

A 'Final Word' From Br Greg

As the Advent journey draws us closer to Christmas, I am conscious of this being my last story for Christlife. It has been a joy to present news of Marist Youth Ministry to our Marist Association readers over the past few years. Some sign-off thoughts shortly but first, an update on the biggest event happening for the Young Church in Australia.

Presently, members of our MYM team are in Perth for the fourth Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF). Spending quality time in this beautiful city and enjoying the hospitality of the Churchlands Brothers' Community, Perth Young Marists and staff from Newman College has been wonderful.

There has been a tangible and spirit-filled sense of joy and celebration.



An Invitation to Listen like Mary and Build like Francis

In his welcome to ACYF19, Archbishop Tim Costello SDB, invited all participants to make themselves 'appropriately vulnerable' and to listen to what God is asking each of them, like Mary. He also echoed the challenge given by Pope Francis' to young people at WYD16 in Poland, to 'get off the couch' and, like St Francis of Assisi, act on God's voice inviting them to 'Go and rebuild my Church which is falling into ruin'.

Prayer that leads to Mission

Among the myriad keynote presentations, workshops and Expo encounters, what has stood out for me has been the carefully prepared prayers and liturgies, with beautiful Indigenous art, music and dance threaded throughout. The Taize prayer during the Sunday evening plenary allowed the young people to pray by drawing on scripture, silence and song, something very close to the heart of our Marist way of praying with young people.

The Monday evening Adoration was another moment of encounter with the Lord which was beautifully explained to the young people. At the end of



Listen to What the Spirit is Saying! ACYF19

There is a tangible and spirit-filled sense of joy and celebration among the 5000 young people who are celebrating their faith and friendship with Jesus and their desire to be witnesses to the Gospel. The theme of ACYF19, 'Listen to what the Spirit is Saying' has provided a terrific opportunity for young people to encounter the Holy Spirit prompting them to listen, to be restless and to truly desire the 'more' of what God offers them - Jesus and the fullness of life.

Adoration, Bishop Brian Mascord, from the Diocese of Wollongong, told the young people that the true gift and grace of Eucharistic Adoration is to move from 'watching Jesus' to 'carrying Jesus' out into the world, and being his living presence as Eucharist for others. For me, this was a significant and theological shift in my understanding of Adoration, which was not lost on anyone present.

Meeting the Family at ACYF

Marist Youth Ministry was delighted to connect with students and staff from numerous Marist schools who visited our MYM Expo booth over the three days. We have enjoyed many happy family reunions. We also welcomed Bishops from many of the dioceses across Australia where Marists have a significant presence.

Looking Back with Gratefulness

As I conclude my four years as National Coordinator of Marist Youth Ministry, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the faith lives of young people who come to us with a love of our Catholic faith and Marist charism or with questions and a sort of open curiosity. Regardless, I believe that MYM is an inclusive and welcoming space where young people can be prepared for going on the adventure of encountering Jesus and being open to live as his disciples in the way of Mary and Champagnat.

We have been blessed to have committed MYM Coordinators and Regional Assistants who provide solid programs through which young people can ground their experiences of faith and life through the Marist story. From Remar to Game Changers, Justice Forums to Vocation Forums, Student Leaders' Gatherings to Young Adult pilgrimages and immersions; from homework clubs to swimming lessons for refugees; from street retreats to Blind Eye ministry, to shop front food stalks; from monthly young

adult Masses to Taize prayer and dinners; from Bread Runs to Young Adult contemplative retreats; from WYD to Marist Youth Festivals and international gatherings. All these amazing programs are concrete ways that Marists are bringing Jesus alive in the here and now with the young and those in need.

Thanks

My sincere thanks to our MYM Leadership Team of Jeni (Sydney), Caitie (Brisbane) and Edwin (Remar/Game Changers) and our wonderful Regional Assistants for all they have done in ministering to young people this year and for their personal faith they share with joy and enthusiasm. They are truly inspiring Marists.

Thanks to Br Peter, Joe McCarthy and the Marist Association Council for their ongoing support which has enabled MYM to operate nationally. Grateful thanks to Dr Frank Malloy and the MSA Leadership Team for their whole-hearted endorsement of all we are doing in Marist Youth Ministry, particularly in helping us grow a new and vibrant Catholic youth ministry program for our Marist schools into the future.

Thanks to all leaders and members of the Marist Association for your prayers and support of MYM. It is indeed a privileged place for me to have been in and I know that Edwin and the 2020 team will take MYM to a new level with renewed energy and vitality.

May Mary and Champagnat continue to bless and guide us in all our work as we endeavour to make Jesus Christ known and loved among our young people.

Br Greg McDonald
MYM National Coordinator

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