

Faith Formators Propose Directions

Fifty Faith Formators from Marist Schools across Australia gathered recently to reflect on the specific role of Faith Formators in Marist Schools today. The Colloquium was held at the Hermitage in Mittagong from the 23rd to 25th March, 2014. Keynote speakers were Ms Kate Fogarty, Fr Chris Gleeson, Br Michael Green, Fr Rob Galea, Mrs Gail Coates, Br Graham Neist and Br Peter Carroll. **Ms Carole Wark** and other members of the Mission and Life Formation Team, facilitated the program.

Mr Tony Clarke, National Director of the Team began the program on the opening night by asking 'What are the edges for Faith Formators that we need to address over the next four years?'

Next morning, **Kate Fogarty**, the first of the keynote speakers, suggested that amidst the struggle for competing agendas, the role of the Faith Formator is 'to create space for God to be God with this people, in this place, at this time'.

Fr Chris Gleeson reminded us of Paul Tillich's insight 'he who knows about depth, knows about God'. Armed with this knowledge, Chris invited Faith Formators to go with Jesus to the peripheries. Our approach can involve us in being 'grace namers', highlighting where the 'signature' of Jesus is evident.

Br Michael Green stressed, that while evangelisation is in our Marist DNA, we still need to ask 'What would Mary do?' He encouraged us to be mystics and prophets – a mystic being someone who comes into touch with the mind and heart of God and a prophet someone who brings that mind and heart to the world.

Fr Rob Galea, through his singing, reminded us that music transcends the mind. He invited us to commit to liturgy, to know what it is about, how it connects with our lives and to expect a 'God encounter' whenever we participate. He recalled the well known truth that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. As a priest, he strives to be authentically present to others, to prepare well for his prayer and to embrace silence.

Gail Coates and Br Graham Neist informed the Faith Formators about the emerging Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. This will provide an opportunity for Marists, Brothers and lay, to be co-responsible for the future life and mission of the Marist Institute.

Br Peter Carroll concluded the keynote addresses by highlighting the importance of our being witnesses to our faith. The observation attributed to St Francis of Assisi: 'Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words' summarised Peter's sentiments.

Throughout the colloquium, participants drew strength from each other, from the availability of Marist programs and from their own prayer lives. They agreed on the importance of being genuine and authentic people and of remembering that evangelisation takes place in relationship. A very rich colloquium concluded in communal prayer.

John McMahon
28th March, 2014