



M A R I S T E D U C A T I O N

Creative fidelity to its sources

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Introduction

We need to talk about 'Marist education'

In the agreements of yesteryear between the Superior General of the Marist Brothers and local ecclesiastical authorities, drawn up when the Brothers had been invited to establish a new school in a particular diocese or parish, or where they were taking over an existing one, there were two frequently included provisions that typically ran something like this: the Brothers would be 'at liberty to use their own methods and textbooks', and the 'Brother Provincial would appoint and transfer' the staff.¹ Most of the other clauses were usually concerned with money and property. But let us put that aside, and we can leave for later consideration the clause about the appointment of staff (which is arguably the more important) and turn our attention first to the curious phrase 'their own methods and textbooks'.² What did that mean? Clearly, it inferred that the Brothers believed that they used a pedagogical methodology – an educational approach, if you will – that was distinctively *Marist*, the formalised guarantee of which they regarded as essential. Even as important as the money and property! Was this a valid view, or just some insular or circular view of who they were? And if it did have validity, of what did this distinctive way of Catholic education consist?

Australian Marist students of a certain generation (such as this ageing scribe) would remember using Marist primary school textbooks in English, Arithmetic, Social Studies, and Religion of course. Even literature apparently called for a Marist approach: my Year 5 poetry text was entitled *Poems Grave and Gay. An Anthology for Students of Marist Brothers' Primary Schools*. I don't recall what was especially either gay or grave about the selected poems. Perhaps another title may be chosen today. Or perhaps not. Later, my introduction to Shakespeare in Year 9 was through a text 'edited for Marist Schools by Brother Gerard and Brother Ligouri'. Edited Shakespeare, indeed! Our teacher – also a Brother, but younger and given to a little iconoclasm – delighted in telling us that, apart from giving us a useful critical introduction to the play, these venerable Marist scholars had sought to protect our delicate adolescent sensibilities by editing out nasty blasphemous curses such as 'marry' (by Mary!), 'sblood' (Christ's blood!) and 'swounds' (God's wounds!). It didn't seem that Shakespeare's stereotyping of the Jewish character Shylock bothered them as much. Then, at the end of term, our acquired Shakespearean knowledge, along with that in all our subjects, was assessed through common exams set by Marist examination committees, with the day and time the same across all Marist schools in the State.

¹ The six-clause agreement between the Superior General, Brother Louis-Marie, and the Archbishop of Sydney, John Bede Polding OSB for the start of the first Marist school at St Patricks in Sydney, for example, stipulated exactly such provisions. See Doyle, A. (1972) *A History of the Marist Brothers in Australia*. Sydney: Marist Brothers. p.627

² One of the tussles for the Marist Brothers when they began their first schools in Australia was prompted by this very point. The leader of the group, Brother Ludovic Laboureyras, records in his history of the first years, his resistance to local clergy and bishops trying to get the Brothers to use texts and methods that were not their own. Laboureyras, L. (undated) *Annales de la Mission d'Australie*. Unpublished manuscript translated by K. Eaton (November 1993), p.51.

Was this just all a money-making exercise in the days before government funding of Catholic schools? Marist Publishing was a going concern churning out these textbooks and exam papers, based at Westmead in Sydney until the late 1970s. Very occasionally, a more ecumenical spirit slipped in, such as when we were issued in Year 8 with 'The Christian Gentlemen' by Brother G.C. Davy, a Christian Brother no less. But it was the end of the 1960s, and the tightness of the moorings was slipping.

In other parts of the Marist world, the opportunity 'to use their own textbooks' grew into quite an enterprise. In Brazil for example, where the first Brothers had arrived carrying nothing more than their suitcases (one each, and small), they set about writing, printing and selling school texts. Their project evolved into the flourishing publishing house and media company 'FTD', today the fourth largest such company in one of the most populous countries of the world. It works across print and digital media, and also produces whole integrated learning systems for schools. The letters 'FTD' stand for 'Frère Théophile Durand'. Brother Théophile, a noted educationalist in his own right, was Marist Superior General between 1883 and 1907, and oversaw the writing of a complete suite of school texts. You can see his books displayed with museumed honour in the FTD officer tower in São Paulo. He also presided over the building of impressive new schools right across the world. He relished making visits to all parts of this burgeoning Marist world, his Circulars becoming travelogues of his journeys. Indeed, he was the first Superior General to visit the distant antipodean British colonies, in the 1890s, in order principally to be present at the official opening and solemn blessing of the grand sandstone edifice just built at St Joseph's College in Sydney. Sadly, he also had to deal with the expulsion of the Brothers from France in 1903 and the closure of more than 600 Marist schools there. An extraordinary number.

Indeed, the growth of Marist schools from their humble beginnings in Lavalla just eight decades before to become a sizeable international network by the turn of the twentieth century had been nothing short of extraordinary. It was made even more amazing given the circumstances of its founding and the person who started it. If you were going to start a new global educational movement, then you might not have chosen a relatively isolated and poor mountain town in the upper Gier valley as the optimal place to do it, and Marcellin Champagnat probably would not have presented himself as your first choice as founder. Derided by his clerical colleagues – even within his own Society of Mary – as someone rather ill-equipped to establish schools or to prepare teachers, Marcellin had to prove his credibility.

Etienne Terrailon, one of the first Marist priests, on Marcellin's team at The Hermitage (1825-26), and later parish priest in Saint-Chamond, was dismissive: 'Father Champagnat gathered Brothers in order to train them while he himself was unlearned in what he was teaching them. He instructed them to read without himself knowing how to read properly, and to write while he himself didn't observe the rules of grammar in writing.'³ Another early Marist companion, Claude Mayet, suggested that one would have had good reason to put to Marcellin, 'You are their teacher and expected to be more instructed than they, yet your letters are not written in good French.'⁴ Influential Marist priest, Denis Maîtrepierre, was similarly critical: 'Father Champagnat possessed, in fact, everything that was humanly necessary to prevent such an

³ *Origines Maristes, Extraits concernant les Frères Maristes*, Doc.162

⁴ *Idem*, Doc.157

undertaking.⁵ To be fair, the comments of all three were something of a backhanded compliment to Marcellin because they judged his success must have been due to his alignment with the will of God and his trust in God. God was with him and was his strength. Such may not have been the view of the man who baptised Marcellin, had seen him grow up during the turbulent years of the 1790s, and then in 1819 had invited him to send Brothers to take over the school in Marhles – Jean-Antoine Alirot. This priest’s terse assessment, shared with young Brothers Louis and François who were stationed in Marhles, was: ‘Your superior is a man lacking in experience, ability and intelligence.’⁶ The two Brothers disagreed and told him that that was not the opinion of people in Lavalla. Perhaps Alirot was just old and grumpy; he died later that year, shortly after Marcellin had withdrawn the Brothers due the mean living conditions that Alirot provided for them.

It seems that Marcellin surprised even himself with the ‘immediate success’ of his schools, which was ‘beyond my hopes’.⁷ He had reason to be surprised. In addition to his own limitations, the Brothers’ register of entries records these words next to the majority of new recruits from the rural and mountain regions nearby during the first half of the 1820s: ‘*ne sachant ni lire, ni écrire*’, or ‘*sachant un peu lire et écrire*’.⁸ Yet among them also were men of uncommon intelligence and aptitude, Brothers such as François and Jean-Baptiste, for example, and later Louis-Marie. They were these and others who soon began to theorise and to codify what the Brothers were doing, and why and how they were doing it.

Not that we should too easily dismiss of Marcellin’s own ability nor his level of learning. In the context of his day, he was educated to a degree to which very few were. His twelve-year seminary training meant that had successfully completed the equivalent of both secondary school and university education. He became trilingual in the process, having had to master not only French (which was not the native tongue of his home region) but also Latin for his theological and scriptural studies, as well as for prayer and worship. He was a reader, and he kept a respectably-sized personal library. He was a seeker of knowledge, especially in the areas of spirituality and educational practice. It is telling that the key Brothers he gathered around him became something of polymaths, and that Marcellin valued this in them. In addition to Marcellin, two of the first four Superiors General (Louis-Marie and Théophile) had a seminary formation before deciding to become brothers rather than priests, and were well-steeped in theological studies.

It is amply evident from the personal journals, correspondence, and formal writing of François, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie that they were seriously immersed in the socio-political, educational, spiritual and ecclesial discourse of their time. Jean-Baptiste, for example, produced a thesis-length (but unfortunately unpublished) tome on the topic of education in the late 1840s which revealed a wide but critical engagement of the leading educational thinkers in France over the previous two centuries. When *Le Guide des Écoles* (in later edition in English known as *The Teachers Guide*) was approved in 1853, it was not simply a practical handbook on how to run a school and conduct a class based on what seemed to

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, p.91.

⁷ *Idem*, p.166

⁸ ‘not knowing how to read or to write’; ‘knowing how to read and write a little’. The Register began in 1822 and survives in the Marist Brothers’ General Archives.

work, but was underpinned by discerned theory. This theoretical basis was lost for a long time, as the pragmatically disposed Brothers just went about doing what they did. Perhaps such conceptualisation was something that was undervalued by too many right from the start – almost a Marist blind spot.⁹ It is the grace of our present time that we are both rediscovering it and reframing it.

To understand ‘Marist education’ merely as a collection of the textbooks that may have been used during one decade or other, or indeed to describe it in terms of the contents of a what-to-do and what-to-avoid manual such as *The Teachers Guide* – as rich as it surely is as a resource – is as facile as it is reductionist. There has also been, often enough, an equally reductionist application of its successor as a Marist reference text: *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*,¹⁰ overlooking the intent that is revealed in its sub-title: a **VISION** for Marist education today. This intent is well developed in the book, most of the substance of which is unfortunately but frequently neglected by present-day Marists in their rush to focus on only one of its chapters – the fifth, which deals with five stylistic characteristics of Marist ministries.

Similarly, to dismiss Marist education as lacking the coherent philosophical or educational framework that informs some other traditions in the Church such as the Ignatian or Augustinian, would also be ill-founded. While it did grow organically from its beginnings as a network of small rural primary schools in early nineteenth century France, it quickly became much more than that. Yet, even in the Marist founding period, education in Marist schools was informed by theory and discerned priorities; it was not just a case of some well-motivated young men doing their best to run local schools that gave opportunity to young people denied it, without anything especially novel or distinctive about their approach.¹¹ The roots of Marist schools were fertilised by rich sources – spiritual, educational, anthropological and socio-cultural. Later chapters will explore these.

Marist education’s early development was indeed typical of most nascent strands of educational thought and practice in the Church. When a new educational tradition introduces itself into the Church’s life and mission, two things usually occur: first, it is sparked by a founder or a founding group who bring a clear rationale and fresh emphases to their project, then, second, it has a period of practical implementation before there is a comprehensive attempt to normalise it and develop an articulated conceptual framework for it. For example, it was almost half a century after the death of Saint Ignatius that the Jesuits (who found themselves, more by circumstance than original intent, engaged in a growing network of secondary-level colleges in the sixteenth century) brought their educational approach

⁹ Marist scholar, Br André Lanfrey, has been critical of a certain ‘anti-intellectualism’ in the culture the Marist Brothers, at least in some countries.

¹⁰ Finalised in 1997 after a mandate from the 1993 General Chapter of the Brothers for such a reference text to be written. It had been a matter raised for the previous couple of decades but had been put aside by General Chapters that had prioritised renewal of the Brothers’ life and work. The new text was formally adopted by a General Conference of Provincials in 1998, and ratified by the next General Chapter in 2001.

¹¹ The reverse was the thesis of an Australian Marist, John Braniff, in his 2006 book (*And Gladly Teach, The Marist Experience in Australia 1872-2000*. Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing), which was developed from his doctoral dissertation. He did not see evidence for regarding Marist education as a philosophy of education, or that it offered anything novel or distinctive. See this writer’s review of the book in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* (Vol. 28; 2007).

together in their famous *Ratio Studiorum*.¹² The book was almost twenty years in the drafting and re-drafting before a definitive model of education was agreed.¹³ Then it was substantially revised in the nineteenth century, as a function of ongoing experience.

A key factor to recognise is that, at the time of the Marist founding period, education was a thing in the western world, and most especially in France. It was a hot-button question, and France was something of a crucible for it. Who should be educated? To what end? What should they be taught? How? By whom? Who was responsible for doing all this? These were all live questions, and had been for some time, indeed well before the French Revolution and the year of Marcellin's birth which coincided 1789. It was not by happenstance that Marcellin Champagnat became the founder of new group of religious teachers. Nor did he do so without having formed some views in response to questions such as these.

France had mandated compulsory elementary education as early as 1698, in the reign of Louis XIV. There was no government funding that came with that royal decree, so its implementation was patchy. Incentivised by it, nonetheless, were the *Petites Écoles* ('Little Schools') that had grown in the previous century in parishes across the Realm. The rationale for these schools, along with their curriculum and their approach to teaching and learning, had been topics of discourse since that time when the movement began to gather momentum. Louis XIV's decree did not come out of the blue; there had been a growing insistence on the right of all to be literate, numerate, well prepared to take their place in society and, most importantly of all, well catechised. This was part of how the Catholic Reformation played out in France following the Council of Trent. As well as the significant spiritual developments that were percolating through the country, there was an accompanying educational awakening that was integral to the efforts to religious reform.¹⁴ The growth of parish schools cannot be disassociated from the whole post-Tridentine inland missionary effort in France – for which St Vincent de Paul founded his congregation and St Jean-François Régis SJ was influential in Marcellin's home region, working out of Le Puy. Both men provided inspiration for him the Marist group at the seminary to dream of what their new Society of Mary could be.

A notable book on the subject of the *Petite Écoles* – one that finds a number of echoes in later Marist practice and literature – was published by Jacques de Batencour in 1654 entitled

¹² The *Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Iesu*, usually called simply the *Ratio Studiorum* (Plan of Studies) of the Jesuits was first published in 1599. It was substantially revised in 1832. It provided a basic structure for the syllabus of Jesuit schools, and the regulations by which they would be conducted.

¹³ The first international working group was commissioned with the task by the Jesuit Superior General in 1581.

¹⁴ The sources, shaping factors and evolution of Marist education in France, from its roots in medieval education and then the *Petites Écoles* movement, through to the emphases of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and later the new teaching congregations established post-Napoleon, has been carefully researched and expounded by the late Br Pierre Zind. His two significant works are (a) his magisterial doctoral dissertation *Les nouvelles congrégations enseignantes en France de 1800 à 1830* (Université de Lyon, 1969) ('The new teaching congregations in France from 1800 to 1830') and (b) a course given in Brazil in 1988 and disseminated by Br Paul Sester after Br Pierre's untimely death there while presenting that course: *Bx M. Champagnat, son œuvre scolaire dans son contexte historique* ('Bl. Marcellin Champagnat, his educational work in its historical context.'). The former research has been well augmented by that of Br André Lanfrey in numerous works, notably his own doctoral dissertation: *Une Congrégation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904* (Université Lyon II, 1996).

L'Escole Paroissiale ('The Parish School').¹⁵ It presented itself as something of a treatise on the *Petite Écoles* that were established on a no-fee basis by parishes, targeting children who may not otherwise attend school, and that were unambiguous in their religious purposes. In the Lyon diocese, Charles Demia (1637-1689) – who had spent time both with the Community of Priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet in Paris where Batencour was based, and also did inland missionary ministry with the Vincentians (known as the Lazarists in France) – was to write a manual for such schools and the approach to religious instruction in them.¹⁶ St Jean-Baptiste de la Salle (1651-1719) drew from this educational discourse and its evangelising intuitions, and developed them considerably in founding the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Lasallian approach came to be formalised in the manual *La Conduite des Écoles Chrésiennes* ('The Conduct of Christian Schools') first published in 1706. Each of these pre-Revolutionary and pre-Napoleonic developments had a direct influence on what later became Marist education,¹⁷ along with the wider range of factors at play during the period of the Catholic Reformation and later.

The decade or so of Napoleon's educational reforms reaffirmed the ideal of universal basic education but it brought a focus on the school as an agent of the state and the formation of people who would be good citizens of France. The Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1816, after the more secular agenda of revolution and empire, saw a return to the more explicitly religious purposes of the school. The priority of the Church was for 're-Christianisation' of France, something seen as being able to be pursued effectively in schools.¹⁸ This led to the founding of a plethora teaching congregations across the country.¹⁹ Some flared and fizzled, some struggled from the start, some amalgamated for viability, and a handful flourished. The Marist Brothers were in the last group. That they did so is due to the clarity and effectiveness of the responses they offered to those issues of the time: Who should be educated? To what end? What should they be taught? How? By whom?

Each of these questions is important for understanding how Marist education began, what it has become, and what its future could be. But the most critical one was, is, and ever will be the last one: *By whom?* When Marist Schools Australia was established twelve years ago, it was the answer to one fundamental question that most strongly influenced its strategic planning. The question: *What is Marist education?* The answer: *Marist education is what Marists do in education, and why and how they do it.* The implication of that answer was

¹⁵ The full title of the book is: *L'Escole Paroissiale, ou la manière de bien instruire les enfants dans les petites écoles* (The parish school, or the way to instruct children well in [parish primary] schools). De Batencour was a priest of the Community of Priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet in Paris, a group responsible for a number of educational projects in that part of the city, and in the orbit of Olier over the Seine in Saint-Sulpice.

¹⁶ Demia published two important works, following the network of schools he had already established in Lyon itself (from 1667) as well as a number of towns in the Archdiocese of Lyon (including the region where the Marcellin later worked – in Saint-Etienne, Saint-Chamond and Rive-de-Gier): *Le Trésor clerical* in 1682 (a manual for parish priests in their establishment of parish schools) and *Reglements pour les écoles de la ville et diocèse de Lyon in 1688*. ('Regulation for schools in the city and diocese of Lyon'). Important for Demia was the training of teachers. This is considered in a later chapter.

¹⁷ Zind (1988, op.cit., pp.73-109) goes into detail with this.

¹⁸ A study of the mix of contextual influences, often enough in competition with one another, that came to shape Marist education was the subject of a doctoral dissertation by Br Danilo Farneda Calgaro: *Guide des Écoles 1817-1853, Estudio histórico-crítico*. Tesa doctoral. Universidad Pontificia Salesiana, Roma (1993). See a summary of his research outcomes in Marist Notebooks 5, (1994): 'The Teachers Guide, A Historico-Critical Study'.

¹⁹ See the references to the dissertations of Brothers Pierre Zind and André Lanfrey in Note 12.

urgently apparent: if Marist education is what Marists do in education, then what's needed for its future are Marists.

Accepting that insight as a foundational premise helped to shape the priorities of Marist Schools Australia and, a few years later, the Marist Association of St Marcellin, which assumed responsibility for MSA as the Association's principal locus of ministry. It has continued to shape those priorities. The critical challenge is to have Marists: people who self-identify as Marists spiritually, who feel a bondedness with like-hearted people who also identify as Marists, and who have become skilled in the distinctively Marist way of educating and relating. They are educators who can genuinely and readily name and claim *Marist* as their own way. They use the first-person when they talk Marist and Marists.

It has never been any different. In the founding period, the term 'Marist education' was not a thing. Had you have asked someone such as Brother François or Brother Jean-Baptiste, or even St Marcellin himself, to describe 'Marist education', they are likely to have looked at you quizzically. The labelling came later; the codification came later (albeit not too much later). What was there from the start were the people. Without Marists, Marist education is but a house of cards. Policies, contracts, agreements, handbooks, strategic plans, letterheads and livery, it can all amount to an empty gong clanging. If there are not people whose hearts are Marist and who professional priorities and practice stem from a personal identification with the Marist way of educating, then the living heartbeat of the movement dies. Its claim to locate itself in the charismatic dimension of the Church's life and mission loses its validity.

That is not suggest that the answers to the other educational questions that were being debated in France between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries were not also important for defining Marist education at its inception, or that they will not be into the future. Like any new movement in the Church that is born of the Spirit, the first Marists needed to be immersed in the concrete realities of their time and place, so as to be able to offer attractive, relevant and compellingly relevant ways for the gospel of Jesus to find renewed incarnation in those contexts. That meant engagement with the discourse and urgencies of the time – those of education, society, church and, what we would call today, evangelisation. They needed to know, in the words of Pope Francis, the 'smell of the sheep'.²⁰ And they did. This also meant a capacity to break out of what the Holy Father calls self-referentiality. This is a challenge for the Church at any time; it needs to unshackle itself from its restorationist strictures or self-serving attitudes, and to imagine new frames of reference for its life and mission – ones that keep Christlife at the heart of its communities but which speak to the people of today. In the four-minute pre-Conclave speech which probably got him elected, Cardinal Bergoglio is reported to have said:

*Evangelising presupposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all suffering.*²¹

²⁰ Homily at Chrism Mass, 28 March 2013, St Peter's Basilica.

²¹ *National Catholic Register*, April 3 2013

Just as is happening today, during the Marist founding period influential recidivist elements of the Church in France were seeking to unscramble the egg. The fifteen years of Restorationist France (1815-1830) were not just about having the Bourbons back on the throne; they were about putting the Church back in what was seen as its rightful place.²² Indeed, despite the essentially fresh way the original Marist aspirants conceived their project, there were still hints of this kind of thinking in the wording of their pledge at Fourvière, reflecting the currents that would have been bubbling through the seminary.

The ongoing vitality of any movement will then be significantly a function of how its community can continue to reimagine and re-cast itself in different and emerging contexts. The evolution of *The Teachers Guide* is an example of how this can take place. The book's publication in 1853 (after a series of drafts and some debate) was the first edition of several. The last revision by the General Chapter of 1920, appearing in English in 1931, was a quite different book from that of 1853. Each edition, and each translation, was the fruit of reflection on lived experience and engagement with fresh realities. Then in 1997, a new reference text appeared in the form of *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*. It had a similar purpose: to give Marist educators words, touchstones, priorities, and frames of meaning for what they spent their days doing. Again, it went through several drafts and attracted debate. It drew on the essence of the evolved tradition and a pondering of this, but it addressed itself to the people and issues of the time. It gave them a language for their time. Words are important because they allow for the teaching and learning, the passing on, of a tradition. Being able to be creatively faithful to the 'what' is essential or fundamental to the graced intuitions of the founding but, at the same time, to be able to discard or adapt elements that are the answers, language or priorities of another context, is a perennial challenge.

Creative and faithful – both. It is not all about what was, but nor is the sole concern about the now and the new. Time and lived experience allow for accumulation of wisdom and the development of conceptual frameworks. While it is necessary for movements to exercise 'creative fidelity' to their founding,²³ there is also need for such fidelity to be the fruit of discernment and for it to be marked by integrity with those original intuitions. That is to say, the longer Marists are around, the more expertise, resources and efficacy should mark them because they have engaged in both ongoing critical reflection and strategic enrichment of their distinctive way of gospel living and proclaiming. The story of Marist education is but two hundred years old – not an especially long in 'church time'. But it is long enough. It is also a critical moment, a stage of the Marist story where history suggests a movement can either revitalise or fade away.²⁴ When a movement stops reflecting on its distinctive way of living

²² There has been a long and broad discourse in the supposed link of *trône et autel* ('throne and altar') in France, something which goes back to Charlemagne's time, and which continues to this day with the association between monarchist sentiments and recidivist Catholic movements such as the Lefebvrists.

²³ The term 'creative fidelity' first appears in John Paul II's *Vita Consecrata* (1996) where he applied it to religious life, in the spirit of Paul VI's *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971). John Paul called religious courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world.' (37) He uses the term in a conceptually quite different way from how the term is used in Christian existentialist philosophy, particularly that of Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973).

²⁴ The study of the lifespans of renewal movements in the Church is a well-researched field. A seminal study was that of French Jesuit Raymond Hostie. Hostie, R (1972), *Vie Et Mort Des Ordres Religieux*, Desclee de Brouwer, Paris. Hostie's focus was on religious orders and institutes; he concluded that most of them lived through a predictable lifecycle that involved a founding period of 10-20 years, followed by consolidation lasting a similar

and ministering, developing and re-framing it, and importantly, re-articulating it, then it becomes something for the history books. This is the fate of most new movements in the Church. They serve for a time, sometimes with great effect, but then dissipate and are replaced by new ideas with different people. The grace of our time is that Marist educators, at least in this part of the world, are choosing a path which is future focussed, open to new ways of conceptualising who they are and what they do, but rooted in original intuitions of their founding.

The following chapters on the Marist education critically explore the principal historical sources from which this educational tradition emerged, distilling the essential and enduring from the incidental and time-specific, and bringing that essence into dialogue with the context of today. The questions to frame this exploration can be those named above, the same ones to which Marcellin and the founding generation responded: Who should be educated? Why? What should they be taught? How? By whom?

time, then an expansion during the subsequent century. Most then stabilised for a time or began to decline. Few of those he studied lasted more than 250-300 years.

Chapter One

Marist education: for whom?

This has been contested space. Of the five questions that frame this exploration of Marist education – *Who should be educated? Why? What should they be taught? How? By whom?* – it is perhaps the first one that has attracted some of the most passionate debate among Marists. Culture wars have been fought, won, and lost as Marists have debated their response to this simple question.

It was not always so. In fact, before the 1960s, there had been little attention in official Marist documents concerning who should be the focus of Marist education. In the last set of guidelines published for the Marist Brothers before Vatican II moved the goal posts on everyone, the Brothers were tasked simply to devote their endeavours to the ‘Christian instruction and education of the young’.²⁵ There was no chapter in the book to describe where, with whom, or by what means they should be doing this; indeed, no chapter devoted to the locus of their educational ministry. This was, rather, implied throughout the text: they were to be in schools, and with young people generally. There were chapters on the ‘zeal’ and the ‘love of work’ that the Brothers were expected to bring to their teaching, and on the kind of ‘relationship’ they should have with their students.²⁶ But, not much more. Curiously perhaps for a modern reader, no-where among the 492 Articles of that document – ‘the old Rule’ as it is still known by today’s senior Brothers – had there been any explicit statement concerning any preference for the poor.

In the companion document to the old Rule – the *Constitutions* – there was a little more qualification provided through the additional phrase: ‘particularly those of rural areas’.²⁷ These words had been there unchanged from the first edition way back in 1853 until they were replaced by the General Chapter of 1958 with this sentence: ‘The less fortunate students will be the object of their special care.’²⁸ An interesting modification, but it was not the same thing as saying ‘the poor’ or ‘the marginalised’.

Has it just been a latter-day thing for Marists, this emphasis on the last, the least and the lost? Well, perhaps not, if you have read Matthew 25. But why had such a fundamental evangelical imperative not been up there in Marist lights before the 1960s? Where are the quotable quotes from Marcellin and the founding generation on this priority? Why did Marcellin not use the same phrase that had been the De La Salle tradition – *particulièrement des pauvres* – and use instead *particulièrement ceux des campagnes*?²⁹ Then jump forward to the expression that only popped into Marist rhetoric in the late twentieth-century: that Marists

²⁵ *Common Rules of the Marist Brothers of the Schools*. (1960). #2

²⁶ *Ibid.* Chapters XV, XVI, XXXVIII.

²⁷ In the original French: ‘*principalement ceux des campagnes*’. The base text of this document was French, as was the practice for all major documents of the Marist Brothers until the 1990s. Even the spoken language of the General House, although it had been located in Italy for most of the twentieth century, was French until 2001.

²⁸ In the original French: ‘*les élèves moins fortunés seront l’objet de leur prédilection*’.

²⁹ J-B de la Salle’s phrase translates as ‘especially from the poor’, Marcellin’s ‘especially those from the country areas.’

are called to serve ‘the Montagnes of today’. From where did that phrase spring? What does it mean? Why hadn’t it been used previously? Is it valid?

The four French words – *particulièrement des plus délaissés*³⁰ – that appeared at the end of Article 2 of the Brothers’ new Constitutions that were approved 1986 came after a couple of decades of post-Conciliar discernment, some of it not without angst. Similar words had first appeared in their *ad experimentum* Constitutions of 1968.³¹ Today, over half a century later, at least three generations of Marist educators have been introduced to this phrase as a constitutive element of the Founder’s charism, and they are likely to be able to explain without difficulty or hesitation the ways in which they and their fellow-Marists around the world are attentive to the educational and evangelical needs of marginalised young people in various contexts. The most recent Marist International Mission Assembly put it this way:

Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists of St Marcellin are PROPHETS because:

- *we have moved out of our comfort zones, and are ready to go to the peripheries of our world, impelled to proclaim and build the reign of God;*
- *we are purposefully reaching out to the Montagnes of our day, to be a significant presence among and with them;*
- *we give public voice to the promotion and defence of the rights of children and young people, in the social and political forums where decisions are considered and taken;*
- *we have a global missionary mindset, seeking new ways of being present on the periphery, both nationally and internationally;*
- *with courage and determination, we are opting for our educational works (schools, universities, social centres, etc.) to be platforms of evangelisation, and to promote an education that is inclusive, committed, compassionate, and transformative;*
- *we are accompanying people in Marist Youth Ministry programmes to ensure that they and their programmes are forming prophets and evangelisers for our time.*³²

In the latest iteration of the Marist Brothers’ Constitutions, the equivalent phrase from the 1968 and 1986 documents reads this way (and recognises the role of all Marists, not only the Brothers) and also picks up on favourite phrases of Pope Francis:

*With other Marists, we give ourselves to the evangelisation and education of children and young people, especially those who are poor, most in need, and living on the geographical and existential peripheries.*³³

³⁰ *Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers of the Schools*. October 1986. #2. ‘Especially from the least favoured’ or ‘the most neglected’ is how it was usually rendered in English.

³¹ *Constitutions of the Marist Brothers of the Schools*. Rome, 21 September 1968. #2. The expression is a little different in this document, but not especially different in its sense: ‘... *en particulier au service des moins favorisés*’ – ‘particularly at the service of the least favoured.’

³² *Voices of the Fire, Message from the II Marist International Mission Assembly*, Nairobi, September 16-27, 2014

³³ *Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers* (2020) #4. Marist Brothers General House, Rome.

Back in the two decades following Vatican II, however, the change was a quite significant one and not welcomed by all with the same enthusiasm. The expression was new. And it was strategically placed in the document.

It was not just a change in words. Across the Marist world, there had been through these decades a significant reorienting of focus and resources. In the countries of Latin America, especially, where Marist education had taken place for the most part in private, fee-paying schools and universities that catered for those who could afford them, and in societies marked by what the bishops of that continent criticised as highly inequitable 'bi-classism',³⁴ there was sometimes fractious debate but ultimately considerable change. This found echoes right around the Marist world, its momentum ticking up especially after mid-1980s.³⁵

There are a few things to consider here. It would be helpful, though, first to step back to the context from which Marist education emerged so as to get a handle on Marcellin's own intuitions concerning the focus of his project.

The first thing to note is the proportion of French children who lived in rural areas at the time. It was most of them, indeed almost all of them! In 1800, when Marcellin was growing up on his family's farm at Le Rosey, 87% of his compatriots were living in similar situations – in hamlets, small towns and rural settings. The level of urbanisation in France was just 12.2%. By 1830, when the industrial revolution was beginning to draw more people to cities such as Lyon or growing urban centres such as Saint-Etienne, the level was still only 15.7%. It had reached only 20% by 1850 and 35.4% by the turn of the century, when 50% of the population were still dependent on agricultural industries.³⁶

For readers from some other countries, such as Australia, this has not been their history. It was not until after the Second World War that urbanisation approached levels that have been the case in Australia pretty much since the beginning of European settlement. Australians' self-perceptions about living in Dorothea Mackellar's 'sunburnt country' of 'sweeping plains', 'rugged mountain ranges' and 'droughts and flooding rains' belies the fact that at least 80% of us have lived in large cities and towns since well back in the nineteenth century, and now almost all of us do – one of the highest and earliest rates of urbanisation in the world.

There is a risk, therefore, that Australians, or indeed most Marists in developed parts of the western world today, can read the phrase 'particularly those of rural areas' inaccurately. In nineteenth-century France, these children were the majority; they were not the few on the fringe. The typical Marist school of Marcellin's time, and for many decades later, was the local parish school, which was the same as the local public school. It was for everyone. Marist schools were quite mainstream. There were literally hundreds of them across the country. Until the French secularisation laws of the last decades of the century necessitated the

³⁴ *Document on Peace. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops*, Medellín, Colombia, August 24–September 6, 1968. #3.

³⁵ For a more detailed account of how this played out in the countries of Latin America and then across the Marist world see *History of the Institute, Vol.3, Dawn's Uncertain Light (1985-2016)*, pp.64-65; 103-129; 151-155; 162-175.

³⁶ Bairoch, P. and Goertz, G. (1986) Urban Studies Factors of Urbanisation in the Nineteenth Century Developed Countries: A Descriptive and Econometric Analysis. *Urban Studies* 23, 285-305.

Brothers' moving to establish private schools, and also the growth of large urban-based boarding and secondary colleges from the time of Brother Louis-Marie, the successor to Brother François, most schools were embedded in the ordinary life of local communities. This was in contrast to religious orders that concentrated their efforts on education of urban elites with a view that, through them, society could be influenced. Marist schools were founded more along the lines of that endearing definition of the Catholic Church by the rather imperfect Catholic James Joyce, as 'here comes everybody'. Joyce may have been more at home in a Marist school than he was apparently at the Jesuits' Clongowes Wood College. But that's just idle conjecture.

This 'school-for-everyone' concept, however, needs some nuancing. There were some radical dynamics at play in Marcellin's schools, especially at the beginning.

Marcellin did not come up with the idea for such schools. He was part of a movement in France that had been well under way from at least the sixteenth century. The concept the 'parish school' had been developing since then. We have mentioned before the influence of priests such as Jacques de Batencour in Paris, Charles Démia in Lyon, and Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in Reims in establishing schools that included all children of the parish, with a particular intentionality around including children of poor families who would not have been otherwise able to afford it. France led the way in Europe in promoting universal education. Démia was especially strong in his advocacy, publishing a long exhortation in 1666 to the civic leaders of Lyon that argued vehemently for the free Christian education of poor children, the neglect of whom was having deleterious consequences both for them and for the city. He painted a quite dire picture of the situation of poor children in Lyon, what their fate would be without such education. It has been compared in his significance for education in France to the impact of Martin Luther's '95 Theses' for the Church.³⁷ Twenty years later in the year before he died, and after considerable success in the Diocese of Lyon, he developed the embryo of a plan for the whole of France including the establishment of teachers' colleges in all the major dioceses.

Démia's advocacy certainly reverberated well beyond Lyon. One who picked it up was Nicolas Roland (a Canon of Reims). On his deathbed he confided his project to Jean-Baptiste de la Salle who took up the mantle with considerable purpose and vision, founding the Brothers of the Christian Schools³⁸ for the Christian education of *particulièrement des pauvres* ('especially of the poor'). Understandably, La Salle and others were far more able to achieve their goals in cities and large towns which had the means to finance such schools and to support a Brothers' community. Part of the primitive Lasallian plan was to establish a second branch of their Institute comprising single men to teach in rural areas, but this was not realised. In many regions, nevertheless, education was to become quite well established by the time of the

³⁷ The parallel is suggested by Br Pierre Zind in *Bx M Champagnat, son oeuvre scolaire dans son context historique*. Démia's 1666 exhortation was entitled *Remonstrances aux Prévôts des Marchans, Echevins et principaux habitants de la ville, touchant la nécessité et utilité des écoles chrétiennes pour l'Instruction des enfants pauvres*.

³⁸ Known in many countries as either the De La Salle Brothers or the Christian Brothers (not to be confused with the Christian Brothers founded by Edmund Rice in Ireland).

Revolution. Ironically enough, given the ideals and indeed the explicit rhetoric of both the Revolution and the Empire, most of this was to dissipate between 1789 and 1815.³⁹

By the time of the Restoration of the monarchy after Napoleon, momentum was building for renewal and reanimation of the Church's works on various fronts. Christian education was at the core of this, and especially that of the great majority of the children who lived outside the towns and the cities. In 1816, the year of Marcellin's ordination and the Pledge of Fourvière, the Brothers of the Christian Schools held a major General Chapter in Lyon to plan what part they could play. Their mode of community religious life, however, precluded their presence in the smaller towns and villages. Others were beginning to take initiatives to fill this gap, along conceptually similar lines to the original Lasallian framework but independent of it. There grew a general understanding that, for the boys at least, this education could be put in the hands of men called '*petits frères*' (who could live in ones and twos and teach in the *petits écoles* in those places), while the '*grands frères*' (in larger communities of four or more) would rebuild their Lasallian educational network in the cities and towns. Marcellin would have been well aware of this emerging discourse, and probably of a number of the initiatives that were being taken across the country. Already by 1823, eight new congregations of teaching brothers – *petits frères* for rural areas – had been formally approved by King Louis XVIII.⁴⁰ By and large, they were being driven primarily by a concern for redressing what was seen as the dramatic moral and religious decline of the previous two decades.

The prevailing feeling was that the reintroduction of the *grands frères* into the large towns and cities, and the establishment of new groups of *petits frères* to serve the country areas, would be a return to the kind of *petits écoles* that had flourished before the Revolution. From one perspective, Marcellin's foundation was part of this movement across the country; he would have seen himself as part of it. But he did some things differently. A notable initiative was how he mixed together the children from poor and better-off families. While Batencour had wanted all students in the same room, the poor children were put on benches apart from the others, to create some distance from their '*crasse, leur odeur et leur parasites*' (their 'grime, their smell and their lice')⁴¹. Lasallian classrooms, where the focus was more especially on the poor, also had different benches for different students. Marcellin's classrooms had no such distinctions. Nor were students separated into groups that were being taught to read only (the less able) while others (the more able) were being taught both to read and to write. The full curriculum was taught to all students in the Marist school. He was also pleased to welcome children from the better off families of the parish, and indeed to charge them tuition fees. This reflected two core intuitions of Marcellin: that all students should be treated equitably and that all of them could be 'good Christians and good citizens'.⁴²

The underpinning anthropology out of which Marcellin operated will be a topic taken up in a later chapter when we explore the 'why' of Marist education. But here, as we consider the

³⁹ Zind, *op.cit.* (pp.113-149) details a range of enquiries, reports, decrees and raw statistics to demonstrate how things deteriorated markedly during these years, and the situation at the time of the Restoration in 1815.

⁴⁰ Zind details these foundation in his doctoral thesis *Les nouvelles congregations enseignantes en France de 1800 à 1830* (Université de Lyon, 1969) ('The new teaching congregations in France from 1800 to 1830'). Marcellin's *petits frères* came after a number of others.

⁴¹ *L'école paroissiale* (1654)

⁴² See the letter Marcellin to M. Libersat at the Ministry of Public Instruction, 19 September 1839. (Letter 273 in *The Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*).

‘for whom’ of Marist education, this expression ‘good Christians and good citizens’ bears further comment. A conviction that all students could and should be ‘good Christians’ is hardly surprising; that had been a primary driver behind the whole *petite école* movement for two centuries, as part of the wider Catholic Reformation. Now the same imperative was behind the flurry of pastoral activity associated with the Restoration. But Marcellin’s juxtaposition of the words ‘good’ and ‘citizen’ was new, and somewhat edgy. *Citoyen* (‘citizen’) was a word of the French Revolution. Before the Revolution, ordinary people had been ‘subjects’ of the King; now they were citizens of France, all equal – at least in theory. Even in La Salle’s schools, the presumption had been that students were being given a basic education so that they could take their place responsibly and fruitfully in the stratum of society in which they found themselves. This had been implicit in *petit école* movement since Louis XIV. The more important concern was for their catechesis.

‘Citizen’ was a word that had been used in the discourse of the Enlightenment and also the Protestant Reformation; Calvin spoke of citizens in Geneva. In France, the word became lionised by its later inclusion in *La Marseillaise*, and remains a conversational form of address in some parts of the French-speaking world to this day, with much the same sense as the word ‘comrade’ is used in English (and with the same leftist connotations).

In Marcellin’s wanting to form ‘good citizens’, there were clear influences of the new, egalitarian thinking. It was a quite empowering aspiration, a value no doubt derived from his father who was captured by the original hopes and ideals of the Revolution. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* in August 1789 was one of the first major acts of the National Constituent Assembly. A quarter century later, however, at the time of the Restoration after 1815, Marcellin would have been somewhat out of sync with many in the Church, and even some of his fellow Marist priests, in using this word. Writing later in the nineteenth century, when secularist movements were felt to be increasingly antagonistic to the interests of the Catholic Church and of religion in general, Brother Jean-Baptiste tempered ‘good’ to ‘virtuous’ in the books he wrote, and this alteration persisted in Marist documents. This had not been the Founder’s intent. Unfortunately, it was Jean-Baptiste’s expression rather than Marcellin’s that found its way into the 1998 reference text *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*.⁴³

For Marcellin, evangelisation and education went hand in hand; all young people deserved the opportunity of them in full measure. All deserved the best efforts of well-prepared Christian teachers to give this effect. The story of Marcellin’s encounter with the dying boy captures this well. This story has been told since the early years of Marist education, including by Marcellin himself. Since our first years, it has been used to indicate the kind of young people for whom Marcellin began his educational project. It is, therefore, justifiably seen as one of our ‘creation myths’. But like all genuine myths, its fundamental role is to address the ‘why’ of how we came to be and the essence of what we are, rather than the literal veracity might have happened. Towards the end of the twentieth century, a century-and-a-half after the incident itself, the previously unnamed boy was identified incorrectly as a Jean-Baptiste Montagne, a young man who died on 28 October 1816 not long after Marcellin arrived as

⁴³ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, #69.

curate at Lavalla.⁴⁴ During the 1990s and early 2000s, this boy's name came to personify the type of young person who should be most deserving of Marist education or Marist care. While the name 'Montagne' may not be correct, this does not diminish in any way the significance of the incident, or the proposition that we cannot use the subject of the story in an emblematic way. That is why it has been told and re-told since the beginning.

Among other things, the story of the dying boy emblemises some of the 'how' of Marist education: knowing and loving the student; going into the world of the student rather than having them come to you; educating in and through relationship; being driven by hope. It has a rich Visitation parallel. In a later chapter we will take further these aspects of the 'how', but here let us consider the 'who'.

Who was this unnamed dying boy? We are told that his family lived in the foothills of the Pilat ranges. The hamlets found there – tucked away in the narrow upper-reaches of Gier valley – were tiny, isolated in a steeply rugged and forested region, and dirt poor. There would have been no ready access to education, to parish life, indeed to much social contact at all.⁴⁵ We are also told that the boy was around eleven or twelve years of age;⁴⁶ the age being rather significant because this was the age when children made the first Holy Communion, and which

⁴⁴ For a detailed consideration of the identity of the dying boy see two articles in *Marist Notebooks 35* (2017): Br Michael Green 'The Montagne Myth: An Archetype of Marist Ministry' (pp.5-26); Br André Lanfrey 'Encountering a Sick Child in the Foothills of the Pilat Mountains' (pp.27-54). The principal argument against the boy's not being J-B Montagne is that key elements of J-B Montagne's life and death not only do not align with the story as it was originally told, but more importantly *why* it was told. Four elements do not fit and indeed contradict the image of 'Montagne' as the word is used today:

- a. The place is wrong – up on the top of the range rather than 'in the foothills' as the three original accounts attest. It is also not really remote or on the margins: Le Bessat is close to major commercial road linking the Rhone Valley and Saint Etienne.
- b. The age of the boy is wrong. The early accounts have him at 11 or 12. The significance of his being this old is that this was the age of first Holy Communion, after which a boy entered the adult world. So, the point was: here was a boy about to do that, but who didn't know about the purpose and meaning of life.
- c. The family circumstances are wrong. The Montagnes were relatively wealthy for those parts, and were active in the life of the local church. Indeed, the boy was buried from the church. So, it is extremely improbable that J-B Montagne would have been religiously ignorant. Also, the parish to which they were connected was Tarentaise, not Lavalla (even though they technically lived within the boundaries of the Lavalla parish – just an accident of history from pre-Revolutionary times when it was all part of the lands of the Duke of St Chamond).
- d. The date is wrong. According to notes made by Fr Bourdin who interviewed Marcellin in 1828 (and whose notes were not available to Br Jean-Baptiste when he wrote *The Life* in 1856) the incident happened after the first Brothers moved into Lavalla, not before.

⁴⁵ A plausible identity for the dying boy is a Jean-Claude Fara, whose death occurred in 1819. His family lived in one of these small hamlets (La Fara), now abandoned. The thorough census/assessment completed by the occupying Austrian army in 1815 when assessing each family's capacity to contribute to requisitioning indicates they were a very poor family. This timing – at least regarding the sequence of events, with the Brothers being founded some time before the encounter with the dying boy – accords with the notes of Fr Antoine Bourdin SM who lived at the Hermitage between 1828 and 1830. Bourdin – a self-appointed chronicler of the Society of Mary – interviewed Marcellin on the early years at Lavalla, and Marcellin's words are recorded verbatim. It is clear from what Marcellin said in the interview that the Brothers were already active before the meeting with the dying boy made their work 'more urgent'. Bourdin's notes were discovered after his death many decades later, and were not available to Br Jean-Baptiste when he wrote *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*.

⁴⁶ Jean-Baptiste has him a few years older, but he is out of sync with other accounts on this. Jean-Baptiste also has the incident in 1816, up to three years earlier than the others. More credence can be given to Laurent and François who were there in the house at Lavalla at the time.

was a kind of right-of-passage for them to leave school and to begin their working life. So, here was a boy on the verge of starting to make his way in the world. The Founder, we are told, went to him without delay. Each of the accounts describes Marcellin's being 'afflicted' by what he found. The French word *affilgé* is rather strong.⁴⁷ In modern English vernacular, we might say that Marcellin was 'gutted'; he was pierced to his very core. Finding the boy completely ignorant of God, facing death, probably illiterate and innumerate, Marcellin did not simply do the priestly thing in anointing him and comforting him; he sat with him and he taught him.⁴⁸

In Marcellin's eyes, and in his heart, this anonymous boy in some corner of no-consequence deserved no less. It was not a matter of just making him comfortable, but of educating him. Later, the Founder would emphasise with the Brothers that all young people had the same inherent right and dignity. Each of them was the 'price of the blood of Jesus Christ' was an expression he frequently used; 'bone of your bone' he told them, 'your companion in eternity', 'your brother'.⁴⁹

The writings of Brother François are replete with similar sentiments. While addressing the needs of young people generally, and the zeal they deserved from their teachers, he emphasises that there should be no distinctions made among the students. He cites, as he would have undoubtedly heard Marcellin do, the example of St Jean-François Regis in his tender care of the poor and the sick, and the people in country areas. All of them deserved the same opportunities. Not all young people were in the dire circumstances of the dying boy, of course, but there would always be ones who experienced exclusion, isolation, or disenfranchisement; there would be those who found school more difficult.

Each of Marcellin, Jean-Baptiste and François gives considerable space the virtue of the 'zeal' that was required to redress inequities faced by such young people. This word became cemented in Marist documents, along with 'love of work'. Sometimes it has developed negatively in Marist culture into a kind of unhealthy activism. It was not that for the founding leaders, because their focus was not on the teacher's need to be or do something, nor the reputation of the school, but on the student and on God. Brother François described zeal in terms of 'desire', something that sprang from a deep love of God and wish to make such love known. The kind of zeal blessed by God, he wrote, would be 'prudent, attentive, simple, gentle, patient, industrious, humble, constant and selfless' in a way that won students hearts.⁵⁰ He explained what it meant to be each of these; to have a 'humble' and selfless zeal, he explained, would mean:

⁴⁷ Brothers Laurent, Jean-Baptiste and François each use this same word.

⁴⁸ According to the protocols in place for the Diocese of Lyon at the time, Marcellin would not have been permitted to hear the boy's Confession and give him absolution, if he the child had not be instructed in the rudiments of the faith.

⁴⁹ These and similar expressions pepper Marcellin's writings and his reported talks. They are perhaps most powerfully collected in Chapter 38 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, which Brother Jean-Baptiste published in 1868, 28 years after Marcellin's death, as a compilation of his teachings. This chapter is called 'The Respect that We Owe a Child.'

⁵⁰ Notebooks of Brother François, #309, p.113.

To be pleased to be with the lowliest of the children, with the poor ones, with those who are the most difficult to teach and to form in virtue⁵¹

Posing the question as to what would lead a person to devote the extra investment of time and energy into such needy students who may lack much gratitude for the teacher's efforts, Marcellin asked:

Why does a teacher decide to take care of the weak students in his class as well as the strong ones, and to give them even more attention precisely because they are weak, and to act so that, without slowing too much the progress of the better students, he does not leave behind any of these poor children who give so little satisfaction to his self-esteem?⁵²

His answer was love. Someone who loved young people would believe in what they could become, would never doubt their essential goodness. The taking in of the troublesome young waif, Jean-Baptiste Berne, at Lavalla – despite the protests of the Brothers who found him more than a little bothersome and disruptive – also became one of the Marist 'creation myths'.

While Marcellin's major focus was on young people in parish schools, he was also responsive to needs well beyond those. His letters indicate a readiness to become involved in a range of situations. He had a particular concern for orphans and children with hearing impairment – taking over the management of orphanages in Lyon and Saint-Chamond, and considering another in Grenoble; sponsoring professional training at The Royal Institute for Deaf-Mutes in Paris for Brothers destined to establish schools for the hearing impaired in the cities of both Saint-Etienne and Le Puy-en-Velay.⁵³ He agreed in principle to send Brothers to lecture at the teachers' college in Montbrison, the capital city of the Department of Loire.⁵⁴ Notably all these initiatives were in larger urban settings, as were some of the large boarding schools that were established by the first generation after the Founder. Marcellin indicated to the Bishop of Belley his interest in taking on an agricultural training farm for men such as those returning from military service without adequate trade skills, and to a parish priest in Paris his hope to be able to run a project for disengaged youth on what was then the urban fringes of the capital city to where they had drifted.⁵⁵ Brothers in a number of places ran night schools for adults who had missed out on basic literacy education. He accepted some homeless widowers into aged care at The Hermitage. We know also Marcellin's keenness, really from his seminary years, to become involved in overseas missionary work. It is a quite varied list of commitments, in a range of settings.

What becomes apparent in delving into Marcellin's intuitions is that he was wide in his cast. Deep in his heart was the conviction that everyone should get what Australians describe as 'a fair go'. Everyone should and could experience the fulfilment, the joy, and the sense of worth from being a good Christian and a good citizen, and have reason and means to be both.

⁵¹ *Idem.*

⁵² *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.337

⁵³ See Letters 27, 53, 219, 281, 306, 318, 320, 321, 323, 329

⁵⁴ See Letter 64.

⁵⁵ See Letters 28; 339.

No distinctions, no privileges, no classism. For them to have that, they needed to know and experience love. That was fundamental. And for that they needed a good education, a Christian education. The further that the circumstances of their lives distanced them from that possibility, the more Marcellin was driven to make a difference in their lives.

Over the last half century, the Church has come to a more intense alignment with similar priorities. An institution that had grown arguably too triumphalist and self-absorbed was urged by Pedro Arrupe SJ, Pope Paul VI, and others to show a 'preferential option for the poor'. Pope Francis has called the Church to go to the 'existential peripheries'. The first Marists wanted to be found, like Mary, where the Church was as it came to be born, what they called being with *l'Eglise naissante*. They did not see themselves in the shadows of ancient spires or safe in the remove of gilded sanctuaries; they sought to be grounded in the lives of ordinary people, people who yearned for what they knew not, especially young people. How can Marist education situate itself in such a nascent Church?

It was a deeply held conviction of Marcellin that Marists should be loyal to the Church, that they should serve the interests the Church, and see themselves always integrated within the Church.

But which Church?

Then as now, the Church has different faces. Its members seem at times to be pursuing competing or apparently dissonant agenda. Look, for example, at the treatment of President Joe Biden in the intensely polemical and narrowly cast discourse of American Catholicism. For some he is a saint, for others an apostate. American Catholics, including bishops, staked their positions on opposite sides of the debate.

It is perhaps more appropriate that we speak of 'Catholicism' rather 'Church' in this regard because, as we profess each Sunday, the Church is only ever 'one'; and it is also 'holy', 'apostolic', and 'catholic' with a small 'c'. But Catholicism? That's another story. An 'ism' typically is. It was the case in Marcellin's day, and probably always will be. From one perspective, that can be healthy – a diversity of ideas, insights, wisdom, scholarship, and experience being brought into dialogue should be a good thing. One is reminded of Pope Francis's call for a more 'synodal' Church. But that only works when people listen to one another; listening before they presume to speak. And it needs people to be attentive to the Spirit who unsettles and surprises, rather than bringing cheap peace or rootless unity. Mary would have some thoughts to offer on what it means to be surprised and discomfited by the Spirit of God.

So, which brand of Catholicism, or which 'church', does Marist education serve? To which 'church' is it loyal? With which 'church' do Marist educators stand? The answer to those questions might be most helpfully found in an expression that comes from the early Marists: *l'Eglise naissante*, the Church as it comes to birth, or the 'birthing' church.⁵⁶ That is where the Marist educator is most at home – being proactive in the emerging Church rather than lamenting a crumbling edifice; assisting the renewing Church rather having a concern for

⁵⁶ Cf. *Water from the Rock*, #11. The English word 'nascent' does not really capture the nuance of the French word 'naissante' from which it is derived. 'Naissante' has a sense of the very action or process of being born.

restorationist thinking or trying to respond to today's questions with yesterday's answers. If it is not too much a stretch of metaphor, the Marist is akin to a midwife at the time of this birth of church.

To deploy another image, the Marist likes to be with the people who are – to use Pope Benedict XVI's expression borrowed from ancient Judaism – in 'the court of the Gentiles' rather than in the sanctuary.⁵⁷ Others have described it as dialoguing with the people who may have made it only as far as the 'narthex' of a church but are yet to enter the 'nave'.⁵⁸ In a world that is secularising, relativising, and pluralising, especially among young people in the West, such a description is increasingly apposite for almost any school or university setting, Catholic or otherwise.⁵⁹

From their seminary days, from the very first discussions of Marcellin and his fellow-seminarians on their new *projet mariste*,⁶⁰ they felt an invitation from Mary to be in and for their time and place in the way she was for the disciples at Pentecost: among people in their 'dis-Spiritness', in their abandonment and their fears, in their unfulfilled hopes and desires. The reference text for Marist education, *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, reminds us:

*Like Mary of the Cenacle (Acts 1:12-2:4), we build community around us. In an age that is adrift spiritually, we bring the belief and vision of a new and Spirit-filled Church.*⁶¹

⁵⁷ Benedict XVI (2011), *Message to Courtyard of the Gentiles*, 26 March, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome. The Holy Father was addressing how to bring believers and non-believers together in dialogue, with a view to the promotion of fraternity, liberty and equality among all people.

⁵⁸ The phrase was coined by Bert Roebben in reference to religious education, and promotes the value of respectful adult dialogue. 'Narthical learning' – which we will take up at a later point – parallels the 'Courtyard of the Gentiles' concept favoured by Pope Benedict XVI. See: Roebben, B (2009) *Seeking Sense in the City: Perspectives on European Religious Education*, LIT Verlag, Berlin. See also Fr Craig Larkin SM's wonderful book *A Certain Way, An Exploration of Marist Spirituality*, where offers a similar image in relating the Eastern Orthodox tradition around Mary of Egypt, p.139.

⁵⁹ An informative report that considers the changing place of Catholic education in these contexts is the *Global Catholic Education Report 2021. Education Pluralism, Learning Poverty, and the Right to Education*. March 2021. The report is co-sponsored by peak international groups: the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) (in which the Marists are involved), the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), the World Organization of Former Students of Catholic Education (OMAEC), and the World Union of Catholic Teachers (UMEC-WUCT). Visit: www.globalcatholiceducation.org. For a longitudinal perspective, see the work of the Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project, led by the Faculty of Theology at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, and familiar to many Marist schools in Australia. For a comprehensive introduction to ECSIP see: Pollefeyt, D. and Bouwens, J. (2014) *Identity in Dialogue: Assessing and enhancing Catholic school identity. Research methodology and research results in Catholic schools in Victoria, Australia*. Berlin: LIT Verlag. For an accessible introduction to its origins and rationale, see Paul Sharkey (2013) 'Hermeneutics and the Mission of the Church, ECSIP as a case study', in D'Orsa, J. and D'Orsa, T. (2013) *D'Orsa, J and D'Orsa T. (2013) Leading for Mission, Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Education*. Mulgrave Vic: Vaughan Publishing.

⁶⁰ In contemporary Marist discourse this term is commonly used to capture what the founding Marists sought to do and how they intended to go about it. The French word 'projet' is not wholly synonymous with the English word 'project', even though that is how it is usually translated. 'Projet' in French is broader: it has a sense of a seminal idea and a way of proceeding to realise it.

⁶¹ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today*. Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools (1998) p.69

The founding Marists came to understand themselves as Pentecost people. They had the conviction – one that was not well received by the Curial officials in Rome at the time – that this required them to personify a new way of being church, ‘something new for our time’.⁶² New implies different. They saw themselves doing this everywhere, in ‘every diocese of the world’,⁶³ and most heartfully with people whose life circumstances and faith experience placed them on the margins of society or church, or both.

A guiding principle for Marist educators, therefore, is always to seek out where and how, and in whom, the Church can or needs to emerge, to revivify, and/or to come to birth – among young people, younger members of staff, and indeed older people whose past experience of church has been disheartening or disillusioning. In post-Revolutionary and post-Napoleonic France, the founding Marists had no lack of such people or places. These were found in the country areas where the great majority of the population lived, and among the materially poor in the cities and towns, again the numerical majority of the people in these urban settings. What these people had in common was a lack of a Christian education; this was the lens through which Marcellin saw them, and his response was shaped accordingly. He was drawn to the poorly educated and the poorly evangelised.

Where is the ‘emerging church’ of our time? What are its signs and markers? From Vatican II, we know that it is one that understands itself to be immersed in the world rather than fearful of it – the basis of *Gaudium et Spes*.⁶⁴ It is also one that, however falteringly, is becoming more inclusive and dialogical. And it is one that seeks to re-position itself as the ‘church of the apron’,⁶⁵ to learn again how to build a culture that is humble and which exemplifies service. Arguably, though, the single most defining growth-edge of the *église naissante* over the last sixty years, and perhaps the one that will impact on everything else it seeks to be and do, has been the emergence of the Church’s ‘preferential option for the poor’. It has similarly been a growth edge for Marists.

From where did this now familiar phrase spring? Its general context, of course, is the rich and growing corpus of the Church’s social teaching which was launched dramatically by Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 and championed by every Pope since, irrespective of where each may have positioned himself on other doctrinal, moral and liturgical matters. Specifically, though, the expression ‘preferential option for the poor’ comes to us from the extremes of wealth, power and opportunity in Latin America. The bishops of that continent famously adopted a phrase that was being championed by Pedro Arrupe SJ, the first Basque to lead the

⁶² This was a recurring theme for J-C Colin: ‘The Society must begin a new Church over again. I do not mean that in a literal sense; that would be blasphemy. But, still, in a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church’. Another way that Fr Colin described this was that the Marists were not trying to establish “*une autre Eglise*” but “*une Eglise autre*”. See Craig Larkin, *Mary in the Church. How Can the intuition of the first Marists be a source of vitality for us today?* Address to the General Chapters of the Marist Family. 12 September 2001, p.7

⁶³ Letter XX of Marcellin

⁶⁴ *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*. Vatican II.

⁶⁵ The expression is that of the late Bishop Antonio Bello. Don Tonino took the image of Jesus’ garment at the washing of the feet as the only ‘vestment’ worn by Jesus, advocating for a Church that serves, that looks up from below to those whose feet it is washing. This Franciscan, mystic, poet, Marian scholar, prophet and bishop is a model and inspiration favoured by Pope Francis. The image of the apron was also offered to Marists internationally by the Brothers’ former Superior General, Emili Turú FMS, as the logo for one of the three years in the lead-up to the 2017 bicentenary.

Jesuits since Ignatius himself, and one who was similarly given to a paradigm-shifting way of understanding God's mission. He was a close friend and confidante of the Marist Superior General at the time, the Mexican Brother Basilio Rueda.

The year was 1968 and the world seemed to have slipped its moorings: students on the streets of Paris and elsewhere across the world, part of a rising-up and rejection of old societal and ecclesial hegemonies; assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy in the USA, amid widespread unrest triggered by hot-button issues such as racial prejudice and the Vietnam War; rapid decolonisation in Africa and South East Asia; flower-power, hair, and hippies. Libraries have been filled with analysis of the latter half of this decade. And in Medellín, Colombia, the bishops of Latin America not only called out the elitism and marginalisation of people that marred that continent, but recognised the Church's deep complicity in both.

Medellín, with a second gathering in Puebla, Mexico, eleven years later, is widely regarded as a prophetic moment in the life of the whole Church. The ripples of 'liberation theology', 'basic Christian communities', and 'conscientisation' became tsunamis through the 1970s. Writers and thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Dom Helder Camara, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff were read and heard well beyond their own countries, and became staples of social discourse in secular and religious universities alike. Because power and wealth were under threat there was strong reaction. People were killed, their martyrdoms sparking international outrage: Oscar Romero, Jean Donovan, the Jesuit and Maryknoll martyrs of El Salvador; countless others. Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, arguably still the theologically most profound papal teaching on evangelisation, rooted the missionary essence of the Church in human liberation and personal witness, with a freshness and directness that perhaps was not to occur again until *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*, and *Tutti Fratelli*. They were momentous years for church and society.

These defining two decades after Vatican II were the ecclesial and social context in which the locus and focus of Marist ministry were being discerned. With whom should Marists be working? As for the Church generally, so also for the Marists: some fundamental questions were being asked and, with Mary, they were sometimes discomfited by the answers. As for the broader Church, it was in Latin America that this played out most dramatically for the Marists, and perhaps prophetically. It is a fascinating story of significant gatherings in places of which many Australian readers of these pages may not have heard, let alone visited – Chosica, Peru in 1984 ('our Medellín' as one Marist described it); Cali, Colombia in 1987; and Veranópolis, Brazil, in 1989. The sometimes-fraught deliberations during the Brothers' long General Chapters of 1976 and 1985 are compelling, and mirrored in Provincial Chapters all over the Marist world, before answers really crystallised without divisiveness in the General Chapter of 1993, the Chapter that called Marists to serve 'the Montagnes of today', established an international office for 'solidarity', and commissioned the writing of a new text on Marist education. This text became *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, and was formally adopted at the next Chapter of 2001. It had been a journey of more than a quarter of a century.⁶⁶ It provided some discerned answers to questions around who should be the focus of Marist education, and why.

⁶⁶ For a detailed account of these developments and associated references to documents, see *Dawn's Uncertain Light, History of the Institute Vol.3 1985-2015*, pp.103-130; 153-55

Part of the dynamic of the 1993 General Chapter (as it had been at the meeting of Provincials at Veranópolis four years previously) was a 'pilgrimage of solidarity' where all delegates were asked to spend some significant time immersed in the situation of a Marist ministry in another country which was focussed principally on the poor. Brother Charles Howard, the then Superior General, believed that this experience would lead to a more genuinely evangelical discernment, for they would be evangelised by the face of Jesus they met in the poor. Indeed, the experience was to 'leave its mark on each of us, on our attitudes, our judgements, our heart.'⁶⁷ In their communiqué with the Marist world after the Chapter, the Brothers (and the several Marist lay people who had joined them for the first time) said that they had heard ...

- *The cry of pain from so many poor people all over the world, who are simply swept aside and left by the side of the road.*
- *The cry of distress from all those young people who are out of work and whose talents are considered to be of no account.*
- *The cry which rises from the silence of all those who are rejected, all those who have no voice, no freedom, all those who are desperately lonely.*
- *The cry of despair from so many young people who are trying to make sense out of their life and who are seeking happiness in illusory paradises.⁶⁸*

In particular, it was children who moved them:

- *The cry of the street children, abandoned and condemned to a subhuman existence.*
 - *The cry of the children who are the unjust victims of hunger and war.*
 - *The cry of the children who are discouraged by their failure in school.*
 - *The cry of the children of divorced parents and broken homes.*
 - *The cry of children who are abused or who sell their bodies.⁶⁹*
- Behind their suffering faces hides the face of Jesus. Behind all their cries echoes the cry of Jesus from the cross.*

But they also heard 'cries of hope':

- *from all those who dedicate themselves to promoting human rights,*
- *from all those who build peace,*
- *from all those who push back the tide of misery,*
- *from all those who share in the mission of education,*
- *from all those involved in the struggle for respect for life,*
- *from all those involved in the effort to safeguard all of creation.*
- *from all those who announce the Good News.*

The Chapter then made practical commitments for how to take the Marist educational project forward in the context of the close of the twentieth century, mandating that in every Marist administrative region there be, for example, new projects to serve marginalised young people, that in every Marist school in the world there be a new initiative taken as a 'project

⁶⁷ *Message of the XIX General Chapter of the Marist Brothers*, November 1993. #13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* #5

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* #6

for the poor', that regions collaborate to look at how the most marginalised could be served – those who were illiterate, street children, young people who were victims of drugs and violence.

For the perspective of almost three decades later, the Brothers' General Chapter of 1993 was something of a watershed, for two reasons. It brought one phase of Marist history to a conclusion, and it launched another that was new. First, it defined decisively and unequivocally, after a period of lengthy discernment and debate, the guiding rationale of Marist education, for Marist educators. The document *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* which emerged several years later, confirmed the settling of issues that had been percolating for some time. Any significant Marist event or publication since – for example the rich *Messages* of the two International Marist Mission Assemblies in Mendes in 2007 and Nairobi in 2014 – have really only used different words to reframe the same essential priorities and values. Second, the Chapter launched a new era for who the Marists were, one that was broader in its embrace and more creative in their conceptualising for who they could be. No longer would the Marists be a Brothers-only or even a Brothers-primarily community of the Church.

Let us look at how the 'for whom' question was addressed twenty-five years ago by our then-new reference text for Marist education, and see how comfortably the words still sit with us as Marist educators today.

First, it places us with young people: 'Among the young, especially the most neglected.' Not *exclusively* the most neglected, but with an *especial* focus on them. The essential point is that we seek to redress both non-inclusivity and inequity wherever we find it. We know that it is some of the apparently richest of socio-economic contexts that this can occur. We have a passion to include and empower all young people, because they have the right to both, something that a Christian education can give them. This is the subject of Chapter 3 of the text.

Marcellin Champagnat lived among children and young people, loved them with passion, and devoted all his energies for them. As his disciples, we also experience a special joy in sharing our time and our persons with them, we resonate with their aspirations, we are filled with compassion for them and we reach out to them all in their difficulties.

In the same way that Marcellin was thinking especially of the least favoured of young people in founding the Marist Brothers, our preference is to be with those who are excluded from the mainstream of society, and those whose material poverty leads them to be deprived also in relation to health, family life, schooling, and education in values.

We recognise in this love for all young people, and especially for the poor, the essential identifying marks of our Marist mission.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, ##53-55.

The book goes further to explore who these ‘most neglected’ can be, and the underlying structural causes of their marginalisation:

Further, fidelity to our charism requires us to be constantly alert to the evolving social and cultural forces that have a profound influence on the self-perception of young people, and on their spiritual, emotional, social and physical well-being.

Our world today is confronted by new challenges: global interdependence, living in pluralist societies, secularisation, and the advent of new technologies. Such developments set new horizons and, despite their ambiguities, create new possibilities.

Some trends pose threats for the healthy growth of the young, such as the rapid pace of change, a culture of individualism and consumerism, insecurity in family and work prospects. In some situations, there is not enough change taking place: the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow in a world dominated by the vested interests of the powerful; our world is still scarred by wars. Gross inadequacy of living conditions and educational opportunities, as well as the experience of personal violence, abandonment, exploitation, and discrimination of all kinds, continue to be the daily reality for many.⁷¹

We don’t do this, however, for dispassionate or purely philosophical reasons – but because we personally know these young people; we act from our heart. Faithful to Marcellin’s starting point, we act out of love. Like Marcellin we are *afflicted* by

... the harsh reality of the lives of so many of these children and youth moves us personally, and as a group, to grow spiritually and to respond in more daring and more decisive ways in fidelity to the Gospel and to our charism.

... Through our ordinary contacts with individual young people, we come to appreciate their idealism and their need to be part of groups that energise them and give them a sense of identity. We know how, at their best, they are joyful, enthusiastic, and frank, how they are willing to trust, how they want to take part, and express their sense of freedom.

We feel their keen sense of justice, their desire for a more caring world, and their hunger for the spiritual. We hear their personal cries for acceptance and intimacy, for a quality education, for hope and authenticity, for meaning and purpose. We sense their eyes on us, examining our credibility as adult role models.

Often, however, we find young people who are discouraged, disoriented, or for whom life is a daily struggle. We see them dealing with learning difficulties, personal disabilities, lack of acceptance from peers. We meet many who are unchurched, ignorant of Jesus Christ, or indifferent to him and his message. We witness the inner turmoil of those who are victims of poverty, family disintegration, abuse, and social

⁷¹ *Ibid.* ##56-58

upheavals. In their confusion, they can be disruptive and angry, and even indulge in self-destructive behaviour.

To all in our care we are present with Marcellin's spirit of practical compassion. We listen with our hearts to his words, "Take particular care of the poor children, the most ignorant and the dullest; show such children a lot of kindness; ask them often how they are, and make it clear on all occasions that you esteem them and love them all the more for the fact that fortune has not smiled on them nor has nature favoured them."⁷²

These paragraphs from *In the Footsteps* reveal the broad embrace of Marist education. Sometimes, Marist educators read official Marist documents such as this and publications and they find themselves wondering, 'Where do I fit into all this rhetoric?' They ask this because they look at themselves in their mainstream Marist school, with their regular class-timetable and duty roster, faithfully and compassionately going about their teaching, their coaching, their administering, and everything else they step up to do. Their days are devoted to the young people in their classes, their pastoral groups, their teams, their boarding house, their tutorials, or their youth groups. Yet they don't find their photographs in international Marist journals publicising some new initiative for kids on the edge; they don't read stories about what they are doing day-in/day-out, year-in/year-out. That's a great pity, because they are undoubtedly wonderful Marists. They are educating.

They are educating young people not to greed and personal gain, nor to self-righteousness and entitlement, but to become critically aware and compassionately engaged, with sense of justice and moral imperative, with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will lead them to be 'good citizens'. And through the witness of their lives – their joy in daily living, their generosity and compassion, their kindness and patience, their understanding and fairness, their resilience and fidelity – these marist educators are evangelising. They will be alert, of course, to the students who need more care and attention, more assistance with their learning, more affirmation and self-belief, more security. They will be seeking out the ones on the peripheries, and they will be trying to redress the lack of confidence or skills or, most especially, love that have put them there.⁷³ They never confuse the person with the deed, because they believe in the essential goodness of them all. All can be 'good Christians'.

Ultimately, Marist educators will be Matthew 25 people for their time and place:

In opening our eyes and hearts to the depths of suffering of young people, we begin to share God's compassion for the world. Our faith enables us to see the face of Jesus in those who are suffering - we take some personal action to help; further, we experience indignation and outrage at the structures that create or condition poverty - we begin to address causes rather than symptoms.

We are humbled before the determination and capacity of the poor to help themselves - we hear the voice of God and see the hands of God and God's power in their struggles; we can become disillusioned with our own poverty and the human weakness of the poor until we learn real solidarity - together, no longer "us" and "them", we recognise

⁷² *Ibid.* ##64; 60-63

⁷³ Cf. *Ibid.* #68

the cause of the poor as God's cause, and that there are parts of all of us and our situations that only God can heal.

*We embark on the transformation, where necessary, of our existing institutional structures and other ministries to reach out more effectively to young people who are truly vulnerable or marginalised because of family or social circumstances.*⁷⁴

This is powerful theology: existential; mission-oriented; liberational; Christocentric. It is to be part of *missio Dei*, sharing in the life of the God-who-is-mission. It is also a theology that some interest-groups in 'Catholicism' would condemn. The famous quip of Dom Helder Camara is apposite: 'When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint; when I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.'

What makes the Marist approach not communist is that it is both sourced in Jesus and directed towards Jesus. The Gospel is the point of origin and the destination of a genuinely Marist education – as it was for Mary. A measure of the evangelical integrity of any ecclesial community will be the degree to which its members can say this about themselves. The Marists taking part in the first International Marist Mission Assembly in 2007 did exactly that:

We heard the strong voice of Jesus revealing himself to us at the centre of our mission: listen to your heart; listen to the voice within. This is the centre; this is Jesus.

Jesus is in the heart of each individual who feels the call and responds. We find him among us in our communities. Filled with his love we have a burning desire that unites us with a passion to serve and proclaim the Kingdom. We have all heard this call to holiness. Just as St Marcellin responded to this call, we too follow Christ as Mary did. We have been captured by the powerful image of Mary bringing Jesus to life, calling us also to bring Jesus to life with motherly tenderness.

Within us are the eyes and ears, the feet and hands, the heart of Jesus. We see him in the eyes of children, in the faces of the young people we are caring for in our educational and social works and we hear his voice in the cry of those whom we are yet to meet (Mt 25: 34-40).

This encounter with Christ-in-the-other is deep in Marist spirituality. One of the richest metaphors for Jesus and for God's mission in Jesus is one that comes from the so-called 'French school of spirituality': that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A young Marist leader whose poor health permitted him only four short years as the Brothers' Superior General in the 1880s, Brother Nestor Granier, wrote what is now a little-known Circular on the place of the Sacred Heart in Marist spirituality and mission.⁷⁵ It is a rich exploration of the spirituality of the heart that is characteristic of many of the traditions of Christian spirituality that developed from France, and especially of Marist spirituality. For Brother Nestor, encounter with God and others takes place in the heart; indeed, they are two dimensions of the same reality:

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* ##65-67

⁷⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General, Vol. 6 (1878-1882)*, Circular on Devotion to the Sacred Heart (12 July 1881).

To be devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus does not mean to be in the habit of going to seek God on God's own, but of seeking God's reflection in people. And where is a person most striking and most loving but in the human heart? Is it not to meet God in a heart similar to ours, a brother of ours, who, except for sin, experienced all that we experience? The knowledge we have of our own hearts allows us to meet God like reading an open book. ⁷⁶

To be a Marist, according to Brother Nestor, is to come to know others 'in Christ'. It is very Pauline.

So, which 'church' do Marists serve? A missionary church; a church that reaches out to the existential peripheries, to the places and young people whose life circumstances have not allowed the 'light of the Gospel' to ignite. This where they encounter the young people they are called to serve. At the second International Marist Mission Assembly seven years after Mendes, the self-described 'new Marists in mission' aligned themselves with the emerging Church, with *l'Eglise naissante*, that Pope Francis wanted:

In communion with our local Churches and the universal Church, the words of Pope Francis resonated in our hearts in a special way during the Assembly: 'Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to move out from our own comfort zones in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel' (Evangelii Gaudium 20). 'I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advance along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission'. (EG 25).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.335

Chapter Two

Marist education: why?

In a healthy school, *purpose* and *identity* are strong correlates of each other, and the school is well served when each has both saliency and consistency among the members of its community. It becomes problematic, even dangerous, when one or the other is confused or weak, more especially purpose. Strength in identity without clarity of purpose risks diminishing the school community to insularity, self-referentiality, or even cultism. All hat, no cowboy. Or, as St Paul might have wanted to put it, no more than an empty gong clanging. Religious schools and movements are not exempt from such risk. Indeed, they may be more prone to it.

This can be the dark underside of so-called ‘charism’ or ‘spiritual families’ discourse.

Schools are intensely relational places. Collective identity can be equally intense in them, sometimes bordering on tribal. Especially when young people are involved, the desire to belong can feed the fuelling of a super-glued group identity. The wearing of uniforms and badges, and barracking at sports events, are easily observable manifestations of this, but often the markers of inclusion or acceptability operate even more potently in less tangible ways. Without necessarily being told explicitly, people soon perceive what really cuts the mustard, what they need to be or do to ‘be cool’ in the eyes of student or staff peers. And from the time they are in kindergarten, people learn the importance of peer-determined coolness.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with such relationally bonded identity or shared values; indeed, they can be wholesome expressions of human community. A family to which to belong. It can be a way forming *ekklesia*, and it is the hope of the Church that each Catholic school community can be a local expression of being church.⁷⁷ On the other hand, strong collective identity may go another way. At its worst, it can degenerate to a *Lord-of-the-Flies* pathology or, at least, begin to head in that direction. People who have experienced schools as cruel or fearful places – as indeed did Marcellin himself – have often found themselves in such environments.

When ‘organisational culture’ became a thing some forty years ago, the initial emphases of research and commentary concerning its nature and influence often focussed on ‘how we do things around here’. The organisations that had built up cohesive cultures, ones with widespread buy-in among employees for desired custom and practice, were judged to be those topping the ladders of so-called ‘effective’ or ‘excellent’ companies. Firms such as Apple or McDonalds built global empires on the back of doing this well. Purpose did not have to be identified because it was tacit and always the same: to make more money; to maximise the bottom line. Really, if they were honest, everything was geared to that end. Identity – at least, the ‘how we do things’ part of it – was the basket into which the eggs went.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education (2008) *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission of Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. ##16-17.

⁷⁸ The issues around purpose and identity, and their relationship with organisational culture of Catholic schools are developed in detail – along with references to the literature of these fields – in the author’s book (2018)

Schools are different. Catholic schools even more so. Or should be.

For them, the so-called bottom line is not a commercial thing. They need to be financially viable to do what they do, of course, but achieving a maximal surplus is not their purpose. They want to attract enrolments to influence as many students as possible, but increasing market share is not an end in itself. They are advantaged by expansion of their resources and facilities, but pursuing the latest and greatest in capital development is not their mission. They certainly need a comprehensive and well implemented suite of policies and robust, accountable governance arrangements, but again their fundamental purpose is not found in having those in place. They are all means to an end. Admittedly, means and ends can and should overlap, with the former serving the latter. But being big on means and weak on ends can have an insidious effect on mission effectiveness.

The answer to the 'why' question for Catholic schools is always the same: the realisation, in time and place, in people individually and communally, of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to share in *missio Dei*. We Marists, drawing on Pauline imagery,⁷⁹ like to put in terms of 'bringing Christlife to birth'. Contemporary missiology often emphasises God-as-mission, that 'mission' being love, which Divine revelation has showed us to be the inner life of God. *Deus caritas est*.

Unquestionably, there has been considerable benefit for the education sector over the past four decades in its appropriation of the conceptualisations and methodologies of the organisational culture discourse, and the organisational effectiveness and the excellence movements that were its offshoots. Vision and mission statements, periodic reviews and school renewal processes, agile strategic planning, data-driven and evidenced-based reforms, continuing professional learning, post-grad courses in leadership and management, and an array of approaches and matrices for school enhancement, these have all served schools and their governing bodies well. They continue to do so. When integrated with the rich and evolving rhetoric of ecclesial authorities and individual spiritual families regarding the purposes of Catholic schools that has developed over the same time period, schools have been able to shape and propel their ways of sharing in God's mission with more sharpness than ever.

Why, then, are there rumblings about 'mission drift' or 'mission softening' in Catholic schools and universities? Why did the so-called 'Catholic identity' of institutions become such a concern in the first two decades of this century? To what degree is it because teachers, parents and even governing bodies have grown faint in their evangelising heartbeat?

While there are hopeful and encouraging exceptions to such a generalisation, the evidence shows clearly that there is significant change afoot in how people are understanding the intentionality of Catholic educational institutions, especially schools. There is growing disparity of thinking on why they exist, and the ends they are serving. It is a liminal time. The

Now With Enthusiasm. Charism, God's Mission and Catholic Schools Today. Melbourne: Garratt Publishing. See especially: pp.6-16; 121-138

⁷⁹ Especially Galatians, which is something of a signature Epistle for Marist spirituality – something evident from Brother François's 'Circular on the Spirit of Faith' (1848-52).

longitudinal research that has been undertaken in a number of Australian dioceses as part of the *Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project*,⁸⁰ for example, has revealed what ECSIP calls ‘secularising, pluralising and de-traditionalising’ trends not only in society generally but, critically, among those who comprise Catholic school communities, including those in leadership and governance of them, and parents and teachers. People are looking to Catholic schools for different things; they teach in them and send their children to them for a range of reasons. The ECSIP research has identified what it calls significant ‘alterity’ – a disconnect between the formal rhetoric of Catholic education and what people are really seeking. Although ECSIP suggests that it is exploring ‘identity’, its focus is arguably more on purpose: why do we have Catholic schools? What do they think they are doing? Why do people establish them, fund them, send their children to them, and teach in them?

It is interesting, in this context, to do a simple textual analysis of *200 Years Young*, the Pastoral Letter of the Australian Bishops published in 2021 for the bicentenary of Catholic education in this country.⁸¹ ‘Evangelisation’ gets just two passing mentions in the document, one of them in the context of ‘new evangelisation’ – a term purloined, in the time of Pope John Paul II, from its origins in Latin American church where it meant something quite different from how it came to be used in the pontificates of John Paul and Benedict. The document also names ‘pre-evangelisation’ as an important imperative for the future. ‘Jesus’ is mentioned only twice, in the conclusion, and one of those only quoting what he is recorded as saying in the Gospel of Matthew. Most of the column-centimetres are devoted to statistics, historical growth, the current footprint of the sector, achievement and market-share; comments are made about the importance of quality education and the contribution of Catholic schools to society. All good but, at least visually, the one-and-a-half columns on the last page that address ‘Catholic identity and life’ present as something of a postscript. Back in the 1870s and 1880s, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Australian Bishops took decisive steps to establish and secure a Catholic education sector, their reasons for doing so were arguably clearer and more compellingly stated. While societal and ecclesial contexts have changed, this new Pastoral Letter at the start of Catholic education’s third century in Australia seems to lack the same urgency and sense of purpose. Does it reflect a dominance of identity over purpose in the energies around Catholic education in Australia?

What about Marist schools in this unfolding context or, as Pope Francis suggests, this ‘change of era.’⁸² What does our own track record look like on the identity vis-à-vis purpose question? Let us look at the Australian experience, as an example. When a new reference text for Marist education was published in 1997 – *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for the Marist Education Today* – it was taken up with heartening enthusiasm across the country, as elsewhere in the Marist world. Like its predecessor texts – notably *Le Guide des Écoles* (1853)

⁸⁰ For further consideration of the ways in which ECSIP is revealing the trends in how people understand the identity and purpose of Catholic schools in Australia and elsewhere, and a range of commentary on this, see Green, M.C. (2018) *Now with Enthusiasm. Charism, God’s Mission and Catholic Schools Today*. Melbourne: Garrett Publishing, pp.7-8; 13; 49-51; 77; 123; 129-30

⁸¹ Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. *200 Years Young, A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Australia to the leaders, staff, students and families of Catholic education in Australia*. ACBC, 2021.

⁸² In his address to the decennial conference of the Italian Church (at Santa Maria del Fiore church in Florence in 2015), Pope Francis proposed that we are living through not an ‘era of change’ but a ‘change of era’. See: [Visita Pastorale - Firenze: Incontro con i rappresentanti del Convegno nazionale della Chiesa Italiana \(Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore, 10 novembre 2015\) | Francesco \(vatican.va\)](#)

which was thoroughly revised and expanded in 1920 and published in English in 1931 as *The Teacher's Guide*⁸³ – the 1998 manual gave considerable attention to the purpose of Marist education. Indeed Chapter 4 of *In the Footsteps*, which explores this, is one of the longest and richest sections of the book. It defines both the essence and the principal approaches of Marist education with some sharpness. In the structure of the book, it enjoys some precedence. Yet, we have not given that chapter anything like the attention or emphasis that we have accorded the following chapter that describes five characteristic ways in which this purpose is pursued. We went for the how, and largely skipped over the why. This was not, and is not, healthy. Identity ahead of purpose. How ahead of why. Mmmm? What might that say about us?

So, let us redress this with a revisiting of some of Chapter 4.

'We Are Sowers of Good News' is the chapter's title. The phrase comes directly from Marcellin himself. In naming eleven constituent elements of what it means to be a Marist, Marcellin proposed that every Marist is a 'sower of the Gospel'. He went on:

*Notice that I said sower, not harvester ... The season for harvesting crops is not the one when you cultivate the ground to make it fit to produce them. The seed doesn't spring up the minute you drop it into the furrow. For a while, it almost seems lost; but bad weather and even all the rigours of winter do not destroy it. Even while you are complaining, the seed is sprouting in the hearts of your children, and it will appear on the surface in its own time.*⁸⁴

From the Founder, the purpose of the Marist school is clear: Marists are evangelisers, and they evangelise through education:

*The core of Marcellin Champagnat's vision of mission was **to make Jesus Christ known and loved**. His saw education as the way to lead young people to the experience of personal faith and of their vocation as 'good Christians and good citizens'.⁸⁵ As his followers, we assume this same mission ...⁸⁶*

The Founder's deep conviction was that no young person should be denied this. Again from Marcellin:

⁸³ The 1931 text is, indeed, quite different from the original of 1853. The structure, content and scope of the former book vary significantly from the latter which had been written for French primary schools in mid-nineteenth century France. The English-language book is also not the same as the French one. Those differences notwithstanding, the themes and emphases among the various editions are consistent and unchanged.

⁸⁴ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*. Ch.1

⁸⁵ While 'virtuous' is the word used by Br Jean-Baptiste and in the text of *In the Footsteps* which quotes Jean-Baptiste's biography of Marcellin, 'good' was the word used by Marcellin himself. Therefore this is an amended quotation from *In the Footsteps*. The significance of using 'good' in relation to 'citizen, and the importance of staying with Marcellin's original expression has been discussed above.

⁸⁶ *In the Footsteps*, ##69-70

*'To make Jesus Christ known,' he repeated incessantly, 'to make him loved, that is ... the whole purpose of the Institute. If we were to fail in this purpose, our Institute would be useless and God would withdraw his protection from it.'*⁸⁷

We are reminded of St Paul's 'Woe betide me if I do not preach the gospel!'⁸⁸

But the phrase 'preaching the gospel' may need some nuancing. It did for Marcellin. In his 'preaching', if we can use that word as a coverall for his ministry of evangelisation, he was no hell-threatening soap-box evangelist. In his time, while there was great concern about the state of the Church, the insidious impact of the media of the day, and the drift of people away from traditional practice of their faith, he did not preach self-righteously from the pulpit, nor allow his Brothers to fear-monger in the classroom. If he were here today, it is unlikely he would have sought employment at EWTN. Like his fellow Marists he consciously eschewed the approaches of those in the Church who wanted to use rigorism or imposition to get people back to the confessionals and the altar rails. Marcellin was committed to a central tenet of Society of Mary's founding: that the 'spirit of faith' as they called it, or 'Christlife' as we might call it, needed to be loved into life. This was 'Mary's work', as they like to describe it. Father Jean-Claude Colin counselled his inland missionary Marist priests with these words:

*Let us learn to understand the human heart. Let us put ourselves in the place of those to whom we are speaking. Would outbursts of invective win our hearts? Let us, on the contrary, find excuses for them, congratulate them on their good qualities (there are always some), but no reproaches. I do not know of a single instance where invective from the pulpit has done any good, not a single one ...*⁸⁹

For Marcellin, the influence of *personal witness* and the dynamic of *interpersonal relationship* were the key means in education for nurturing Christlife in the young. He described this as 'being a living Gospel'⁹⁰ calling for an approach that was gentle, respectful, and ultimately loving. It is resonant with what Paul VI was to write more than a century later in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁹¹

It is also resonant, of course, with what Marcellin would have read in his favourite Gospel – that of John. As we have seen elsewhere, Marcellin was so immersed in the Johannine scriptures that in his talks and letters he blurred his own words and imagery indistinguishably with those of John. In the fourth Gospel, Jesus's purpose is to bring life, life in abundance. He engages people by meeting them in the context of their daily lives, in their struggling and questioning. Rarely do we find him in the Temple. It is, rather, in the midst of people's ordinariness, and through respectful and liberating dialogue with them, that he offers them a transforming new perspective for their lives. He brings them wholeness of life at the core of their life; he is the Bread of their life. His approach is one of interpersonal encounter: with Nicodemus; the Samaritan woman at the well; the cripple at Bethesda; the woman caught in

⁸⁷ Br Jean-Baptiste, *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, p.330

⁸⁸ 1 Cor 9:16b

⁸⁹ From the *Mayet Memoirs*, quoted by Craig Larkin SM in *A Certain Way, An exploration of Marist spirituality*. p.50

⁹⁰ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*. Ch.1.

⁹¹ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #67. *In the Footsteps*, #94

adultery; the man born blind; Mary, Lazarus and Martha. He brings them to know the God who dwells within, and who seeks to be at home in them. And he then commissions them – all who have come to this awakening – to ‘go and tell the others’, to ‘bear fruit’.

Chapter 4 of *In the Footsteps* is shaped by the same intuitions and purposes. The Marist emphases in evangelising are inherently Johannine. Marist educators start with meeting the young as they are and where they are:

First, we help young people, whatever their faith tradition and wherever they are in their spiritual search, to grow to become people of hope and personal integrity, with a deep sense of social responsibility to transform the world around them. This work of promoting human growth is integral to the process of evangelisation. In promoting Gospel values, all Marist educators contribute to the mission of every Marist project to build God’s reign on earth.⁹²

Then, as in the fourth Gospel, Marists ‘go further’⁹³:

We present Jesus to the young as a real person whom they can come to know, love and follow. In Jesus, we see God. He comes among us so that we may ‘have life and have it to the full’. He unveils for us what it is to be fully human. His words and actions address our deepest longings. He provides healing and hope ...⁹⁴

The text develops what this looks like in practice: evangelisation through education. Like Jesus ‘we welcome young people and listen to them [because each] is worthy of our respect and love, no matter what his or her circumstances, religious belief, or personal need of conversion.’⁹⁵ So, we are

- *respectful of their consciences and stages of understanding,*
- *passionately immersed in their concerns,*
- *walking alongside them as their brothers and sisters,*
- *gradually unfolding for them the richness and relevance of Jesus’ transforming vision of the human person and of the world.⁹⁶*

It is a ‘holistic education’ that is informed by a Christian anthropology⁹⁷:

- *to develop their self-esteem and inner capacity to give direction to their lives.*
- *to provide an education of body, mind and heart, appropriate to the age, personal talents and needs of each one and to the social context.*
- *to encourage them to care for others and for God’s creation.*

⁹² *In the Footsteps*, #70

⁹³ *Ibid*, #71

⁹⁴ *Ibid*. ##71-72

⁹⁵ *Ibid*. #79

⁹⁶ *Ibid*. #78. The scriptural allusion here is to the post-Resurrection walk to Emmaus (24:13-37)

⁹⁷ *Ibid*. #76

- to educate them to be agents of social change, for greater justice towards all citizens in their own society, and for more awareness of the interdependence of nations.
- to nurture their faith and commitment as disciples of Jesus and apostles to other youth.
- to awaken their critical consciousness and assist them to make choices based on Gospel values.⁹⁸

Drawing on a range of Church documents,⁹⁹ and Marist texts,¹⁰⁰ *In the Footsteps* makes clear that Marist educators ...

- give personal and community witness of our joy, our hope and our Christian living
- engage young people in a dialogue of life which brings them into touch with the Word of God and the Spirit at work in their hearts
- share in the mission of the Church to evangelise cultures
- educate in and for solidarity
- share our faith
- assist in providing sacramental initiation for those who ask
- work to build up local Christian communities, specifically to make them welcoming to young people
- we foster ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue¹⁰¹

For those students who are Christian, Marist educators

*... lead them to deepen their encounter with Jesus Christ. We share how he is the ultimate source of new life, new hope, and new energy for us personally and for all humankind. We encourage their growth as disciples of Jesus in their experience of joy, peace of spirit, and overcoming of fear.*¹⁰²

In other language, in another context and century, early Marist documents and other writings of the first Superiors, are replete with similar emphases. Purpose is clear; purpose is paramount. And that purpose is essentially evangelical. For example, Brother François wrote:

*To raise a child ... is to raise their heart, their emotions, their character, their thoughts, their whole soul, their whole being ... With such an education, we assure the happiness and prosperity of the State, peace and unity in the family, and the practice and spread of religion.*¹⁰³

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* #77

⁹⁹ This chapter of the book has references to: *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *Christifideles Laici*, *Vita Consecrata*, *Ut Unum Sint*, *The Religious Dimension of the Catholic School*, *Lay Catholics in Schools*, *Domimum et Vivificantem*, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, and several address of Pope John Paul II

¹⁰⁰ References are made to the *Guide des Écoles*, *Avis Leçons*, *Sentences*, the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, the *Constitutions*, and several early Marist memoirs.

¹⁰¹ *In the Footsteps*, Ch.4 *passim*

¹⁰² *Ibid.* #83

¹⁰³ Brother François, Notebook 309, p.47

The Brothers' schools are established to give knowledge of Jesus Christ and his religion, to renew the country, to ensure that the faith is not turned off among them and to keep the practice of religion which alone can procure happiness in this world and the next ...

*The Brothers are teachers so that they can be apostles.*¹⁰⁴

From Brother Jean-Baptiste:

*To teach children is to bring them know Jesus Christ above all, and to form them in good and religious habits ... To give them an education is to form them in Christian and social virtues, to give them the love and habit of order, economy, propriety, civility, etc; to give them the taste and habit of work, and to neglect nothing in giving them solid civil instruction, appropriate to their age, their skill, their condition, their present or future needs, and the spirit of the country.*¹⁰⁵

Evangelisation is not presented here as some kind of *spiritual* pursuit that is somehow disconnected from the *secular* or day-to-day lives of people. That is a false dichotomy that would not have occurred to Marcellin. For him, the forming of 'good Christians' and 'good citizens' was not a dual goal, but two dimensions of a single goal: to bring young people to wholeness of life. The project of the Marist school emerged generally from the *Petit Ecole* movement in France, and specifically from the seventeenth century initiatives of Charles Démia in the Diocese of Lyon and across the country from work of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers), as was discussed in a previous chapter. While clear spiritual purposes, and indeed eschatological concerns, drove these movements, and the Marist school was to develop some differences in style and emphasis from its antecedents (arguably more in line with the egalitarian spirit of the times), they all shared this basic intuition of evangelisation in and through a holistic and integrated education.¹⁰⁶ A good education was an evangelical endeavour in itself, as much as feeding the hungry, healing the sick, setting the prisoner free.

Such thinking led both the early Brothers and the authors of *In the Footsteps* to see Marist education in terms of the evangelisation and education of individual students, but to frame it more broadly in its societal and cultural benefits. This breadth finds echoes in our present time in the recurrent calls of Pope Francis concerning the role of schools and the potential contribution of education. Examples from the Holy Father are manifold, but perhaps best crystallised in his initiative in 2020, through the Congregation for Catholic Education and in collaboration with UNESCO and other bodies, to launch the 'Global Compact on Education'.¹⁰⁷ His emphases on themes such human community, ecological responsibility, and inter-cultural

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.69

¹⁰⁵ Brother Jean-Baptiste, Notebook 3, p.157

¹⁰⁶ This thinking has implications for the 'what' of Marist education, a subject to be taken up in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁷ For a comprehensive summary of the teachings of Pope Francis on education, see the *instrumentum laboris* for this initiative, drafted in 2019. www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/instrumentum-laboris-en.pdf. For further information on the Global Compact, see: www.globalcatholiceducation.org/global-compact-on-education

dialogue, elucidated in signature documents such as *Tutti Fratelli* and *Laudato Si'*, are given particular focus in this project. It is one that should resonate readily with Marist educators.

Yet, let us not lose sight of the phrase from *In the Footsteps*, 'we go further'. Jesus went further. With the Samaritan woman, for example, he did not stop with revealing her true self to her – 'He told me everything I have ever done' – and of transforming her understanding of her world; he revealed himself to her, and he quenched her spiritual thirst with 'living water'.¹⁰⁸

The most distinctive feature of any Marist school is not its Marist style or livery, not its *identity* per se, but the priority and effort it consciously invests in evangelisation, and the expertise with which its teachers undertake that with the young people of today. Impelled by this purpose, identity follows. It is interesting to see just how keenly the founding Marist generation, people such as Marcellin, François or Jean-Baptiste, expressed this purpose in the early days. For example, this from a letter of Marcellin to a young Brother who seemed to be discouraged and struggling in the classroom. After offering some words of encouragement, Marcellin reminds him of what he is doing and why:

*It is up to you to open heaven to the children you teach, or to close it to them.*¹⁰⁹

That's not pulling any punches! Then, in the next sentence Marcellin tells him how he needs to do that:

*Aim to edify them ... aim to imprint the love of God in their young hearts.*¹¹⁰

Personal witness and inter-personal relationship, from heart to heart.

The ways to give effect to this work of evangelisation will ever be challenging, and always evolving. Evangelists need to be agile. St Paul would have suggested this was 'being all things for all people'.¹¹¹ Today's questions need answering, not yesterday's. In search of a stable metaphor to guide us as Marists, nevertheless, let us go back to our beginnings and, in the words of T.S Eliot, 'know the place for the first time'. Or, in the words of the ECSI Project, 'recontextualise' what are about. The germ of the Marist project took root in Le Puy-en-Velay, before a statue of the Black Madonna in the sanctuary of the basilica there. It did so in a young man's response to an act of healing: the restoration of his full eyesight. Le Puy was the Lourdes of its day, a place to which people who were in need of healing came. Instead of the waters of Lourdes they used the oil of the lamps in the sanctuary. To the left of the sanctuary is the famed 'healing stone' – likely to be a vestige of the ancient Roman temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, which had stood on the site. People had been making pilgrimage to Le Puy for millennia, even as far back as the Druids. This was a healing place. To this day, pilgrims to Le Puy lie down on the healing stone, seeking to be healed. Let's leave aside any scepticism about superstition or religious mumbo-jumbo, and stay with that simple fact: the genesis of our Marist project was in a place dedicated to healing, to bringing people to wholeness of life. It

¹⁰⁸ See John 4:1-42

¹⁰⁹ Letter of Marcellin to Brother Euthyme (Letter 102), 19 March 1837.

¹¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹¹ I Cor 9:22

did not take place in the vicissitudes of ideological battle about church or state, nor in arguments about doctrine or morality, or even education.

And it happened in a Marian place: the Cathedral of the Annunciation, a shrine that celebrates the moment of the Incarnation, the very moment of Christlife taking flesh. In response to that experience in Le Puy came what Marcellin and his co-founders of the Marists were soon to call 'Mary's work', this bringing of Christlife to birth. Like Mary, Marists cooperate with the Spirit in germinating and nurturing life – Christlife – both in themselves and in those whom they served. *In the Footsteps* reminds us that we Marists share in *missio Dei* in this quintessentially Marian way, as John puts it: 'to bring life, life in all its fullness.'¹¹²

Marcellin's purpose, and the purpose of Marist education since, can be sourced most succinctly in this verse at the centre of the fourth Gospel. Marist educators are alert for whatever in themselves and in their students may be in need of healing, of bringing to wholeness, and of keeping them from coming to know love and to know God. 'To love God, and to make God known and loved, that is what it means to be a Brother,' Marcellin often said.¹¹³ Today that simple definition of the Marist *raison d'être* is taken up by a broad embrace of Marist women and men. Their approach is to love this into life.

From the time of the Founder, this was not some ethereal theological aspiration; it was pursued in ever so practical ways, as a document such as the *Guide des Écoles* attests. This first reference text for Marist educators, published in 1853 after having emerged organically from their lived experience of several decades, was a manual for realising John 10:10 in French primary schools of the mid-nineteenth century. It carries details of curriculum, timetables, the design of learning spaces, and especially the care and management of students. Already by the 1850s a quite distinctive style of education had emerged, a suite of emphases, priorities, and ways of doing things. A lot of 'how'. The 'how' of twenty-first century Marist education will have its similarities and differences with this, and probably a lot more of the latter. Indeed, the *Guide* itself was not just tweaked but significantly re-written during its different editions. The 'why', however, is perennial.

¹¹² John 10:10

¹¹³ Brother Jean-Baptiste, *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*. Ch.15

Chapter 3

Marist education: *what* should be taught?

There is no battle quite like a curriculum battle. They have been raging righteously since Socrates took on the Sophists. And they continue to this day – just look at the hot commentary generated by the ‘Australian Curriculum.’¹¹⁴ Marcellin’s time was no exception. Curricular content, emphases, and goals were debated just as polemically, with a familiar defensiveness of what is at risk, on the one hand, and a vision for what could be, on the other.

From early years schooling through to university level, divergences of opinion are frequent and passionate concerning what should be taught. How do students most effectively learn to read, for example? It is question that never seems to be resolved and one, interestingly enough, on which Marcellin himself needed to make a call back in 1828. And on the very same options – phonetics or whole-word, the behaviourists versus the social constructionists. Or, how should students learn and master mathematical operations – by direct instruction or problem-based enquiry?

At least those questions are linked to well researched and seriously debated theories of learning. When we move into other areas of the curriculum such as history, literature, and social education, the wars heat up. Is there a canon of literature to which all students should be introduced, for example? Or of art? Or music? What should constitute civics education? Where do the school’s rights and responsibilities lie when it comes to education in sexuality? The questions go on.

History seems an especially fraught domain. A late Bishop of Lismore in New South Wales reportedly argued for Irish history to be a core component of the curriculum of Catholic schools in his diocese! That may seem an extreme cultural position to take, but perhaps no more so than the old Australian history syllabi that carried the implied notion that nothing of much significance happened on this continent prior to 1788. A long-time lecturer at the University of Sydney was notorious for spending most of the academic year just getting the First Fleet through Sydney Heads.

To what extent should one meta-narrative or another influence how events are interpreted? I recall as a first-year undergraduate enjoying a few (perhaps more than a few) Friday afternoon wine-and-cheese gatherings in our history lecturer’s rooms (such things used to happen on university campuses) as he opined at length on the intellectual bankruptcy of any

¹¹⁴ For readers who are not from Australia and/or not engaged in the field of education, the ‘Australian Curriculum’ is a cooperative project of all the States and Territories that comprise the federated Commonwealth of Australia. It seeks to develop a common curricular framework for what is expected to be taught across the years of primary and secondary schooling, and aims to build quality, equity and transparency across the country’s education systems in pursuit of agreed national values and goals. Other countries have similar arrangements. The delivery of the national curriculum remains a responsibility of each State or Territory and there is considerable diversity among them in how this is done. The Australian Curriculum has been unfolding since 2009, and at the time of writing is undergoing a scheduled partial review. It is overseen by a statutory body known as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Visit: www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

historian's lacking a philosophical prism through which to understand the sweep of history. His was avowedly Marxist, as was most of the faculty's it seemed. Having studied Thucydides at school and been taught to admire his dispassionate treatment of the ancient Athenians' and the Spartans' world views, this challenged me. But, on reflection, I had to admit I also had a prism: a Christian one. Anyway, the coursework for that year covered Renaissance and Reformation Europe, which probably was more suited to my prism than to his.

Special interest groups can inject extra vitriol to the curriculum debates. What about the suspicions regarding university programmes funded by outside groups, such as, in Australia, the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation? And what might the CCP be up to with those Confucius Institutes being established in universities around the world? Some of more passionate arguments are reserved for religious education. Those of a more militantly atheistic bent such as the Richard Dawkins school of thought contend that to fill impressionable young minds with fiction and false hopes is nothing short of child abuse; most readers of these pages would take another view entirely. But even among the latter, there is considerable disagreement on what should constitute the RE curriculum in Catholic schools. As one wise De La Salle Brother once told me, 'Where you stand on these issues, is usually determined by where you are sitting.'

Another wrestle is around the question of how stable the curriculum should be, with the same traditional content, with what we might call our cultural and intellectual patrimony taught to successive generations. Alternatively, how much does it need agility and responsiveness to changing contexts? As a young principal, I recall being challenged by a bureaucrat from the diocesan office as to why I was insisting that the school needed to maintain the teaching of French. Was it just a Marist thing, I was asked, a vestige of our being founded in France. My response was that, no, I just couldn't imagine a secondary school that didn't teach French. Was my judgement hampered by cultural blinkers or nostalgia? Perhaps. Ironically enough, in the Master's thesis I was completing in Curriculum Studies at the time, I had been citing J. Abner Peddiwell's 1939 famous satire *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum*¹¹⁵ to argue against irrelevance and outmoded inclusions in the curriculum.

'What should be taught?' is a question that interrogates the core purposes of schools and education of young people more broadly. The answer is always politically driven, because it is ever concerned with who stands to gain or to lose, who ends up empowered or disempowered, whose narrative prevails. What kind of society do we want? What kind of economy? What kind of church? What does it mean to be an educated person? What are the ends we are serving by sending children to school? With the limitations of time and resources at hand, where should we directing our best efforts?

¹¹⁵ An entertaining parody that looks at relevance in the school curriculum and which continues to be on the reading lists of curriculum courses. The paleolithic character New-Fist Hammer-Maker innovatively asks three questions so as to construct a useful curriculum for his children: 'What things must we tribesmen know how to do in order to live with full bellies, warm backs, and minds free from fear?' The answers become the three 'subjects' in his curriculum, proving quite effective despite the protestations of the traditionalists and tribal leaders. But as the fish become better at evading capture, the woolly horses were wiped out, and the tigers could pneumonia due to the coming ice age, the new curriculum itself became less and less useful. J. Abner Peddiwell (1939) *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum and Other Essays*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

The first Marist educators lived through an era when responses to questions such as these oscillated considerably as French church and society turned, sometimes 180 degrees. While the founding Marists were the sons and daughters of parents who were educated in the eventide of the *Ancient Regime*, their own schooling largely took place during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic years. One might imagine that they should have enjoyed the benefits of the achievements of the Enlightenment, and that they would have been well educated to become critically aware and engaged citizens of the newly envisioned society.

Alas, the reverse was the case for the children of those decades, the overwhelming majority of whom lived in rural areas. Indeed, their educational opportunities were, ironically enough, given the rhetoric of the Revolution and the centralised reforms of the Empire, often more limited than those of their parents.¹¹⁶ For example, Marcellin's father Jean-Baptiste Champagnat appears, from what we can glean from the standard of his writing and his personal library, to have had a more extensive basic education than did his children.¹¹⁷

It was also a quite conflicted time philosophically. Irrespective of whichever party may have happened to be in the ascendancy in Paris at any given time, it was more an accident of circumstance if a child in a small town came to be taught by someone motivated by the new ideas or the old, or by anything much at all. Nonetheless, the first Marists were men and women of their time, and ready for something new.

As the founding Marist generation began to establish schools, they initially did so during the fifteen years of the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, a period marked by a competing discourse between those wanting to undo the reforms of the previous decades and those pushing for even more radical reform. A bit like the post-conciliar church of today! In the decades after the July Revolution of 1830, as secularist thinking gradually took a more widespread hold on the general French mindset – mostly after Marcellin's death – the drivers for Marist education arguably became a little narrower in their focus, more belligerently batted against the rising tide of popular thought. It is a trend with which Marcellin would have likely been uncomfortable.

For example, Brother Jean-Baptiste leaves us with little ambiguity as to what he felt was at stake by mid-century:

¹¹⁶ Brother Pierre Zind, in *Bx. M. Champagnat, son œuvre scolaire dans son contexte historique* [Blessed Marcellin Champagnat, his educational project in its historical context] (Rome, 1991) provides extensive evidence for how France's rather well-established primary school network collapsed between 1789 and 1815.

¹¹⁷ See Farrell, S. *Achievement from the Depths* for some useful research into J-B Champagnat, especially during his time in civil office during the 1790s. It is also worth noting that he was also secretary/treasurer of the *Penitents* in Marhles in the years before the revolution – a type of para-religious club that met to discuss the issues of the day as well as being involved in social action. Interestingly enough, given the prevailing anti-revolutionary sentiment of the region that became evident during the 1790s, the *Penitents* in Marhles seemed to have been quite progressive in their thinking and well in tune with Enlightenment thinking in the 1780s. One example is the fact that they allowed women as well as men to be members in almost equal numbers, Marcellin's mother among them. Some further background on the Champagnat family is provided by Br Gabriel Michel's article *Grandeur et décadence des Champagnats* [The rise and fall of the Champagnats] in which his research into several decades of the family reveal that branches on both sides of Marcellin's family tree were relatively comfortable lower bourgeoisie, and likely therefore to have had access to reasonable schooling. Marcellin himself, of course, through his completion of secondary and tertiary studies in the minor and major seminaries took his own education considerably further than that of his forebears.

We are in a time when man [sic] thirsts for knowledge; schooling has now spread even to the smallest hamlets. Philosophers and unbelievers, inspired by the spirit of darkness, exploit this need-to-learn in men [sic] to instil their pernicious principles in the hearts of children; they strive to take hold of young people in order to infect them with their deadly doctrine, to demoralise and destroy them by depriving them of their faith and morals. They want children to learn everything and to be introduced to every field of knowledge, except religion. Christian schools are established to cripple these efforts of the wicked and to be a backstop to the devastating torrent of their dire doctrine ... ¹¹⁸

Jean-Baptiste was drawing on a view, widely accepted in church circles, that good Christian people such as the Marists were increasingly engaged in direct, even eschatological, combat against the work of the Devil himself. There are frequent references in his writings that frame the work of Marist education this way.¹¹⁹ Many people at the time were conflating everything that they saw as ‘new’ into this Satanic understanding of what was at play in their society. Their word for it – one used by Marcellin, J-C Colin and other Marist founders – was ‘unbelief’.¹²⁰ It was to provide young people with a compelling faith alternative to this that drove them. For Marcellin, in particular, the priority was to establish a society of Christian educators. Father Champagnat could have done many things as a priest, and done them well. He showed that he was very effective in parish ministry, for example, and he would have certainly made a most effective missionary – either in France itself or overseas. But he opted to be an educator, and to form educators. The nature and future of society were at stake.

Marist schools were addressing a subtly but critically different situation than that of the pre-Revolutionary *Petit Ecole* movement from which they emerged. Jacques de Batencour, Charles Demia, Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and others had been impelled to action in another context. Each of them had become involved in education to address the plight of the poor. While certainly they were motivated by what today we would call the need to evangelise, and a deep desire to nurture the faith of young people whose eternal fate they saw to be at risk, they were not working at odds with the political hegemony of the time. Indeed, the *petite écoles* – their curricula with a blend of religious, secular and social elements – were originally an initiative of the King. The schools were in the hands of local church authorities or new religious congregations and sodalities. They were not aimed at transforming society so much as enabling all people – including the poor – to lead fruitful and faithful lives within its existing social and political strata.

Marcellin’s context, and his response to it, was similar but different, especially after 1830. One key to understanding how and why is in his use of the word *citoyen*, and also his preference for describing of the Brothers as *instituteurs* (teachers) rather than *maîtres*

¹¹⁸ Br Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Apostolat d’un Frère Mariste*. 1848. Unpublished manuscript.

¹¹⁹ André Lanfrey explores this theme at depth in his doctoral study: *Une Congrégation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes 1850 à 1904*. Université Lyon II, 1996.

¹²⁰ See for example Marcellin’s Letter 4 (to Vicar General Cattet, May 1827) where he laments the ‘frightful progress’ that was being made by ‘unbelief’ (*incrédulité* in French).

(masters).¹²¹ These were new words, words of the time. As we have seen before, *citoyen* was a concept of the Revolution and of the Enlightenment; it captured what it meant to be a contributing and co-responsible member of a re-envisioned social order. Marcellin was so comfortable with the word that he described half of the twin-purpose of his schools as the preparation of *bons citoyens*, as a corollary to the preparation of *bons Chrétiens*. Good citizens, good Christians. We have seen how Brother Jean-Baptiste later skewed this to 'virtuous citizens'. The 1931 English edition of the *Teacher's Guide* distorts it further, in one place claiming to quote Marcellin as saying he wanted to form 'good Christians and worthy citizens', and in another 'to train up good Catholics and virtuous citizens'.¹²² There is no documentary evidence that Marcellin ever said any such thing.

To construct an authentically Marist curriculum, it is well to work from this core imperative of Marcellin – to educate people to be good Christians and good citizens. And to do so for their own time and place.

The implication of bringing these two terms into correlation is to recognise that, for Marists, evangelisation and education are inextricably bound up with each other. They were for Marcellin, because each is aimed at bringing young people to the fullness of their humanity. Beyond what that could mean for individual students, it was underpinned also by a vision for society and for church more collectively. Marcellin lamented a society that was at risk of losing its sense of God, and he intuited that the role of the Church was to reconcile the worthiness of the new ideas with the gospel of Jesus. 'Something new for our time' was a mantra of Marcellin Champagnat, Jean-Claude Colin and the founders of the Society of Mary. A new way of being church.

In the light of this, the curriculum content described for the first Marist schools appears at first glance to be rather unremarkable, particularly after the important education Act of 1833 (called the *Guizot Law* after the Minister of Education who sponsored it).¹²³ After all, there was now a national curriculum, and each of the Brothers' schools was, almost without exception in the early decades, the local town school operating under the auspices of the *Mairie* (town council or municipality).¹²⁴ Indeed, official Marist documents from this period

¹²¹ It must be admitted, however, that the term *maître* was still used in early Marist documents, especially those penned by Brother Jean-Baptiste. It is not necessary to read much into this; it may simply be a consequence of the Marist Brothers extensive use of the De La Salle teaching manual, *La Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes* which used this word.

¹²² The 1931 redaction in English was mostly worked on in Scotland where, as in Australia in the same era, the Catholic population lived in a quite sectarian milieu, were in majority of Irish heritage of only one or two generations removed, and felt that they suffered until a Protestant or Anglican ascendancy.

¹²³ François Guizot (1787-1874, a thus a contemporary of Marcellin) was one of the notable intellectuals and politicians of nineteenth century France. A scholar, historian, linguist, moderate liberal, active Protestant, Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister, Guizot was most active politically from the Bourgeois Revolution (his term) of 1830 to the Revolution of 1848. He was a man of the Enlightenment, but no radical. In 1833, as Minister of Education he introduced a Law that made required the civil authority in each parish to establish a primary school, in which teachers were required to have *brevet de capacité* (certificate of competence), and in which curriculum content and method were set.

¹²⁴ This had been the case under Napoleon before 1816 and would remain so again after 1833. During the Restoration years, however, it was the responsibility of the *Curé* (parish priest) to conduct the school. A number of Marcellin's early letters and arrangements were, therefore, with priests. Even after 1833, towns were

– including the first Brothers’ *Rule* of 1837 – provided ample assurance to the public that the full curriculum required by the government would be covered. The goal of the Brothers, we read in Chapter 1, Paragraph 1 of that document was to provide ‘primary instruction’ through ‘religious and moral instruction’ as required by the law, and the teaching of

reading, writing, elements of French grammar, arithmetic, the legal system of weights and measures, elements of geometry, linear drawing ... and elements of history and geography. In their teaching, they follow the new pronunciation, and the simultaneous-mutual method.

The *Guide des Ecoles*, published fifteen years later, went into quite precise detail on exactly what was to be taught in each subject area, prescribing the daily timetable for doing so down to the minute, and specifying how assessment and class progression took place. How much wriggle room in the school day was there for the Marists to ‘bring Christlife to birth’?

Wrong question. The first thing to recognise is that Marcellin had no issue with his Brothers investing their energies into providing a comprehensive and relevant secular education for the students. Quite the contrary. While he understood his core purpose to be ‘religious’ – what we might call evangelising – this did not imply that the teaching of reading, writing and the other subjects were a second-order thing. Nor was the ‘teaching of religion’ to be some kind of confessional curricular tack-on to what was required by the State. He saw such education through the lens of evangelisation and, equally, he saw evangelisation through the lens of education. Marcellin resisted the efforts of Father Colin and others in the Society of Mary and the diocese of Lyon to categorise the Brothers simply as lay catechists.¹²⁵ They were teachers, educators. And he wanted them to be excellent teachers. More than that, taking a leaf from the book of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, Marcellin also insisted that their work as educators should be seen as a ‘ministry’.¹²⁶

An early window into what this looked like in practice can be seen in the *Rule* of 1837 which prescribes the weekly morning schedule. It is the earliest description we have, in any detail, of how a Marist school operated:

11. *At eight o’clock, the Brothers will take the children to Mass, two by two, arms crossed, being careful that they walk without turning their heads left and right and that they do not make noise while entering the church. The Brothers will do their best to procure a daily Mass at a fixed time from the parish priests.*

permitted to engage religious congregations to run their schools (indeed most did), and priests continued to be involved in many places as founders, sponsors or guardians of these groups.

¹²⁵ In 1837, possibly concerned about Fr Champagnat’s declining health, Fr Colin suggested that the teaching Brothers could be excised from the Society of Mary and become a sodality of lay catechists under the auspices of the diocese. He said a number of times that they were not part of the original vision for the Society. He maintained this view for some time.

¹²⁶ The first sentence of the first chapter of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, describes a Brother’s educative work as a ‘ministry’. The book goes on to use the term no fewer than 36 times, at times equating the importance of the work of the teacher to that of the priest. This was clearly an important understanding for Marcellin, and goes a long way to explain his resistance to Father Colin’s wish to see the Brothers as lay catechists or lay Brothers within the Society of Mary. This seems to have been the biggest point of disagreement between Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin.

12. *When children cannot be taken to Mass, class will begin at eight o'clock, and a quarter of an hour more will be given to Catechism, Reading and Grammar.*
13. *At a quarter-to-nine, the prayer of the diocese is recited. After the prayer, roll call; then the Brothers proceed to correct the children. If there is no one to correct, then they sing the song of thanksgiving that precedes the teaching of Catechism.*
14. *At nine o'clock, Catechism, which should be preceded by a short canticle. One must strongly endeavor to make them learn the Catechism and long explanations should be avoided.*
15. *At half-past-nine, Writing. The Brothers in charge will be carefully attentive that the children keep their notebooks clean, and that they write according to the rules of penmanship.*
16. *At half-past-ten, on Mondays and on Tuesdays, there is reading from the Holy Bible or 'Les Pensées d'Humbert'; on Wednesdays, Courtesy; on Fridays and Saturdays, the Hours of respective dioceses. (The children of the first division can learn Grammar while those of the second continue the Reading.)*
17. *At eleven o'clock recitation of the Grammar lesson, and correcting the dictation from the day before, with an explanation of it.*
18. *At half past eleven, the class finishes with the prayer: My God, I thank you, etc.*
19. *A visit to the Blessed Sacrament is made, if the parish priest is amenable. If they are not going to the church, the prayers of the visit are recited in the classroom. These prayers are: the act of the spiritual communion, the acts of faith, hope and charity, and the Hail Mary ... and the Angelus.¹²⁷*

Leaving aside the quaintness of such prescriptiveness from two centuries ago, let us focus on the seamless integration of the day's learning experiences. It reflects a holistic and balanced curriculum, with its religious dimension integrated into the whole. Brother Jean-Baptiste was to argue that this dimension was both the end and the means of education.¹²⁸ The daily timetable also implies a curricular approach that has its own rigour and expectation of excellence. And notice, as well, the subtle inclusion of singing several times through the morning. Indeed, Marcellin was criticised for the large proportion of time that the Brothers devoted to in-class singing.¹²⁹ But he wanted Marist schools to be joyful places, quite in contrast to his own early school experience.

¹²⁷ *Regle des Petites Frères de Marie*. 1837. Lyon: L'Imprimerie de F. Guyot. pp18-21.

¹²⁸ *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste*, Ch.5(1)

¹²⁹ The arguments for the inclusion of singing seem to have a disproportionate coverage in early Marist documents, perhaps reflecting the degree of justification that was required. The first edition of the *Guide* argued that the teaching of liturgical singing – hymns and plain chant – was the more important the poorer or more

The *Guide des Ecoles* in 1853 further developed the rationale for a holistic curriculum.

Although the teaching of religion is the main goal of the Brothers and should hold the forefront in their schools, the other parts of primary instruction should not be neglected. Indeed, the Brothers will endeavour to provide these to their students with great care and zeal. It is important that their teaching leave nothing to be desired for the rigour and the sound direction of studies. Therefore, parents who choose the Brothers' school for religious principles, should not have to regret not finding in them all the advantages they could desire for the education of their children.¹³⁰

In its third section, the *Guide* went into minute detail on the curriculum content to be covered in reading, writing, arithmetic and geography, how to teach each subject, how to structure classes and so on.

The most detailed part of the manual – a full third of it in the second section of the book – is nonetheless reserved for what it calls *L'Enseignement religieux et Education*. It is an interesting phrase. It differentiates 'religious instruction' from 'education', but it binds them inseparably. While the teaching of what was usually called 'catechism' and the learning of prayers – so-called 'religious instruction' – was expected to be done diligently and effectively, and innovatively,¹³¹ Marcellin had a much broader concept of what constituted a 'Christian education'. Brother Jean-Baptiste devotes the greater part of his long 1848 treatise to exploring how such 'education' should be understood by Marists.¹³² It is a rich treatment, one which he refined twenty years later in two chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* – titled respectively 'What it means to educate a child' and 'The necessity of education'.¹³³

remote the place, so that the beauty of the liturgy could be experienced by even the poorest and most isolated people. Of just as much importance, though, was the whole experience of how this was done. Some effort was invested in it each day. This from the *Guide*:

Every day, before catechism, a hymn will be sung. In places where there are three classes, the pupils of the first class will usually sing in choir with those of the older class. We must always choose the most popular hymns, those which appeal to children the most, ... so that the children know them by heart and can sing them with more taste and togetherness. For Sundays ... we will prefer those hymns which are lively, cheerful, easy to sing, and those which have a refrain. For the singing of hymns, the characteristics must be a little lively, animated, sustained ... Singing of hymns is singularly pleasing to children and ... makes them like school and be attracted to coming ... The Brothers will neglect nothing to achieve this, and to lead children to derive from their efforts all the fruits expected from it.

¹³⁰ *Guide des Ecoles, à usage des Petites Frères de Marie*. 1853. Lyon et Paris : Perrise Frères, Imprimeurs et Libraires. II, Ch.1

¹³¹ In *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste* (Ch.IV.3), Brother Jean-Baptiste makes explicit reference to the renewal that has come to the Church through a reinvigorated approach to religious instruction and Christian education. In other places (e.g. *Guide des Ecoles*, II, Chs 2-5, and *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch.37), the Brothers were urged to look for the ways to teach religious education that engaged students at the affective level.

¹³² *Idem*.

¹³³ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* Chs 35 and 36. This book is presented by Jean-Baptiste as a compendium of teachings and conferences of Marcellin, but it is often not straightforward to separate the words of Marcellin from those of Jean-Baptiste, especially in the last part of the book which deals with education. It is clear, nonetheless, that the essence of the understanding of what education was and why it was so necessary for every young person is very much Marcellin's.

Jean-Baptiste's cast is wide. Good education of young people, he argues, is essential for them as individuals, as much as it is for the family, the Church and the State. It involves inspiring in a person a love of God rather than a dutiful or, even worse, fearful following of religion. It is concerned with the formation of character, of conscience and, most especially, of heart.¹³⁴ Later editions of the *Guide* affirmed this and described how a Marist school should provide a holistic education – physically, academically, morally, spiritually and socially. Detail is provided on a broad liberal curriculum, including education in civics. Nor does it omit singing!¹³⁵

The present age has its differences from that of Marcellin and founding Marist generation, yet there are many parallels: society is being radically affected by a revolution (the digital one rather than the industrial) that risks the marginalising, disenfranchising and disempowering of many young people; popularism threatens to diminish or compromise more noble human aspirations; new lines ideological and cultural fracture are opening up between peoples; money and power still talk; 'unbelief' grows. The answer to the question of 'what to teach' is sourced today, as it was two centuries ago, in a critical reflection of what is needed for people to be critically engaged, socially responsible, personally fulfilled and compassionate human beings, and co-creators of a society in which all can live justly, productively, securely, creatively, and faithfully. *In the Footsteps* puts it this way:

A Marist school is a centre of learning, of life, and of evangelising. As a school, it leads students to learn to know, to be competent, to live together, and most especially, to grow as persons. As a Catholic school, it is a community setting in which faith, hope and love are lived and communicated, and in which students are progressively initiated into their life-long challenge of harmonising faith, culture and life.¹³⁶ As a Catholic school in the Marist tradition, it adopts Marcellin's approach to educating children and youth, in the way of Mary.¹³⁷

The curriculum of the school flows from that vision:

We determine educational programs, curriculum content, and teaching methods in the light of our mission statement, and of the best educational and pedagogical thinking available to us. We seek to meet the aspirations of students and their parents in regard to subject choices, career possibilities, and qualifications. Through external consultation, we seek to ensure that the education we offer is socially and culturally relevant in the long term.¹³⁸

Consistent with our ideal of providing a truly holistic education, we include environmental awareness as well as physical and health education in our students' learning experiences. We encourage sports activities to develop their skills and

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* II, Chs 1-10; IV, Chs 22-30.

¹³⁵ See *Teacher's Guide* (English edition, 1931): First Part, Chs 1-8.

¹³⁶ *In the Footsteps* takes this significant phrase from Vatican II's *Gravissimum Educationis* #8, and the signature document of the Congregation for Catholic Education *The Catholic School* (1977) ##38-43. It also found a place in the Marist Brothers Constitutions (1986) #87, and was carried into the revised Constitutions (2020) #57.

¹³⁷ *In the Footsteps*, #126

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* #133

*physical co-ordination, as well as to enhance character formation, teamwork, recognition of personal limits, coping with failure, and the desire to succeed*¹³⁹

*In our general teaching, we help our students to develop their critical judgement of values implicit in material they are studying. We lead them to appreciate the spiritual aspirations of humanity, and the manner in which these have been expressed in the course of history in all cultural contexts*¹⁴⁰

It is a way of re-framing what it means to educate ‘good Christians’ and ‘good citizens’ in the present age. Despite the post-religious, post-structural and relativist trends of the time, and even the apparent success of more God-cancelling commentators of a more wolf-warrior bent, it is a task that Marist educators take on from an essentially hopeful position, rooted in a positive anthropology. Marcellin and the first Marists had very similar and deeply held fears about the directions in which society was heading and how God seemed to be increasingly written out of the script, and their first priorities were what we would call today ‘evangelising’. Their response was not, however, to seek to impose an apologetically-driven or retro-fitted Catholicism onto the young people in their care. Indeed, it was to provide an alternative to such stricture thought and action that the whole Marist project was conceived.

Marists intuitively align themselves with an early doctor of the Church – and coincidentally bishop of the same city in which the Marist project was to germinate many centuries later – who penned the famous line *gloria Dei vivens homo*.¹⁴¹ Traditionally translated as ‘the glory of God is man fully alive’, this phrase of Saint Irenaeus offers a rich manifesto for any Catholic school, and certainly for a Marist one. It is a missional statement that can provide a foundation for the building of its curriculum. Its anthropological premise comes straight from the Book of Genesis, one that continues to provide the basis for much Catholic moral and social teaching: that in the essence of the human person, every human person, is found the ‘image and likeness of God’.¹⁴² The more that a human person comes to a fullness and integration of life – intellectually, psycho-emotionally, physically, morally and spiritually – and the more that the person grows in appreciation of truth and beauty, justice and love, then the more the divine essence of the person is incarnated. For Marist educators particularly, and for the Church generally, Mary is the archetype of this: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum! Exultavit spiritus meus in Deo!* ‘My soul magnifies the Lord! My very being rejoices in God’.¹⁴³ And the collective corollary to that also underpins Catholic anthropology and the project of Catholic school: the more that human society, or any community within it, comprises such people, the more prevalent is the reign of God among them. This is *missio Dei* or the mission-that-is-God.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* #137

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* #136

¹⁴¹ *Adversus Hæreses* IV, 20, 7. Saint Irenaeus’s great work *Adversus Hæreses* (Against the Heresies) was written especially against the heresy of Gnosticism, prevalent in the second century, which denied the full humanity of Christ, and also promoted a kind of dualism that distinguished the spiritual from the carnal in human beings, extolling the former and denigrating the latter. It was not only a denial of the Incarnation, but also a denial of the possibility of experience of the Divine in the here and now of everyday life – thus, a rejection of the incarnational theology which underpins the argument of this book.

¹⁴² Gn.1:26. Cf. also Wis.2:23; Jn.10:10

¹⁴³ Lk.1:46b-47

It follows that, in a Marist school sourced as it is in *missio Dei*, one would hope and expect to find an educational approach that makes every effort to liberate the divine essence of students, both personally and communally. Again, we return to Galatians, that great epistle of freedom, truth and love that is so deeply rooted in the founding spirituality of the Marists that comes from Marcellin and François.¹⁴⁴ To be alive in Christ is to be free, a liberty that emanates from what is most true and beautiful in a person, and most impelling to love.

What would this look like in practice in a Marist school's curriculum? A number of things. It would mean both breadth and rigour of learning. It would mean an education that nurtures and celebrates both sides of the brain, one that is holistic and wholesome, and that is widely cast but purposively pursued. To walk around a Marist school would be find literacy and numeracy being mastered, students with specific learning challenges being included and taught in ways that bring them success, the sound of music instruments being practised, visual and performing arts being finding expression, sports being played to promote health and skills as much as to learn collaboration and self-discipline, programmes in social and ecological responsibility having weight and credibility, minds and hearts being extended through enquiry, critical thinking and respectful debate, and the great treasures of the past being brought into dialogue with the priorities of the present. The 'glory of God' in a person 'fully alive' would be seen in a child who has learned to read, or to bring finesse to the playing of a piano, or brilliance to the kicking of a football, or dramatic presence to the stage, or sharpness of thought to a mathematical complexity, or self-assurance to speech and behaviour, or the wisdom of the ages to the challenges of the day, or compassion and empathy to situations of hurt or exclusion. The glory of God would be evident in the ways that clarity, creativity, equity of opportunity, principled action, and justice-with-mercy are being learned and practised by both students and staff.¹⁴⁵

Such learning would be taking place, of course, as much through the so-called 'hidden curriculum', as the visible and formal one. The prioritising of human and physical resources, the structure of the daily timetable, the physical plant of the campus, its art and symbolism, and the ways decisions are taken, are all means of teaching and learning. Learning is also embedded in the culture of the institution or project, one that not only provides for all the curricular and co-curricular offerings above, but which is welcoming, hospitable, inclusive, equitable and, especially, joyful and life-giving. Faithful to their seminal intuition from Le Puy – the place of healing – Marist educators would be proactive in creating a culture that heals and brings to wholeness.

The multitude of contexts in which Marist education takes place means that there is a plethora of ways for the concretising of these principles.¹⁴⁶ A learning project in a favela in

¹⁴⁴ See especially Chs. 2 and 5. The themes and even words of Galatians figure often in foundational Marist spirituality, most powerfully in Brother François's *Circular on the Spirit of Faith* (Part 4).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, ##133, 135-137, 140.

¹⁴⁶ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* recognised and, in a sense, legitimised the diversity of Marist educational contexts. Although from the time of Marcellin there had been considerable diversity (parish/town primary schools, special schools for students with hearing disability, orphanages, trade schools, teacher education, youth welfare projects), there had been a tacit understanding that the Marist school was typically a mainstream primary or secondary school, serving a largely Catholic clientele. The *Apostolate* document of the 1967-68 General Chapter widened this understanding, as did the imperatives explicitly named by subsequent General Chapters in 1985 and 1993. But in the 1998 document which aimed to give a 'Vision of Marist Education

the slums of São Paulo, Brazil, for example, would obviously have a quite different ‘curriculum’ from a mainstream secondary school in Ireland or a university in The Philippines. In a tertiary setting, the ‘pursuit of knowledge and truth’ and the bringing of faith and culture into resonance might be more explicitly undertaken than it might be in an early childhood setting,¹⁴⁷ but in a genuinely Marist enterprise they would be happening just as effectively in both. Even within a large school, the threads of the Marist educational project can be many and varied but, quilted together, they generate *vivens homo*. In this sense, all educators can contribute to the evangelising mission of the Marist school.

This breadth and depth of the ‘what’ of Marist education have been characteristic from its first decades.¹⁴⁸ The original *Guide* in 1853 begins, tellingly enough, with the importance of physical education and hygiene. Ever pragmatic, we Marists! It does, nonetheless, reveal a respect for the person, and an awareness of what could be described as the incarnational groundwork that underpins evangelisation. The *Guide* then describes with some exactitude the ways in which reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history and drawing should be taught, but it cautions that the Marist educator does not stop there:

*Teachers who would content themselves only with giving instruction to children would only be fulfilling the least part of their task.*¹⁴⁹

What is more important, the *Guide* counsels, is to provide ‘an education’:

*To educate a child is to develop, strengthen and perfect all the faculties of the soul; it is above all to form the child’s heart, will, character, conscience and judgement.*¹⁵⁰

In a similar vein, in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* we read:

Today’ a broad range of contexts is named. In paragraph 127 we read: *The circumstances and profiles of Marist schools around the world vary greatly, depending on their social, cultural, political and legal settings. They are to be found in the rural world as well as in urban areas. They include all three levels of education: primary, secondary, higher education and teacher training. There are day schools as well as those that offer boarding.* Significantly, a whole chapter is devoted to education in ‘other social and pastoral ministries’, including ‘non-formal settings’.

¹⁴⁷ The characteristics of Marist tertiary education have been richly developed in a companion document to *In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*. Published in 2010 by the International Network of Institutions of Marist Higher Education *The Marist Mission in Higher Education* draws on both Marist documents as well as on significant documents on Catholic higher education to describe the purpose, identity and characteristic emphases of a Marist university. See sections 3-4 and 16-19. One of the principal purposes of the Marist tertiary institution, as a Catholic university, is named in the document the pursuit ‘of knowledge and truth’.

¹⁴⁸ In this, the Marist schools were not novel: they were following the tradition of French schooling, most especially that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salles). The Lasallians’ *Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes*, a major source both for the Marist *Guide* and early Marist teaching, was explicit in its holistic approach to education. See: Br Léon Lauraire FSC (2008) ‘The Conduct of Schools, A Pedagogical Approach’ and ‘The Conduct of Schools, A Comparative Approach’, in *Cahiers lasalliens* No. 62 and 63. Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, Chs 3-5 of No.62, and p.51-53 of No.63.

¹⁴⁹ *Guide des Ecoles* (1853 edition), Part 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem*.

*When he founded the Institute, Father Champagnat did not intend merely to provide primary instruction for children, nor even to teach them as well the truths of religion, but to provide them with an education.*¹⁵¹

This meant ‘inspiring virtue’ and ‘correcting faults’, according to the *Guide*. Among the virtues to be ‘inspired’ were obedience, charity to one’s neighbour, compassion for the unfortunate and those who suffer, respect for parents and for those in authority, humility and a balanced self-concept. To be ‘corrected’ were ‘egoism, severity, pride, duplicity, indocility, rudeness, ingratitude, dissipation and theft’.¹⁵² It is an interesting list, not very different from what we read in Galatians 5. We may quibble over the inclusion or omission of this or that trait, but the general sense is that it was the human person that was to be brought alive. St Paul would call it the life of the Spirit. The 1931 English edition, published at the height of the Great Depression, was clearer in its naming of the constituent parts of a holistic education. Again, ‘physical education’ is named first (comprising ‘hygiene’, ‘games’ and ‘physical training’). Then came intellectual education which was not simply a matter of knowledge acquisition but of developing ‘perception’, ‘judgement’, ‘reasoning’ and ‘memory’. ‘Moral education’ was presented as more than learning right from wrong, showing respect and ‘politeness’; it was primarily about ‘formation of the heart’. And ‘social education’ addressed such areas as ‘probity’, ‘justice’, ‘love of work’, ‘zeal for the common good’, contributing the prosperity of the nation (which, rather curiously for twenty-first century sensibilities, the ‘fertility of its land’ and the ‘productivity of its mines’!), and eschewing ‘idleness’, ‘selfishness’, and the ‘pursuit of pleasure, social strife and injustice’.¹⁵³

The truth of the above notwithstanding, it is critical for a Marist school not to lose sight of that simple but powerful line from *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*: ‘... we go further’.¹⁵⁴ Lest it be tempted to conceive the curriculum of the Marist school no differently from one sourced in a secular humanism, it is helpful to return to Irenaeus, and to the lines in his writings that follow his celebrated sentence *gloria Dei vivens homo*. Irenaeus is short-changed if we take those four words out of the context in which they appear. The full quotation reads:

*The glory of God is man [sic] fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God. If the revelation of God through creation already brings life to all living beings on the earth, how much more will the manifestation of the Father by the Word bring life to those who see God.*¹⁵⁵

There are thus two sides to Irenaeus’s coin: to nurture a fulsome expression of human life is to resonate absolutely with the vision and reign of God, but just as importantly it is in bringing people to knowledge of Jesus – the Word of God – that human life comes to fullness. Life in all its fullness means to ‘see God’. This is what drove Marcellin to want to evangelise through education. This is what he was about in an age, as he described it, that was growing in ‘unbelief’.

¹⁵¹ *Avis, Lecons, Sentences*, Ch.35.

¹⁵² *Guide des Ecoles* (1853 edition), Part 3.

¹⁵³ *The Teacher’s Guide* (1931 English edition), Part 1.

¹⁵⁴ *In the Footsteps*, #71.

¹⁵⁵ *Adversus Hæreses* IV, 20, 7

Brother Jean-Baptiste quotes Marcellin in these words:

What does it mean to educate a child? Does it mean to care for him [sic], meet his needs, and allow him to lack nothing in terms of food and clothing? No. Does it mean to teach him to read and write, and give him the knowledge he may need later on in his business dealings? No. Education is a higher task than that. Does it mean teaching him a trade and making him capable of exercising a profession? No, no. Education is not apprenticeship. Does it mean making him honest and polite, training him in the social graces, and teaching him to live in society? No. All that is good and necessary for a child, but it is not education properly speaking; it is only its outer shell, its least important element.¹⁵⁶

Marcellin affirms all these things as ‘good and advantageous’, but only in the context of the deeper purpose of bringing young people to a knowledge and love of God who he describes as their ‘primary end’, and of ‘heaven’ which is their ‘true homeland’.¹⁵⁷ This means that Marcellin did not understand a Christian education to be some kind of disembodied or gnostic God-trip.¹⁵⁸ For him, growing in knowledge of God and maturing in human personhood were inseparable. He understood education to comprise ‘enlightening the mind’, ‘educating the heart’, ‘forming the conscience’, ‘growing in holiness’, ‘loving goodness and religion’, ‘learning service and humility, ‘developing good judgement’ and a capacity for ‘reflection’; in short ‘making a complete person’.¹⁵⁹ It was an integrated thing.

That is, to prepare young people to take their places in civic society – as mature human beings, professionally competent, critically engaged and compassionately disposed – is no second-tier goal. Marist educators want those attributes in their graduates, and they construct curricular content and experiences that will best ensure it. But they ‘go further’ – both in their vision, and in their practice. They build a curriculum which at all levels, from early childhood to post-graduate study, is informed by a Christian hope for humanity and for creation more generally.

A Marist educator will sit well with these words of Brother Jean-Baptiste from *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*; although written with boys in nineteenth century French primary schools in mind, they are applicable to all students of any time or age:

The father of Socrates, who was a sculptor, showed his son a block of marble and said to him, ‘There is a man inside this block; I’m going to bring him out with blows from my hammer.’ When someone brings you a child who is still ignorant, rough, uneducated, living only the life of the senses, you can say with even more reason that Socrates’ father, ‘There is a man there, a good father, a good citizen, a Christian, a

¹⁵⁶ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Ch.35.

¹⁵⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁵⁸ In this, his thinking aligns very much with Irenaeus whose *Adversus Hæreses* was pitched against the understanding of a divided nature in Christ as promoted in Gnosticism.

¹⁵⁹ *Idem, passim*. Ch.35 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* identifies these among 15 elements of what it means to educate a young person. Leaving aside some of the nineteenth century language and theology, it is a vision of an integrated, critically aware, socially responsible, generous, compassionate and faith-filled person.

*disciple of Jesus Christ, a saint, a soul chosen for heaven, and I am going to bring him out. I am going to ... [educate] him into what he can and should be.*¹⁶⁰

It is from such a vision of evangelisation-through-Christian-education that the curriculum of the Marist school differentiates itself from one that is founded on purely secular values. It is not to demean such values, or the learning that stems from them, because these will be constitutive elements of a Christian vision of a good society. For example, in the Australian context, the 2008 'Melbourne Declaration' which remains the principal source and foundation of the 'National Curriculum' contains goals and statements that can and should be embraced by Marist schools in Australia. The Statement calls Australia to provide an education to all its young people that helps to build:

a democratic, equitable and just society— a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation's history, present and future.

The fruit of twenty years work of State and Federal Ministries of Education,¹⁶¹ the Melbourne Declaration distilled two primary goals for Australian schools:

- i. To promote equity and excellence*
- ii. To ensure that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.*¹⁶²

These goals were to be pursued in a context that was defined in ways which, even more than a decade later, ring familiar and urgent chords:

- *The rapid increase of global integration and international mobility*
- *The growing influence of India, China and other Asian nations, with Australians needing to become 'Asia literate', engaging and building strong relationships with Asia*
- *Globalisation and technological change placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians*
- *Complex environmental, social and economic pressures such as climate change that extend beyond national borders pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways.*
- *Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology.*¹⁶³

With the exception, understandably, of the Australian-specific reference to Asia, each of these contextual elements was identified by *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* ten years before as it looked to provide a curricular basis for the Marist school.¹⁶⁴ That may have been prescient, but it is not surprising given the extent to which the Marist document draws on

¹⁶⁰ *Idem.* End of Ch.35.

¹⁶¹ The Melbourne Declaration was preceded by the 'Hobart Declaration' in 1989 and the 'Adelaide Declaration' in 1999.

¹⁶² Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008) *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. pp.6-9

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* pp.4-5

¹⁶⁴ Cf. ## 57-58, 77, 137-38.

soundly based documents such as the 1996 Report to UNESCO that looked to the educational priorities for the twenty-first century.¹⁶⁵ It also reflects two sound curriculum development principles: first, to be clear on the goals; second, to do a critical analysis of the context in which the learning is taking place and the curricular priorities that suit the time and place. It from these that areas of learning can be identified; for the National Curriculum, the curricular domains were named as: English; mathematics; sciences; humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship); the arts (performing and visual); languages (especially Asian languages); health and physical education; ICT, design and technology.

At first glance, a modern educator may see this list as fairly standard stuff. It needs to be viewed, however, in the contexts both of history and of the purposes it is serving. It implies a citizenry that is liberally educated – not simply to maximise its capacity to serve the country’s economic or political ends – but to fulfil human potential of each person, and to have a society comprised of responsible, inclusively minded, culturally sensitive, and critically engaged people who are genuinely enfranchised – not only legally and politically, but socially, culturally, technologically and intellectually. That is far from standard in the grand sweep of human history.

The first Marists approached the curriculum process no differently. Brother Jean-Baptiste in his 1848 treatise on education also offers a societal analysis and discerns some fundamental goals for schools. He strongly affirms the benefits that education offers ‘the State’.¹⁶⁶ He draws on some of the ideals of the *petit école* movement to do this, but he brings his main argument to the imperatives of his day. The difference between the analyses and goals proposed by him, and *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, from those contained in a document such as the Melbourne Declaration and the curriculum that has emanated from it, comes from the different prisms through which the analyses have been undertaken. For the Marists it is an explicitly evangelical lens that is used.

Jean-Baptiste feared a dissolution of the foundations of society, and of the family unit within it, if people were uneducated, which meant not only their being illiterate, innumerate or unskilled, but being devoid of all that a good education brought with it. And a good education meant a Christian education. For him, that included a sense of morality, of social responsibility, of social etiquette, of human maturity and selflessness, of physical and mental health, and a capacity for love, all of which were infused by a sense of faith and an active spiritual life. It was the ‘spirit of faith’, as they called it at the time, what we might call a penetrating sense of Christian discipleship, that was the key to everything.

Curricular goals and priorities were built on working towards an embrace of this. A natural consequence was that a massive proportion of the early Marist curriculum was devoted to experiential and instructional learning that was explicitly religious in nature. In his analysis of the programme of the early Marist schools, historian Brother André Lanfrey, observes that sixty per cent of the day could be given over to it, if compulsory daily Mass and activities such

¹⁶⁵ *Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission for Education in the 21st Century*. J. Dehors, President.

¹⁶⁶ See *Apostolat d’un Frère Mariste*, pp.104-117.

as prayers and singing were included.¹⁶⁷ Not everyone agreed with such an allocation of time and effort.

For example, Brother Urbain Toulouse, Director of a new school in Seyne-sur-Mer in 1852, was taken to task by the parents, the local parish priest and the town mayor over the quantity of time the Brothers spent on religious matters. 'All they do is pray, sing hymns, and learn the catechism'.¹⁶⁸ While, of course, that was not true, Urbain's defence for the time spent on these things was that this was way the Brothers did it.¹⁶⁹ If one looks at *the Guide des Ecoles* or Brother Jean-Baptiste's treatise, it is clear that Urbain was on solid ground, at least as far as his fellow Marists were concerned.¹⁷⁰ While that argument did not convince his critics, the school's results soon did: people were surprised at the effectiveness of the Marist approach. The 'abysmal ignorance' of the students, their 'scorn for religion' and general disrespect, were redressed; the school became so popular that extensions to the building needed to be made. Urbain's biographer attributes this to his subject's determination, his mastery of teaching, his kindness and his close relationship with his pupils. To put that another way: first, the Brothers were clear on *why* they were running the school; second, they knew their students well enough to be confident that their curricular approaches served their goals; third, they were proved to be effective.

In Marcellin's vision, being an *instituteur* (teacher) and an *ouvrier évangélique* (gospel worker) went together.¹⁷¹ Both terms were reasonably novel as replacements for the old *maître d'école* (school master), as was Marcellin's describing the role as *un ministère apostolique* (an apostolic ministry) at least as significant as that of priest in the faith life of the young.¹⁷² In his Spiritual Testament, Marcellin arrestingly uses the word *culte* (veneration, liturgy, devotion) to describe the kind of approach the Brothers should have towards young people. All this reflects a vision for the Marist school – and therefore for its curriculum – infused at every turn with a religious, even a sacramental, dimension.

¹⁶⁷ Lanfrey, A. (1996) *Une Congrégation enseignante : Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*. Doctoral thesis. Université Lyon II, p.30. Brother André bases his calculations on the daily timetable of the Brothers' life as outlined in the *Regles Communes* approved by the 2nd General Chapter. It is also important to note that, traditionally, the end-point and to some extent a core purpose of the French parish/town school was the students' First Holy Communion. This typically occurred at the end of their two or three years of schooling and, at the age of about twelve or thirteen, was something of a rite of passage into the adult world. Preparation for this event was an important element of the whole school experience. In the tradition from which the Marist schools evolved – the so-called '*petite école* movement' significant time was always given to religious instruction, liturgical and prayer experience, and to hymn singing. This is evident in the manuals of the three leading figures in the movement: Jacques de Batencour in Paris, Charles Déma in Lyon, and Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in Rhiems and various parts of France. See Lauraire, *op.cit.* (No.63) pp.127-137.

¹⁶⁸ *Biographies de Quelques Frères*, p.263

¹⁶⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁷⁰ As well as the time allocated in the daily school timetable, the proportion of space in early Marist reference texts devoted to nurturing of the spiritual life in young people – intellectually, attitudinally and even emotionally – reflect the height of priority given it. For example, a third of the *Guide* is given to it, and half of the text of the seven chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* concerned with education.

¹⁷¹ These terms recur in the text of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*.

¹⁷² On this point, Marcellin did draw on the understandings of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle.

As the nineteenth century progressed, such a vision became more and more contested, as the momentum of secularism built.¹⁷³ While Marist educators needed to find ways to work in and around an increasingly hostile legal and political environment – for example by going private with their schools – their goals and purposes did not pale. Similarly, today’s Marist educators working from a *raison d’être* that is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus, are challenged to be clear on their fundamental role as evangelisers, and creative for how that can be respectfully, relevantly and effectively undertaken. This is not a Churchillian call to ‘fight them on the beaches’ and to ‘defend our island’, but neither is it a namby-pamby softness or silence with respect to the school’s identity or purpose.

The early Marists made their own critical analysis of the society in which they found themselves. They saw much in it that was positive, and they readily worked with a State-mandated curriculum which sought to advance that society; indeed, they bound themselves to it in the Rule of 1837. But because their analytical prism was different from those pursuing political ends or given to other philosophical positions, the ways that they embedded that curriculum in their schools were also different. Similarly, Marist educators today need to shape an integrated curriculum that serves the purposes for which their institutions and projects exist. In the Australian context, and that of many countries, it is likely that the nation’s priorities will be able to be pursued to great effect by the Marist school. Yet, it is also likely that some things will be challenged or at least find different emphases.

In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat puts it this way:

*Together we develop a statement of mission and guiding values, based on our broad vision of Marist education ... Such a statement makes explicit our identity, our ideal of education, the particular character of our school in its local context, and our priorities. It serves as a source of inspiration and as a reference point ...*¹⁷⁴

For example, the Marist school is not going to be supportive of a curriculum that is too skewed to serving economic outcomes, or one that is restricted to vocational training alone or to other narrowly instrumentalist purposes, or one that promotes one country’s entitlement to an unjust level of prosperity relative to humanity more generally, or at the expense of the health of the planet. A Marist school will educate in and for solidarity, and attend with considerable effort to forming of the social conscience of its students.¹⁷⁵ A Marist school will listen to the most credible prophets of the time, and at this time no one more than Pope Francis in his call, for example, to a more responsible care of ‘our common home’ and to dialogue and fraternity among faiths, cultures and peoples. A Marist school will be attentive to the values it celebrates, ritualises, and teaches.

¹⁷³ There were other anti-Catholic factors at play, not necessarily secular in essence. The republican side of politics – which was generally anti-clericalist since it tended to link ‘throne and altar’ – comprised a spectrum of positions from the more hard left socialists to others who were more moderate and conservative, including Protestant. The Masonic influence among the French political class, especially the republicans, is one that deserves mention. Brother Michele Gaetano Vinai is one who makes this argument in his book *Un secolo di lotte per l’insegnamento libero in Francia* [A century of struggle for freedom of education in France]. Stampa Universitaria Nazionale, April 2005.

¹⁷⁴ *In the Footsteps*, #129.

¹⁷⁵ One of the major emphases of *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* is this trait of Marist education. The concept of ‘solidarity’ is mentioned more than forty times in the text. See especially ##152-154.

The curriculum of a Marist school, both formal and hidden, will be a Gospel curriculum, holistically conceived. It will be one that hastens the reign of God in the hearts and minds of its students, its staff, its community, and the wider society in which it is situated.

Chapter Four

Marist education: how it is done

All of us who have stood in front of a new class for the first time, or a taken up a position in a new school, have had that twang of apprehension: 'How's this going to go?' Perhaps it has been more than just a twang. Our challenges are unlikely, however, to have been as steep, or our self-doubts as triggered, as those of the Brothers on their first day at St Patrick's School, in what was then Sydney's rough and poor docklands quarter. Brother Ludovic, the twenty-eight-year-old Frenchman who had been chosen to establish the school, has left us this account in his journal:

*The boys were all assembled in one of the classrooms. The Brothers handed out paper, pens and ink for a test, but scarcely had they received the sheet of paper than they covered it with all kinds of scribbling, overturned the inkwells, broke their pens, and began to dance on the trestle tables, several of which were overturned.*¹⁷⁶

The mayhem was witnessed not only by the four Brothers but by a venerable assemblage of clergy and notables for whom the opening of a Catholic boys' school by a European religious order had been long anticipated, and in which much hope was invested. It was an inauspicious start.

Not that scenarios such as this were unknown to Brothers coming from nineteenth century France.¹⁷⁷ Brother Urbain, when he began the Marist school in Seyne-sur-Mer in 1852, had trouble even getting the students inside the door. Having organised for the new school year to begin with Mass on All Saints Day and made attendance compulsory, Urbain was dismayed when not a single student showed up; they had all conspired to go off to play in the forest. His biographer sardonically observes that the path that led to the parish church was not well-known to the boys.¹⁷⁸ Such ill-mannered and uncorralled ways were not dissimilar to their contemporaries in The Rocks, Sydney.

A number of the first Brothers certainly had their struggles in the classroom. Brother Barthélemy, for example, one of the early Lavalla community, was apparently (and oddly enough for a Frenchman) repugned by smell of both cheese and garlic. Alert to this, of course, his students were known for rubbing the pages of their exercise books with both foodstuffs when it came time for them to inspected. Riots ensued.¹⁷⁹ And one wonders just what difficulties Brother François faced when, still a boy, he was sent to Marllhes as community

¹⁷⁶ Brother Ludovic Laboureyras, (undated) *Annales de la Mission d'Australie*. Unpublished manuscript translated by Brother Ken Eaton (November 1993).

¹⁷⁷ The most absorbing accounts of how the Brothers fared in their teaching and school administration, for better or worse, during the nineteenth century come to us from the sometimes acerbic and often amusing pen of Brother Avit who took it upon himself to give a potted history of more than three hundred Marist schools in France up until 1890. See his three volumes of *Annales des Maisons*. An interesting article drawing from this and other sources is that of Brother José Perez: Perez, J. (1998) 'The Academic Climate of Our Schools in France (1818-1891)'. *Marist Notebooks*. No.13, pp.149-180).

¹⁷⁸ *Biographies de Quelques Frères*, p.262

¹⁷⁹ Brother Avit, *Annales*, cited in *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat, Vol.II, References*, p.71.

cook and part-time student teacher. Some of his pupils were two or three years older than he, and he needed to stand on a stone block so that he could be seen by the class.¹⁸⁰

Many of the first Marist educators did not enjoy the benefits of much formal schooling as children, as indeed did not Marcellin himself. Yet it was admitted by even his doubters that Marcellin was that he was able to educate these recruits to become outstanding teachers. Driven, no doubt, by his own experience of poor, even harmful, teaching,¹⁸¹ Marcellin put much store on what we might call the craft of teaching, and its corollary, the way students most effectively learned. Brother Théodose received the habit from Marcellin at The Hermitage in 1836. Fifty-four years later, after a long career in schools, among them some quite difficult ones,¹⁸² this was the final paragraph of his testimony to the diocesan enquiry that began the cause of Marcellin's beatification and canonisation:

*The first Brothers whom [Father Champagnat] received into the novitiate had little more than good will and courage. Their religious instruction was incomplete; they barely knew how to read and write; they knew almost nothing of good manners; their rusticity matched the rugged mountains where they were born. It is hard to believe their rapid transformation, thanks to [Father Champagnat]; in a few years, their lives proved that they had become good religious, and the high regard in which their schools were held proved that they were capable educators.*¹⁸³

Théodose attributed such success especially to Brothers' use of the *Guide des Ecoles*, which he described as a 'summary of the talks on education' given by Marcellin.¹⁸⁴ While not disputing that the *Guide* was indeed a manual that reflected Marcellin's characteristic emphases in education, it is important to recognise that it had a much richer provenance than the Founder's conferences. A primary source for it was the Lasallians' *Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes* (The Conduct of Christian Schools),¹⁸⁵ which itself emerged from the living

¹⁸⁰ Brother Giovanni Bigotto (2003) *La Joie d'Être Frère, Frère François, Gabriel Rivat (1808-81)*. Marist Brothers, Rome, p.6.

¹⁸¹ Brother Jean-Baptiste, in the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat* (pp.5-6), describes dramatically the incident that Marcellin witnessed on his first day of school, where a student was hit by the teacher. Jean-Baptiste claims Marcellin refused to go back because of this. This is possible but unlikely because he was permitted later to make his first Holy Communion. In any event, Marcellin himself wrote later of his difficulties in learning because of unsatisfactory teaching: see his letter to Queen Marie-Amélie in May 1835 (Letter 59, in *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol.I)

¹⁸² Brother Théodose apparently was well regarded as a teacher, but had some difficult assignments early in the piece. One of his confrères wrote to Brother François in 1844 to describe the students in the school in Carvin (Pas-de-Calais) where Théodose was Director. He said that they were 'inattentive and quite impudent, that they speak to the Brothers very conceitedly, that they are not well-behaved on the streets, and that they are unruly coming out of class and heading home ... People are indignant that they attend class and speak to the Brothers with their hats on'. (*Letters*, Vol.II, p.474)

¹⁸³ Témoignage du F. Théodose. *Textes complets des témoignage, dépositions et écrits reçus par le tribunal diocésain de Lyon (Octobre 1888 à Décembre 1890) lors du procès informatif « ordinaire » pour l'introduction de la cause de béatification et de canonisation de Marcellin-Joseph-Benoît Champagnat*. (Dix-huitième Session ; 4 février 1889, Palais archiépiscopal de Lyon)

¹⁸⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁸⁵ In the first Statutes of the Little Brothers of Mary, submitted for approval of the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs and for Public Instruction in Paris in 1825 by Archbishop de Pins and co-signed by forty Brothers (which would have been just about all of them at that stage), their method of instruction was named as that of 'the Brothers of the Christian Schools'. (The date of signing was 15 January and the place of drafting was named as

traditions of the pre-Revolutionary *petit écoles* – and the literature associated with this movement, most notably *L'Escole Paroissiale* of Jacques de Batencour and *Reglements pour les Ecoles de la Ville et Diocese de Lyon* of Charles Démia. Brother Jean-Baptiste's long treatise on education, also a major influence on the shaping of the *Guide* if for no other reason that it is largely from the pen of the same author and written just a few years before the *Guide*, drew widely from educational and spiritual writers.¹⁸⁶ Among the nineteenth century educationalists and catechetical theorists he cites directly or whose approaches are clearly evident are Felix-Antoine-Philibert Dupanloup,¹⁸⁷ César-Guillaume de La Luzerne,¹⁸⁸ Pierre-Antoine Poulet,¹⁸⁹ and Etienne-Michel Faillon.¹⁹⁰ He made frequent reference also to the writings of saints, masters of the spiritual life, and educational thinkers such as St John Chrysostom, St Augustine, St Francis de Sales, St Vincent de Paul, Alphonsus Ligouri, Jean-

Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, which on that date would have been just a half-erected building with no-one yet living in it!). In a statement indicating his own approval of these Statutes for the Diocese of Lyon, signed on 9 February 1825, the Archbishop indicated his 'lively interest' in this new congregation which he described in his letter of recommendation as 'the complement to the Brothers of the Christian Schools necessary for country districts and for the poor.' In the first Rule of 1837, the *Conduite* is recognised as a principal manual for the Brothers of Mary to study (cf. Art.32), something also attested in a letter of Marcellin (Letter 161). Various studies have explored the relationship between the *Guide* and the *Conduite*, e.g. Danilo Farneda's doctoral thesis on the *Guide* analyses it in some detail. Farneda Calgaro, D.L. (1993) *Guide des Ecoles 1817-1853, Estudio histórico-crítico*. Tesis doctoral presentada in Universidad Pontificia Salesiano. Brother Pierre Zind also traces sources of the *Guide*, especially from the various editions of the *Conduite*, in *Bx M. Champagnat, son œuvre scolaire dans son context historique*. Rome, 1991. See especially Ch.8.

¹⁸⁶ This is forensically examined by Brother André Lanfrey (2000) in *L'Enseignement du P. Champagnat et Des Premiers Supérieurs (1817-1872), 5ème partie: F. Jean-Baptiste, Traité sur Education*. Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae (the Society of Mary's collection of studies on Marist origins). The references that immediately follow have been informed in part by Lanfrey's research.

¹⁸⁷ (1802 -1878), Bishop of Orléans and member of the Académie française, Dupanloup was one of the leading intellectuals and ecclesiastics of his time. Educated in the same school which helped to shape Batencour centuries before (Saint Nicholas, of which Dupanloup was later in charge) and seminary studies at Saint Sulpice, he was immersed in the same spiritual and educational traditions from which Marist schooling emerged. In his educational writings (notably *Méthode Générale de catéchisme recueillie des Pères et Docteurs de l'Eglise et des Catéchistes les plus célèbres depuis St Augustin* and *De l'Education*, (3 volumes) he espoused active and critical thought in the learning process, the respect teachers should show students and the freedom to accord them, and the importance of a holistic education. Jean-Baptiste references him extensively, as he does also in 1868 in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*. Each of Dupanloup's works was published after the death of Marcellin.

¹⁸⁸ Active and well positioned both in church and politics before the Revolution, La Luzerne (1838-1821, and a Cardinal from 1817) played a part in it for a few months before the requirement for clergy to take the Constitutional Oath. Resigning his see, from then until the Bourbon Restoration he stayed outside of France. He preached and wrote extensively on matters of faith and morals, including on the evils of *incrédulité* – 'unbelief'.

¹⁸⁹ Jean-Baptiste's chapter on the spirit of a good school is taken almost entirely from an 1844 piece written by this school director. Poulet expounds on the preventative influence of a good milieu and well-educated teachers who can edify the students through their example and moderation in discipline.

¹⁹⁰ (1799-1870) A Sulpician priest who wrote on the history of the Sulpicians and their distinctive catechetical approach. Marcellin's own formation was much influenced by Sulpician-trained professors. Faillon's influence on Jean-Baptiste's writing is evident in Chapters 2 and 4 of his educational treatise, the text of which is also found almost word-for-word in the introduction to *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*.

Baptiste de la Salle, and tens of others, citing both from primary and secondary sources.¹⁹¹ He had much material from which to draw.¹⁹²

Jean-Baptiste's treatise, replete with references to this literature, spans thirty-eight chapters and an appendix. It is an impressive work, particularly if one considers the place and means of its composition. The first part, comprising sixteen chapters, is entitled *Moyens de faire le bien parmi les enfants* ('Means for doing good among children'). It is all about the 'how'. The second and third sections, grouped under the general title *De l'Education* ('Education') and then *Moyen d'Education, l'Instruction, Necessité de l'Etude* (Means of education and instruction; the necessity of study), provide a conceptual basis for Christian education, and further consideration of how to go about it. An initial glance may suggest that this magnum opus of Jean-Baptiste is something of a potpourri of educational and spiritual wisdom. It has a kind of structure, but it is repetitive, laboured in parts, and not always sequential. It would have benefited from the eye of a tough editor. But, from a deeper perspective it has both logic and power. These emanate from the recurrence of its themes, particularly on the purpose and value of Christian education, and the kind of schooling that would give effect to this. It is an instructive tome for in the search for the keys to the distinctive Marist approach.

In the late spring of 1853, at The Hermitage, the thirty-four delegates to the Second General Chapter of the Marist Brothers devoted just about all the two weeks they had available to them (16-31 May) to debating a draft of the *Guide des Ecoles*. Several copies had been circulated among leading Brothers for the previous year, and the final draft tweaked by the General Council. Now the capitulants went through the text, chapter by chapter, quibbling over words and phrases, voting on each point. It is fascinating to read the minutes of their twice-daily sessions,¹⁹³ not for so much for what was discussed and contested but for what was not. Their proposed alterations concern what seem to be minor things: the type of timber to be used in the desks and benches; the exact prayers to be said and when; which religious images would be on the walls; how many taps of the 'signal' meant this or that; the size of the classroom and the placement of windows; whether ten minutes or fifteen minutes should be devoted to a particular task; who should control the front gate; and so on. All very practical stuff. It is their silence on the major purposes of the school and its guiding pedagogical principles that is most telling. On these there was tacit unanimity. They knew what they were about.

¹⁹¹ André Lanfrey has identified up to 40 authors, in addition to scriptural and patristic sources, that are cited directly or indirectly by Jean-Baptiste. See, Lanfrey *L'Enseignement mariste*, pp.15-20. Among them are the Spanish Jesuit Alonso Rodriguez (1526-1616) and French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Saint Jure (1588-1657) who were quite influential in shaping the kind of spirituality that Marcellin nurtured in the first Brothers.

¹⁹² Between the 17th and 19th centuries there were hundreds of treatises published on education. In his critical introduction to the 1996 re-edition of the 1706 text, Br William Mann FSC claims that almost every pre-Revolutionary philosopher and essayist wrote on the subject. So, too, are debates on the subject of schooling mentioned almost without exception in the minutes of the councils of communes across the country. See, *The Conduct of Christian Schools. The Complete Works of John Baptist de la Salle* (Vol.6). Christian Brothers Conference: Landover MD. p.20

¹⁹³ The original French text of the *Guide* was re-printed in 2001, with an introduction by Brother Henri Vignau CG, and with the minutes of the 1853 session of the Second General Chapter (which was held in three sessions over 1852-1854) appended. Marist Brothers' General House, Rome.

This deceptively simple and eminently practical manual, *Le Guide des Ecoles*, was not a compendium of homespun wisdom accumulated from the experience of Marists in their first three decades at the chalkface, a kind of ‘tricks-of-the-trade’ resource compiled from a proverbial ‘university of hard knocks’. Its roots poke deeply into at least two centuries of educational discourse. Marcellin and the first Brothers were not just a group of good-willed young men who had the knack for teaching and for making connection with young people. Many of them did; some of them didn’t. Certainly, they did learn from their experience and hone their skills, and they did adopt pedagogical approaches that came from Marcellin himself who, it must be said, was a natural teacher. Like its antecedent, the Lasallians’ *Conduite*, from which it borrowed much, altered and re-ordered parts, and omitted others, the *Guide* did not shrink for being a quite prescriptive and detailed handbook: giving unambiguous directions, for example, for the daily class timetable, the type of classroom furniture, the dimensions of the classroom, how to enter and leave it, what was to be taught and how, extensive attention to religious instruction and faith formation, jobs and class responsibilities to be allocated to students, how teachers were to conduct themselves. It can read like a ‘teaching-for-dummies’ handbook. But its foundations and conceptual underpinnings are solid and wise.

What would render today’s Marist educators to be ‘dummies’ would be for them to jump to the detail of the original text, but to miss its major trees amidst all its context-specific leaves.¹⁹⁴ The trees are strong, noble and enduring. Their sap remains fresh and life-giving. It was the trees – the major principles of Marist methodology – on which the capitulants in 1853 seemed to have had no recorded disagreement. It had become so much part of them, tacitly but deeply, and indeed for Marist educators for the next century or more, that they did not feel much need to describe it in any kind of formal way. It is who they were.

In addition to its scholarly provenance, in practice the *Guide* worked. In faraway Sydney, twenty years later, the effectiveness of the Marist approach was soon apparent at St Patrick’s School in The Rocks. Within a couple of months of their start, the attitudes of the unruly, impious and illiterate band of young urchins whom Ludovic and his confreres had met on the first day were transformed to such a degree that Bishop Quinn of Bathurst remarked, ‘Devils had been changed into angels or wolves into lambs.’¹⁹⁵ It was not so much a ‘miracle’ as claimed by Bishop Quinn, but the effect of the distinctive style of education that the Marist Brothers brought to the school, the fruit of their training from the *Guide* and even more what they had imbued from their confreres. Ludovic’s own pen picks up some of the essence of it in a letter written later that year:

All the people here are astonished at the freedom between the Brothers and pupils, at the affection, so plain to see with which these friendly children surround us. You cannot go along the streets without seeing them running up to take our hands, receive a word or two, and a smile. When they are leaving school of an afternoon, all the

¹⁹⁴ Brother Pierre Zind’s encyclopaedic exploration of the origins of Marist education – *Bx Marcellin Champagnat, son oeuvre scolaire dans son contexte historique* – can be criticised on this point. His treatment of the *Guide* – in relation to the *Conduite*, the Marist Rule of 1837, and other sources such as Demia – is quite detailed. It is arguable, however, that Zind overlooks some of the larger themes of the text.

¹⁹⁵ Brother Alban Doyle (1972) *Marist Brothers in Australia 1972-1972*. Sydney: Marist Brothers. pp. 54-55.

*passers-by stop to see them march past in twos in silence from the school to George Street.*¹⁹⁶

The love of children and belief in them, the non-fearful and down-to-earth relationships, the good humour and lack of pretence, as well as the high expectations of students, are all recognisable as elements of a Marist style. Yet the guiding principles of this style had not been comprehensively codified. Aspects of its concrete expression were described – in the *Guide* – but often in ways that suited a particular time and place. Indeed, the *Guide* was to go through a number of editions over the next eighty years, and the Lasallians' *Conduite* even more so, as educational contexts changed.¹⁹⁷ The *Conduite* of 1906 bore little resemblance in structure to the original of 1720. With the Marists, the 1931 edition of the *Guide* was also very different from that of 1853. What the Lasallian tradition did develop which the Marists did not in the same way, was its statement of the 'Twelve Virtues of a Virtuous Teacher' by Brother Agathon,¹⁹⁸ even though that document was well-known to Marcellin and the founding generation. In a formal and published way it provided an integrated description of Christian education and Christian educators as La Salle wanted. For the Marists, such conceptual underpinnings or themes were to be found in the correspondence, journals, and unpublished writings and talks of Marcellin himself and Brothers Jean-Baptiste, François, and successive Superiors General, but only by inference in official texts such as the *Guide*.¹⁹⁹

It was not really until the late 1960s before there was a move to publish a more philosophical or conceptual rationale for Marist education, and to name its guiding methodological or pedagogical principles. Partly this was because there had been no concept of 'Marist education' per se. What the Marists did, indeed the reason for which they were founded, was *Christian* education. A book such as the *Guide*, an unpublished treatise such as that of Brother Jean-Baptiste, or later *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, described the way that *Christian* education should be done by the Marist Brothers. That sense is reflected in the title page of the *Guide*: '*Guide des Ecoles à l'usage des les Petits-Frères-de-Marie, rédigés d'après les règles et instructions du M. l'abbé Champagnat, Fondateur de cet Institut*' ['Schools Guide for the use of the Little Brothers of Mary, taken from the rules and instructions of Father Champagnat, Founder of this Institute']. That is, while there was a recognition that the Marists had a distinctive approach to Christian education and to the conduct of schools, there was not the modern sense of 'the Marist school' or of 'Marist education'.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.154.

¹⁹⁷ The *Conduite*, completed in 1706, had two editions (1720 and 1742) published before the Revolution. In the next century there were over twenty editions: in 1811, 1819, 1823, 1828, 1834, 1838, 1849, four in the 1850s, and another dozen before 1903. The first English edition was published in 1845 in Dublin and differed significantly from the French one. Fresh editions continued to be published as the education scene changed and the Brothers spread. Editions later in the 19th century and into the 20th departed quite substantially from earlier ones. The same happened for the Marists.

¹⁹⁸ Published in 1785 by the fifth Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, as Circular: *Les Douze Vertus d'un bon Maître*. These 12 traits had been named by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, but without any elaboration. In later editions of the *Conduite*, Brother Agathon's work (or later versions of it) were included as an appendix or as its own section, and came to be seen as part of the *Conduite* in many countries. See: Brother Gerard Rummery FSC's introduction to his 1996 translation of the work, <https://napcis.org/12VirtuesGoodTeacher.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹ A whole section on the qualities of the educator was included in later editions of the *Guide*, but this was not in the 1853 edition.

This began to change after the paradigm-shifting Brothers' General Chapter of 1967-68, and the encouragement of the Church for its spiritual families to re-discover their founding inspiration and to re-imagine it for the present time. From that Chapter came a document called 'The Apostolate', but it soon disappeared without making much impact. The next two General Chapters (in 1976 and 1985) each called for a new document on Marist education to replace the *Guide* which had fallen into disuse. The priorities of those Chapters and the General Councils that they elected were, however, largely elsewhere – more on the renewal of the Brothers' religious life and on the reorientation of their mission to be more inclusive of the poor and the marginalised.²⁰⁰ In response to need, driven not least by the increasing number Marist educators who were not Brothers and who were calling for formation and resources, it was left to individual Marist Provinces, regions and scholars to begin to develop a contemporary discourse of Marist education. The 1980s saw conferences, courses, books and other materials begin to appear, especially in Spain, Brazil and France, and in other countries. In the history of Marist education, these are quite significant because they reflected how Marist education was happening in practice and how people sought to describe it.

There are many examples that could be cited. One Spanish schema, for instance, named twelve essential features of Marist education.²⁰¹ First, were the four foundational elements of 'simplicity', 'presence and closeness to young people', 'work and constancy', with 'Mary as a reference point'. Within the Marist school, these features would be evident in four additional ways: in a 'family spirit'; in the 'involvement of all'; in 'attention to the neediest'; and in the 'proclamation of Jesus and his gospel'. Marist education also was seen to have a four-dimensional impact beyond the school, each concerned with developing a critical social conscience and a disposition to act from it. Finally, the authors propose the four qualities that should constitute the profile of the Marist teacher in the modern world. Such a person should be first a 'contemporary person', a person with 'feet on the ground', with a sense of history but in touch with the major social and intellectual movements of the day, and forward looking. Second, the person should be a professional, with thorough knowledge of particular disciplines, effective pedagogy, and up-to-date understandings of educational psychology. Third, a Marist teacher needed to have a sense of vocation with respect to teaching, something that manifested itself through a commitment to work and the development of the students, a concern for the nature of the relationship with the students, a concern always to witness to human and Christian values through good example, and an ability to work as a team member. Fourth, the Marist teacher needed gradually to come to know the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat to identify with it, to express it in everyday activity, and to integrate it into his or her own life and teaching. In their attempt to describe the *carácter propio* — the special or distinctive character — of Marist education the authors identify its *objetivo fundamental* as Marcellin's goal to help students to become 'good Christians and good citizens'. Marists who are familiar with the later text *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* would recognise some of the terminology that came to be included in that text.

²⁰⁰ For a more detailed account of these years, see *Dawn's Uncertain Light, History of the Marist Brothers (Vol. III)*, pp. 103-131

²⁰¹ *Marco Educativo Marista: El Carácter Propio en el Desarrollo Curricular*. Madrid: Delegación Nacional de Educación, 1992

Another initiative was sponsored by the Brothers' General Council in 1989: a small book authored by New Zealand Brother Gregory Ryan, called *A Guide for the Marist Educator*.²⁰² It followed on others such as that by Catalan Brothers Josep María Escorinhuela, Joan Moral and Lluís Serra six years before, *El Educador Marista*. That of Brother Greg drew on the recently-adopted Brothers' Constitutions of 1986 and his own experience of the Marist school. He proposed the three essential aims of Marist education to have: a sense of Jesus and his Church; a sense of person, with special love for the most neglected; and a sense of Mary, and a family-based spirituality. A 'Marist educator' needed to have: a sense of Jesus alive, by accepting Jesus as a real person in his or her life, by knowing Jesus and wanting to share him, by consciously belonging to a church community, and by being committed to the mission of the Church; a concern for all people but especially the most neglected, by his her own sense of self-worth, by a sense of fulfilment in society and wish to find a fulfilling role for others, by being socially critical, and by being ready to act and to work for a better society; and an ability to relate to others, by accepting Mary as model and mother, by sound family values, by being able to relate widely, and by living out a family/Marian spirituality. The strategies which followed were heavily anchored in a particular educational context, one most relevant to secondary schools of the late 1980s. It is, also an arguably confected synopsis, as is the Spanish schema. They did, however, affirm two important developments in the evolution of the thinking on Marist education that were taking place during the 1980s and 1990s. The first was the use of the term 'Marist educator', referring to all who taught in Marist schools, not only the Brothers. The second was to introduce 'spirituality' as a constitutive element of the Marist approach education, and to propose that this spirituality was shared by all Marist educators.

Another reference text, this one from France,²⁰³ prepared a few years later after the 1993 General Chapter and with reference to it, the 1986 Brothers' Constitutions, the writings of Brother Jean-Baptiste and other documents, distilled six characteristic educational values of the Marist school:

- *Simplicité*, which it saw reflected in the nature of personal relationships as well as in pedagogical practice
- *Espirit de famille*, which grew into certain educational attitudes such as inclusion, respect, hospitality, belief in every student, extended opportunities for students and teachers to form relationships, a warm ambience in the classroom.
- *Solidarité*, which began in mutual support at the level of faculty, and moved to showing special attention to the students most in need, to sowing hope among students, and to moving outside the school into further outreach.
- *Présence et écoute*, which expressed itself in the knowledge of each student and respect, being available, and having open eyes, hearts, minds and time for the young.
- *Pragmatisme et créativité*, drawing on the example of Marcellin and the first Brothers.
- *Annoncer l'évangile à la manière de Marie*, through living each day and teaching with Marian attitudes such as humility, simplicity, selflessness, respect, discretion, and listening to the will of God.

²⁰² Brother Gregory Ryan (1989) *A Guide for the Marist Educator*. Rome: Marist Brothers

²⁰³ Commission Provinciale d'Animation Pédagogique, *Texte référence de l'éducateur mariste*. Saint-Chamond Province de Notre Dame de l'Hermitage

Around the same time, and again just before the appearance of *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* in 1998, this author's own doctoral research identified a number of features that Marist educators self-identified as characteristic of the culture of Marist schools. 'Family' was found to be a root metaphor for this culture. Other core cultural traits included a maternal-like instinct for nurture, a disposition to simplicity, and a pro-active educative presence in the midst of young people. Several other qualities were found to be present, but less obviously or consistently expressed: a Christocentric approach to evangelisation, an explicitly Marial dimension, a love of work, a sense of family-school-church connectedness, and the encouragement of daring in leadership. This dissertation was one of a number that had appeared in the Marist world by the mid-1990s. The distinctive Marist educational approach was starting to become extensively defined and described.

It is telling that, despite the absence of a philosophical base-narrative or comprehensively developed pedagogical principles, beyond that which was contained in the limited and largely disused documents of the mid-nineteenth century, the living tradition of Marist education at the end of the twentieth century was turning up new formulations with remarkably consistent terminology and emphases. Any tradition, if it is to maintain both its vitality and its integrity, needs to continue to articulate its purpose and identity in the language of its time and in touch with the imperatives of its time. It was to this task that the Marists turned in the 1990s.

Before looking in more detail at what was emerge by way of description of a contemporary Marist educational style, there is still much to plumb from that early Marist experience and writing. Let us consider two quite different images of the ideal of the Marist educator, one just an incidental reference from the pen of Marcellin, the other a more considered discourse found in the notebooks of Brother François.

The first comes the oldest extant letter of Marcellin that we have, from December 1823. He is writing to Brother Jean-Marie Granjon in Bourg-Argental, and gives him an update on how things are going in some other places. One of those parishes is Tarentaise, from where the indefatigable and passionate Brother Laurent has been recently transferred. Marcellin includes a curious phrase in the letter:

Les enfants disent que le frère Laurent était bon enfant, mais que celui ici l'est encore plus. [The children reckon that Brother Laurent was a 'bon enfant', but the one there now is even more so.]

Hungarian Marist scholar, Brother Alexandre Balko, homed in on this expression of Marcellin – '*bon enfant*' – which he suggested be left in the original French.²⁰⁴ He proposed it as a way of describing the simplicity of the relationship between Laurent and his young charges – one that is open, unpretentious and friendly. A frequent theme in Balko's writings is that simplicity is the quintessential Marist trait.²⁰⁵ In this letter, rather than trying to find an English equivalent for the expression, Balko prefers to keep the two French words and to propose the

²⁰⁴ Brother Alexandre Balko, 'Marcellin Champagnat, a man of God for our times'. Unpublished article in *Reflections on Our Origins, An Anthology of selected articles, published and unpublished by Brother Alexandre Balko FMS*. Marist Brothers (Rome), 2001. p.71. In the English translation of the *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat* Vol.1 by Brother Leonard Voegtle, published in 1991, the expression 'bon enfant' is translated as 'nice guy'.

²⁰⁵ See, 'Simplicity', *ibid.*, pp.119-126.

term *'bon enfant style'* as characteristic of Marcellin's way of educating. Such a style, argues Balko, is self-evidently warm, relational and unpretentious. It is a Marist style that would be readily familiar to most Marist educators, and also capture something of the culture of the typical Marist school. But can we go further than Balko? The expression may imply more than this.

The key to understanding *'bon enfant'* is to recognise that it is a young-person's term. Marcellin is quoting the children of Tarentaise here. *'Bon enfant'* is their way of evaluating Laurent against their own criteria, in the same way the young people of all cultures and languages have their peculiar and often idiosyncratic terms for describing people whom they admire, respect, and like, people to whom they can relate easily and whom they find to be sincere. 'Cool', for example, has nothing to do with a person's body temperature; or 'sick', to take another contemporary expression sometimes used by young people, may have nothing to do with a person's state of health. The critical thing here is that the only criterion Marcellin has chosen to use for the effectiveness of Laurent in the little school at Tarentaise is the fact that the young people have accepted him as one of their own; they have judged him by their own standards.

Much is implied: genuineness, transparency, closeness to the students, fun, ability to communicate, presence in their midst. Above all, the centrality of interpersonal relationship for education is recognised, one that is affective and uncluttered. It is a rich concept, this *'bon enfant style'*. Thank-you, Brother Alexandre Balko, for suggesting it. It gives a distinctive flavour to the oft-quoted line of Marcellin 'To teach children, first you must love them, and love then equally.' *Love* can be an abstruse word; *bon enfant* grounds it and makes it real in time and place. The term also complements and helps to define the kind of 'brother' that Marcellin would have his teachers be. To relate to the students as older brothers to young brothers, to develop in the schools a 'family spirit', to have relationships that are defined by their simplicity and their closeness to the world of the young: these are timelessness Marist traits that a Marist of any age or gender would immediately recognise. Here they are played out in one of the first schools by one of the first Brothers.

Second, let us turn to an extended discourse on Easter that we find in one of François' notebooks,²⁰⁶ which he calls 'The Risen Jesus, a model of the religious teacher'.²⁰⁷ Drawing on Pauline theology, especially from Galatians and Colossians, François first develops the idea that all of us are raised with the Easter Jesus, that we are all now people of the resurrection. He expounds on what this means:

If we are truly resurrected with Jesus Christ, we must lead a whole new life, the kind of one that is of heaven ... so that the life of Jesus Christ alone may be apparent in us. That is to say, our life must be a pure life, a holy life, a mortified life, a life which faith nourishes, which hope sustains, which charity gives life; so that, being resurrected with

²⁰⁶ What we know as 'Manuscrit 308' (numbers 4 to 8 of his notebooks), pp.1297-1314.

²⁰⁷ It seems to be a conference that François gave one Easter, although the exact year is uncertain. From his analysis of the text, Br André Lanfrey feels that it is certainly an original text of François. It finds echoes in the original prospectus of 1824 (*Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, Part 1, Ch.12), Chapter 1 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, and the spirit of of Brother Jean-Baptiste's treatise on education.

*our Lord, living his life and being one and the same body with him, we can say like Saint Paul: I live, or rather, it is not I who live; it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.*²⁰⁸

François then explores several post-Resurrection Gospel passages in which Jesus appears, considering the manner in which Jesus interacts with people and teaches them: on the road to Emmaus; with the apostles gathered in Jerusalem; with Mary Magdalene in the garden; on the shores of the lake in Galilee. He does this through an evangelising lens, emphasising that it is each of us today who shares in the ministry of the resurrected Jesus as an educator. He describes this privileged role as ‘a holy and exalted ministry, a ministry which Jesus Christ has, in a way, deified.’²⁰⁹

He looks at the approach of the resurrected Jesus by focussing on the way that Jesus dispels fears, clarifies confusion, calms anxiety, and brings both peace and joy. He points out that Jesus does this by walking alongside, by sitting down at table, by simple conversation, and by being the one who cooks and serves. If Jesus reproaches his disciples – as he does for their paucity of faith – then he does it in ways that liberate them and give them hope. François urges his listeners to have the same approach as educators.

*Children sometimes experience a sense of confusion, fear and apprehension in the presence of a [teacher] ... It is important to destroy this painful feeling and to dispel any servile fears that tighten their hearts, restrain them, or engender an aversion and estrangement from school, and even from religion and its ministers. Following our Saviour's example, the teacher must reassure children, inspire them with confidence, and gain their affection. It means to enter the classroom and appear among them with a modest, simple, affable and considerate demeanour, to have a gentle and honest manner, and to behave with self-restraint and decency which show maturity of spirit, solidity of virtue, and esteem for the [role of teacher]. Children like to experience their teachers as pleasant people who exude kindness, goodness and respect. Above all, the teacher must strive to show great tranquillity, consistency, and equanimity of spirit and temper.*²¹⁰

François builds to the centrality of love as the fundamental element in education. He explains the kind of love he means, its drivers and its character:

*The love that a teacher should have for children is not that false love driven by soft condescension for whims and faults, which flatters or conceals these rather than challenging them, but a supernatural and divine love, a wise and firm love when necessary, which knows how to take the means to correct the faults of children effectively but without irritating. The teacher's love of children is only for the sake of God; it only values and esteems in them what faith reveals to us: the price of their soul redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ; their innocence, which makes them temples of the Holy Spirit; and their destiny, which is heaven and the possession of God.*²¹¹

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.1300

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.1305

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.1307

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p.1310

Lest we be inclined to think that François could be getting absorbed in his own theological rhetoric, and a little out of touch with the realities of the classroom, he recurringly reminds us – as so often did Marcellin – that he is well aware of what all this means in practice:

... the Brother teaches his pupils with zeal, but he expects in advance to find children who are not very open, to whom learning comes slowly, with difficulty; light and clumsy minds who apply little, forget quickly, and take nothing seriously; narrow minds, easily distracted, that conceive of things only roughly, and don't see beyond the immediate and the concrete. A Brother will know all this, and he will not get angry; but he will redouble his efforts, his zeal and his charity.²¹²

For this to happen, means and ends need to be in harmony; François turns to the familial ideal that was so important for Marcellin, thus grounding his elevated theology in a very human way:

Education is above all a work of the heart. A teacher who does not know how to love children is not suited to raising them. A hard heart, a bad heart, understands nothing of this ministry of education, which is all about charity, gentleness, and devotion. To raise a child is to act as the child's mother and father, with maternal and paternal affection. It is only by loving children that we can accept and bear the burden of educating them, which otherwise would be too heavy; the task impossible. But for the teacher who loves, everything is possible, the same as Our Lord says about the person who believes (Mark 9). Everything becomes easy and attractive to such a person. Even the most difficult tasks are undertaken without reluctance, almost without effort. The one who loves, says St Augustine, feels no pain because we do not feel pain when we love or, if we do, we love the pain. When you love, adds St Bernard, not only will you have no difficulty but it will be a pleasure and joy, because as soon as there is love, pain goes and there is only gentleness. What better example do we have of this than the hearts of fathers and mothers?²¹³

In these two descriptions – the theological essay from François, the other a little human quip from Marcellin – the affective dimension of Marist education is paramount. It all turns on the relationship between teacher and student. There is so much in both the formal and informal literature of the Marist founding period that could be cited to illustrate the same point – in Marcellin's correspondence and that of the Brothers, in the notebooks of François and Jean-Baptiste, in *Guide des Écoles*, in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, in *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat* by Jean-Baptiste's and in his treatise on education, and in other sources. Recurringly, the founders of the Marist educational tradition come back to the nature of this relationship, how to build it, to maintain it, and to use it to evangelise and to educate.

A raw textual data analysis of much of this body of literature, however, may not at first turn up the word 'love' or 'relationship' as its predominant theme. It is likely, rather, to come up with the word 'zeal'. Indeed, Brother François, in his introduction to the *Guide* in 1853, writes not only of the 'zeal' that Fr Champagnat modelled and expected, but amplifies it to 'ardent zeal'. The term then appears more than two dozen times in the text. We find it forty-four

²¹² *Ibid.* p.1311

²¹³ *Ibid.* p.1309

times in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, and just about the entire first half of Jean-Baptiste's treatise is concerned with zeal. One would be excused for wondering if these first Marist leaders felt that their followers were lazy and in need of extra impetus. Was this early emphasis on the need for zeal – and the associated term 'love of work' that is part of the Marist way – the source of an unhealthy activism in Marists?

A closer examination of how 'zeal' is described, and the textual contexts in which it appears, dispels this concern. In ministry with young people, extreme zealousness – or call it love of 'overwork' – can be a psycho-emotional pathogen when it is disconnected from love. That was not Marcellin, nor François, nor Jean-Baptiste, nor what we find in what was developed as the Marist approach in the founding period. When François urges the readers of the *Guide* to emulate the 'ardent zeal' of Marcellin, he prefaces it by writing of 'the love of God which filled his heart, and the tender affection he had for children'.²¹⁴ In his definition of 'zeal' for his treatise on education, Jean-Baptiste, drawing from St Vincent de Paul, writes of it first in terms of knowing and loving God, of an ardent love for one's neighbour, of service, of an 'enflamed desire' for the spiritual wellbeing and eternal goodness.²¹⁵ It is telling that he would draw from Vincentian concepts – so affective, so grounded, and so concerned with justice. He then devotes successive chapters to the qualities of the zeal that a Marist educator needs: one that is primarily concerned for the spiritual and material wellbeing of young people; that is prudent, patient, industrious, self-sacrificing, holy, humble, constant, and prayerful.²¹⁶ A chapter is devoted to describing how zeal must be 'doux'. The quality of 'douceur' – so important for Marcellin and which he drew conceptually from St Francis de Sales, as does Jean-Baptiste²¹⁷ – carries a sense of gentleness, sweetness, softness, delicacy, mildness, and geniality. It is the antithesis of imposition of self, hardness, rudeness, or an uncompromising pursuit of ends at the sacrifice of means.

Thus, the 'zeal' that figures so extensively in early Marist literature – and indeed in much of the spiritual and educational literature from which the first Marists drew – is a zeal born of love. It was a love that, as *Water from the Rock* puts it in its opening article, was 'a passion for God and a compassion for humanity'.²¹⁸ For love is passionate, of its very nature; it is of the heart. The *Guide des Écoles* – in its successive iterations from 1853 to 1931 – was nothing more or less than a way describing for Marist educators what this work of the heart should look like in practice. It is no surprise, then, that such a large proportion of it would be devoted to guidelines for how teachers should relate with students as they teach them.

In the original 1853 edition, the first chapters are concerned with establishing what Marcellin prized as calmness and tranquillity in the school: practical matters such as the enrolment students; the order of the day; the use of silence and the 'signal'; registers; the general demeanour of the teacher; keeping the students occupied; the little jobs or 'offices' that were allocated to various students; holidays.²¹⁹ Much of this reflects what was in Parts 1 and 2 of

²¹⁴ *Teacher's Guide* (1931 edition), p.ii

²¹⁵ *Apostolat d'un Frère mariste*, p.17.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* Chs. 4-10, 13-16.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.40-45 *passim*. Jean-Baptiste also refers to Jane-Frances de Chantal, close associated of Francis de Sales, and to a number of other saints and writers on spiritual and educational themes.

²¹⁸ *Water from the Rock*, #1.

²¹⁹ *Guide des Écoles*, Chs. I – X.

the *Conduite*, albeit re-ordered a little and put more succinctly. Then in Chapter XI, the subject turns to 'discipline'. By the time of the major revision of the *Guide* approved by the 1920 General Chapter, this single chapter had grown to number five chapters of the manual. To that, in 1931, the English edition had an additional appendix on 'classroom management' (one that remains eminently applicable to this day). The treatment of the topic of discipline or behaviour management reveals a central priority for the *Guide*. The actual craft of teaching was not left to chance; it was something to be honed and in a distinctive style.

In his introduction to the *Guide* (of which there is only a summary in the 1931 English edition), Brother François names five things that he judged to be the original and distinctive emphases of Father Champagnat in education. They are all concerned with ensuring the 'how' of what took place in the classroom. The first was the new method to teach reading; the third, fourth and fifth were: his method for teaching catechism and winning children's hearts to love Jesus; the inclusion of singing in the curriculum; and the importance of teacher education. The second was Marcellin's approach to discipline in schools. In describing 'the qualities and spirit' of 'a good discipline', François writes:

*Father Champagnat wanted firm discipline in the classroom, because it is an essential part of education, and without it the character and the will of the child remain unnurtured. But he wanted this discipline to be paternal. 'The purpose of discipline,' he said, 'is not to restrain children by force or fear of punishment, but to form their will, to move it gently towards good, to habits of regularity and of virtue, by religious sentiments and love of duty.' That is why he always stood so forcefully against abuses in the way that punishments were then commonly inflicted, and frequently recommended to his Brothers not to use them. 'Remember,' he said to them, 'that obedience and a sense of duty in children are not achieved by corporal punishment, but by moral authority, by dignified and invariably uplifting conduct, by an unbounded dedication to their education, and by a modest, serious and consistently even demeanour. Show yourselves to be their fathers rather than their masters, and then they will respect you and obey you without trouble.'*²²⁰

The authority of the Marist educator needed to be founded on a fourfold methodology according to the *Guide*: (a) moral authority and affection; (b) appeal to reason and conscience; (c) emulation; and (d) rewards.²²¹ The positive character of this approach is obvious; it amplifies the contents of the previous chapter on 'supervision', the general thrust of which was the benefits of being pre-emptive rather than reactive, in creating conditions and an environment – a culture, if you will – that were conducive to wholesome development of students.

Of the four elements of the Marist approach, the first one is arguably the most arresting for the way that it juxtaposes 'moral authority' and 'affection'. The inclusion of the former is unremarkable. Like the other three aspects of the preferred methodology, it is a universal trait of good leadership, good teaching, and good student management. The *Guide* names qualities such as dignity of character, being a person of virtue and principle, evenness of temper, impartiality, competence, the use of physical bearing and tone of voice. It suggests

²²⁰ *Guide des Écoles* (1853 edition), pp.7-8.

²²¹ *Teacher's Guide* (1931 edition), Ch.XI.

that some teachers have such traits naturally, and that all can learn them. But linking moral authority with 'affection'? Here is something that is very much from Marcellin. It is, however, a nuanced concept:

Pupils are moved by motives of affection for their teacher when the teacher refrains from anything that might offend them, and strives to behave well and work diligently in order to win their approbation and praise. The characteristic essential of good discipline consists in winning the affection of the pupils, and the infallible means of securing this, is to love them. 'To educate children properly,' said the Venerable Champagnat, 'We must love them, but we must love them all alike.' We need only refer to his biography in order to find these words: 'The spirit existing in the Brothers' schools should be similar to that which animates the family.'

To promote affection is self-evidently a precipitous approach. It is not necessary to have been through the scarring experience that the exposures of sexual, emotional and physical abuse in the Church has brought in recent decades to appreciate this. The first Marists were aware of it. While Marcellin did not shrink from frequent use of quite affective language and emphases, he was careful as to what he meant and did not mean. The *Guide* captures some of this:

But the kind of love a Brother should manifest towards his pupils is not a partiality for their changing fancies, nor a foolish satisfaction in their winsome ways, their artlessness, or their innocence. To love the pupils from natural motives such as these is inadequate, as it is the origin of favouritism, and may even lead to serious subversion; and in any case, it is too feeble a prop to afford support in times of difficulty which are not uncommon in the life of a teacher ... Besides, it must not be imagined that to win the hearts of the pupils and to gain their affection, it is necessary to fawn upon them, to be blind to their failings, to concede every request, to allow them to become familiar, or to flatter and touch them. Such means are better fitted to spoil the pupils rather than to win their affection; and, instead of being loved, teachers who employ these means are more likely to be despised.

The *Guide* then cautions against both excessive severity and excessive kindness, both sourced in personal inadequacy, insecurity or immaturity of the teacher. Teachers who seek to have their own needs served in some way by their students are potentially harmful people.

The next chapter of the text becomes more concrete as it considers how to 'correct' students. This had long been a subject treated by French educational manuals, and was also a major focus of the *Conduite*. The *Guide* describes a threefold duty of the teacher on this subject: (a) to prevent faults, (b) to punish rarely, and (c) to be dispassionate when administering punishment. Frequent or harsh punishments were seen to be harmful:

Children should be kept in their natural disposition, which is one of joy and confidence; otherwise their minds will become clouded and their spirits crushed. The lively become exasperated and the dull, stupid. Fear, like a drastic remedy, is to be used only in

*extreme cases. It purges, but it impairs the constitution and debilitates its powers. A mind constrained by fear is invariably weakened by it.*²²²

The text also provides the salutary advice to teachers that, when children misbehave, they are 'seldom culpable' because their misbehaviour is usually the result of the 'neglect of those in charge of them'. It is on the topics of dispassion, moderation, and means that compromise ends that the *Guide* is strongest:

In reprimands and punishments, a Brother ought to possess his soul in peace and never display signs of anger or bad temper. Prompted by feelings of anger the punishment of a pupil is no longer a correction but a vengeful act. In the first place, this is contrary to our Rule. Further, it is imprudent, for if the pupil resents and resists or is insolent, the teacher being in a flurry, is liable to use expressions greatly to be deplored, and sometimes even to exceed the bound of moderation. Moreover, it is useless, because the pupil feels that the teacher is actuated by passion and not by dignified firmness, and in such circumstances the correction, already bitter in itself, becomes unbearable and harmful ... A Brother should never be afraid to say to a pupil: 'I shall not correct you today, or just now, because I feel too angry.'

Besides being rarely imposed as well as moderately and calmly applied, punishments should moreover be just in themselves, be proportionate to the offence, and be kindly and prudent.

With regard to punishments termed corporal such as striking the pupils with the hand or with anything else, it is sufficient to say that they are strictly prohibited by our Common Rules: 'All such actions are opposed to charity and denote passion.' Likewise, depriving a pupil of meals, of consecutive play intervals or of successive walks, keeping a child too long in any tiring position, standing or kneeling, or in the cold, are excesses which are evidently prohibited. Our Venerable Founder was unremitting in his efforts to banish such methods from our schools. In doing so he was opposing the customs of the country and the spirit of the times in which he lived when corporal punishment was still recognised. This is a proud distinction which we should endeavour to preserve for our Institute in whatever country we may be, and notwithstanding the customs prevailing in the locality. We read in the life of our Founder that he regarded corporal punishment as a serious abuse, and declared that a Brother of harsh and violent temper, who would readily strike the pupils or ill-treat them by abusive words was ill-fitted for the work of a teacher.

The matter of corporal punishment is an important one because, in his absolute prohibition of it, Marcellin consciously went further than the Lasallian *Conduite*,²²³ which in its turn had gone further than Batencour's *Escole Parroissiale*, or many of the other sources available to him.²²⁴ To be so deliberately counter-cultural reflects how deeply this was a conviction of

²²² *Ibid.* p.41

²²³ Later editions of the *Conduite* were to adopt the same stance, but the latest one available to Marcellin (that of 1838) still had provision for the use of corporal punishment.

²²⁴ In *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* there are references to no fewer than 195 authors, theologians, saints and others, in addition to Scripture and doctrine.

Marcellin. The last chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, particularly Chapter 38 ('The respect we owe a child') and 41 ('What is a teacher'), develop this at length. This book, published just three years before his death, can be seen as both a culmination and crystallisation of the scholarship of Brother Jean-Baptiste, in his bringing a lifetime's Marist experience into dialogue with the wisdom of centuries. For example, in describing the marks of the Christian educator, he brings together the originality of Marcellin's 'family spirit' as a descriptor of the school's characteristic 'spirit', with the paternal and maternal approaches of the *Conduite*, and the beautiful imagery César de La Luzerne as he describes the ministry of Christian education:

The work of education means paternal care, pastoral devotedness, and enthusiasm. Schools are a family, a Christian family. God is present, and the authority of God, which is fatherly and motherly to the highest degree, is there. Yes, in a school like that, one is primarily concerned with souls, to win them over to God.

From what we have just said, it should be clear that the ministry of the Christian educator is very noble, very exalted and very difficult. In point of fact, imparting a good education is no easy business, and it does not happen automatically ... It is not enough simply to throw into a soul the seeds of virtue; they must be cultivated with care, constancy and intelligence, until one has harvested their fruit. It is not enough just to teach religious principles; they must be deeply engraved. It is not enough to make the gospel known; one must make it loved.

What a combination of seemingly irreconcilable qualities this great undertaking demands!

authority which grants all the freedom needed to develop character, but which refuses what might spoil it: gentleness without weakness; severity without harshness; seriousness without brusqueness; kindness and good-naturedness without familiarity; a great desire for success tempered by a patience which nothing can dishearten or discourage; a vigilance which nothing escapes, with a wisdom which often seems to overlook things; reserve which does not detract from frankness; firmness which is never opinionated; wisdom for discerning inclinations, without ever showing its hand; prudence which knows what to excuse and what to punish and the right moment to do each; cleverness which never degenerates into slyness, and which influences others' minds without antagonizing them; a pleasant manner which makes lessons enjoyable without detracting from their solidity; a sensitivity which evokes love, coupled with an exactitude and justice which inspire respect; a humility which adapts itself to others' inclinations without favouring them too much; skill in using certain inclinations to overcome others, and in strengthening the good ones and weakening the bad; far-sightedness which anticipates dangerous situations; presence of mind which is never disconcerted by unexpected happenings.²²⁵

The person of the educator is thus central to what Marist education is all about. Marist education is what Marist educators do, and how and why they do it. The key is to have genuinely Marist people as educators. This is something we will take up in the final chapter.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* pp.357-58.

Importantly, also, the Marist educator was never to be a lone ranger. It is of the nature of any Marist educational endeavour that is a communal undertaking.²²⁶ Taking a lead from Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, Marcellin insisted that his Brothers did not work alone or in isolation.²²⁷ In practice, this went as far in the Guide as the provision that the wall between classrooms contain glass panels so that the Brothers would retain visual contact with one another, something that remained a feature of all Marist classroom design until recent decades. It was more than a practical safeguard, as attested by the contents of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* where there is many more chapters given to the nature of the way the Brothers should relate with one another than there is to their educational approach.

That is, Marist education is not only about the relationship between teachers and students, but also, and prior, the relationship among teachers.²²⁸ The term *frère* [brother] was widespread in the French church in Marcellin's time, and was applied to a number of functions from sacristan, pastoral associate, social worker, to teacher, to monk.²²⁹ Marcellin's use of the word aligns most directly with La Salle's sense, which was founded first on the educators as brothers to one another. As Marist education has expanded to include women as well as men, there remains considerable grace and power in a sense of their being brothers and sisters to one another. And we must always remember the scriptural and ecclesial origins and use of these words.

With all of this affective emphasis on the spirit of a Marist school's being a 'family spirit', and the centrality of personal relationships between teacher and student, and among teachers, and even more broadly in the school community, it can sometimes be overlooked that Marcellin was just as concerned to see results, academic results, in the schools. He wanted Marist education to be as *effective* as it was *affective*. He did not shrink from promoting a little league-table competition on occasion to help to pursue this end. Brother Jean-Baptiste tells us that each year, the Brothers were required to bring to their annual summer holiday at the Hermitage a copy of each student's writing at the start and end of the academic year. These were judged by a committee, awards given, the schools ranked, and best teachers and students recognised. Competition was strong, so much so that there needed to a process of authentication that no Brother was being deceptive with the exemplars he produced.²³⁰

²²⁶ The Marist Brothers' Constitutions of 2020, retaining the expression used in the 1986 Constitutions, state simply: 'Ours is a community apostolate'. (*Constitutions* #51).

²²⁷ In the Lasallian approach, the concept of 'association' was fundamental, and remains so. In the time of Marcellin, this meant that communities of fewer than four were not allowed. La Salle did, however, give in principle approval for a parallel society of Brothers who would live and work alone in small villages, something that did not come to pass, but also something that never figured in the schema of Marcellin.

²²⁸ Brother Maurice Bergeret named three characteristic elements of Marist education: first, a pedagogy of closeness to students; second, a pedagogy of what he calls *créativité et projet* [a sense of innovation, daring and purpose]; and, third, a pedagogy of the 'educational team' and 'educational community'. See Bergeret, M. (1993) 'The Marist Teaching Tradition'. *Marist Notebooks*. #4. Pp.63-82.

²²⁹ An interesting sentence appears in the notes of Antoine Bourdin SM who interviewed Marcellin in about 1828 about the start of the Brothers just over a decade before. Bourdin quotes Marcellin in reference to Jean-Marie Granjon whom Marcellin had to convince to move into the new house at Lavalla: '*le frère ne s'appelait pas frère*'. The sense is that Jean-Marie, who was already doing charitable work in the parish and was known as a 'brother', did not want to become a 'Brother'.

²³⁰ See *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, pp.520-21.

Perhaps the best window into Marcellin's focus on effective pedagogy is provided by the early Marist approach to the teaching of reading.

Literacy was and is a foundation stone of an egalitarian, engaged and educated society. Western social advances from the time of the Enlightenment forward have been the fruit of a literate society, and they have been successful to the extent that there has been universal literacy, and a liberal orientation to education more generally. Nowhere was this a conviction more or earlier than in France, from where are our Marist educational intuitions took shape. To be illiterate is to be disenfranchised from critical and shaping engagement in society. It is to be marginalised, an underclass.

Similarly, in the post-Temple Judeo-Christian tradition, literacy has been fundamental for forming inclusive communities of faith, ones that gather around the Word and draw life from the Word. Arguably, one of the deep roots of clericalism in the Church was fertilised by the persistence of a literate elite, of which the clergy and monks formed a major part. Father knows best. Yet *all* of us are people of word. And we are all people of the Word. The convergence of literacy and Christian community is exemplified no more powerfully in the last century than through the emergence of liberation theology, prompted by prophetic pedagogues such as Paolo Freire.

It is telling, therefore, that a major pedagogical priority of the first Marist educators was the effectiveness of their teaching of literacy, and their readiness to apply both the latest in educational theory and the learnings of their own action research to it. Both François, in his introduction to the *Guide des Écoles* in 1853, and Jean-Baptiste in *The Life* three years later, identify the Marists' method for the teaching of reading as one of several emphases of the Founder which defined their way of education. Marcellin, who had struggled as a young child with learning to read, later wanted to find out why, so he did his own research into it. He brought the outcomes of his research to a committee of Brothers, and together they devised a new method.²³¹ This direct and insistent intervention of the Founder found him at loggerheads with several of the leading Brothers in 1828 to the extent that they parted company with the Institute.²³² It matters little today on what the pedagogical argument turned;²³³ the more significant point is that there *was* a debate about pedagogy among these early Marist educators. After ten years' experience with the Marist method, in 1838 Marcellin published a textbook for the schools called *Nouveaux Principes de Lecture à l'usage des Frères de Marie* [New Principles of Reading for the use of the Brothers of Mary].²³⁴ This book

²³¹ *Ibid.* p.522

²³² It can be surmised that they did so because Marcellin's method was a departure from the method used by the Brothers of the Christian Schools (de la Salles) as described in the *Conduite* and widely accepted as best practice. This is a view suggested by Br Maurice Bergeret, see: Bergeret, M. (2005) 'The Method of Reading', *Marist Notebooks*, No.22, p.73.

²³³ The essence of it was to use phonics in the teaching of reading, and also the new pronunciation of consonants, which was a decisive move away from the traditional method of using spelling and the sound of single consonants based on their Latin pronunciation. Bergeret (2005) considers this in more detail, describing the traditional method and the debate at the time that surrounded it.

²³⁴ *Nouveaux Principes de Lecture à l'usage des Frères de Marie* Lyon : Chez Fr. Guyot, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1838. 36 pages. A facsimile is included in Bergeret's (2005) article. Later editions were simply called *Principes de Lecture*.

continued to be revised, to the extent that by the end of 1916 there had been no fewer than forty-two editions of it!²³⁵

Beyond the teaching of reading, good classroom practice more generally was a major preoccupation for Marists through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth – measured by results, by student industriousness, and by the reputation of individual teachers and schools.²³⁶ The teaching of religion was, unsurprisingly, a topic of particular attention, based on the documentary evidence we have; there was a continual search for the most efficacious methods and a celebration of success. The self-concept of the Brothers collectively was that they were educators, and that their effectiveness as classroom practitioners – as teachers and evangelisers – mattered a great deal to them. To form good Christians and good citizens, they wanted to be expert teachers and catechists. If modern day Marists were to drift too far from these intuitions, they would not be faithful to the founding charism of St Marcellin Champagnat.

Purpose and identity, ends and means, again come into focus. There would be no Marist education, as Marcellin envisaged it, if purpose were to be mollified by identity, or ends clouded by means. That said, a ‘distinctive Marist style’ or ‘distinctive pedagogical approach’ – as *In the Footsteps of Marcellin* puts it²³⁷ – has developed and has been valued in Marist discourse from the beginning. It is essential that it has, for this is the Marist ‘way of inculturating the Gospel,’²³⁸ and it is the Gospel of Jesus that provides both the purpose and identity, the end and the means, of Marist education. We can recall that a distinctiveness about ‘the how’ was important for Marcellin himself: he resisted four separate attempts to have him amalgamate with other foundations of teaching brothers, and the founding generation invested so much into developing and articulating their particular pedagogical/catechetical approach and publishing their own textbooks.

How best to describe that style today? What kind of conceptual framework to employ, if indeed one need be? Which words to use? Here we wade into tricky waters, for there have been various models and sets of descriptors developed to answer such questions, and to provide Marist educators with a lexicon for describing how they do what they do. The currently canonised one is the 1998 edition of *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today*.²³⁹ It names five characteristics of a distinctively Marist pedagogical approach. Its comprehensive process of international consultation and writing between 1995 and 1997, and its formal approval by a General Chapter of the Marist Brothers, gives it a status equivalent to the *Guide* that was similarly approved at this level. At the same time, there have been in recent decades, both before and since the appearance of *In the Footsteps*, other worthy publications and research projects that have sought to describe

²³⁵ The announcement of the 42nd edition is contained in a Circular of the Superior General, 11 November 1916.

²³⁶ Circulars of Superiors General (notably François and Théophile, but all of them), the *Guide* itself through its various revisions and editions through to 1920, the published writings of Br Jean-Baptiste through to *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* in 1868, the notebooks of François, the textbooks in use in the Institute all provide ample formal evidence of this. The *Annales* of Brother Avit, through to 1891, give a clear message as to what was prized in Brothers and what was judged harshly; effectiveness as a teacher was very high among the tacit criteria of Avit.

²³⁷ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, Charter; #97

²³⁸ *Idem*.

²³⁹ It is recognised that this text is currently under review at the time of writing.

contemporary Marist educational style. Spanish, French and Australian examples have been cited above, proposing between three and twelve characteristics. Others have been published in Latin America.²⁴⁰ In 2010, the committee of the Network of Marist Institutions of Higher Learning circulated, with the approbation of the then Marist Superior General and following some years of consultation, a list of eight elements of Marist pedagogy at the tertiary level.²⁴¹ In 2011 a text was published by the Marist General Administration on the Marist approach to youth ministry.²⁴² From another perspective, it can be argued that the spiritual intent of Marist education should not be lost in any description of its style, and that the three spiritual attitudes advocated from the founding time – simplicity, humility and modesty – should be the fundamental descriptors. For a similar reason, people may want to highlight the six characteristics of Marist spirituality that were named in *Water from the Rock* in 2008.

So which ones are the definitive descriptors of Marist pedagogy? Which are correct? The answer is all of them, to the degree that they have come from women and men who are well-formed and well-informed Marists. Marist education has grown organically within the Marist community rather than being created from first-principles as an integrated educational philosophy; it resists corraling into any neat conceptual framework. For the same reason, there can be no definitive number of characteristics – three, five, six, eight, twelve or some other number. It would be an artifice to propose some kind of nicely balanced or symmetrical schema, for it is a living tradition and it draws its authenticity from an enduring community of people – the Marists – who are educating in many different contexts. Its integrity is sourced to a large degree in this vitality.

It is better to recognise that any set of descriptors provides just one prism among others for refracting the light of how Marists go about making Jesus known and loved among young people. The words and terms can legitimately vary and evolve, depending on the locale, the priorities, the emphases of one line or ministry or another, or the hermeneutical angle from which the subject of Marist education is being approached.²⁴³ A great disservice to Marist

²⁴⁰ For example, *Modelo Marista de Evangelización* (Cuarta redacción) published in 2015 by the Province of Santa María de los Andes (Bolivia, Perú, Chile) (Editor: Br Mariano Varona). This book centres Marist pedagogy very much that of Jesus in the Gospels, and has a Christocentric emphasis. The spirituality that comes from Marcellin gives Marists both inspiration and identity in this work, marked especially by its Marian style and purpose, as well as distinctively Marist traits that come from the ‘little virtues’, and a sense of community, continual renewal and a preferential option for those on the margins. (##50-85).

²⁴¹ International Network of Institutions of Higher Learning (2010) *The Marist Mission in Higher Education*. The eight characteristics are: Marian pedagogy; pedagogy of love; pedagogy of integral formation; pedagogy of family spirit; pedagogy of presence; pedagogy of simplicity; pedagogy of love of work; pedagogy of a practical and innovative spirit.

²⁴² *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth* was the product of the work of an *ad hoc* international commission over several years. While concerned with ministry with young people more broadly than only in schools, it situates itself within the broader project of Marist education. It cites the five characteristics of the Marist approach named in *In the Footsteps* (in paragraphs 122-134, except that it expands ‘simplicity’ to ‘simplicity, humility and modesty’), but it is more discursive and multi-sourced in canvassing the principles and methodologies for Marist youth ministry. It draws widely from the literature of Catholic youth ministry and presents a description of MYM that is somewhat more eclectic than that described in Chapters 5 to 7 of *In the Footsteps*. Like, *In the Footsteps*, it is, however, clear on the evangelising purpose of MYM, and is quite Christocentric in its purposes.

²⁴³ See, for example, the author’s 2014 book *Marist Education Since 1993, its vitality and potential. Marist Charism and Educational Principles Collection, Vol. 3*. Curitiba (Brazil): Editora Universitária Champagnat. This book was published as a text for the international course on Marist education offered by Pontifícia Universidade

education has been done in some quarters when the five characteristics of Marist pedagogical style named in *In the Footsteps* have been described as the five ‘pillars’ of Marist education. That they are certainly not, nor are they presented that way on any page of the text which is careful to root Marist education in the gospel of Jesus, and to present this as a gospel of love.²⁴⁴ That is the only pillar of Marist education.

There are, nonetheless, some descriptors of the Marist way that have deep roots and time-honed usage among Marist educators. They are now part of their collective self-concept. More than that, there is a valid intentionality in the use of these terms, so that they become prescriptive and not just descriptive of Marist education. They have been distilled through two centuries of practice. An example of a such a concept is ‘family spirit’. This comes from Marcellin himself, who wanted his first Brothers to show both a maternal and paternal care of young people, in contrast to the much more capricious prevailing approach that then operated in many school settings in villages and small towns. It has grown into an essential cultural feature of every genuinely Marist educational institution or project. Marcellin originally put it this way:

*The spirit in a brothers' school should be that of a good family, not that of a barracks or a prison. What stands out in a good family are mutual respect, love and confidence, not fear of punishment. Anger, brutality and harshness are inspired by the devil to destroy the fruit of the good principles imparted to the child. Just as weeds choke the wheat, so does cruel treatment stifle the good attitudes which your teaching and good example can enkindle in the children's hearts.*²⁴⁵

*‘Be a father; no, that is not enough – be a mother,’ was how Fénelon put it; and that said it all. St. Paul said it before him: ‘We are not tutors, we are fathers; I was among you as a father, speaking to you tenderly as to my own children.’*²⁴⁶

In the Footsteps broadens Marcellin’s idea of ‘being a father and mother’ to say that members of the Marist school community ‘relate to one another as members of a loving family would intuitively do’, thus including the full range of familial relationships.²⁴⁷ In doing so, it builds on Marcellin’s fundamental dictum concerning the educators’ starting point as love of their students. It also extends the family-styled relationships between teachers and students to refer to all relationships in the school community, including among staff members. Indeed, especially, or at least firstly, among staff members. The expression ‘family spirit’ is found eighteen times in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, but only one of these mentions applies to the

Católica do Paraná. It explores Marist education from five perspectives: anthropological; sociological; pedagogical; ecclesial; spiritual.

²⁴⁴ Cf. *In the Footsteps* refers to the Gospel no fewer than 50 times in the text, and employs the word ‘love’ 124 times.

²⁴⁵ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.52. This is a verbatim extract from what appears in *The Life (Part 2, Ch.22)*. p.532.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, from the last chapter entitled ‘What is a teacher?’ François Fénelon (1651-1715), Archbishop of Cambrai, is one of the writers that Jean-Baptiste cites in this important chapter. Fénelon – a leading churchman, academic and theologian of his day – was a champion of compassionate education and leadership, noted among other things for his advocacy against Jansenism. It is interesting that Jean-Baptiste (and probably Marcellin) quotes him because his best-known educational work and his reputation more generally concerned the education of girls. At the time, the Marists only educated boys.

²⁴⁷ *In the Footsteps*, #107.

classroom or school. Every other reference is concerned with the attitudes of the Brothers among themselves. Similarly, in *The Life of Marcellin* and every other formal text from the founding period, the expressions ‘family spirit’, ‘good family’, ‘paternal’ and ‘maternal’ as well as ‘fraternal’ are used mostly of the relationships of the adults among themselves.²⁴⁸ We have seen above that ‘family spirit’ is characteristic element of Marist *spirituality*, drawn particularly from the Johannine scriptures. A Marist pedagogical style that is not sourced both from a genuine experience of family among staff and from a spiritual base is not what Marcellin had in mind.

There is much to be plumbed from this metaphor of the Marist school, arguably its root metaphor. Families – the ‘good families’ to which Marcellin referred – are sourced in, defined by, and sustained primarily by love. Not love as an abstract concept, but experienced in real and living relationships, with all their ups and downs, joys and hurts, successes and failures. Families live in homes. Families are hospitable. Families are inclusive; there is a place for everyone at the table. You are known in your family – no hiding behind a mask – and you are loved for who you are. To be excluded from a family is a big deal. In good families, there is rarely a confusing of the person themselves with what that person may have done or not done. Families need trust, mutual respect, forgiveness and reconciliation to stay together.

All of those elements are named by *In the Footsteps*,²⁴⁹ but perhaps one thing is missing that has been named in other texts and emerged in the research of this author: nurturance, a maternal-like nurturing of young people.²⁵⁰ It is not only a belief in them, in their goodness and potential, but a gentle yet persistent accompaniment to ensure they reach it. These comments come from subjects in that research:

‘This place is different from other Catholic schools I’ve been in. It’s a curious thing, really, and you don’t understand it till you’re in it. Our expectations on students are higher, yet we’re far less legalistic about it. There’s more of a freedom; it’s less sharp than [another Catholic tradition]. Even with [name of former principal] who was tough, there was always that ability to let go of the letter of the law. His rules were strict, but kids always came before rules. That’s because you know them, and therefore you understand them. Yes, you want the best for them, but you don’t alienate them in getting it.’

One teacher interpreted this bias for maternalism, even indulgence, as a singularly Marist quality:

‘I taught in two of their [another religious order’s] schools. I wasn’t comfortable in either of those places. Since I came here, I found something different, very different. And perhaps it’s the way staff support one another, and the witness of the Brothers. They have a more simple approach, more down to earth. We really look after the

²⁴⁸ Brother Maurice Bergeret argues is that the character of ‘the educational team’ and the nature of ‘community’ among the staff of the school is one of the three essential elements of Marist pedagogy. See Bergeret, M. (1993) ‘The Marist Teaching Tradition’. *Marist Notebooks. No.4. Pp.63-82*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* ##108-109.

²⁵⁰ A major finding of the doctoral research of the author, completed just before *In the Footsteps* was published, was that Marist educators identified this as one of the most distinctive elements of the culture of Marist schools. Cf. Green, M.C. (1997), *The Charismatic Culture of Marist Schools in the Province of Sydney*, Dissertation submitted in the Faculty of Education, University of Sydney. pp.144-45.

students, perhaps we even mother them too much — that’s how we interpret the Marist way.’

Another saw it as a loyalty to and persistence with students that, again, was essentially maternal:

‘The difference between [this school] and [another school] is that here a student is wrapped around in a total cocoon of care, like a mother would, but over there, even though it is a very good school, the care wasn’t there because ultimately the girls were by themselves. Kids are not by themselves here. We would have a real sense of failure if a kid were to feel that.’²⁵¹

The words may be different, but the sentiments align clearly with those of Chapters 4, 5 and 9 to 12 of *The Teacher’s Guide* which, curiously enough, it is unlikely that any of these three teachers had ever read. It says a great deal about the enduring power of a living culture.

Two other characteristics named in *In the Footsteps* are also universally mentioned in contemporary Marist texts and recognised as quintessential elements of the Marist style: *presence* and *simplicity*. They need to be seen together with *family spirit*. None of these cultural traits, or any other that is used about Marist pedagogical style, can be understood on its own; they are mutually defined.

Presence is perhaps best approached by a term not mentioned in *In the Footsteps*, but frequently used in Marist discourse: ‘pedagogy of presence’.²⁵² In essence, this has the sense that we teach who we are. As *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* turns in its last seven chapters to consider the ‘august ministry’ of the educator, which the book describes as ‘the holiest’ of things a person could do,²⁵³ Brother Jean-Baptiste begins by quoting Marcellin:

*We want ... to give children a complete education. To do that, we must be teachers. We must live among the children and they must spend a great deal of time with us.*²⁵⁴

In a mid-winter letter to a discontented Brother Barthélemy, someone who struggled in the classroom and with people more generally, Marcellin encouraged him with these words:

²⁵¹ *Idem*.

²⁵² Perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of this concept has been offered by Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún in his 2014 book *Pedagogia da Presença Marista*, Curitiba: Grupo Marista. Estaún traces the origins of this distinctive Marist trait at the time of the founding, through its concretisation in the *Guide* and revisions of the *Guide*, through to its expression in documents of more recent times. He centres on the quality and nature of the encounter between teachers and students, and links pedagogy of presence to family spirit and simplicity.

²⁵³ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.309

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.301.

*I also know that you have many children in your school; you will consequently have many copies of your virtues, because the children will model themselves on you, and will certainly follow your example. What a wonderful and sublime occupation you have! You are constantly among the very people with whom Jesus Christ was so delighted to be ...*²⁵⁵

It is a revealing letter both because it indicates something that was at the heart of education for Marcellin – the personal example of the teacher – but also because it shows Marcellin's faith in Barthélemy who was no paragon of pedagogy. Like all of us, he was someone whose patience was tested at times, who was hurt by ingratitude, who knew unfairness, who grew tired and disheartened. Yet it was he who Marcellin said had a 'sublime' task, one he shared with Jesus. And the most effective method at his disposal, according to the Founder? His presence.

The presence to which Marcellin called him was also quite intentional. He told Barthélemy that being with young people would allow him to show them what God's love for them looked and felt like. That is, the presence was fundamentally an evangelising dynamic. In *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Marcellin is quoted to say that the teacher is called to be a 'living gospel':

*Saint Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy, 'Be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith, and your purity ... Take great care about what you do and what you teach; always do this, and in this way you will save both yourself and those who listen to you' (1 Tim 4:12,16). A Brother's first duty is to teach the children by his example; his actions should be a sort of continual catechism which teaches the children to live in a Christian manner. He should present himself as a living gospel, in which each student can read how to live in order to imitate Jesus Christ and be a perfect Christian. In a word, a Brother should live in such a way that he may say to those whom he teaches what Paul said to the faithful: 'Take me for your model, as I take Christ.' (1 Cor 11:1).*²⁵⁶

In the Footsteps puts it this way:

We educate above all through being present to young people in ways that show that we care for them personally. We make time for them beyond merely professional contacts, getting to know each one individually. Personally, and together as a group of adults, we seek to establish relationships with them, founded on love, which create a climate for learning in an educational setting, for passing on values, and for personal growth.

*We seek to immerse ourselves in the lives of the young. Our instinct is to engage the world of the young by going out to meet them in their own space and through their own culture. We create opportunities to become involved in their lives, and welcome them into ours. In school ministry, we seek to extend our presence through free-time, leisure, sports and cultural activities, or whatever means offer themselves.*²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol.1. Letter 14, 21 January 1830.

²⁵⁶ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.323 – from the chapter entitled 'How to teach catechism well'.

²⁵⁷ *In the Footsteps*, ##100-01.

A scriptural figure that Marists have found useful to understand these instincts in themselves is to align with Mary Luke's account of her going to visit Elizabeth.²⁵⁸ Various expressions in this text resonate deeply with Marist educators: Mary's going 'into the hill country', her leaving 'with haste', her going 'into the house of Elizabeth', and her bringing of news replete with joy and justice, mercy and faithfulness. The passage turns on the encounter of Mary and Elizabeth before the words of the *Magnificat*, their meeting, in which new life stirs. Marist educators look to do the same: they make reason and means to encounter young people and to affect them by presence and example, by relationship.

It is also a relationship that is 'holy ground' for the educator. Perhaps this sense is not emphasised as explicitly as it might have been in *In the Footsteps*. 'Respect for the child' was a concept of major emphasis of Marcellin, one which comes directly from the *petit école* movement, and is found in Batencour's *Escole Paroissiale* and La Salle's *Conduite*. An entire chapter of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* is given to this subject.²⁵⁹ Although in this chapter Jean-Baptiste quotes largely from sources other than Marcellin, familiar phrases of Marcellin are there, such a child's being 'the price of the blood of Christ', 'the image and likeness of God', and 'your brother'. It is well also to recall the attitudes towards children that Marcellin included in his *Spiritual Testament* where he reminded his readers that they were to be like 'Guardian Angels' (an expression that also is found in the *Guide* and *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*) and to approach young people with reverence.²⁶⁰ This called for educators to be 'circumspect', 'reserved', 'moderated', 'careful' and 'vigilant' in how they related to young people, and in the situations they created for that relating.²⁶¹ This is a critical qualification to the trait of 'simplicity' – and the *'bon enfant'* style that has been described above. It underlines the importance of seeing all the Marist traits together, rather lionising any of them in isolation. It also highlights that the educator's relationship with a young person is not one of equals, nor one of friendship in the sense that two children can be friends. The educator is the adult, and a certain maturity is required so that the educator is not inadvertently seeking young people out for companionship or the meeting of personal need. Towards the top of the list of ten types of Brothers that Brother Jean-Baptiste tells us 'Father Champagnat did not like' were those who were 'nannies',²⁶² who fawned on students, were too familiar with them, and did not 'understand their own dignity' as adults.²⁶³

Simplicity, nonetheless, is something that has been embedded in Marist discourse and style from the beginning. For Marcellin it came especially from Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul, two French spiritual masters with whom he intuitively and deeply connected.²⁶⁴ The sense of authenticity, transparency, directness, and lack of pretence or empty ritual have attracted Marists since. *In the Footsteps* captures it well:

Our simplicity expresses itself primarily through contacts with young people that are genuine and straightforward, undertaken without pretence or duplicity. We say what we

²⁵⁸ Luke 1:39-47

²⁵⁹ Chapter 38: 'The respect we owe a child'.

²⁶⁰ 'Culte' is the word used in the original French – a sense of liturgical worship or adoration.

²⁶¹ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.330.

²⁶² 'Les Frères bonnes' in the original French.

²⁶³ *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, p.51.

²⁶⁴ For an more extensive consideration of the origins and nature of 'simplicity' in Marist spirituality and ministry see the author's (2020) companion work 'Historical Sources of Marist Spirituality', Ch.6.

believe, and show that we believe what we say. Such simplicity is the fruit of a unity of mind and heart, of character and action, that derives ultimately from our being honest before ourselves and before our God.

To simplicity we link humility and modesty, making the ‘three violets’ of our Marist tradition: patiently allowing the action of God to work through us and seeking ‘to do good quietly’ ...

We lead the young to adopt simplicity as a value for their own lives, encouraging them to be themselves in every situation, to be open and truthful and to have the strength of their convictions. In a world distracted by the superficial, we help them to value themselves and others for who they are, and not be seduced from this by possessions or fame. Rather, we help them to prize an integrated, balanced and loving life, built on the rock of God’s love.²⁶⁵

The ability to explain the complex in simple and accessible terms is, of course, the mark of any great teacher, something also recognised in *In the Footsteps*.²⁶⁶ It is also an important element of the Marist approach to evangelisation, and a reason for its effectiveness with young people, that the Gospel and the life of faith are presented in accessible, relatable and immanent ways.

While these first three characteristics of Marist pedagogical style described in *In the Footsteps*, and the fifth one which describes its Marian approach, are commonly included in any list of Marist attributes, the fourth is not always. This is not to deny that ‘love of work’ – in exactly those words²⁶⁷ – has not been a feature of Marist discourse from the beginning or a quality that the Founder strongly encouraged. Brother Laurent tells us that from the earliest days in Lavalla that ‘Father Champagnat was the sworn enemy of lazy people’,²⁶⁸ and Brother Jean-Baptiste devotes a chapter to this personal trait of Marcellin in Part 2 of *The Life*. But in this section, Jean-Baptiste has twenty-four chapters devoted to various aspects of Marcellin, such as his ‘joy’, his ‘spirit of faith’, his ‘love of Our Lord’, his ‘love of poverty’, his ‘trust’, his ‘spirit of recollection’, his ‘love of prayer’, his ‘humility’, his ‘charity’, his ‘love of purity’, his ‘love for the Brothers’, and his ‘constancy’. So, more than a few ‘loves’ there! Should ‘love of work’ be the one highlighted in Marist pedagogical style?

The question is not so much one of legitimacy but of emphasis. The inclusion of ‘love of work’ is self-evidently legitimate because it comes from Marcellin and it endures in contemporary Marist values. We have seen above that ‘zeal’ was probably the most frequently extolled virtue of the early Marists, although, as Brother Jean-Baptiste explains at length in his treatise on education, this term was much qualified to ensure that ‘zeal’ did not equate to just working hard, but would be marked by features such as prudence, gentleness, patience, humility, and

²⁶⁵ *In the Footsteps*, ##103-04a; 106.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* #105

²⁶⁷ ‘*L’amour pour la travail*’ in the original French.

²⁶⁸ The small document we know as the ‘Memoir Laurent’ was penned by Marcellin’s third recruit the year after the Founder’s death. It is just a few pages long, and seems to have been written in response to Brother François’ invitation to the Brothers to send in their memories of Father Champagnat so that a biography could be written. Laurent concentrates mainly on the early years in Lavalla.

balance of life.²⁶⁹ Should 'love of work' be included as one of a handful of key characteristics be at the neglect of some other aspects of Marist pedagogy that appear in Marist publications. While none of these is fully absent from the text of *In the Footsteps*, they are not highlighted in the same way that the named characteristics are. Among these, most of which have already been mentioned above, are: love of young people, equitable love; innovation and creativity;²⁷⁰ collaboration and shared enterprise;²⁷¹ prioritising of ongoing professional development;²⁷² prioritising of resources and effort to evangelisation and catechesis; pragmatism; daring; honouring of effectiveness and achievement; fondness for those students who find school difficult; calmness and tranquillity; emphasis on positive means of engaging students through inspiration, emulation, moral authority, etc; integral or holistic formation, and breadth of curriculum; recollectedness in the teacher, and God consciousness throughout the curriculum and the school day; inclusiveness.

The above list has its crossovers and is not exhaustive; it is simply indicative of the many qualities that would not be strange to the cultural reality of most Marist school settings, and the various ways that the pedagogical approach of Marist educators can be validly represented. Back in the 1840s, the quality of 'zeal' was arguably more nuanced and tempered in *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste* than that of 'love of work' is in *In the Footsteps*. There would even be an argument for saying that original Marist pedagogy was founded less on a 'love of work' and more on a 'love of what works'. That is certainly the take-away from Marcellin's efforts to find a method of teaching reading that was effective for all students, as well as his relentless efforts to use catechetical methods that engaged young people and brought them to a love of God.

The final characteristic – 'In the way of Mary' – is presented in *In the Footsteps* as something of a unifying one: 'she inspires our pedagogical approach'.²⁷³ This part of the text in Chapter 5 alludes to the Lucan image of Mary – at the Annunciation, in the Visitation and Magnificat, and at Pentecost – and its conclusion repeats these as well as taking the reader to the Johannine images of her, all presented as models for the Marist educator.²⁷⁴ Purpose and identity come together for the Marist in Mary. For Marists, there is more than just a Marian 'style' to their pedagogy. It is that, but there is something more fundamental at play. For the Marist seeks to *be Mary*. This is the essence of educating as a Marist: with Mary, 'bringing Christlife to birth', as *Water from the Rock* puts it. To share in 'the work of Mary' as Marcellin and his co-founders described it, and it go about this as Mary did – prayerfully, joyfully, sensitively, relationally, quietly, justly, unshakably, mercifully, bringing faith, hope and love to life.

²⁶⁹ Cf. *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste*, Chs 4, 6-12, 15-16.

²⁷⁰ Brother Maurice Bergeret puts a strong case for what he calls '*créativité et projet*', drawing on early Marist history, not least the swift foundation of the Brothers by Marcellin in 1817 and the building of The Hermitage. See Bergeret (1993), *op.cit.*

²⁷¹ *Idem.*

²⁷² This was one of the five particular contributions and emphases of Marcellin regarding education, according to Brother François in his introduction to the *Guide* in 1853.

²⁷³ *In the Footsteps*, #117.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* ##118-121; pp.68-69

Chapter Five

Marist education: by whom?

The most important thing that the reference text *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today* has to say about the future of Marist education hides in plain sight. It appears on the title page. And it is just a single word.

After the title comes the charter or manifesto which provides a structure for the eight chapters of the book:

*Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat,
Brothers and Laypeople, together in mission, in the Church and in the world,
among the young, especially the most neglected,
we are sowers of the Good News,
with a distinctive Marist style,
in schools,
and in other pastoral and social ministries.
We face the future with audacity and hope.*²⁷⁵

The key word first appears at the start of the fourth line: 'we'.

Marist education is, was, and always will be about the people who are Marist educators. It stands or falls, flames or fizzles, grows or withers on this. The depth and breadth of all that has been presented in the foregoing chapters notwithstanding, there will be no Marist education without its being defined and animated by educators who are authentically Marist, inspired and supported by leaders, formators and scholars who are authoritatively Marist. They will be an inclusive group of people, people in and of their time, who are intuitively attracted by the Marist way – pedagogically, communally and spiritually. All three. They will be people who are both informed and formed in each. There is no short-cut. Together they will have a sense of shared responsibility for the vitality and integrity of Marist education, and a way of exercising this effectively and adaptively.

In the Footsteps is sourced in this premise. The entire text is written in the first person. There is an invitational and aspirational tone to this, but also a presumption that its statements will be realised.

It has always been thus. Indeed, there is a clear parallel between the challenges facing the 'Marist educational project' at this stage of its story in the twenty-first century and those with which it dealt during the latter decades of its founding period in the nineteenth, following the death of Marcellin and most of the first community. Both sets of challenges stem not from a crisis of diminishment or loss, but from crises of expansion and increasing diversity of membership, Both also play out in a time of competing narratives both within church and within society.

²⁷⁵ *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today*, p.3.

When Marcellin died in 1840, twenty-three years after his founding of the first Marist school in Lavalla, there were 280 Brothers who were conducting 40 schools. When Brother François finished as Superior General twenty years later, this had spiked to almost 2,000 Brothers and 380 schools. The growth was exponential. That is an average of 17 new schools per year; and about the same number of new directors (i.e. school principals); almost 90 new Brothers per year needed to be formed and inculturated as Marists. These numbers were to more than double again before the French secularisation laws at the end of the century led to something of a decimation in France (but an accelerated spread to other parts of the world). Obviously, there was enormous *vitality* during these decades; people were attracted in large numbers to the Marist way.

But how to ensure their *integrity* as Marists? They had never met Marcellin or the early Brothers; most would never visit the founding places in Lavalla and The Hermitage unless they happened to belong to the Province in which these were located (for soon there were four Provinces in France, then six). They came from all parts of the country, and soon from England and Belgium; many had never been to a Marist school. Although we sometimes think that the majority of the first Brothers were quite young, even boys, in fact they were not. At least until the establishment of ‘juniorates’ by Brother Louis-Marie in the latter part of the century, most joined the Brothers as adults, often well into their twenties or even older. Their personalities and self-identities were already well-formed; they had their own spiritual and personal journeys, and carried the personal baggage acquired over those years. And all this was taking place against a backdrop of a secularising society, and growing distrust and straight-out rejection of church. It is not a dissimilar context from how most people who become Marists first come into contact with Marist education today.

Let us take Pierre Laboureyras – who was to become Brother Ludovic and to be entrusted with establishing Marist education in Australia – as an example. Ludovic did not have a Marist education as a boy, joining the Brothers sight unseen after finishing school because he read in a pamphlet that they offered the possibility of overseas missionary opportunities.²⁷⁶ At the age of twenty-eight, after only a few brief teaching stints in France, Ireland and Scotland, he was appointed as leader of the community of four sent to the other side of the world to open the first Marist school. Within six months, he had accepted a local Australian novice, and was to act in the role of novice master for fourteen years. All the first generation of Australian Marists were introduced to Marist life and Marist education by him. But how did he himself become Marist?

He learnt. He learned from other Marists.

Ludovic joined the Marist Brothers and undertook his initial formation in the early 1860s, at the height of the period of rapid growth. Ten years before that, Brother François and his

²⁷⁶ Ludovic wrote extensively, so we know a lot about his life, his personality, and also about his time in Australia. The Marist Brothers’ General Archives contains four works, the first two written by him in English during his time in Sydney, the second two in French when back in Europe: *Journal of the Foundation and Progress of the Mission in Australia from 1871 to 1878*; *Annals of the Novitiate of Mount St Joseph from the Solemn opening by the Most Rev Bede Vaughan on the Feast of the Patronage of St Joseph, the 12th May 1878*; *Mémoires du F. Ludovic, fondateur de Sydney*; *Annales de la Mission d’Australie*. We learn from Ludovic that his primary education was at the hands of the De La Salle Brothers; his secondary education was with the Jesuits and then a small congregation called the Josephists, both of which he considered joining.

Council had begun to implement some strategies to ensure that the distinctive spirit of their fledgling Institute, a spirit that they treasured, did not dissipate or skew. So many religious institutes in the history of the Church have been steered onto new courses by the ‘young Turks’ of their second generations.²⁷⁷ The proactive Marist strategy to prevent this included the publication of a series of reference texts. During his novitiate Ludovic would have used the Marist novice’s manual, *Manuel de Pieté*, published just six years before. He would have learnt from it by heart, catechism style, lists of Marist traits and sayings of the Founder. In the novitiate he would also have studied the new *Constitutions*, the *Common Rules*, the *Guide*, and *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat* – all written in the previous decade. As a young Brother, in the years before his departure for Australia, he would have been able to read *Biographies de Quelques Frères* and *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* (both published in 1868), and *Le Bon Supérieur* published the following year. Ludovic was both a conscientious and full-hearted person; it is likely that he wanted to absorb all that these books had to offer.

As has been discussed previously, a content analysis of any of these texts would indicate that their pages are overwhelming concerned with the *who* rather than the *how*.²⁷⁸ Worthy of highlight among them are the biographies – both that of Marcellin published in 1856 and those of seventeen of the early Brothers contained in *Biographies de Quelques Frères*. Of course, they were written in the hagiographical style of the time, but that approach would not have been off-putting for a nineteenth century reader in the way it might be for one from the twenty-first. Both books had the same purpose, and indeed the second was deliberately styled to be what we would call today a ‘sequel’ to the first. These twin volumes aimed to bring their readers into a story, an inspirational story, of which they were to write the next chapters by their own lives. The twenty-four chapters of the second part of *The Life*, while ostensibly concerned with Marcellin’s ‘virtues’, are more an attempt to describe the traits of the ideal Brother, but to do it through story rather than through a theoretical framework or catalogue. Similarly, each chapter of *Biographies de Quelques Frères* attributes one quality to an early Brother and tells the story of his life through this lens. Its aim is to inspire and influence the life of the reader by the life of the subject.

It was also a time when the practice was still in place of every Brother’s writing, several times a year, to someone in the leadership group, and the superior’s responding individually to the Brother. In Ludovic’s time, this was a major occupation of the Superior General and the

²⁷⁷ We need look no further than the Marist Sisters who effectively sidelined their foundress, Jeanne Marie Chavoin. (See, Sr Myra Niland’s 2001 biography: *Hidden Fruitfulness, the Life and Spirituality of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, Foundress of the Congregation of the Marist Sisters*. Dublin: Columba Press). Jean-Claude Colin also had to manage the influx men – often already ordained secular clergy – who joined the Society in numbers after its Papal approbation and its entrustment with the mission field of Oceania after 1836. It was a challenge he met, despite his own misgivings. (Among the many Marist scholars who have treated this subject, see: Justin Taylor’s 2018 biography: *Jean-Claude Colin, Reluctant Founder*. Adelaide: ATF; and Jan Snijders [2012] *A Mission Too Far, Pacific Mission*. Adelaide: ATF) A telling example of the influence of how the intuitions of the founding group may not be shared by the second generation occurred at the 1839 General Chapter of the Society Mary on a vote concerning the Brothers of the Society. Both Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin found themselves out-voted. Another founder who saw the congregation he founded begin to head in a direction different from the original vision was Edmund Rice, who sought admission and was refused entry to a General Chapter of the Christian Brothers late in his life. See Denis McLaughlin (2007) *The Price of Freedom: Edmund Rice Educational Leader*. Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing.

²⁷⁸ For example in the 46 Chapters of *The Life*, only two are concerned with educational ministry, and only seven of the 41 in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*.

Assistants General.²⁷⁹ Brother Jean-Baptiste tried to limit such letters to ten per day so he could give due attention to each one.²⁸⁰ Ludovic wrote to his superiors in this way, and he additionally maintained a correspondence with the then-retired Brother François whom he met shortly before leaving for Australia. Indeed, it was a letter from Ludovic that was probably the last thing that François ever read; one was found sitting in the middle of his desk the day he died in 1881.

The Marist approach has been sourced from the beginning in the power and grace of people: people affecting other people. Marists forming and inspiring other Marists. *In the Footsteps* opens not by describing the philosophical or pedagogical principles of Marist education, but with the phrase ‘Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat’. It is a rich word, ‘disciple’, and a richly Scriptural one. The word μαθητης (*mathetes*, ‘disciple’) occurs more than 250 times in the Gospels and in Acts. In the Greek, it does not have any sense of one who passively follows, but one who has chosen to become a student, and who seeks to learn from a teacher.

Ludovic did this. He did so from books, but he did so at least as much from his experience of Marist people. In the weeks before he set sail for Sydney, he took some time to travel down to Saint-Chamond and to visit The Hermitage for three days. While he was there, he prayed at Marcellin’s tomb, met with Brother François and some other older Brothers, and was even accorded the privilege of sleeping in Marcellin’s bed during his stay. On leaving, he made his own pilgrimage to the chapel at Fourvière in Lyon to pray.

Becoming a Marist was something that affected him at the level of his heart. It captured him. He wrote that he could hardly contain his emotions when he was at Marcellin’s graveside.²⁸¹ We glean a sense of his heart through his personal journal entries. For example, as his ship, the *Star of the Sea*, neared sight of land at Port Phillip after eighty-nine days at sea, Ludovic writes that he was up well before sunrise; in fact, he could hardly sleep. He describes feeling an excitement like that of Christopher Columbus on seeing the Americas.²⁸² His sense of grand purpose seemed undimmed a couple of weeks later when he found himself in the smelly, unsanitary and impoverished backstreets of the Sydney docks quarter where the first Marist school was to start. His sense of the mission in which he shared was nothing shallow or

²⁷⁹ In religious life this practice is classically known as ‘manifestation of conscience’. At the beginning, every Brother wrote to Marcellin three times a year, and he responded. Later, the job was shared by the Superior General and the Assistants General. We have, for example, over 600 letters to individual Brothers written by Brother Jean-Baptiste when he was an Assistant, and responsible for the two Provinces in the south of France. (There were no Provincials or local major superiors in that period before 1903.) The letters were means of providing both spiritual direction and personal encouragement. The Holy See insisted this practice be discontinued when it approved the Brothers’ Constitutions in 1903, because it deemed that only priests were equipped to offer spiritual direction, not non-ordained Brothers.

²⁸⁰ In May 2003, nine hand-written pages were found tucked inside a book in the library of the Marist Brothers’ novitiate in Seville, Spain, by Brother Alain Delorme. They carry thirty little principles that Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet had developed himself, for his own leadership and his spiritual direction of the Brothers. The last one reads: *Quand on a fait huit ou dix lettres en un jour, il faut s’arrêter parce qu’on ne ferait plus alors que se répéter : on ne ferait rien qui vaille. Il faut alors faire trêve à cette occupation et retourner puiser la provision dans les études ou la méditation. [When you have completed eight or ten letters in a day, you must stop otherwise you will just repeat yourself. You will write nothing more that’s worthwhile. You must make a truce with this activity and return to draw from the sources of your studies and meditation.]*

²⁸¹ *Annals of the Australian Mission* (trans. K. Eaton), p.16.

²⁸² *Journal of the Foundation and Progress of the Mission in Australia*.

emotive. Discipleship is a deeper thing, certainly Christian discipleship. Essentially it is about conversion, *metanoia*. It is about the heart. *In the Footsteps* ends by taking us to the image of the disciples on the road to Emmaus:

*The glorified Jesus, God of life and lord of history, is our hope. He goes forth to meet us, walks beside us, listens to us, stirs up hope within us, and helps us discover God's plan even in the midst of confusion and human darkness. In our daily contact with young people as much as in our moments of prayer, we recognise his presence. The words of some of the first disciples come back to us, 'Was not our heart burning within us?'*²⁸³

There is indeed a distinctive style, a *modus operandi*, about Marist education. Marist educators learn this; they need to do so. They have words for it. They can articulate it, apply it in their own professional practice, include it in staff handbooks and policy documents, and teach it to new staff members. It is likely to be attractive to them professionally and personally, to sit comfortably with their own preferred ways of proceeding. It is likely to bring out the best in them as educators. Ultimately, however, it will be something deeper than just a style that makes each of them a Marist educator. It will be who they are. And it will be who they influence and inspire their colleagues to be.

It is interesting to look at the terms that Marcellin uses for a good teacher: 'brother', 'father', 'mother', 'guardian angel', 'example', '*bon enfant*'. Or the six qualities proposed by the *Guide* as the marks of the 'ideal religious educator': 'affection and authority' sourced in a parental kind of love; 'good sense' that was acted out in prudence, reasonableness, lack of capriciousness, consistency; 'firmness' from being both decisive and understanding; 'affability and kindness' that brought patience, gentleness, tolerance, good humour, graciousness and that built confidence and family spirit in students; personal holiness, which was 'indispensable'; and finally 'professional skill' that included not only knowledge and aptitude, but ongoing development.²⁸⁴

Such a list of traits does not imply that there is any cookie-cutter sameness about Marists. One of the great legacies of Marist formation that comes directly from Marcellin himself is that he encouraged there to be as many kinds of Marists as there were Marists. Marcellin wanted his disciples to become themselves. And what a bunch they were! Among them were scholars and barely literate peasants, men at home in the outdoors and others more given to the library, many who were outstanding classroom practitioners, those who were masters of the spiritual way, others who shone in their kindness and their gentleness, men who had a passion for evangelisation, rough diamonds and cut-and-polished ones. The Brothers who worked most closely with Marcellin were, ironically enough, some of the most divergent from him in their personal characteristics. They would have covered all points on the Enneagram or most categories on any personality schema. Their discipleship of Marcellin was not confused with anything other than his wanting it to be a path of Christian discipleship, because they were to be 'gospel workers'.

²⁸³ *In the Footsteps*, p.69.

²⁸⁴ *Teachers Guide* (1931 English edition), Ch.XVI

One of Jean-Baptiste's last works was a book called *Méditations*, written to assist the Brothers to use effectively the time required by their Rule for this religious exercise each day. It is a long and thorough work, built around the three axes of God's love that are strong in the French school spirituality and that Marcellin had instilled in the Brothers: the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Eucharist, or 'the Crib, the Cross and the Altar'. Brother Louis-Marie SG, in his Circular announcing the death of his long-time confrere Jean-Baptiste, reported that Jean-Baptiste often said to him that he had only one aim in writing this book: 'I want the Brothers to know Our Lord.'²⁸⁵ At the end, despite all that had transpired since he first came to La Valla in 1822, despite all his love the Marist Institute which he had helped to found and to lead, and despite all it had grown to become, Jean-Baptiste had a simple and clear view of what was essential for Marists, one that had come from Marcellin: to know and to love Jesus Christ. That was their project, after all. As it still is.

On that firm and unambiguous foundation, a characteristic style did emerge, as has been seen in previous chapters. Then as now, Marists needed to feel at home with that style; it needed to be one that inspired and assisted them to be themselves, not something artificially put on or dutifully implemented on behalf of someone else, an employer. As it still does. Among the ten classic 'types of Brothers' that Marcellin 'did not like' were 'servant Brothers' – people who did not see themselves as part of the family, but just did the family's bidding. They were not Marists for Marcellin, for he wanted no grades or levels of membership. The kind of person that Marcellin sought was, by implication, the opposite of these types: people who were gentle, self-possessed, humanly mature, generous, understanding, reliable, consistent, humble, simple, joyful.²⁸⁶ The great spiritual and ministerial traditions of the Church always present a do-able discipleship for people, an inspirational and accessible way of being Christian, a space where people feel at home and where there is a prevailing style of ministry that they feel can be their own, and where they have a sense of inclusive Christian community with like-hearted people.

When *Marist Schools Australia* was being envisaged more than a decade ago, this was the guiding principle: if Marist education was how and why Marists did education, then what was needed to secure its integrity and vitality in Australia were Marists. First, these would be people who would be *ministerially* Marist – the Marist emphases and approaches to their professional practice as educators would be attractive to them; they would understand them, be able to explain them, and make them their own. Second, they would be *communally* Marist – they would associate easily and readily with others who shared the Marist way, both on a human level and as a community of faith. They would have sense of shared responsibility for Marist life and mission. And finally, they would be *spiritually* Marist – the Marist way of the gospel of Jesus would resonate with them at a spiritual level and, if Christian, it would be one of the principal ways that they lived out their Baptismal vocation.

²⁸⁵ *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux*, Vol.IV, p.258

²⁸⁶ Ch.5 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* details the other nine types, some of which have been mentioned already. These included Brothers who were: 'preachers'; 'nannies'; 'executioners'; 'had sore elbows' (i.e. lazy); 'nonchalant'; 'looking for advice in Egypt' (which he took to mean not being frank and open with one's superior); 'proud or vain'; and 'slowpokes' or 'negligent'.

This classically tridimensional way of understanding the spiritual traditions and spiritual families of the Church opens three doors for people.²⁸⁷ Typically, it will be one door, more than the other two, through which potential Marist educators will be attracted initially to enter the Marist spiritual family. As a short-hand labelling, let us call them the ministry/professional door, the community/belonging door, and the personal faith/mystery door. Some people will intuitively connect first with the ministry style of the Marist school, for example its educational priorities and approach, its distinctive pedagogy and accumulated expertise, its ways of relating and its pastoral care, its sense of innovation, its emphases on addressing particular needs, and other cultural attributes. They will feel that this is the kind of school in which they can flourish professionally, and work productively. They may or may not have sense of the deeper rationale or sense of Gospel-mission as they first enter, but what they do see and feel sits well with them. Other people may be more attracted to the sense of belonging and family spirit they feel, among both staff and students, and perhaps more widely in the Marist school community. They intuitively feel at home, and among people with whom they relate easily. They feel they can be themselves with these people. They identify readily with the school community, and are quickly comfortable when speaking of it in the first-person plural. Experience suggests that these two doors, the ministry door and the community door, will be the most commonly used ones.

The third door, that which gives a glimpse into a personal discipleship and draws people interiorly into the mystery of God, will also be initially attractive to some, perhaps to those who have been more actively or consciously engaged at times in their lives in a quest to touch into the deeper meaning of their lives, whether or not this has been specifically through a religious faith framework. These people may be more alert to the distinctive Marist spirituality that is alive in the school or, more pointedly, in members of the school community. They will feel drawn to it. Its language, its emphases, its style, its prayer and worship, its wisdom figures, its integrity – these will make sense to them, and may trigger a desire to learn more, to go more deeply.

A person's coming at least a little way through one of these doors tends to take place without much intentional effort from anyone. People just do it intuitively. Indeed, it is helpful when it happens this way. Purposeful spiritual formation needs, however, to follow on. Some writers on spiritual formation describe this movement as 'narthical', a reference to the narthex of a church.²⁸⁸ People who find themselves drawn through the outer doors, are engaged right

²⁸⁷ The following few paragraphs are based on an extended treatment of this subject in the author's 2018 book *Now With Enthusiasm. Charism, God's Mission and Catholic Schools Today*. See Ch.7.

²⁸⁸ The phrase was coined by Bert Roebben in reference to religious education, and promotes the value of respectful adult dialogue, in a not dissimilar way to the emphases of the post-critical dialogue school advocated in the Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project. 'Narthical learning' parallels the 'Courtyard of the Gentiles' concept of Pope Benedict XVI (cf. *Message to Courtyard of the Gentiles*, 26 March, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.) See: Roebben, B (2009) *Seeking Sense in the City: Perspectives on European Religious Education*, Berlin: LIT Verlag; ~ (2016), *Theology Made in Dignity*, Leuven: Peeters. Richard Rymarz has also supported the concept based on his research of younger teachers (under 30 years of age) in Catholic schools. Cf. Rymarz, R (2018) 'We Need to Keep the Door Open': A Framework for Better Understanding for Formation of Younger Teachers', in Stuart-Buttle, R and Shortt, J (eds.), *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* London: Palgrave Macmillan. Rymarz found that, while their personal connection to Church was minimal outside their professional responsibilities and their sense of personal faith was variously expressed, they were happy to be engaged in the religious activity of the school, and quite supportive of its purposes. This openness, argues Rymarz, is reason to 'leave the door open'.

there, as adults with their own life stories, for that is where they are and who they are. There are reasons why they are not already in the nave with the worshipping community. It is hoped that their encounters with Marist educators will lead them further in, and that they will draw them to the other open doors.

Membership of a spiritual family such as the Marists should provide both inspiration and means by which people can deepen their personal encounter with the mystery of God, live more communally and ecclesially, and serve in love with purpose and connection. It is for this that the Spirit has called spiritual families into life in the Church. They show what Christian discipleship can look like; they teach it. The invitation to these people, mediated in ways they understand from the Marists around them, is for each to become a *discipulus*, a learner. Through such encounter and more structured formation they learn something of holiness, of community, and of mission. It is a sharp but essential line of self-reflection for any spiritual family, ecclesial community, or any individual ministry such as a Marist school, to ask if people's experience of it is one that leads people to personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ. Or, alternatively, are people left figuratively more in the narthex, with feel-good but fairly shallow experiences of the numinous, with having a sense of welcome, inclusion and belonging but little appreciation of being part of a community of faith or a community of mission?

A number of things need to be in place to invite and support people through all three doors. First, there needs to be good Marist educators to be encountered and befriended, people who can influence and offer experiences that become a 'school of ministry, a 'school of community', and a 'school of holiness'. They will be a group – at least a critical number in each school – who hold credibility and authority in the school community. Leadership is also essential, leadership from those in senior positions, course, but also a leadership that is widely and deeply distributed at all levels and in all aspects of the life of the school. These people will be the shapers and animators of the Marist community, those who call, induct and develop the next generation of a continually renewing group.

At a more macro level, there needs to be a structure for Marists to which to belong and through which to exercise co-responsibility for Marist life and mission, and to relate to the wider Church in some kind of corporate or institutional way. There also needs to be an ever-evolving expertise, scholarship and articulation of what it means to be a Marist educator, and specialist people to offer formation, accompaniment and direction. In the Australian context, the meeting of each of these requirements is developing through the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat.

The reality is that the Marists of tomorrow will be a rich mix people. They feel that they are members a community, one that is inclusive in gender, relationship status, and age. Some will be ordained, and some vowed in consecrated life or other forms of life commitment. For some time there has been a simplistic and rather unhelpful bifurcation of Marists into 'Brothers and Lay', but the organic reality of what is happening belies such a binary understanding (along with any lingering sense of status or right). And it needs to. The Marists, like other emerging and revitalising spiritual families of the Church are called to be a genuine expression of *communio*, marked by genuine co-responsibility and shared discernment for Marist life and mission.

Marist education is education as it is done by Marists. Without Marists, the name loses legitimacy. Well-formed and led, with resources and structures that support what they aspire to be and how they seek to serve, these Marist educators will continue to develop the Marist educational project. Together they will make decisions about pedagogical approaches, policies and procedures, curricular emphases, pastoral care, and youth ministry programmes. They will draw on the documents of the past, and they will write new ones. They will decide, in collaboration with the Church more widely, who they will be educating, where and how. They will decide on ways to nurture the Marist element of their deeper Baptismal vocation as evangelisers. Their *why* will remain sharp and, ultimately, be a measure of their mission integrity. They will bring Christlife to birth – holistically, in mind, body and spirit – in and among themselves, and in and among the young people they educate.

In 2015, when the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat took its first bold steps, it developed what might be seen as a statement of identity and purpose. It was called simply 'We Marists'. The realisation of the hopes expressed in this statement will ensure the flourishing of Marists, and therefore of Marist education:

*We Marists are a vital faith community,
an expression of Church
that embraces God's mission with Marian joy, hope, and audacity.
Our discipleship of Jesus Christ
and the priorities of all our ministries
are inspired by the Gospel passion and compassion which fired Saint Marcellin.
We remain attentive to the God of all life,
and we are committed to nurturing our spirituality through ongoing formation.
We draw on both Marist tradition and Marist imagination
to be game-changers for young people,
particularly those most on the peripheries.
We foster connectedness and communion
among ourselves as an Association,
with the Marist spiritual family around the world,
and with the wider Church of which we are part.²⁸⁹*

²⁸⁹ From the booklet 'We Marists', circulated by the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat, and available on its website: www.maristassociation.org.au