

Known and Loved dignity for all

After taking the pulse of Australia for over six decades, the social researcher and renown psychologist, Hugh Mackay, claims that: “Everyone’s deepest desire is to be heard.”¹ He says by nature we are social beings who are born to connect – we share a common humanity and we need each other. What we long for most is to be listened to, have a sense of belonging, and to be accepted. Interestingly, this was echoed by a number of our Marist students who were recently asked, “What is the one thing you *fear* the most?” They expressed that their greatest fears were loneliness, being forgotten, and a lack of love for who they are.

What then could this be saying about the deepest desire of the human heart? Perhaps it is the desire for a place where people are known, loved, and feel the immense value of their personal worth; where everyone is welcomed and has a place at our table, where their voice is heard, valued, and respected. A place where every person is treated with ‘dignity’. The word dignity is derived from the Latin word *dignitas* meaning, ‘of being worthy of honour or respect’. Doesn’t this speak to what is at the heart of the Gospel message? That every human being, no matter who they are or where they come from, possesses dignity because they are created in the image of God. St Paul captured this beautifully by describing each one of us created as “**God’s work of art**” (Eph 2:10).

What does this ask of us? Jesus’ mission was to restore human dignity and what he cared about was lifting people up from whatever dehumanised them or caused them suffering. Jesus put his words into action by restoring sight, removing social stigmas, setting people free, and reclaiming the inherent dignity of each person he encountered. The pandemic has given us moment to pause and breathe, now it feels like it is a time to act.

We believe as Marists we are being called not simply to recognise the dignity of all, but let the world know about it by the way we live our lives for and with others. It’s a call to roll up our sleeves and to live our spirituality on the streets; it includes the staff member sitting next to you, the student in the second row that often feels invisible, the cleaner on a temporary visa, the family risking their life in a desperate search for a home where they can raise their kids safely, those suffering from the effects of inequality because of race, sexuality, economic class or gender. Anyone who is at risk of feeling and being left-out or forgotten.

In this year of our Sesquicentenary it is a time for celebrating our Marist mission of making Jesus Christ known and loved among the young, especially the most neglected. Let us be encouraged to live this mission courageously though our actions and the witness of our lives. Human dignity is the heartbeat of the Gospel, Catholic Social Teaching and our Marist story: “*Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you...May it be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians: ‘See how they love one another’*” (Marcellin Champagnat). Let our prayer be that everyone, especially the least, lost, and invisible are ‘**known and loved**’ as we strive to uphold, restore and defend the **dignity for all**.

Mary, defender of the displaced, the accompanier of the lost, the least and the lonely. **Pray for us.**



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¹ The Kindness Revolution, Hugh Mackay, 2021.

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