that went beyond the traditional call of duty. As has been seen, throughout this narrative, the Marist Brothers' teaching energies, historically, had been dedicated to boys only, and *Divini Illius Magistri's* 1929 ban on co-education, referred to earlier, had consequently caused them no problems. But faced, in the early 'fifties, with rising secondary school enrolments, the American bishops petitioned Pope Pius XII about the matter, and the Vatican Congregation for Religious duly produced a document, in December 1957, which stated that, the 1929 encyclical notwithstanding, local bishops, with permission from Rome, could encourage Religious Orders to 'tolerate' co-education for serious pastoral reasons.<sup>29</sup> The Australian bishops, faced with the same problem as their American counterparts, especially after the Wyndham Scheme, and similar expansions of secondary teaching in other states, soon took advantage of this relaxation and urged religious orders to provide co-educational opportunities, where needed.

This was not a widely popular development for the majority of the urban Catholic laity; but in country towns, where the duplication of library and laboratory facilities for small, separate single-sex schools was clearly impractical, the bishops moved ahead.

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<sup>26</sup> See pp. 174 -175 above.

<sup>27</sup> See Chs. 5 & 6 above.

<sup>28</sup> See Ch. 8 p.161. Marist co-operation in this rationalization – which included the re-location of St Patrick's from Church Hill to Dundas – has been documented in Br John Luttrell's 1991 MEd. Thesis 'You've Taken Our Schools!' (Sydney University) p. 89.

<sup>29</sup> B.M. Frison, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1966), Vol iii. p. 979.



Bishop Farrelly of Lismore was, nevertheless, clearly choosing his words and exercising his pastoral responsibility gingerly, when he opened the new co-institutional facilities at the Marist Brothers/ Presentation Sisters' school in 1967.

Bishop Farrelly said this type of education was a departure from what the church had undertaken previously. He would not (really) describe the school as being co-educational, but rather co-instructional in some subjects.

Special permission had to be obtained from Rome for the classrooms to be used in such a manner.

'An obligation has been placed on me as your Bishop, because in the law of the church, there is only one teacher in a diocese – the bishop' he said. Bishop Farrelly said, in these times, science was so important and it was good to see the education system was trying to keep pace with it; but, in doing so, we must remember to keep all things in their proper perspective.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, the Australian Marist Provinces accepted this departure from tradition, after some internal discussion, certainly, but without demur. With most of their schools located in country centres, the Marist Melbourne Province, in particular, saw more than half of its schools become co-educational by the end of the 1980s. By the mid-1990s, even the three surviving Melbourne Province boarding schools had become fully co-educational.

The need for the local bishop to seek special permission from Rome was removed by a post-Vatican II document issued in 1971;<sup>31</sup> but the Irish Christian Brothers, by contrast with the Marists, fought a long and principled rear-guard action against accepting responsibility for co-educational schools, arguing that it was against their *Constitutions*. Although the Christian Brothers did hesitantly accept participation in a co-instructional situation, (i.e. joint facilities, segregated classes), at Wagga Wagga in 1969, their General Chapter, of that same year, refused to approve co-education in principle.<sup>32</sup> Br Simmons, who worked for the Sydney Catholic Education Office and later, in a more senior position, for the Brisbane CEO, wrote two articles in the Christian Brothers' *Our Studies* journal, in which he surveyed the literature and the Church documentation and concluded that the changes in the Church's position were due to economic and pastoral concerns rather than to a genuine change in philosophy. He did not conclude that the Irish brothers should change their principles, however, and when the St Patrick's (i.e. Melbourne) Province of the Christian Brothers' 1977 Provincial Chapter did, finally, approve co-education, a sizeable minority, 35 per cent, dissented.<sup>33</sup>

Returning to the broader question of cooperation, rationalization and the ceding of financial control of the schools to diocesan authorities; initial Marist participation in this process also predates the circulation of the interim *Constitutions*, the re-introduction

<sup>30</sup> *Marist Monthly* April, 1967.

<sup>31</sup> *Declaration on Coeducation in Schools Run by Religious*. In Flannery, *Vatican Council II* (1975) pp. 678-79.

<sup>32</sup> *Our Studies* Sept., 1968 and Oct., 1971.

<sup>33</sup> Shane Dooley, 'The Changing Nature of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers within the Province of St Patrick and its Response to the Second Vatican Council (1959-1977)'. Ph.D. Thesis, Latrobe University. 1997. p. 326.

of State Aid and even the major expansion of the Catholic Education Office, itself.<sup>34</sup> In 1965, Cardinal Gilroy established the Sydney Catholic Building and Finance Commission, its sub-committees chaired by his auxiliary bishops, but staffed, often in an honorary capacity, by several highly-placed legal and financial lay experts, to co-ordinate fund-raising, the granting of loans to parish and regional schools, and the lobbying of state and federal governments for financial assistance. For its first twenty years, this body acted with the Cardinal's authority as regards the financial planning and running of schools and parishes. Even the Catholic Education Office, itself, had to apply to the CBFC for its annual budget and, although there was a name change, to the Catholic Schools Finance Office, in 1984, it was not until 1987 that the Commission was reduced in status to become simply a section of the Sydney CEO. By 1984, of course, most of the money the CBFC was handling was coming from State and Commonwealth education grants, so the name change and the re-structuring were entirely appropriate.<sup>35</sup> In its early years, the CBFC reported encountering some resistance from, at least, the male teaching congregations; but within a few years the Marist, De La Salle and Patrician Brothers had signed agreements with the Commission, and only the Irish Christian Brothers continued to hold out for independence.<sup>36</sup>

The same pattern held true for the Melbourne Province, even though the evolution of the Catholic Education Office and the form of its control over the schools would develop somewhat differently from Sydney's. There too, while the Marist Brothers co-operated willingly, some Irish Christian Brothers and some senior Jesuits opposed the Karmel Commission's proposed method of funding for independent schools and the powers that this would give to the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne.<sup>37</sup> It should not, thereby, be assumed that the Marist Brothers, in either Australian Province, blithely shrugged off the responsibility they had willingly shouldered for nearly a century, of providing a large part of Catholic boys' education in Australia. At the Fourth Provincial Chapter, held at Marist College, Monash University – the Melbourne scholasticate – in August 1977, Fr Frank Martin, the then Melbourne Director of Catholic Education, gave a paper outlining the *fait accompli* of lay staffing in the Catholic primary schools of the Melbourne Archdiocese; the seemingly inexorable advance of a similar development within secondary schools; and the Melbourne CEO's proposed response to this situation. In the time allowed for questions, Br 'Joe' Heinrich, a Provincial Councillor and *ex officio* Chapter Delegate asked, somewhat disconsolately: 'Father, can you tell us any good news?' to which Fr Martin replied with words to the effect that:

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<sup>34</sup> For much in the next few paragraphs, I am indebted to Br John Luttrell's M.Ed Thesis/ History of the Sydney CEO: 'You've Taken Our Schools!' Sydney University. 1994.

<sup>35</sup> Luttrell, *op.cit.* p. 93.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> For the Melbourne Province part of this summary of the expansion of the CEOs, the writer is indebted to Anne O'Brien's *Blazing a Trail*, (Melbourne, 1999), e.g. pp. 116-117. However, the writer was also a member of the Melbourne Province from 1960 till 1995; of the Principals' Association of Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools (1974-80 and 1985-95); of the Catholic Education Commission of W.A. (1982-84); and of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia. (1982-1990).

Brother, I thought I was giving you good news. I have been saying that the CEO and the lay teachers it employs are now in a position to sustain and develop the Catholic School network in the Melbourne Archdiocese. And while we still definitely need and welcome the support of the Religious Orders, especially at the secondary level, we can now say to you: 'Make your own choices, in the light of your Province's personnel situation and the 'Signs of the Times'. You and the other Orders have carried the whole 'system' for the last hundred years. Now you are free to go where the Spirit leads.<sup>38</sup>

This reply may not have consoled all the brothers of Br Joe's generation completely. Many of them had no qualifications other than the Victorian Registration they had gained in the scholasticate; some had not even that. But this sort of reply did give space for, and countenance to, the debates and soul-searching that were going on throughout the Sydney and Melbourne Provincial Chapters, during the 1970s and early 1980s.

As we have seen above, the re-statement of the brothers' 'Apostolate', in the interim *Constitutions*, had widened Marist possibilities to include a concentration on Catechetics and/or working with ex-students and/or developing the new 'note' in Religious Poverty of 'solidarity with the Poor.'<sup>39</sup> This led to considerable debate as to how the brothers' limited manpower (and even more limited qualifications) could best be deployed. Some, of the older generation, wanted to withdraw from the well-established, more middle-class schools and to re-inforce existing 'poor' schools, so that they could be totally staffed by brothers. Others wanted to form 'frontier groups': small core teams of experienced teachers and administrators to start new Catholic Education Office regional schools in developing suburbs. Others wanted to devote more brothers to the mission schools already run, by both provinces, in Papua-New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Some wanted the brothers to concentrate on Catechetics and to provide Religious Education Coordinators in the schools. Still others wanted to reach out to young people from 'problem home' situations or to Aboriginal children, as being the most recognizably 'poor' people in Australia. Many, probably the majority, felt that existing Australian commitments - whether to middle class or working class schools - should be honoured until such times as appropriately qualified lay staff could relieve the brothers, to follow this wide range of possibilities. In the end, this putative majority had their way, and all but the first option - the 'all-brothers' school' - were eventually pursued.

Back in Sydney, the Marists' commitment to working with the Catholic Education Office was both demonstrated, and assisted, by the appointment of some brothers to work full-time with the CEO. This was a gradual process; but the steady progression of Br Kelvin Canavan from being a primary school inspector/consultant in 1968, to head of the Primary Department in 1977, and Director of Catholic Education, from 1986 to the

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<sup>38</sup> Fr Martin's presentation is preserved in the Melbourne Province's Archives, in the box marked 'Acts of the Fourth Provincial Chapter'. The question and answer section was not recorded; but the writer was an ear-witness to the exchange and can vouch for the substantive accuracy of Fr Martin's reply. The date of the presentation was 29.8.77.

<sup>39</sup> Above pp. 176-177.

present, is the most obvious case in point.<sup>40</sup> For part of this time, Br Kelvin was also a member of the Sydney Provincial Council; and in the Melbourne Province, the reverse process was employed, with Frank Rogan of the Melbourne CEO sitting as a member of the Schools' Sub-committee of the Provincial Council. In Sydney, again, the Marist, Br Norman Hart was commissioned from November 1979 to May 1980 to develop a more rational system of administration for the CEO itself.<sup>41</sup> By this time, the financial control of the CBFC, as it still was, over all but the 'non-systemic' Catholic schools, was complete. School fees from each school and government *per capita* grants were paid to the Commission, which then paid the teachers' salaries and the brothers' stipends, according to a Commission-approved staff-student ratio. The only Marist 'non-systemic' schools in Sydney were the boarding schools: St Joseph's College at Hunter's Hill and St Gregory's at Campbelltown.

Thus, although the Brother Provincial could still appoint brothers to particular school/communities and Brother Directors/Principals could still hire appropriately qualified lay teachers, both brothers and lay teachers had to be employed within the CBFC or CEO budget, established for that school. The Melbourne CEO situation, where the secondary schools retained their own school fees and received their government *per capita* grants as a lump sum, was slightly different; but the lay teachers they employed soon had some security of tenure, superannuation and long-service leave entitlements, co-coordinated by the CEO. The Melbourne Province may even have led the way when it continued to appoint brothers to the staff of the school at Warragul, where the Sale Diocesan CEO appointed a lay Principal in 1976.<sup>42</sup> But, in either situation, it was a profound change from the old Marist 'system' described by Br Walter, in the late 1940s, when the Provincial appointed the communities in mid-January and the Br Director 'picked his team' in the week before school started.<sup>43</sup>

By 1985, the Provincial no longer visited the classrooms – of either province – as Br John Dullea and Br Andrew had done. That task was now delegated to a Brother School Supervisor, of which the Sydney Province had two: one for Secondary and one for Primary. By 1985 too, the role of Br Director had also been changed with a Brother Superior and a separate Brother Principal being appointed to many school/communities. The responsibilities of the Provincial and local Superior were now focused much more on the personal and spiritual welfare of the brothers, rather than on their teaching-apostolate. The first generation of local Superiors often found it difficult to hand over control of the school to the usually younger, scholasticate-trained Principals, but this task became more manageable as the number of older, retired brothers in each community began to rise, itself a new phenomenon: most brothers, of earlier generations, had died with their boots on. But with all these changes in the traditional administration roles, and the ever-increasing number of lay teachers in the schools, how could the Marist identity of the schools be maintained?

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<sup>40</sup> Luttrell, *op.cit.* pp. 102 and 173.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> *Marist Newsletter*. 29. 7.1975. The decision was announced in '75 and implemented in 1976.

<sup>43</sup> See above Ch. 8 pp. 156-158.

## II: Religious Education

If the negotiations, surrounding the transfer of school administration from the provincial authorities to the various Catholic Educations Offices, had caused a certain amount of heartburn among the generally compliant Marists, the post-Vatican II changes in Religious Education were a great deal more fraught with both internal and external controversy. This was particularly the case in the Marist Melbourne Province, where:

With access to television and print media, the most vocal and influential opponents of change were (Mr B.A.) Santamaria and the NCC.<sup>44</sup>

but these Victorian debates sent out substantial ripples, not to say shock waves, through the rest of Catholic and Marist Australia, including New South Wales, where the Marist presence was much stronger and the National Civic Council much less influential, than in Victoria. The heat of this Melbourne controversy is well captured in Dick Selleck's and Anne O'Brien's separate accounts.<sup>45</sup> A calmer, more academic, description of the actual changes to Religious Education, in both style and content, has now been provided by Br Bill McCarthy's PhD thesis, completed at Melbourne's Monash University in 2002.<sup>46</sup> However, it is not the purpose of this section to either re-ignite the debate or to repeat Br Bill's sequential account of the changes. Rather, it sets out to show how the local Marist praxis of Catechetics, or Religious Education changed, during these three decades.

One of the most noticeable, though by no means immediate, changes occurred in the prayer life of the schools, rather than in their formal Catechetics programs. This was particularly the case in boarding schools, of which the Australian Marists still ran ten in 1970, where the quasi-monastic regime described by the young boarder in the 1890s had not changed a great deal.<sup>47</sup> Br Basil Kelly may have abolished reading in the refectory at St Joseph's and introduced inter-school sport; but most Marist boarders, in Australia, into the 1960s, still rose in silence every morning to attend Mass in the chapel and went to bed, in silence, each night after prayers, usually led by the Brother Director, again in the chapel. Even in the day schools: lessons began and finished with a series of prayers, read from a prayer card; the *Angelus* and the Rosary were recited each day in class time; and a bell was rung every hour, on the hour, for a short, prescribed prayer to be said. Even in the day schools: the parish clergy would normally appear, once a month, in class time, to give boys the opportunity to have Confession; and most schools had an annual three-day silent Retreat, in school-time, usually conducted by a visiting team of Passionist or Redemptorist priests. The Sodality of Our Lady still functioned in many schools, and the chapels of the smaller boarding schools usually had pale imitations, at least, of the cohorts of resplendently garbed altar boys, who served St Joseph's chapel, at Hunter's

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<sup>44</sup> Br W.V. McCarthy, 'A Historical Analysis of Approaches to Religious Education in Victoria.1945 - 1995.' PhD Thesis. Monash University. Melbourne. 2002. p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> R.J.W. Selleck. *Cruden: The Reluctant Rebel*. (Melbourne, 1970); Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail*. (Melbourne, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> McCarthy, *op.cit.*

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 6. pp. 111-112.

Hill. Every classroom had a crucifix above the blackboard and a white or blue and white plaster statue of Our Lady, on a little shelf or altar, in the corner and, usually, additional pictures of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady, Blessed Marcellin Champagnat – as he still was – or one of the other saints, on the walls.

The wonder is not that these things changed after Vatican II; but that they had lasted so long - well into the ‘student revolution’ period of the late 1960s - and that they changed so gradually, even after the Council. When the writer emerged from university studies and began teaching at a New South Wales Marist boarding school, in 1967, the three-day silent Retreats he had experienced, as a boarder at a Victorian Marist school, in the late 1950s, were still a feature of the school year. Morning Mass for the boarders; silence in the dormitories; recitation of the Rosary and regular prayers in the classroom, were still part of the daily routine. The three-day silent retreat was, perhaps, the first card to fall. Teenage boys of the late 1960s could hardly maintain a respectful silence during the ‘conferences’ given by the visiting retreat priests, much less a prayerful silence, during the in-between times. The parish clergy continued to attend school each month, for Confessions; but fewer and fewer boys took the opportunity to avail themselves of their services and, eventually, the priests stopped coming. The boarders’, previously daily, Mass gradually became a once-a-week occurrence, apart from Sunday, as one of the four dormitories joined the brothers in the chapel, while the other three ‘slept in.’ Once, in the early 1970s, during the Year Twelve dormitory’s morning Mass, when it came time to go to Communion, all but one, of the twenty or so boarders remained stolidly in the pews - for most of the year. And in both senior classes, eliciting a clearly audible and articulated response to the ‘Hail Marys’ of the daily Rosary, became an effort akin to that of drawing teeth. Even the most loyal and traditional Marist Brother teachers were forced to realize that ‘The times they (were) a-changing’.<sup>48</sup>

Student response to developments within the formal, classroom Religious Education program, was hardly more encouraging. As Br Bill McCarthy remarks, the new Kerygmatic Catechesis had hardly been established, in Australia, before it was dropped.<sup>49</sup> The new *Catholic Catechism*, Books I and II, commissioned by the Australian Hierarchy and written by Fr John F. Kelly, the Director of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office, were published in 1962 and 1963 respectively. The two books, and the Teachers’ Guides that went with them, were warmly embraced by the Australian teaching congregations, the emerging national catechetical journals, for example, the De La Salle Brothers’ *Our Apostolate*, and they received favourable overseas reviews from international authorities, such as Fr Johannes Hofinger SJ and Fr G.S. Sloyan.<sup>50</sup> Book I of the new *Catholic Catechism* was aimed at primary classes and Book II covered the same Kerygmatic material, although with greater scriptural and liturgical depth, for the benefit of junior secondary classes. It was at the secondary level,

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<sup>48</sup> The writer was on the staff of Red Bend Marist Brothers’ College, Forbes from 1967 till 1974 and experienced these developments at first hand. The pace of changes in other Marist boarding schools may have differed somewhat, but they were all in the same direction.

<sup>49</sup> McCarthy, *op.cit.* p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Mullins, W.A. ‘The Development of Catholic Education in NSW.1900-1966.’ (Washington. 1969), pp. 169-76.

that the Kerygmatic approach ran into its major problems. The new catechism was widely regarded, by the clergy at least, as doctrinally strong, sound and succinct; but although it abjured the rote-learning of the old 'Penny Catechism', the new Australian *Catholic Catechism* still had little pedagogical appeal for teenagers. The De La Salle Brothers' ex-students, surveyed by Fr Mullins in 1967, were probably too young to have experienced the new catechism; but they would, almost certainly, have experienced the Kerygmatic approach itself, and their negative reactions were only amplified by those of the Marist Brothers' Year Twelve students, who certainly had experienced the new catechism, and who were surveyed, more broadly, by Br Marcellin Flynn in 1975.<sup>51</sup>

The Australian Bishops also commissioned a new Religious Education resource book for senior secondary classes and the Marist Br Flavius Donnelly, mentioned earlier, together with Fr Maurice Duffy of the Sandhurst (Bendigo) diocese, were among the team chosen to produce the text. They were aware of the student reaction to the earlier, junior catechisms and also of overseas movements towards 'pre-evangelization' and 'life-centred' catechesis and they discussed these developments, with a sizeable group of younger Marist Brothers and invitees from other Teaching Congregations, in an extended seminar, at St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, in December/January 1970. That first Catechetics seminar came to be known as 'Cats I' and, the following summer, a larger, almost one hundred and twenty strong 'Cats II' seminar, consisting mainly of Marist Brothers from both of the Australian provinces (plus New Zealand) and some Marist and Mercy Sisters, and with in-put from a number of contemporary experts such as Fr Crudden, the former Director of the Melbourne CEO, Fr Wally Black MSC, and Br Christian Moe FSC, was held at Hunter's Hill, again, over a month-long period. Cats II essentially tried to disseminate all that was recent and, seemingly, effective in Catechetical, Religious, Scriptural and Liturgical Education and it also served to launch the new senior school Religious Education text, which was simultaneously published in the form of a once-off series of colour-printed mini-magazines called *Come Alive*.

*Come Alive* and the whole 'life-centred' approach to catechesis, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, attracted the ire of the conservative country bishops of Victoria, led by Bishop Stewart of Sandhurst and abetted by Mr Santamaria and his lay supporters in the National Civic Council.<sup>52</sup> The theological *coup de grâce* was administered by the Bishop of Sale, Eric D'Arcy, who published a critique in the *Australasian Catholic Record* in 1975, declaring the methodology, academically and doctrinally inadequate. What the parents and NCC supporters of Mr Santamaria really wanted was teenage children who would: go with their families to Mass on Sundays, stay off drugs, get a career and abjure sex before marriage. 'Life-centred' catechesis was apparently not 'producing' that, and so they demanded a 'back to the Ten Commandments' type curriculum. Fr Crudden had been forced from his Directorship of the Melbourne CEO in 1970 by this sort of pressure and throughout the 1970s his successors, Fr Frank Martin and Fr Tom Doyle, remained under pressure from this same constituency, to produce and promote Religious Education *Guidelines* which were doctrinally and morally more

<sup>51</sup> Mullins, W.A. *op.cit.* pp. 269-70. and Br Marcellin Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action*, CEO Sydney, 1975. pp.197-200.

<sup>52</sup> O'Brien, *op.cit.* p. 63.

directive and demanding.<sup>53</sup> Even the first Melbourne attempts, in this direction, were regarded as too tame by the conservatives, but all of the bigger Australian dioceses were eventually obliged to follow the Melbourne *Guidelines* lead and to produce structured and fully-resourced syllabuses of their own. *Come Alive*, and the life-centred approach to Catechetics, may not have been producing regular Sunday church-goers, or numerous ‘vocations;’ but there is little evidence to suggest that the contemporary, doctrinally-enriched *Guidelines* approach has improved either outcome, significantly.<sup>54</sup>

If the *Come Alive* aspects of Cats II ‘crashed and burned’, the other Theological, Scriptural, Liturgical and Methodological insights provided by the month-long seminar, bore more lasting fruit. In particular, the use of camp-style retreats, advocated by Br Bill Firman FSC at Cats II, to replace the old school-based, silent retreats, quickly caught on, and have continued to the present, in most Australian Marist schools. Moreover, some of the techniques employed on these camps, such as meditation, simulation games, values clarification, small group work, relaxation and affirmation exercises and participatory preparation of the liturgy, have also fed back into the ordinary classroom Religious Education lessons. Most Australian Marist Schools now have these camp-style retreats, at least for their Year 11 and 12 classes, in school time, but at some off-campus location and with the lay teachers ‘living in’ with the students, and leading the small group discussions and other activities. These retreats usually incorporate a non-sacramental, communal Rite of Reconciliation, rather than the First or Second Rite, demanded in parish situations; but they also, usually, include a Eucharistic liturgy which, though participatory and informal, is orthodox and reverent. Like the Religious Education programs, generally, these camp liturgies and the whole-school liturgies, at the start and end of the school year, have not converted the bulk of Marist students to being regular church-goers; but they are the most effective experience of ‘Church’ that many of these students and ex-students re-call.<sup>55</sup>

If the Retreat Camps did not transform the Marist students (and ex-students) into model parishioners, they did, at least, encourage some of them to adopt a more critical, constructive and consciously Christian approach, to the world around them. Led by a few brothers, in various communities, across Australia, some flirted briefly with the Prayer Groups of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal which blossomed, for a time, in the late ‘seventies.<sup>56</sup> From the early 1970s onwards, ex-students also began giving up time to run holiday camps for Asthma and then Cystic Fibrosis sufferers in Victoria, under the leadership of Br Ambrose Kelly; and for the ‘Little King Movement’, which supported physically and mentally handicapped young people, led by Brs Des Phillips and Charles Aquilina, in Brisbane.<sup>57</sup> More continuously, from that time until now, senior students and ex-students began to get involved in Social Justice activities. Br Charles Howard, the

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* pp. 149-152.

<sup>54</sup> McCarthy, *op.cit.* p. 206.

<sup>55</sup> The evidence for this last statement is anecdotal; but the writer was part of a panel set up by the Melbourne Province in the late-Eighties to evaluate the work of the Province Retreat Team and interviewed many teachers and students in Victorian Marist schools. In less formal situations he has also heard the verdict affirmed by many NSW ex-students.

<sup>56</sup> Turner, *op.cit.* pp. 137-39.

<sup>57</sup> *Marist Monthly* March & April, 1979.



then Sydney Provincial, was elected as Assistant General at the XVIIth General Chapter in 1976, and spent a good deal of his time in that role promulgating and popularizing the Chapter's document on *Poverty and Justice*. Both Australian Provinces, by then, had Retreat Teams of brothers, and Religious or lay female members, who traveled around from school to school, helping the local Religious Education Co-coordinator and staff members to run retreats for the senior classes. Some of the brothers, on these Retreat Teams, graduated from that activity, to working with ex-students and discovered that Peace and Justice issues struck a responsive chord with many of these 'post-school youth'. Eventually, in January 1984, the Melbourne Province staged the first National Marist Youth Festival, at Assumption College, Kilmore. It drew more than two hundred senior students, ex-students and church youth workers from across Australia and was facilitated by brothers from Sydney as well as the Melbourne Province. The key-note speaker for that first Youth Festival was Cardinal Arns, Archbishop of Sao Paulo in Brazil and subsequent Festivals – it is a bi-ennial event, still in operation – have stayed close to Social Justice and Environmental themes. The Marist post-Vatican II 'Option for the Poor' therefore, still stands, reflecting the original focus of the Founder towards poor, rural communes.<sup>58</sup>

### III Recruitment and Formation

As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, recruitment to the Marist Brothers in Australia held up quite well into the middle, and even the late, 1970s, especially in the Sydney Province. The latter's persistent vitality is not difficult to explain. Since at least 1900, the bulk of Marist recruits had come from students or ex-students of their schools.<sup>59</sup> Until the mid-1970s, the Sydney Province was still running some thirty-odd schools stretching up Australia's east coast from Canberra and Campbelltown, in the south, to Cairns in North Queensland and it was particularly visible in Sydney. In these schools, the brothers still enjoyed a very high profile, emphasized by their maintaining the custom of wearing the religious garb – albeit the newer white soutanes rather than the original black habits with the white *rabat* – while teaching. Moreover, after the success of the first decade of the Dundas scholasticate program and the province's positive response to the challenge of Vatican II, morale was high and the image of the brother as well-trained, forward looking and enthusiastic, was one that might well appeal to idealistic young men in the post-Viet Nam, early Whitlam years. The Sydney Province accepted an average of approximately twenty postulants every year throughout the 'seventies, with a 'bumper crop' of thirty-one in 1976.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Max Charlesworth's definition of 'traditionalist' and 'liberation theology' Catholics in *Catholic Education in Victoria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. p. 124.

<sup>59</sup> Tom O'Donoghue, *Come Follow Me and Forsake Temptation*. (Bern, 2004), Ch.3 pp. 67-97. Professor O'Donoghue demonstrates that the Marist Brothers were by no means unique in this respect. All of the main teaching orders, in Australia and other Western countries, consciously and actively recruited from their own schools.

<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to be precise about these figures and, of course, not all of these aspirants flowed onto the novitiate or to first vows, much less final profession; but the writer established the quoted average by sighting figures published in the *Marist Monthly* for 1972,73,74,75,76,77,79 and 83.

The situation in the Melbourne Province was not as buoyant. There, the proportion of brothers to lay teachers, on most school staffs, had always been lower than the Sydney average. It now quickly sank, further, as more lay teachers were hired, with government funding, to meet the growing demand for secondary places. Many of the older generation of brothers, often with few qualifications other than the Victorian Registration, felt threatened by the young and better-qualified lay teachers now appearing in their midst and tended to cling to the old certainties: the black habit, the daily Rosary, firm discipline and a jocularly authoritarian style of teaching. The first generation of Dundas graduates, professionally more secure, and often fast-tracked through the first few years of classroom experience, quite rapidly found themselves being promoted to Deputy's and Principal's positions at both secondary and primary levels. The second generation, however: graduates of the Monash scholasticate and exposed to, though not necessarily convinced by, Br Ludovic Bourke's scepticism about 'modern' Catechetics and post-Scholastic, post-Vatican II theology, did not flow so smoothly or automatically into a view of themselves as Marist educational administrators, destined to head staffs which would be largely composed of lay teachers. This later generation was reluctant to wear the religious habit, except on formal occasions, and these were the people who moved more quickly into alternative apostolates, such as student counseling or chaplaincy, retreat teams, post-school youth ministry and social justice advocacy.<sup>61</sup>

The image the Melbourne Province brothers projected was, therefore, much more diverse and unfocussed than that of the clear-cut 'Religious Teacher' exemplified by the Sydney brothers. And the young people who attended Melbourne Province schools naturally found it harder to imagine themselves as school administrators, itinerant retreat facilitators, festival directors or semi-professional social activists. Almost half of the students were female, to begin with, and girls could not, by definition, aspire to become Marist Brothers. Moreover, the Melbourne schools were, by now, much more than half-staffed by laypeople, who were often seen to be competent and caring teachers and sometimes also gifted contributors to retreats and youth festivals. And, of course, lay teachers could get married and have children. Why would anyone want to become a Marist Brother in these circumstances? Melbourne aspirants became so few in number that a joint novitiate was set up, with the New Zealand Province, at Nae Nae, near Wellington, in 1978; but this joint venture did not long survive the accidental death of the Australian Master of Novices, Br Clement Terry, who drowned, while on a picnic, in early 1982. By that time, the Sydney Province's novitiate intake had also shrunk in size and another joint novitiate, this time catering for all three provinces, was set up at Winston Hills, in Sydney's outer North-West, in 1985.

Aggravating the pressure, caused by the declining recruitment rate, was the problem caused by the rising attrition rate among junior professed and even perpetually professed brothers, in both Australian Provinces. This phenomenon of the post-Vatican II

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<sup>61</sup> Br Walter Smith, the incoming Melbourne Provincial circulated a series of tables about Melbourne Province brothers' aspirations in a paper called 'The Identity of the Marist Brother Today' delivered to the 1976 Provincial Chapter. To reproduce and analyse these tables here would over-extend the length and argument of this chapter.

Church, both among the secular clergy and within the Religious Orders, male and female, has been well documented;<sup>62</sup> and it has also been sensitively analysed, albeit rather early in the process, by Sr Carmel Leavey OP<sup>63</sup> According to Sr Carmel's figures, attrition rates among junior professed brothers (i.e. all of the non-clerical brothers' orders in Australia, including the Marists) increased from 5.87 per cent to 7.09 per cent between 1965 and 1975 and, among finally professed brothers, from 1.92 per cent to 2.31 per cent over the same period.<sup>64</sup> As these, admittedly early, figures indicate, the problem of attrition or non-perseverance was not new and the initial increase, at least, not dramatic. It had always been easier for 'lay' Religious to leave an order, than for an ordained priest to be laicized. Junior professed brothers or sisters could simply decline to renew their annual vows; and even finally professed brothers could be dispensed from their vows, by the Church, for 'sufficient reasons'. Ordination, on the other hand, is one of the Church's seven Sacraments and, in Catholic theology, the recipient is permanently and irrevocably transformed into an *alter Christus*, in a manner somewhat akin to 'transubstantiation' in the theology of the eucharist. A laicized priest is therefore not un-ordained, his licence to exercise his priestly ministry is simply withdrawn. Consequently, the social stigma attached to a 'dispensed' Religious has never been the same as that to a laicized priest.

Among Marist Brothers, the problem of non-perseverance went back, as we have seen in earlier chapters, to the days of the Founder and was especially pressing, in France, in the 1850's.<sup>65</sup> Only half of the original group of brothers sent to Sydney in 1872, for instance, 'persevered' and this non-perseverance continued, as a phenomenon, among Australian Marist Brothers, right up till the start of Vatican II, and beyond. It is difficult, now, to calculate what attrition rates were like, prior to 1960. Almost certainly, they were lower than those quoted above; but, while the elements of 'mystery', idealism and philanthropy in a religious vocation must never be discounted, the social and economic situation of these brothers of the earlier era, must also be considered. In the 1920s and 1930s, if a young man felt he had a 'vocation' to teach in a Catholic school, he could only do so, in Australia, at least, by becoming a Religious. Given the meagre training they received, at that time, if a person then 'left', or was dismissed from, an order, his employment prospects, as a teacher, were bleak. The teaching orders, generally, were discouraged from employing former members, in a lay capacity, and although other orders could, and did, employ such people, for example, the Irish Christian Brothers accepting an ex-Marist, or vice-versa, the salary paid, in such circumstances, was seldom generous. It was only with the improvement of intra-order teacher training, in the 1950s, and the government sponsoring of Catholic teacher salaries, in the 1970s, that these economic constraints, which had obviously encouraged perseverance, were largely removed.

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<sup>62</sup> *The Education of Catholic Australians*. (Report of the National Catholic Education Commission) Canberra, 1972 pp. 54-55. O'Farrell, *op.cit.* pp. 417-419; Campion, *op.cit.* pp. 228-230. Turner, *op.cit.* pp. 261ff.

<sup>63</sup> Sr Carmel Leavey, OP *Reflections on a Survey: Australian Religious Personnel 1978*. A Report Commissioned by the National Assembly of Major Superiors of Religious of Australia.

<sup>64</sup> Leavey, *op.cit.* pp. 81 and 87.

<sup>65</sup> See above: Ch 3. p. 55.

If Vatican II can be blamed for accelerating the rate of attrition among vowed Religious teachers, therefore, it is only because, in the document on *The Apostolate of Lay People*, the Council Fathers provided the theological justification for the full participation of the laity in Catholic education:

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors, Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing ... But *the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ*; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. In the concrete, *their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men; it is exercised too when they endeavour to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order ... The characteristic of the lay state being a life lived in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, laymen are called by God to make of their apostolate ... a leaven to the world.*<sup>66</sup>

In the light of both these development, the decline in recruitment and the increase in the attrition rate, the Marist formation programs had to be re-structured. Reference has already been made to the amalgamation of the novitiates for the two Australian Provinces and New Zealand. The diminishing stream of postulants and newly-professed was still given the opportunity to complete teaching qualifications before facing the classroom, but the two big scholasticate colleges, at Dundas and at Monash, in Melbourne, were both closed, replaced by communities which were principally residences, rather than training institutions. The actual teacher-training, for both secular subjects and catechetics, was delegated to the various Catholic Teachers' Colleges, which eventually amalgamated to become the multi-campus Australian Catholic University. Where the scholasticates, for the male orders, at least, had trained mainly brothers, with only a minority of lay trainees, the Catholic Teachers Colleges and Australian Catholic University, which succeeded them, catered overwhelmingly for lay trainees. Since all of the Teaching Orders, male and female, were in a similar situation, as regards novices and junior professed, the Superiors, in the capital cities, at least, organized combined evening and weekend courses for the junior professed: sometimes with the help of the local seminary; sometimes utilizing the formation personnel they had so optimistically and painstakingly trained overseas, in the halcyon days of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how a specifically Marist identity could be preserved and nurtured under such conditions.

In addition, to reduce the 'finally professed' attrition rate, much more attention was now given to the on-going formation of both the perpetually professed and the older generation of brothers. In the boarding schools, of which the Australian Marists, to this day (2004), operate seven, brothers who had traditionally provided both the boarding and the teaching staff, were given some time-release from either one or the other function, by the employment of young, lay staff. Brothers, in their late 'thirties to early 'fifties, who had missed out on a university education, were given two years study-leave, or more, to make up the deficit. And even brothers who had benefited from the

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<sup>66</sup> Flannery, *op.cit.* p.768 (Italics mine).

scholasticate opportunity to obtain undergraduate degrees, by full-time study, were sent overseas to complete Master's degrees or Spirituality courses, often, though not exclusively, at American Catholic Universities. The Sydney Province even went so far as to acquire a residential property, near the Jesuits' Loyola University in Chicago where, for five or six years, up to four or five Australian brothers concurrently were completing postgraduate degrees. The traditional Marist Second Novitiate program also continued to operate throughout the period, with between four and six Australians attending each session. There were, at the same time, other Marist Second Novitiates, conducted in French and Spanish; but the Australians attended the English language course, along with their American and British Commonwealth confreres, located at Fribourg in Switzerland. An essential element of these courses, however, was a week's pilgrimage to the Marist 'sacred sites' around Lyon, La Valla and the Hermitage. Similarly, a 'Third Age' or 'old brothers' course was instituted at the General House, by then located in Rome, for those who had missed out on the second novitiate, or who were facing retirement from active teaching. This course also included a 'Champagnat pilgrimage'.

Again, the need to support personnel who were of mature age and, perhaps, facing the 'mid-life crisis', was not unique to the Marist Brothers. To meet this widely felt need, without the expense of sending people overseas - something which many of the smaller congregations could not afford - the hierarchy approved the setting up of an Australian National Pastoral Institute, at the Presentation Sisters' Provincial House in Melbourne, where secular clergy, and male and female Religious could spend a year of personal, catechetical and theological renewal.<sup>67</sup> This course was year-long and full-time, but not residential, the participants usually arranging accommodation in a local presbytery, or a convent or monastery of their own congregation. In the early days, the course catered mainly for priests and Religious; but within a few years, the Catholic Education Offices were offering scholarships to allow lay teachers, in Religious Education Coordinators positions in Catholic Schools, to complete the course and some dioceses also funded lay people who were training to become 'pastoral assistants' in the many parishes, which were now operating without a curate or assistant priest.<sup>68</sup> This hierarchy-approved initiative to train up lay people, to fill gaps in the thinning ranks of 'middle management' Religious Teachers in Catholic Schools, soon set Provincials of the Teaching Orders thinking and a new focus in Marist formation began to crystallize.

The Melbourne Province began running annual Principals' Conferences to which all the brother Principals and the lay Principals of what had formerly been Marist-run schools were invited. In alternate years, the lay vice-principals were also invited to these conferences and the emphasis was very much on inculcating and reinforcing the 'Marist Way' of doing things. The Sydney Province took a slightly different tack. Using the Jesuits' 'Colloquium' process as a starting point, the Sydney Province's Education Committee developed a program called 'Sharing Our Call' to which middle-management

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<sup>67</sup> National Catholic Education Commission. *The Education of Catholic Australians*. Canberra. 1972. p.22  
The setting up of the NPI, as it came to be known, was apparently recommended to the hierarchy by the NCEC 'as a matter of urgency', in 1970.

<sup>68</sup> Crumlin, Sr Rosemary *Compass Theology Review* (Melbourne) Vol 19. Summer 1985 p. 5.

teachers from several Marist schools at a time were invited. These courses were three or four day, live-in seminars many of them conducted at the old novitiate at Mittagong and they invited the participants to reflect upon, to share and analyse their experience of being taught, and teaching in, Marist schools. The two provinces have also had joint conferences, learned from each other's methods and developed further programs, some of which involve taking Principals and Religious Education Co-coordinators to Rome, Lyon and the Hermitage. The Melbourne Province has even launched a refereed 'learned journal', *Champagnat: A Journal of Marist Education*, in which lay-teachers, pursuing post-graduate studies in Marist education are invited to publish their work in progress. In short, a very serious attempt is being made to analyse, articulate and propagate the idea of Marist education, among the lay teachers who now dominate the staffing of all schools in both Provinces.

One initiative, developed by the Melbourne Province, rather than by Sydney, and which extends the Champagnat influence, via lay-teachers, to students, is called Remar, a quasi-acronym for Marist Renewal. It was originally developed in the South American provinces and has a nautical vocabulary, stemming from Latin America's Spanish origins. Each group or unit is called a Caravelle, each year of the program is called a 'crossing', the Bible is the 'compass' and Fr Champagnat is the 'Old Seadog.' The members are volunteer students from Years 10, 11 and 12, who meet, every fortnight, for a session which involves prayer, discussion, personal development and leadership training and planning for pastoral activities such as peer support or social service commitments. There are two or three camp-style retreats each year and a 'rower' (the word *remar* also means an oarsman, in Spanish) must complete a certain number of hours of participation to earn a 'passport' to the next, higher 'crossing'. In many ways, these small groups are successors to the Sodalties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to the Young Christian Students' Groups and Junior St Vincent de Paul Conferences of the 1950s through to the 1970s. One difference, from these older models, is the central emphasis on Fr Champagnat as a model of Christian commitment, (rather than as an educational leader). And another interesting aspect is that the twenty plus Caravelles, now involving some four hundred students, are all led by lay-teachers and just over half operate in Marist schools. The rest are in CEO-controlled schools, only a few of which, have former Marist connections.<sup>69</sup>

So many, so various and so on-going are these attempts at propagating the 'Marist Way', that this paragraph will not attempt to enumerate, or to document, much less to evaluate all of them. All that has been attempted, so far, has been to demonstrate that, despite the radical nature of the re-orientation towards the modern world, called for by the Second Vatican Council, the Australian Marist Provinces have made a sustained, generous and valiant attempt to be faithful to their founding inspiration and to their historical Australian 'mission'. In their co-operation with the hierarchy and the various diocesan Catholic Education Offices, and in their adaptation to the educational and

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<sup>69</sup> The writer had some part in the setting up of the Remar movement in Australia while serving on the Melbourne Provincial Council, in the late 1980s. Details about the current state of the movement, however, were supplied by the present co-ordinator, Mr Paul Salmon, who is R.E. Co-ordinator at Marcellin College in Melbourne in a telephone conversation on 13. 8. 04.

administrative reforms of the State and Commonwealth governments, they have been demonstrably faithful to the example of Fr Champagnat. In their efforts to renew, revise and re-invigorate the catechetical project, which was so central to their original inspiration, they may not have satisfied their more conservative parental and episcopal clientele; but they have consistently striven to follow the directions of Vatican II. And, in adjusting their 'formation' program to the contemporary reality of declining numbers of Religious, and during the transition from lay participation in, to lay control of, their schools, they have persevered in telling and re-telling the story of the Founder and of his first followers. All that remains is to sample how these developments, and this resolution, impacted on their efforts 'in the field'.

### **Implementation at the Local Level: St Patrick's, Dundas. 1970-2000**

This concluding focus on St Patrick's perhaps needs some justification. It was not a 'typical' school in any absolute sense. It was not, for instance, a boarding school, of which the Australian Marists still administered ten, in 1970. But then, the boarding schools, where the original facilities usually revolved around a single brother in a tiny, cabin-like bedroom, supervising a large, barrack-like dormitory and where the boarders' recreation facilities were mainly of the outdoors variety, presented quite special problems for transition to lay control. Moreover, because of its new function as a demonstration school for the scholasticate, St Patrick's was originally staffed with some of the 'best' young, yet experienced, teachers the Sydney Province could muster and, therefore, must be considered as having been rather better than average. Nevertheless, although it started in 1962 with only primary classes, entirely staffed by brothers, and entirely funded by Order and Diocesan funds, by 1970 it had added secondary classes to Year Ten level, it had received its first Commonwealth (Science Laboratories) Grant and was employing eight lay teachers, in addition to the eleven brothers on the staff. In subsequent decades, it would lose its demonstration school status and most of its teaching brothers and become a senior, co-educational, largely lay-staffed, systemic high school.<sup>70</sup> It is during this transitional process, that St Patrick's could be regarded as more typical of the Australian Marist experience.

From 1962 till 1967, under the leadership of Br Thomas More, St Patrick's operated mainly as a senior primary school and the all-brother staff, as well as teaching their classes and demonstrating to the R-group scholastics, also conducted in-service courses for lay-teachers and other Religious teachers from some country dioceses. In doing so, they were not consciously modelling a 'Marist' pedagogy, they were simply trying to keep the trainees abreast of contemporary pedagogical 'best practice.' Thus, Br Claver Atkinson published a book on the 'New Maths', Br Kevin Treston, one on methods in Oral English, and Br Kelvin Canavan, a highly successful text book, on Media Studies, for primary classes. Br Thomas More, perhaps, did model a more traditionally Marist pedagogy in his actual demonstration lessons, and in his jovial

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<sup>70</sup> Statistics, dates and other details for this section of the chapter are taken from the writer's school history of St Patrick's, *Cradle to Canonisation*. Sydney (2001). The school history, in turn, was based on House Annals, school magazines and other archival material.

leadership of a very talented staff; but, above all, by his success in winning the moral and financial support of the parent body. Sadly, his successor as Director, Br David Cunningham, dedicated and industrious though he was, did not manage the leadership of the brothers' community, or the parent body, quite so well. His hopes of using Parents and Friends Club-raised funds to build a chapel for the growing school, ran into serious opposition from both the P and F and from some within his own community. He resigned from the Directorship at the end of 1970.<sup>71</sup>

In 1971, therefore, Br Anthony D'Arbon, who was already on the community, and heavily involved in the teacher-training side of the school's activities, was appointed Superior of the community and Principal of the secondary part of the school. A young, Scholasticate, (Registration-group) graduate was appointed head of the primary school and immediately implemented a self-paced, open-plan classroom, integrated social studies curriculum, for which he had been preparing the ground, during the previous year. His 1970 briefings for the primary parents read, now, like edited extracts from the writings of Ivan Illich and Paulo Friere and, to that extent, appear to be no more than a continuation of the progressive and innovative pedagogy that had been preached and practiced by the previous generation of teacher-demonstrators at St Patrick's:

Today, we are living in a rapidly changing world and we can speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well. It is a world where life, liberty and the dignity of man are more and more threatened; a world of loneliness and despair; of many men crushed by selfishness, cupidity, indifference or lust for power; a world of illiteracy, of rivalries and wars; a world of protest and violence; a world without God, in which man is threatened by spiritual suffocation ...

Competition, marks and places in class will have no place in this school and evaluation of (the) individual's work will be qualitative rather than quantitative.

*Our 'Age of Anxiety' is, in great part, the result of trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools – with yesterday's concepts.*

Marshall McLuhan<sup>72</sup>

However, to the writer at least, the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' and of the 'de-schoolers' of Latin America seem, at this distance, like the diametric opposite of the 'simultaneous' method, teacher-dominated, highly supervised pedagogy instituted by the Marist Founder in the 1830s; which had been canonized by the order's *Teacher's Guide* in

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<sup>71</sup> All the information in this paragraph comes from the house Annals which were very thoroughly maintained from the opening of Dundas until half way through 1974 and contain much information about the running of the school. After 1974 they were still kept up but were more focused on the brothers' community life, with much less detail about the running of the school and the teacher training.

<sup>72</sup> These quotation come from the prospectus for *The Dundas Project*, circulated to parents at the start of 1971 and preserved in the St Patrick's Marist Community *House Annals*. The echoes of Illich were even more pronounced, in some of the earlier P & F documentation, sighted by the writer while writing the school history, in 1998, but which is now unavailable.



1850s; and developed into the test- and exam-driven praxis of Australian Marist schools between 1910 and 1960.

Yet this young primary principal was not simply a radical revisionist; nor a rebellious 'loose canon'. The Marist Brothers were certainly 'open' to educational innovation. The experiment did not meet with universal approval or widespread imitation in the province, but it had the full support of Br Kelvin Canavan who was, by then, the Inspector/Consultant of Primary Schools, for both the Marist Province and the Sydney Catholic Education Office. In fact, the experiment was approved by the Provincial Council as a two-year 'Dundas Project', to celebrate the centenary of the Marists' 1872 arrival in Australia. On the other hand, the National Catholic Education Commission, on which two senior Marists, Br Michael Naughtin and Br Ronald Fogarty, held seats, described Illich's criticism as 'destructive' and his proposed reforms as being 'vague, romantic and utopian.'<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the project was soon wound back; not because of any ideological commitment to Marist pedagogy; but because the project leader became subject to complaints of sexual abuse of his students, by some parents. He resigned, left the order, and continued an apparently blameless career, as a layman, with an interstate Catholic Education Office: until he was brought to trial, in the late 1990s. The reason for his sudden departure seems to have been hushed up, at the time.<sup>74</sup> The 1972 intake, of Grade Five students, was placed in stratified Grade Five classes, rather than in the un-graded classes of the previous year; and the curriculum of the secondary classes was adjusted to cope with students who had come through the 'social studies' regime; otherwise, the new 'system' continued, albeit, in a less dramatic form.

Two years later, at the start of 1974, the Secondary School Principal and Community Superior, Br Anthony D'Arbon, was seconded to the NSW Education Department, as part of the process by which the various Religious Orders' scholasticates would become, first, the Catholic College of Education and, eventually, the Australian Catholic University. Several other secondary brothers were transferred from Dundas, that same year, to take up Principals' positions in other Marist schools. Br Anthony was replaced by Br Noel Davis, a young, university-trained, scholasticate graduate and, the other brothers, by four younger, more recent scholasticate graduates. This year may well mark the start of St Patrick's transition from being a Marist Brothers' school to being a Marist School, whatever that might come to mean. Up until 1973, although the brothers had been gradually reduced to a numerical minority on the staff, they still retained all the main positions of responsibility in the school: Principal, Deputies, Level Coordinators, Sportsmaster and, that newly-emerging role: Religious Education Coordinator. From 1974, the *Annals* record, weekly staff meetings began to be held in the secondary school (as they already had been, for some years, in the primary school) now that they could no longer be held around the breakfast or dinner table in the brothers' community. St Patrick's 'distance' from the Catholic College of Education also began to increase, although, some members of the community continued to lecture at the

<sup>73</sup> NCEC Report : *The Education of Catholic Australians*. Canberra. (1972) p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> The reference to his departure in the *House Annals* 'A great guy, whom we shall all miss.' (Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>) seems to indicate that the local Marist community was unaware of the accusations. In the school *Newsletter*, it was simply explained as being 'for personal reasons'. (Oct 5th)

‘amalgamating’ Teachers’ College and the school continued to accept student-teachers, lay and Religious, on teaching ‘rounds’.

Br Noel, throughout his time at Dundas, tried, in keeping with Vatican II, to reach out to both the local parishes and the wider community, in the latter case, through involvement in sporting and youth-group activities. He also, with Provincial assistance, set up a parent-oriented School Advisory Board. Since the advent of government funding, the fund raising efforts of the Parents and Friends had become much more marginal to the physical development of the school’s facilities and, although many parents were still actively involved in extra-curricular sports teams, working bees, tuck-shop and Parent-Teacher nights, parent involvement in the actual process of education, a post-Vatican II, but also a traditional Marist, *desideratum*, was declining. An issue which might have given an active ‘Advisory Board’ grist for its mill, was the question of extending the school to Years Eleven and Twelve; but by 1979, progress in this direction was, necessarily, being co-coordinated by Catholic Education Office consultants: surveying the local parishes and the other systemic and ‘independent’ Catholic schools in the region. In the event, the extension to the senior years could only be justified in terms of providing additional senior places for girls and the ‘rationalizing’ price to be paid for this would be the closing down of the primary classes at St Patrick’s. This could well be regarded as a significant achievement for the process of bureaucratisation; for it could never have been achieved by St Patrick’s, or the Marist Brothers, acting alone: the more so, because Dundas and the surrounding parishes were just about to be hived off from the Sydney Archdiocese, to become part of the new Parramatta Diocese.

In 1982, on the twentieth anniversary of the transfer from the Church Hill site, and on the eve of starting to phase-out primary classes, St Patrick’s published the first extant school magazine since the Speech Night Concert Programs at Harrington Street in the late 1930s and, with it, a list of the staff: the first such list to survive, in the archives, since 1973. The contrast with the previous list is striking. Although there were still seven brothers on the staff, as there had been earlier, the number of lay teachers had grown from fifteen to thirty-one. Even more strikingly, as mentioned above, in the earlier list the seven brothers had then filled all of the positions of responsibility; whereas, by 1982, apart from the Principal, Deputy and Sportsmaster, all of the other positions – Subject Head, Level Coordinator, even Religious Education Coordinator – had been entrusted to lay teachers. To the writer, at least, this entrusting of the R.E. coordination to a lay person seems particularly significant. It means that Br Flavius Donnelly’s conviction that being a catechist should be a central feature of the Marist concept of education had not been widely accepted.<sup>75</sup>

With the phasing out of the primary classes, and the introduction of co-education, in 1985, the percentage of brothers on the teaching staff continued to decline and the school’s Marist identity was further brought into question. Although the Sydney Marists had been involved in co-education since 1967, they still did not have a large pool of brothers, especially at the administrative level, who were experienced in the co-ed situation. It was deemed prudent, therefore, to secure the services of an experienced

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<sup>75</sup> See above Ch. 8 p.168.

female Religious to help ease the transition to the new system and Sr Margaret Brady, of the Parramatta Mercy Sisters Congregation, was duly appointed as Year 11 and 12 Coordinator. The Mercy Sisters, of course, were involved in the same process of clarifying their charism as the Marist Brothers and, as in many other Australian situations, where the Marists co-operated with other female congregations, such as the Brigidine or Dominican Sisters, common courtesy demanded that not too much priority be given to emphasizing Marist identity. In the 1986 school magazine, the Principal, Br Ronald Blyth, who was seeing the school through the transition, perhaps struggled, as he strove to define:

the Spirit of St Patrick's ... some of its components would be common to all Catholic, Marist schools ... the staff's willingness to work beyond the call of duty and their real concern for the (child) ... parental involvement ...<sup>76</sup>

The implementation of co-education was successful, nevertheless. Br Ronald served out his customary six years as Principal, in 1989, and when Sr Margaret reached the end of her appointment, at the end of 1990, it was not felt necessary to secure another Religious sister, to guarantee the girls' welfare. The new Marist Principal, Br Michael Procajlo, probably at the urging of the Parramatta Catholic Education Office, promptly set the staff to work on that favourite management tool of the late 1980s, a 'Mission Statement'. As is the way with such documents, various staff sub-committees worked on various aspects of the project and came up, not unexpectedly, with the recommendation, among others, to extend co-education from Years 7 to 10, instead of having it only in Years 11 and 12. But, when it came to defining and deciding the Marist character of the school, the whole staff was involved by a method which, again, owes much to the Jesuit Colloquium process. Former members of staff, such as Br Thomas More, and even the much more recent Sr Margaret, were invited back to share their impressions of the Marist 'spirit'. Long serving members of the staff and the P & F, especially those who were also ex-students of the brothers, were asked to contribute their recollections and the whole staff was then encouraged to reflect on and analyse their own experience.

The results of this Colloquium exercise were incorporated in the 'Introductory' and 'Historical' sections of the Mission Statement, and they include assertions of continuity with the Church Hill foundation and loyalty to, as well as appreciation of, the continuing presence and contribution of the Marist Brothers in the school. They contain, also, echoes of the Founder's exhortations - teaching children about God's love for them, encouraging them to be 'good citizens and good Christians', creating a 'Family Spirit' and supporting 'Social Justice'. The whole Statement was launched at a School Mass, for staff and students, in the local parish church, on Champagnat Day, June 6<sup>th</sup> 1993, and in the presence of several former Principals, including Br Thomas More and Mr Noel Davis, who had left the brothers, some time after he completed his term at St Patrick's. The sense of continuity and stability that the Vision Statement and the launching ceremony was intended to convey, however, received something of a shock, twelve months later, when Br Michael, who had led the whole exercise, called a special school assembly and, in the presence of the Marist

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<sup>76</sup> St Patrick's Marist Brothers' College, 1986 *School Magazine*.

Provincial and the (lay) Director of the Parramatta Catholic Education Office, announced that he was resigning as Principal and seeking dispensation from his vows as a brother.

As the earlier reference to Noel Davis indicates, Michael Procajlo, was by no means the only Marist Brother of this era, to seek dispensation from his vows; the present writer, for instance, is another. Michael was, perhaps, unusual in taking his leave so publicly and in the middle of a school year: most people left at the end of the year, and more quietly. Nonetheless, whether those departing the ranks left discreetly or openly, and, in recent times, just as importantly, whether they left voluntarily, and for just reasons, or, as in a tiny minority of cases, were removed, for abuse or breach of trust, they – we – have clearly made it more difficult, for those who remain at their post, to sustain and ‘staff’ the Marist teaching tradition. Michael’s place, as Principal of St Patrick’s, was taken by his young Deputy, Br Anthony Galleta, until the end of that year, and the Deputy’s role was filled by a lay teacher, Miss Liz Kayrooz. At the start of 1995, Br Anthony was posted, again as Deputy, to Marist College, Pearce, in the Australian Capital Territory, Br Peter Pemble, the Director of Marist, North Sydney, was appointed as Principal at St Patrick’s and Liz Kayrooz was confirmed in her position as Vice-Principal at Dundas. This latter appointment could be interpreted as a sign of the increasing confidence of the brothers in the competence of their lay staff; but it was also, surely, a sign that Marist resources of fully-trained and dedicated personnel were being stretched to breaking point.

The new Principal threw himself into the task of re-asserting the Marist profile, nevertheless. The funds raised within the school, in the 1995 Walkathon, were used to refurbish an old multi-purpose room which had housed the school’s first Commonwealth-built library and the area was re-christened: The La Valla Room. On the interior front wall, where students sitting exams, parents attending parent-teacher nights, or teachers participating in an in-service could clearly see it, a short paragraph in large, highlighted printing explained the significance of the room’s name and briefly sketched the 1817 foundation of the order by Fr Champagnat. Administrative staff attended Province-run Marist Administrators’ Conferences, and ordinary classroom teachers were regularly sent, in pairs, to ‘Sharing our Call’ seminars. Penultimately, in 1997, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Marist Brothers’ arrival in Australia provided an extensive opportunity to elaborate on and to celebrate the Marist ethos. For St Patrick’s, with its Church Hill connection, the year had a special significance, since it was also the school’s own 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Br Peter organized a number of events, particular to the school, notably a paraliturgy in St Mary’s Cathedral on April 8th, the actual anniversary of the school’s opening. Staff and students also participated in several Province-organized celebrations: a staff in-service day for all Sydney Marist schools at St Joseph’s, Hunter’s Hill; a Music and Dance Pageant for students from all Sydney Marist schools at one of the indoor venues at the new Olympic Park; and, late in the year, a street party in The Rocks to unveil a new wall-plaque, officially marking the site of the original St Patrick’s, in Harrington Street.

To the writer, a participant in all of these activities, part of the sub-text seemed to be that the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary should be celebrated thus because, by the time the 150<sup>th</sup>

arrived, there would probably be very few Australian Marist Brothers left to celebrate the occasion. Somewhat unexpectedly though, the Vatican provided Br Peter, St Patrick's and the Australian Marist Brothers, generally, with one further opportunity, to celebrate their Australian contribution. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the Marist Founder was canonized by Pope John Paul II, as Saint Marcellin Champagnat. With the financial support of the Province, and of the school's Parents and Friends, St Patrick's, like many other Marist schools, worldwide, sent three students and two brothers, from the staff, to participate in the ceremony in Rome and, afterwards, on a short pilgrimage to Lyons, La Valla and the Hermitage. The local Sydney Province celebration, however, took the form of a High Mass in St Mary's Cathedral on Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of St Marcellin's death and, therefore, also his Feast Day. The Mass was attended by student and parent groups from all the Sydney Marist schools, by ex-students who had become priests, Religious and prominent citizens and it was presided over by Cardinal Clancy, an ex-student of Parramatta Marist. It was also attended by Australia's then Governor General, Sir William Deane, an ex-student of St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill. Cardinal Clancy notwithstanding – one tends to assume fidelity to the Faith on the part of cardinals – it was probably the presence of the Governor General that gave greatest satisfaction to the assembled Sydney Marist Brothers. Not only in his private life, but, by his explicit commitment to Christian principles and Social Justice in the execution of his public duties, Sir William surely embodied the aspiration of the Founder and of all Marist education, to produce people who are 'good citizens and good Christians.'

Thus, the story of St Patrick's, from its re-location at Dundas till the turn of the millennium, exemplifies both the ways in which, and the extent to which, the Sydney Province has tried to maintain and re-orient the Marist teaching tradition. As the Marist schools and teacher training programs have been absorbed into the diocesan 'systemic' networks and the Australian Catholic University's training regime, the remaining school communities – staff, students and parents - have been increasingly exposed to, and immersed in, the legend of St Marcellin Champagnat. Pedagogical styles, catechetical approaches and expressions of piety and devotion have changed profoundly, since those early days at La Valla, since the Marist Brothers first arrived in Australia and, even more dramatically, since Vatican II. Yet, just as the present Pope has beatified and canonized as many 'modern' saints as he can, in order to provide contemporary Christians with relevant life models; even so, the Marist Brothers have re-lived and re-furbished the Fr Champagnat story, attempting to re-establish the Founder, not so much as an exemplar or originator of any particular teaching methodology but, rather, as an inspiration and a prophetic setter of priorities, for contemporary Catholic schools.

