

New Wineskins: reimagining Australia's Marists

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This article considers the ways through which the Marists in Australia are enhancing their charismatic vitality and the structural viability as a movement of Christian educators within the Church. A theoretical context is described, focusing on the nature of the concepts of charism, *communio*, discipleship, the spiritual families of the Church and *Missio Dei*. The strategic initiatives that have been taken in formation and organisation over the past two decades are discussed and the priorities for the immediate future are identified.

Keywords: Catholic education; charism; *Missio Dei*; spiritual families

Setting a context

In a debate that took place during the Vatican Council's drafting of what became *Lumen Gentium*, the Belgian Cardinal Joseph Suenens spoke for the Holy Spirit. While the Church needed its sure structure and dogma, he argued, so as to avoid becoming formless and directionless, it must also welcome the renewing and sometimes surprising movement of the Spirit who continually seeks to irrupt within it, otherwise it would become lifeless and sterile.¹ Such is the perennial but healthy tension of the Church's institutional and charismatic dimensions. While they can and should be complementary and mutually constructive, rather than dichotomous or opposed, they are nonetheless informed by different perspectives and the dynamic of each is fostered in different ways. Attention to both is essential for the Church to share both faithfully and creatively in God's mission. It has been to its spiritual families² that the Church has turned for some of the most effective nurturing of its charismatic life. The Marists³ understand themselves to be one such spiritual family, a Spirit-given way for the Church to develop its vitality and its viability. In Australia, the Marists have been most especially associated with Catholic schools and, together with other religious institutes, were responsible from the late nineteenth century for establishing the quite extensive network of Catholic schools that now serve almost one-third of the country's primary and secondary students.

The rapidity and the scale of the collapse of the numbers of consecrated men and women in schools have changed profoundly the ways in which Australian Catholic schools are governed and led, and shape their identities. In an earlier issue of this journal, John Lydon (2009) discussed the implications a similar decline in England, with specific reference to the Salesians.⁴ In Australia, the responses of religious institutes to this dramatic shift have not been uniform. For some, a narrative of diminishment and passing-on has developed, while for others there has emerged a vision of expansion and reimagined futures. At one end of the spectrum, some have opted for the view that their time, as for most religious movements in

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the history of the Church, has run its course, and so they have judged it responsible to hand over their schools, usually to a local diocese. Others have sought to retain connection at least at the level of governance, including the development of programmes that form members of staff and board/council members in the spirituality and educational approach of their institutes, and also the establishment of new approved canonical entities that can continue to govern the schools in the name of the Church. A few – and the Marists are among these – have moved to a ‘reimagining’ of themselves as broader, more inclusive ecclesial movements, and are seeking ways whereby a wider group of people can share co-responsibility for the spiritual families they have become and the works of the Church for which they are responsible, and for how they can have a legitimised place in the life of the Church at large.

The laity: ‘God’s chosen ones’

In a landmark circular that discussed the growing role of lay people in Marist life and mission almost a quarter of a century ago,⁵ the then Superior General of the Marist Brothers posed this question: if the Institute were not experiencing such a downturn in the number of Brothers in some parts of the world, would it be so concerned with fostering the vocation and involvement of lay people? As someone enthused by Vatican II, he answered his own question with a decisive ‘Yes!’ The Council’s defining teachings on the *universal call to holiness* and the *essentially missionary nature of the Church* meant that groups such as the Marist Brothers should never accommodate an arrangement that had lay people sitting off to the side in any kinds of auxiliary, second-rung or passive roles. Indeed, there was really no such thing as a ‘lay Christian’ or a ‘lay disciple’.⁶ The concept would have puzzled Saint Paul, who wrote to the Christians at Colossae: ‘You [that is, all of you] are God’s chosen ones, his saints’.⁷ He would have struggled with the proposition that there are degrees of spirituality, or a kind of ecclesial caste system, that presumes that some in the Church were the professional, full-time, holy Christians, while others were only part-timers, with serviceable enough spiritual lives but having no serious claim to a developed expertise. In the first letter of Peter we read that we, all of us, are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart’.⁸ The four evangelists would have similarly been intrigued by any notion of a ‘lay’ spirituality. In each of the four gospels, the so-called ‘hard-sayings’ of Jesus are not directed at a special elite, or just to the Twelve, but to everyone.⁹ They did not pen the gospels with monks and nuns in mind. The core concept is *discipleship*, and that this discipleship is for all who answer the call of Jesus. Each person, as a Christian, is called to be a disciple of Jesus; there are no grades of discipleship, no first class and second class Christians, no full members and associate members of the Church. The Church’s renewed appreciation of itself as *communio* and its rejection of any hierarchy of holiness among its members has meant a recasting of the place of consecrated life in the broader life of the Church.¹⁰ Over the past two decades, the Marists have been among those spiritual families of the Church which have been deliberate and strategic in reimagining how their particular spiritual heritage might be appropriated more broadly within the post-Conciliar Church as it strives to share in God’s mission in the world.

Educating together in Catholic schools

But what of the priests, religious sisters and brothers? Certainly, in many parts of the Church, they are generally few and getting fewer, old and getting older. It needs be emphasised that this was not the vision of Vatican II. When Congar and others were writing of the coming age of the laity back in the 1950s, and when the Council captured many of these hopes in documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no one envisaged that lay people would or should replace an ageing clergy or a vanishing band of religious. Indeed, the new thinking was formulated at a time when numbers of clergy and religious were at their height. It was not anticipated that this would change, that there would be what we sometimes call the 'vocations crisis'. Vatican II's was not an ecclesiology that was born out of a context of clerical diminishment. So, also, in key gatherings such as the Synod on the Laity in 1987¹¹ and the seminal document, *Christifideles Laici*, that came from it, there is no sense of a Church or a mission that was the province of lay people alone. Other documents – and, particularly for our concerns here, those published by the Congregation for Catholic Education – are written within a similar conceptual framework. That of 2007 said it all in its title: *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*.¹² The first part of the document situates this mission in the context of a central idea of the modern Church, that of *communio*. This is not a sociological concept, as Ratzinger reminds us,¹³ but a theological and ecclesiological one, founded on the complementary and unified states of life in the Church as the Body of Christ: the laity, the ordained priesthood and the consecrated life.

Vatican II is often misrepresented in this regard, and a misconceived ecclesiology can develop as a result. It is not good theology or good ecclesiology to speak of a 'lay church'. This is not what John Paul II meant when he envisaged the twenty-first century as the century of the laity. Nor will it give us a healthy or viable understanding of 'lay spirituality' if we consider the spirituality of lay people as a phenomenon that is independent from priests and religious. It is a diminished and incomplete understanding of spirituality, because it is a diminished and incomplete understanding of the Church. It is similarly flawed to think of the spirituality of lay people as some kind of successor to the spiritualities of the religious orders that are now so limited in their presence and activity. In planning for the involvement and the leadership of lay people in Marist schools, there has been a conscious attempt – from lay people as much as the Brothers – to avoid a sense of handover or succession.

Alignment with Missio Dei

The most fundamental challenge for any spiritual family, and arguably the most telling litmus test of its integrity, will be its alignment with mission, God's mission. In the sense that Bevans and Schoeder (2004, 2011) propose God *as* mission,¹⁴ this essentially means alignment with God. To share in the life of God – God who is love – is to encounter Christ who reveals this love.¹⁵ This is the heart of mission because this is where the Reign of God is rooted. Spiritual families should be before all else, therefore, schools of spirituality. They will be also schools of community and schools of mission, but first of all they need to be graced spaces in which people can be schooled in Christian discipleship. People encounter Christ there, personally and profoundly. They experience conversion of heart. In such spiritual families, people can become prophets and mystics. Indeed, in the best of these families it is prophets

and mystics who are the recognised holders of wisdom and authority. It is a misunderstanding of the Church's spiritual families – including those associated with the so-called 'apostolic' religious institutes – to begin with what they do, or to focus on their works as their *raison d'être*. That is not the essence of the mission they undertake. While the personal charisms of founders were invariably associated with addressing pressing human needs, there is a deeper way of understanding what they were about. All founders of the great spiritual traditions of the Church acted out of a prior and intense God-encounter in Christ.

In the *Constitutions of the Marist Brothers*, the charism of their founder, Saint Marcellin, is simply defined in terms of his being called by the Spirit, from his deep personal experience of being loved by God, to bring Christian education to young people, especially the most needy, in order that he could help 'to make Jesus Christ known and loved'.¹⁶ It is the last clause that Marists claim as their bedrock. A reference text on their Marist spirituality puts it this way:

The founding Marists understood their mission as a sharing in Mary's work of bringing Christ-life to birth in the lives of young, and being with the Church as it came to be born.¹⁷

The Marist founding intuitions to share in the eternal 'work of Mary', as they called it, was in one sense to *be Mary*. Their conviction was that the ecclesial tepidity, ignorance, scandal, regression, fractures and secularism of post-Revolutionary France would be most compellingly addressed by an essentially Marian approach. Modern Marist theologians describe this in terms of the 'Marian principle' of the Church, something very much in sympathy with the theology of von Balthazar.¹⁸ The Marian way is to nurture, to unify, to reconcile, to heal, to believe and to embrace the lives of those whose sense of a loving God has been most damaged or never really born. Within this broader movement, one branch – that led by Marcellin Champagnat – became specifically concerned with realising the Marist dream through the Christian education and care of young people. The particular strand of Marist spirituality that evolved from the personal charism of Marcellin was one marked by a profound experience of God's abiding presence and love, by trust in God, by a deep personal love of Jesus and his Gospel, by community living in a family spirit and by a humility expressed through simplicity.¹⁹ Marists take Mary's *Magnificat* as their manifesto, setting out into the 'hill country' of young people's lives, filled with hope and joy, bringing them news of the justice and mercy and faithfulness of God.²⁰ Like Mary, First Disciple, their lives are centred on Christ, and their hearts are moved by the young.²¹

The heart of Marist self-identity is not to be found in networks of schools or in excellence of education or in the wonderful care of young people. At its heart is Christ or, more pointedly, a community of educators whose lives have been transformed by Christ and who, with Mary, see themselves bringing about God's reign in themselves and in their world. At least that is the rhetoric. The challenge for the Marists – as for all spiritual families – is that those who describe themselves as *Marist* have this congruence with the life of God. The consequent challenge is for them to be mystics and prophets, people of both prayer and action, and to be in a community that inspires, forms and sustains them as such.

Today's Marists, with all Catholic educators, are charged with 'integrating faith, life and culture' in the teaching and learning experiences and other programmes they

share with students.²² It is what *Evangelii Nuntiandi* understood as incarnating God's reign within a cultural and real-life context, a theme that is commonly enough taken up by contemporary mission theologians.²³ The actual culture in which they go about this is of course a postmodern one, which often attracts descriptors such as pluralist, relativist, fractured and secularist. Some in the Church despair of this postmodern world, and they retreat from it in what Sivalon (2012) calls a 'romantic conservatism'.²⁴ While anecdotal evidence suggests that contemporary Marists are not typically to be found in among that group, the challenge remains of how the Marist movement can be assured that its members are going to be, in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes*, a respectful but redemptive presence *within* postmodernity: how they are going to evangelise their culture, evangelise the culture of their schools; how they are going to bring the heart of God to their ministry.

Charism: a problematic term

A discussion such as this one builds on the concept of *charism*, a term that is used extensively in the discourse of Catholic education but one that suffers from imprecision. Its widespread but sometimes vague usage can both devalue its theological richness and create ambiguity as to the nature of the phenomenon that is being discussed. Lydon (2009) offers a useful history of the term,²⁵ emphasising its Pauline sense. He also identifies the confusion, or at least the intersection of concepts when one is drawing on Weberian theory,²⁶ that can be generated by the words *charism*, *charisma* and *charismatic*. In relation to the last of those words, it is the preference of this author to employ the word *charismic* as the adjective coming from *charism*, reserving *charismatic* for *charisma*.

Charism is not a word that has had much currency in the Church over the centuries. Indeed, since Saint Paul coined a Greek word drawn from *charis* (meaning 'gift' or 'grace') to describe the spiritual gifts evident in some early Christian communities, it has not found significant mention in Church documents or teaching until the twentieth century. Vatican II famously revitalised the word in a paragraph of *Lumen Gentium*:

God distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church. Whether these charisms²⁷ be very remarkable or simply and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church.²⁸

Paul VI, in applying this Vatican II understanding of charism to the religious life itself and as well as to individual founders and foundresses,²⁹ helped to take the concept further than we find it described in the Pauline texts. It then became a recurring term for Pope John Paul II, and employed in the same sense:

The Holy Spirit, while bestowing diverse ministries in the Church communion, enriches it still further with particular gifts or promptings of grace called charisms. They can take a great variety of forms both as a manifestation of the absolute freedom of the Spirit who abundantly supplies them, and as a response to the varied needs of the Church in history.³⁰

The word has entered general Church discourse nowhere more than in Church's service ministries of education and health care. This has been perhaps because these ministries are often enough undertaken or sponsored by apostolic religious institutes of relatively recent founding whose corporate memory of their founding generation has been proximate and alive, and ones who have been active in attending to the spiritual formation of their lay co-workers. This has been a mixed blessing. The benefits have been many, as lay people have found rich spiritual paths to follow and inspirational fellow-travellers with whom to associate. But there have also been, and continue to be, some less helpful developments. One has been the misappropriation of the word *charism*, both because of confusion with its close lexical cousins 'charisma' and 'charismatic', and because of its other uses in the Church, particularly within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the various Pentecostal movements. Another has been a demeaning of the word as the result of another confusion: people's mistaking the temporal expressions of a charism (for example, a distinctive teaching or caring style, or a grouping of people) with the essence of the charism itself, which is always a way of embracing the gospel of Jesus. This has happened as the original charism has attracted successive generations of people who have developed a communal story, a culture, replete with its heroes, legends, sacred places, music, literature, iconography, ministerial style, and its strength of association. While all of these things can and should be authentic ways of incarnating Christ-life in our world – of allowing the Word to pitch its tent in our midst – there is sometimes confusion between the tent and its inhabitant. This seems particularly the case when the charism has been the means of addressing a practical social need, such as education or health care. A third factor is the conventional view that a charism belongs to a religious order or some other church group, when in fact it belongs to the whole Church, to all the People of God, for its benefit and its enabling for mission.

For some it has come to mean little more than a distinctive pedagogical style, for some a cult-like attachment to a particular founder or foundress, for some an insular or inwardly focused association of people with a circle-the-wagons motivation for remaining associated, and for others a nostalgic but ill-defined hankering after what it was like when the sisters or the brothers were around. None of that is charism, because none of it is likely, of itself, either to promote discipleship of Jesus or to serve the evangelising needs of the Church.³¹

So, can we validly continue to use the word *charism* in such a way that its post-Vatican II usage does not betray or skew its Scriptural origins? The answer to that question is yes, but carefully. The concept of *charism* as it was understood by the Council is the same as Paul's: a grace of the Holy Spirit, freely given to a member or members of the Christian community, to enable them to receive and preach the gospel of Jesus in a particular way, and that every *charism* enhances the Church's shared capacity for the service of the Gospel.³² The novelty of recent Popes' use of the term, and its widespread currency in the Church including Catholic schools, is not essentially at odds with this. Indeed, it is well that those involved in Catholic education embrace the call of the Council and of the Popes of our time to receive these *charisms* 'with gratitude'. The *charisms* are, as one commentator has put it, the 'great gospel ideas',³³ the inspired ways of discipleship that have stood the test of time and have proven fruitful, that have inspired generations of Christians to recognise and to love their God, and to undertake the mission of the Church. They have given them a story to join, a community of mission to which to belong, a work

to do, a way to pray, a face of God to see. They have been built around inspired and inspirational people, indeed saints. They have grown into rich and wise schools of spirituality. These charisms are treasures of the Church; they are the Spirit alive in the Church. The word, nonetheless, remains a little strange for many, one that does not roll easily off the tongue. For this reason, and because of the way it can be misused, this author prefers the terms 'spirituality', 'spiritual tradition' and 'spiritual family'.

The Spirit will always be gifting members of the Church to empower them for mission in ways that are new, relevant and engaging, ways that suit who and where they are and the needs they face. As the present-day Church moves to an ecclesiology centred on *communio*, this broadening of the embrace of traditional charisms is really not surprising. What are unclear are the future forms and structures that these charismatic movements will take. Some see this as both the adventure and the frustration of a founding time; or, as some others would see it, a refounding time.³⁴ The Marists are deliberately and strategically aligned with the latter.

The Church's spiritual families: a way forward for Catholic education

At least in the Australian experience, there are arguably no two greater challenges to the integrity and the effectiveness of Australian Catholic schools as agents of evangelisation than the depth of spirituality of those who teach and work in these schools and the degree of their ecclesial involvement. In world terms, Australian Catholic schools are built and resourced outstandingly. They are led and staffed by well-educated professionals, indeed people who, in the history of Catholic education in this country, have never been more highly qualified. Their public funding levels and resources are the envy of many countries. The schools are serviced by Church agencies that provide high-level curricular, financial, legal and personnel support for policies, programmes and governance. They allow dioceses and religious institutes to conduct a world-class network of schools, and to be able offer these to virtually anyone who is seeking a Catholic education. But to what extent is it still a *Catholic* education that is being offered? Or, to put it more pointedly, to what extent are these schools communities places where the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed unambiguously and received openly, where Jesus is known and loved personally, where the reign of God pervades all that is done there and how it is done? To what extent are they places that satisfy the God-thirst in people and promote Christian discipleship? The degree to which it is the case in a school will be largely a function of the depth to which the staff who lead it can personally answer yes to each of those questions posed.³⁵ The Congregation for Catholic Education goes to the heart of the matter:

The project of the Catholic school will be convincing only if it is carried out by people who are deeply motivated because they witness to a living encounter with Christ, in whom alone 'the mystery of man [sic] becomes clear'.³⁶

To avoid significant 'mission drift'³⁷ as the next generation of teachers moves into middle leadership and senior leadership roles – an increasing number of whom have grown up in families that have not been active in their practice of the faith in the traditional sense – then it is important to look for effective and engaging means for developing the personal spirituality of these teachers and connecting them to the life of the Church. The world of young Australian people, including younger teachers,

is for the most part a post-Christian and postmodern one. Their world is pluralist, secularist and relativist. While there are quite notable exceptions, and there are certainly differences among ethnic communities across the country, most people under 50 are not the 'ecclesial natives' that their grandparents were, and perhaps many of their parents. Church is another country. They do not always feel at home there, or understand its language. They do not intuitively connect with it.

The revitalisation of the Church and their fostering of personal faith in such times is familiar territory for most of the great spiritual families of the Church. Indeed, it is where, at their best, they are most at home. It was from the Church's need for renewal, reinterpretation and repositioning that most of them grew. These are in their evangelical and ecclesial DNA; this is what gives them life. The Marists are typical of the many apostolic movements that grew out of such origins. It was to young people who had yet to hear the Good News that they felt called. Their own intuitions in post-Napoleonic France were that the Church needed a Marian approach if it was going to speak to people of its age: an approach that sprang from a maternal heart, one that was grounded and simple, merciful and hopeful, apostolic without being judgemental or punitive. Like other movements, over time they have built up a rich store of means for giving effect to their purpose.

In the context of a Catholic school community, the potential evangelising benefits of belonging to such a spiritual tradition or movement are immense. If it is one that suits that school community and its present realities, one that is relevant and engaging for its members, then it can provide a graced way to give compelling life to the Gospel. First, it will give people a means of deepening their personal and their communal spirituality, a way of quenching their thirst for God, a path to meeting Jesus – what might be called a 'do-able discipleship'. Secondly, it will give a treasure chest of resources; solid formation programmes, literature, symbols and rituals, strategies for ministry, extraparochial and extradiocesan links, and collected wisdom, from which the principal and staff can draw. It becomes the glue that binds the community, and interprets and concretises its mission. The Marists are among those Australian groups that have developed programmes, strategies and structures to offer all of this to local Catholic school communities.

There remains, however, something of what could be called a 'charismic gap' in the macro-leadership of Catholic education in Australia. While some quite exciting and promising initiatives are being taken at the level of spiritual families such as the Marists, one may question whether the spiritual families of the Church are well enough positioned at the level of the Catholic sector to contribute as effectively as they have done in the past. One of the characteristics of the contemporary Catholic education scene in Australia is the enhancement of the Catholic education bureaucracy. As religious institutes have become less directly involved and less influential in the education sector, they have left a vacuum into which lay people have not adequately stepped. Whereas lay people occupy places in the diocesan curia, both comfortably and competently, they are yet to assume their rightful positions of recognised leadership and practical influence in the spiritual families of the Church in ways that impact sufficiently on the life and mission of the Church in education. A corporate blandness can be the result.

Strategic directions of the Marists in Australian Catholic education

Over the past two decades two clear principles have emerged for Marists in Australia: 'charismic vitality' and 'structural viability'. Like the two dimensions of the Church that Suenens described half a century ago, they are inseparably complementary. Charismic vitality refers to the integrity and intensity of 'Maristness' in those who claim that name, in their spirituality, in their professional practice, and in the culture and sense of community of their schools. Structural viability refers to the arrangements for associating and leading these people within the Church, and for governing and managing their work, again within the Church.

It is just over 20 years since the first formation programme was offered by the Brothers' Province for their lay colleagues. It was informed by a well-intentioned but somewhat patronising mindset on the part of the Brothers, one which was quickly challenged and immediately discarded. The senior lay school administrators who were invited to that first course respectfully pointed out that they too had self-identity as Marists, that they had devoted a significant part of their lives as Marist educators, that they felt the responsibility of leading Marist works and inducting new teachers into the Marist way, and indeed that they had their own insights into Marist spirituality and Marist education which they wanted to share. The cast was reshaped into one that was mutually respectful and enriching, and it has remained so.

A suite of programmes and strategies has been developed, now animated by a team with considerable expertise and led by a Marist who is lay. It includes these elements:

- comprehensive study of Scripture, theology and doctrine
- instruction in Christian spirituality, liturgy and prayer
- experience of prayer, worship, retreat and personal accompaniment
- opportunity for service and solidarity
- study of the Marist story, including the canon of Marist documents
- study of Marist spirituality and pedagogy
- exposure to the local Marist story and to the present international Marist reality
- opportunity for membership of an active group of Marist companions who gather regularly for Eucharist and prayer, for faith sharing and for social activity.

It has been seen to be increasingly important for formation to be Christocentric and to avoid any sense of cultism around Marcellin or tribalism around a Marist identity. It is essential for it always to lead from and to Jesus. Almost 4000 people from Marist schools and other ministries have completed the basic three-day residential programme in Marist spirituality and education, and a similar number have participated in other courses and programmes offered on a regional or national level. A former training house for the Brothers has been extensively refurbished as a well-resourced retreat and conference centre, a place to which Marists can come collectively and individually, and have a shared sense of ownership. The centrally offered events are supplemented by local, in-school programmes offered by the team. Each year, between 3000 and 4000 members of staff participate in these other programmes.

The programmes are continually evaluated and in development. The summary of the 2014 offerings in Table 1 may give the reader a window into the scope and focus of what is available.

Marist education was a by-product rather than the starting point of the Marist movement. There was no move to create a new philosophy or mode of education. This is important because it points to a fundamental principle of how the formation and association of today's Marist educators is being undertaken in Australia. 'Marist education' is simply how and why Marists do Catholic education. While it has developed its distinctive features and characteristic emphases – and without undervaluing the their evangelising and educative effectiveness – it would be a mistake to see these as the essence of Marist education. Its essence is to be found, rather, where all charisms born of the Spirit have their source: in *Missio Dei*. For someone to be a genuine Marist educator, that person needs to be Marist. And to be Marist is to have a conscious sense of being caught up in God's mission in the world, and of living this out through the graced way of Christian discipleship first introduced by Saint Marcellin and later enriched by successive generations of Marists. Formation and gathering experiences are designed, therefore, to be attempts through which the members of this Marist spiritual family can grow as Christ's disciples and be communities of mission.

While there is always more that can be done in formation to maximise charismatic vitality, it has been judged that the next phase for the Marists in Australia will have more to do with the structural viability question. A major step was taken in this direction six years ago with the decision to restructure and rebrand the network of schools as 'Marist Schools Australia'. A new governance and management model was developed based in three Regions, and new national arrangements were put in place for supporting school leaders and school communities. This model is now well established. The next step is the establishment of a new canonical entity for all Marists. This has been seen to be essential for giving structure, definition and canonical legitimacy to the sometimes amorphous group of people who see themselves as the Marists. Their defined and assured place in the Church is important for two reasons:

- (1) They need to understand themselves as an expression of the one universal Church, and not devolve into some kind of sect or club. Pope Francis has warned strongly against any 'privatisation' of the Church by particular groups.³⁸ While Marist formation programmes have been increasingly alert to having a Christocentric approach in all that they offer, and to avoiding the 'cult-of-the-founder trap' that is always lurking for charismatic traditions, it is equally important for any spiritual family to ensure its ecclesial communion.
- (2) The Church quite reasonably also needs to be assured that these 'Marists' are trustworthy and reliable partners in mission – that they have, *inter alia*, clear purposes that are congruent with the Gospel of Jesus, solid formation strategies, and appropriate means for choosing and renewing leadership, and that they are sustainable and viable as a group. While the Holy See and local bishops have a responsibility to welcome, to nurture and to support both old and new charismatic groups,³⁹ they have a concomitant responsibility to exercise a pastoral vigilance over them as part of the Church.

Table 1. Summary of programmes offered in 2014.

Name of programme or course	Purpose and target group	Notes
<i>In Marcellin's Way</i>	A half-day induction programme for staff new to Marist schools	Offered locally and regionally, at start of the year
<i>Footsteps I, Making Jesus Christ Known and Loved*</i>	A three-day residential intensive for Marists with at least two years' experience. Marist spirituality and education	Offered nationally, eight times per year for groups of around 30–40
<i>Footsteps II, Making Jesus Christ Known and Loved*</i>	A three-day residential intensive building on Footsteps I	Offered nationally, twice per year
<i>Contemplative Marian retreat</i>	Silent retreat, with presentations and personal accompaniment	Offered nationally, once per year
<i>Marist pilgrimage*</i>	A 28-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome and the Marist founding places in France.	Offered annually
<i>Sharing Marcellin's Vision</i>	A three-day residential immersion in an indigenous community	Offered annually
Staff immersion experience	A week-long visit to a Marist project/community in a developing or needy country	Offered biennially
<i>Being Marist</i>	A two-day residential for front-office and secretarial staff	Offered biennially
<i>Marist Leaders Next Gen I</i>	Seminar series for teachers aspiring to middle-level leadership in Marist schools	Offered regionally three times per year
<i>Marist Leaders Next Gen II</i>	Seminar series for staff aspiring to senior leadership in Marist schools	Offered regionally three times per year
<i>Marist Schools Conference</i>	Large conference for at least three people from each school: the Principal, another from the leadership team and a young leader of the future	Held biennially
#Serve	An in-school PD programme for 2014 on Christian spirituality with a Marist edge – aimed at all staff	Each year a new theme is chosen. Other resources are provided for schools to support the theme
Graduate Certificate in Catholic Education (Marist pedagogy)*	A programme, equivalent to 0.5 of a Master's degree, offered in conjunction with a university.	
Online credential in Marist Principles of Education*	A postgraduate credential offered online in four languages by a Marist university in Brazil, on behalf of the International Network of Marist Institutions of Higher Education	

Table 1 (Continued)

Name of programme or course	Purpose and target group	Notes
Off the shelf; programmes	A range of 20 or so PD programmes that have been developed over the years and can be tailored for local needs and in-school delivery. Themes include: Marist spirituality, Marist education, Mary, middle leaders, evangelisation in the Marist way, staff retreats	
Conferences and meetings	Conferences and meetings, usually residential and with a strong prayer/worship component, are organised each year for each of these groups: principals, directors of mission (or equivalent), youth ministry leaders, business managers, as well as student leaders. A major Marist schools conference every two years	
Various resources	A range of print and electronic resources have been produced by the Institute and the Province Marist education, Marist youth ministry, the Lay Marist vocation, Marist spirituality, resources for School Board/Council formation	
Publications	A Marist staff journal is published three times per year, an academic journal is also published three times per year and a newsletter is produced fortnightly during term time.	
Expectations for theological education	A policy has been developed which specifies the level of graduate theological education and credentials and currency required for teachers, middle-level leaders and senior leaders.	

Note: *Denotes programmes that attract postgraduate credit in both Catholic and secular tertiary institutions, if the accompanying reading and assignments are satisfactorily completed.

The way chosen for this to occur is to establish a public association of Christ's faithful to be called *The Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat*, with its members known simply as *Marists*. Its membership will be inclusive of Marists broadly, with the Brothers inevitably forming a relatively small fraction of the whole. In deciding to go down this canonical path, the Marists have opted for a concept of juridical personality⁴⁰ that is different from that being favoured by many other apostolic groups: this new Association will be, in the terms of Canon Law, an 'aggregation of people' rather than an 'aggregation of things'. The reason for this should be evident from all that has been written above: the Marists are convinced that it will be as a recognised ecclesial movement that their particular spiritual tradition will be most effective in the service of the Church.

Conclusion

The major contribution of the great spiritual families of the Church is that they have developed language, strategies, resources, practices, literature, formation, accumulated wisdom, and a sense of inclusion for inspiring and guiding people in their spiritual journeys, and for giving them motivation and means to share in God's mission in the Church. At their best they are schools of spirituality; they are schools of mission; they are schools of community. They lead people to become disciples of Jesus, to grow in Christian companionship with others, and so to give expression and effect to the work of the Church in the contemporary world. The fruit of two decades of action and evaluation by the Marists in Australia in the area of spiritual

formation is to understand themselves in this way. For their particular charismatic tradition to continue to be of relevance and of service to Catholic education, they have come to see the imperative for them to recast themselves as a broader ecclesial family with a sense of *communio* as Vatican II proposed it, to be quite thorough and strategic in the spiritual formation and theological education offered to its members, and to have structural and legitimised means for associating these people and for giving them a home within the Church.⁴¹

Notes

1. Suenens (1964).
2. The term is the one used by the Congregation for Catholic Education (2007). See 'Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #28–30'.
3. The Marists comprise an extended family of religious institutes and lay groups that each traces its source to the Society of Mary founded in Lyon, France, in the early part of the nineteenth century. Among the founding group were Venerable Jean-Claude Colin and Saint Marcellin Champagnat, both Marist priests. For the purposes of this article, discussion will be restricted to those who are associated with the branch of Marists connected with Saint Marcellin. This was originally the Marist Brothers (or 'Little Brothers of Mary'), a religious institute of teaching brothers devoted to the Christian education and care of youth. In more recent times it has included various groups of lay faithful who are connected, both formally and informally, to Marist communities and Marist institutions.
4. Lydon (2009).
5. Brother Charles Howard (1991).
6. For a more extensive consideration of this, see Green (2011).
7. Colossians 3:12.
8. 1 Peter 2:9.
9. For example, Matthew 4:18–22; 10:34–36; 19:21; 22:12–13; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 9:22–26; John 15:6. This idea is developed well by Donna Orsuto, Director of the Lay Center at Foyer Unitas (Rome), and lecturer in the Institute of Spirituality at the Gregorian University. See Orsuto (1997).
10. Pope John Paul II's encyclicals *Christifideles laici* (1988) and *Vita consecrata* (1996), along with *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, provide some sharp discussion on the complementary roles of consecrated and lay life in the spiritual, communitarian and missionary life of the Church.
11. Or, to give it its full title: A Synod on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.
12. Congregation for Catholic Education, (2007).
13. Ratzinger commented most clearly on this point in 1992 when he wrote an editorial piece for the twentieth anniversary of the theological journal *Communio*, of which he was one of the co-founders. See Ratzinger (1992).
14. See, for example, Bevans (2004); Bevans and Schoeder (2004) and Bevans (2011).
15. See the opening three paragraphs of Benedict XVI's (2005) Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* for a sense of this Christ-encounter.
16. Constitutions of the Marist Brothers, #2 (Marist Brothers 1986).
17. Water from the Rock. Marist Spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat, #11 Institute of the Marist Brothers (2007). See also #26.
18. A circular of the present Marist Superior General, Brother Emili Turú (2011), explores this theme: *He Gave Us The Name of Mary*.
19. *Water from the Rock*, Chapter 1, summarises these six features of Marist spirituality.
20. See Luke 1:39–56.
21. From the description of Marist spirituality in *Marist Schools Australia, An Introduction*. Marist Brothers: Province of Australia.

22. The term was used by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) in its signature document *The Catholic School* #41, and was subsequently picked up by the *Marist Brothers' Constitutions* (Marist Brothers 1986), #87.
23. See, example, the treatment of 'inculturation' by Bevans (2012) and Sivalon (2012).
24. Sivalon (2012).
25. Lydon, (2009). See also Grace (2010).
26. See also John McMahon who, in his doctoral study on Marist education, drew extensively on theories of Max Weber (McMahon 1993).
27. Some translators prefer 'charismatic gifts' to 'charisms'; others stay with the Latin word *charismata*.
28. *Lumen Gentium* #12.
29. See Pope Paul VI (1971) #2, #11.
30. *Christifideles Laici* #24.
31. Pope Francis (2013) has expressed similar sentiments in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #130–31.
32. The Pauline understanding of spiritual gifts is developed through a number of Paul's letters and those of the Pauline school: see Romans 14; 1 and 2 Corinthians; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10.
33. The phrase is Claude Maréchal's (2000), the then Assumptionist Superior General, who delivered a paper on this topic at the 56th Conference of Superiors General, in Rome, in 1999: *Toward an effective partnership between religious and laity in fulfilment of charism and responsibility for mission*.
34. Father Bruno Secondin, then Carmelite Superior General, claims that the Church is going through a developmental phase with regard to lay involvement. Like any founding time, it is 'exploratory, adventurous and contradictory'.
35. See the Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT (2007), *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, for a discussion of important issues around the identity and mission of the Australian Catholic schools.
36. Congregation for Catholic Education *op. cit.*
37. See Peter Nicholson (2009). Conference paper available from Government and Management bookstore: www.goverance.com.au.
38. See his General Audience, 25 September 2013. The Pope points out that a mark of any genuine Christian community is its inclusivity rather than exclusivity – that a Christian may feel 'at home' within it.
39. *Lumen Gentium* #12 challenges the Church to accept this multifaceted giftedness of the Spirit 'with gratitude' because it is God's way of upbuilding the Church.
40. This is a concept of Canon Law. For a person or group to be given the right to act in the name of the Church and/or to hold title to goods or property in the name of the Church, it is necessary for that person or group to have an approved existence in Canon Law, in much the same way that a company or other corporate entity exists in Civil Law. So, for example, a parish or a religious institute is a 'Public Juridic Person' (PJP) in Canon Law. With the new ecclesial movements and other organisations in the Church that are now seeking to exercise ministry in the name of the Church (including organisations that have been ceded the apostolic works formerly conducted by religious institutes) there has been a move to have new PJPs approved by the Holy See, national Episcopal Conferences or local Ordinaries. The more common approach that is being taken by religious institutes is for a PJP to be a small group of people formally entrusted with canonical stewardship of the works that were formerly conducted by these institutes. That is, the number of formal members of the PJP is quite restricted. Examples in Australia are Edmund Rice Education Australia (for educational works formerly conducted by the Irish Christian Brothers), Mary Aikenhead Ministries (for health and educational works of the Sisters of Charity), Mercy Partners (from the Sisters of Mercy), Good Samaritan Education (from the Good Samaritan Sisters) and Kildare Ministries (from the Brigidine and the Presentation Sisters).
41. In following this path, the Marists are doing something that is atypical of most religious institutes, and aligns more closely with the paths followed by the new ecclesial movements. Although their initiative has some resemblance to the tertiary of 'third order' arrangements of the older religious orders such as the Dominicans or Franciscans, it differs in one

critical respect: the new Marist Association includes both professed members of the Institute and lay people, priests and other religious, all as equal members.

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