



## Marist Sisters: Region of Asia-Pacific

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Aotearoa-New Zealand-Australia-Fiji-The Philippines-Papua New Guinea

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On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1816 twelve seminarians gathered in the Chapel of Our Lady of Fourvière, France, and pledged to begin the Society of Mary. Fr. John Jago SM reflects: “The seminarians who climbed the hill of Fourvière were caught in a dream. They were convinced that Mary wanted something. She wanted to transform the Church into a Kingdom of Mercy....to bring a new sensitivity and compassion....The men of Fourvière burned with a vision. They were innovators and prophets....they were men on fire, the men of Fourvière.” (A Certain Way p. 41) May we Marists today continue the Work of Mary with that same energy and zeal as we bring the mercy and compassion of Christ to all whom we meet.

In Mary’s Name,  
*Sr. Julie Brand SM – Regional Leader*

### NEWS FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Our year began with the completion of our Parish Church here at Kanosia. As donations became available and as the community spirit came alive, the St. Vincent de Paul Church was finally tiled, a new Altar, Tabernacle and Baptismal font were all made with local timber and the Church was ready, after 10 years, for its Blessing and Dedication. April 11<sup>th</sup> was a great day for the whole community here at Kanosia and of course it was a privilege for the Marist Sisters to be part of such an historic occasion. Parishioners started arriving the day before from as far as 30km away. Pigs were brought in and cooking, dancing and music were very much part of the celebration. The ceremony itself began with an introduction outside, explaining the ritual itself, followed by a traditional procession to the Church. One of the highlights of the day was the televising of the event on Kundu Television shown throughout PNG that evening and the following Sunday.



This is certainly a year of celebrations for us here in PNG. 2010 marks the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart on Yule Island bringing the Catholic faith to the

Southern Region of Papua New Guinea. Sr. Lavinia Henry and the youth of the Kanosia Parish were very much involved in the celebrations on Yule Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July, the anniversary of the day of the Missionaries’ arrival in 1885. For months Lavinia had been working with the youth, travelling up and down the highway to the different parts of our Parish in order to co-ordinate a water dance and re-enactment of the MSC arrival. Both Sisters Kathleen Bright and Kate McPhee arrived on Yule Island on the day with 11 Bishops from around the Dioceses of PNG to be part of the Eucharistic celebration, which began with the re-enactment of the Missionaries’ arrival. Different cultural groups - the Roros, Mekeos and the Goilalas - were traditionally dressed and present in numbers as we celebrated and were made aware of the immense work and struggles those first Missionaries encountered in their move towards evangelisation of this part of the country. It was lovely to see our youth so active in their water dance and with the boat which carried the two local Bishops - Archbishop John Ribat MSC of Port Moresby and Bishop Rochus Tatamai MSC of Bereina Diocese. The celebrations continued on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July in the Port Moresby Stadium with thousands of people participating from the five Dioceses of the Southern Region.

### NEWS FROM AOTEAROA-NEW ZEALAND

#### EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

On the evening of Wednesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, we gathered at Mt. Albert for dinner and socialising before beginning our three-day Sector Assembly. Each day of the Assembly had a different focus engaging us in processes regarding Regional

Statutes, Leadership in Communities, and Evaluation of Life and Mission. Sr. Katrina Brill RSJ facilitated two days of our Assembly. During our gathering we affirmed our commitment to finding ways in which we as a group can release our Marist charism. On Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> July, we celebrated Sr. Margaret Vaney's Golden Jubilee with a joyful Mass in the Chapel celebrated by her brother, Fr. Neil Vaney SM. This was followed by a meal together during which we had speeches acknowledging Margaret's life and ministry, and stories from communities of which she had been a part.



#### MINISTRIES

Waitaruke has been an area of ministry for the Marist Sisters since 1928 when the Sisters were asked to conduct a boarding School for Maori boys and girls. The School continues but the boarding closed in 1993. The ministries carried out by the two remaining Sisters are varied but centred on their call to be a prayerful presence, as was Mary in the midst of the disciples. The ministries include: support for the local Parish; hospitality; outreach to the disadvantaged; education. In support of the Parish the Sisters see to the Altar linen and ordering of supplies. Training is offered to the Presiders and the Eucharistic Ministers and resources obtained. Sacramental preparation for all ages is given and one Sister attends the Tai Tokerau Pastoral Councils Hui. The ministry of hospitality involves arranging the bookings and management of the accommodation areas and the greeting of the many visitors (ex-pupils and friends) who call almost daily. Outreach to the disadvantaged includes phone calls and letters to the lonely, visiting where possible, attending Tangihanga and sharing the good things brought by our friends with neighbouring families. Also many new-born or sick babies in Auckland have been supplied with beautifully crocheted blankets. The main thrust of education is support of the School by filling the position of Board of Trustees' Chairperson. Tutoring for the *Walk by Faith* programme enables our ministry to reach out to

other Parishes in the area. All this would not be possible without a deep spirit of prayer and the conviction that this is where God wants us.

#### NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

In the first months of this year we were very saddened by the deaths of Sr. Muriel Austin (6<sup>th</sup> January) and Sr. Martha Drummond (2<sup>nd</sup> February). We give thanks for the witness of their faithful and loving commitment to the Lord. May they rest in peace.

#### EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

On 18<sup>th</sup> May the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Broken Bay Institute hosted a National e-Conference entitled *Mary, First Disciple*. The Conference was filmed in a studio and 'streamed' live by means of the internet. People could participate through their personal computer or join a group at venues with large screens set up for the occasion. The Conference Coordinator, Virginia Ryan, was once the REC at Marist Sisters' College, Woolwich, so she enlisted the aid of the Sisters. Sr. Fidelis offered the College as a live-site venue and agreed to invite four people to participate in the studio presentation – a student, a teacher, a parent and the son of a teacher. Sr. Vivienne Goldstein accepted to facilitate the session. So it transpired that, among three inspirational inputs from Fr. Frank Moloney SDB, a moving collection of 'Mary Moments' and a beautiful presentation on Marian Icons, there was a sharing of the Cana Gospel by the Woolwich Marist Group. On the day the Conference was viewed at over 300 sites in almost 20 countries by some 30,000 people.

Cerdon College recently celebrated 50 years since it was established at Merrylands with Sr. Doreen McOscar (Sr. Felician) as Principal assisted by Sr. Claire Penfold. On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010 the occasion was marked with an Anniversary Dinner held at Rosehill Gardens in western Sydney – a lovely venue enhanced by beautiful decorations in Marist blue and white. All the Marist Sisters had been invited. Among those of us who could accept were several who had taught at Cerdon, including a previous Principal, even a couple who had been students there as well as some who had served at St. Margaret Mary's Merrylands, a feeder Primary School for the College. When the 400 guests were seated, Mrs. Patricia Baker, the current Principal, introduced the event by recalling the contribution of the Marist Sisters, naming the past Principals – Srs. Doreen, Carmel Conran, Joan McBride (Sr. Aquinas) and Ann-Marie Webb (Sr Gerard Majella). A heart-warming touch was a

film-clip of Sr. Doreen, who at 96 was unable to be present, but nevertheless clearly and warmly shared her memories of the beginnings of Cerdon College and offered her loving wishes. The first lay Principal, Mr. Paul Dolan, said grace and the dinner was served. The sumptuous meal was punctuated by some wonderful entertainment offered by past students of the College – the highlight being a rendition of the School song by its composer, Jenna Hogan. Jenna had written “In All Things Christ” when only 15 years old. There was a Trivia Quiz to engage each table-group and a constant stream of filmed memories to watch, as well as the opportunity to be photographed next to life-size mannequins dressed as the Marist Founders – Chavoin, Colin, Champagnat and Perroton. In a typically generous gesture, there was also a raffle, the proceeds of which were offered to the Marist Sisters’ Mission in Papua New Guinea – providentially, Sr. Kate McPhee was present to express her gratitude on behalf of the Kanosia Community.



On 11<sup>th</sup> July Sisters gathered at Woolwich to celebrate the joyful occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Srs. Anthony Walker and Margaret Sharma. We congratulate our Sisters on this happy occasion of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Religious Profession.

#### MINISTRIES

Sr. Ruth Davis writes: “I presently work at Catholic Care in Campbelltown. Part of the mission of Catholic Care is to bring care to those on the margins. In my daily work I meet families who, for various reasons, are having difficulties in building a safe and happy family life. A number of the parents have a mental illness and/or an intellectual disability and are dealing with the grief of having their children in foster care. My work involves running parenting groups and case management for these families. Another part of my work involves in-service days on managing challenging behaviours and discipline strategies for foster carers and early childhood staff. As a

Certified Instructor I teach Mental Health First Aid to professional and Government organisations and to High School teachers in the area. Our community tries to support families in the area and I am involved with some who live close by. These people are often isolated and I am able to provide other avenues of support where necessary.” Sr. Noelene Simmons writes: “This year I have been ministering at Marymount Mercy Centre, Castle Hill, as a mentor for participants in the six-month *Journeying With New Members Programme*. There are eighteen men and women from eleven Religious Congregations participating in the programme this year. They come from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Singapore, Tonga, Fiji, Burma, Samoa, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Australia. As mentor I have supported the participants as they engaged in the various aspects of the course, assisted with language and cultural challenges, acted as a facilitator for some of their small group activities and been a resource person as they prepared material that they will use when they take up their ministry with candidates and/or novices for Religious Life and Priesthood. It has been a great joy for me to work in such a culturally diverse situation and I have been enriched by the participants as they entered wholeheartedly into the various aspects of the programme.”

#### NEWS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

##### NOVIATATE NEWS

At the beginning of 2010, Sr. Grace Ellul from Australia and Sr. Teresia Raione from Fiji were appointed to the Marist Sisters’ International English-speaking Novitiate in Mintal, Davao City in the Philippines. Grace is the new Novice Directress and Teresia her Assistant. Catherine Sariman and Celina Gavia, from Papua New Guinea, were already in Mintal and had begun



their Novitiate in November 2009. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2010, three more candidates began their Novitiate at a beautiful Reception Ceremony held in the Novitiate community. They are Birisita Bibi and Valeria Ho from Fiji and Yvonne Amaliri from Nigeria. Yvonne did her candidacy with our Sisters in The Gambia. Life in community is greatly enriched by the different cultural backgrounds of the members, as well as by regular get-togethers with our Sisters in the two communities of the Sector of the Philippines. Most of the time in Novitiate is given to prayer, reflection and study as the Novices learn more about the life to which they are preparing to commit themselves. Sisters and Novices also have ministry outreach each week. This experience too is very formative. Weekly visits are made to the Drug Rehabilitation Centre, Home for the Elderly, Centre for Street Girls, Male and Female Prisons.

#### EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

The great event for our Congregation in February was the First Profession of Sr. Stephanie Smith and Sr. Titilia Tupou, both from Fiji, on the Feast of the Presentation, 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Stephanie's Mother and Aunt came all the way from Fiji to witness their Profession. During the Mass, celebrated by Fr. Aliko Langi SM, Fr. Larry Sabud SM sang the chosen Gospel passage (the Annunciation) to a tune composed by himself and played on guitar. It was a very joyful celebration.



#### MINISTRIES

Recently Sr. Grace began a weekly ministry outreach at the Women's Prison where she will be available for one-to-one help. The women are very happy to have someone with whom they can share their concerns. Sr. Terube Ata is currently participating in a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) programme, which engages her in pastoral outreach in a Hospital context. She has found it helpful, enriching and rewarding, and has

been deeply touched by the lives of those to whom she is ministering.

#### NEWS FROM FIJI

##### EVENTS

As a result of Cyclone Tomas, which struck Fiji in mid-March, many families in the north of the country suffered damage to structures and the loss of their homes. Our community in Wairiki felt the impact directly, though no-one was injured. The Red Cross and many neighbouring countries, including Australia and New Zealand, gave invaluable assistance. Infrastructure was badly affected, particularly coastal roads, sea walls, jetties and communications. However, the worst of the consequences has been the severe and widespread damage to food and cash crops, which continues to impact severely on our people today.

##### FORMATION

Newly professed Sisters, Stephanie and Titilia write: "We are coming to the end of the second term at Pacific Regional Seminary (PRS), Fiji, where we have undertaken a module on Faith Development with the first-year seminarians, and a module on World Religions with the fourth-years. In studying World Religions we have examined Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism and we have still to consider Confucianism and Shintoism. In doing this we have looked at the Catholic Church's position on inter-religious dialogue, particularly through studying *Nostra Aetate (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)* [Second Vatican Council] This has been very enlightening and valuable especially since we live in a country that is not only multi-cultural but has different religions as well. This has brought about a greater appreciation of our faith but it has also encouraged us to have a more embracing attitude towards other religions. We have also begun ministry, visiting in our Parish, and soon we will be visiting those in hospitals and jail. With Mary we are striving to go forward and bring Her presence to all those whom we meet."

Sr. Florence Sariman is from Papua New Guinea and has been professed for two years. She writes: "I am a second-year student at Corpus Christi Teachers' College in Suva, Fiji, and I recently completed my first teaching practice at Marist Convent School in Lami. I had the chance to teach most of the subjects and though I found the four-week experience very challenging, I was happy to have been of some assistance to my class teacher and students."