

Marist Brothers' Sesquicentenary and a new Marist history

In April 1872, four Marist Brothers began the first Marist school in Australia in St Patrick's Parish, Church Hill, Sydney. Irish Catholics of The Rocks called them the 'French Brothers' because their headquarters was in France and their leader was an outgoing Frenchman, Br Ludovic Laboureyras.

Australian recruits quickly joined them and by the 1960s there were over 600 Marist Brothers in five states of Australia. As with other teaching congregations they were in great demand when there was minimal government funding for schools.

From 1970 this momentum of growth and achievement of the first century weakened sharply. Recruitment to the congregation dwindled and communities aged. One recent leader wrote that 'brothers were now living out their vows and consecration in a totally different sub-culture, mostly engaged in some form of ministry, but with few directly participating in schools'. Add to this the revelations and deep impact of the recent Royal Commission.

A bleak outcome after 150 years? The congregation has declined in numbers, but the Marist mission continues in new forms. The spirituality of St Marcellin Champagnat has been embraced by lay colleagues, friends and students. The Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat has grown quickly to 900 members, mostly lay Marists. The original charism continues in the 56 schools of Marist Schools Australia, in youth services provided by Marist180, and in the international outreach of Australian Marist Solidarity.

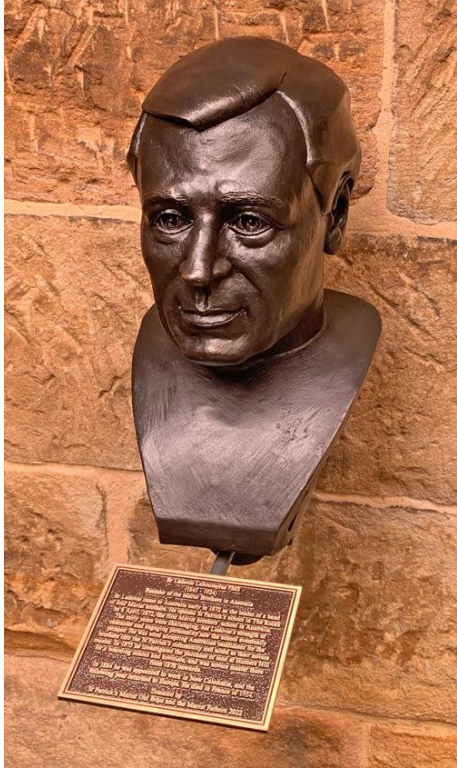
So, in this sesquicentenary, Marists Brothers and lay Marists are reflecting on a complex history in Australia. St Patrick's Parish Church Hill commissioned a bust of the first Director, Br Ludovic. It was unveiled in the parish courtyard on April 8, to commemorate the opening of the first Marist school on 8 April 1872.

A new history of the congregation was launched in early June, under the title *Sub Tuum Praesidium: Marist Brothers in Australia 1872 – 2022*. The authors, Brothers Julian Casey, John Luttrell, Neville Solomon and Peter Rodney, share a broad experience of the Marist story.

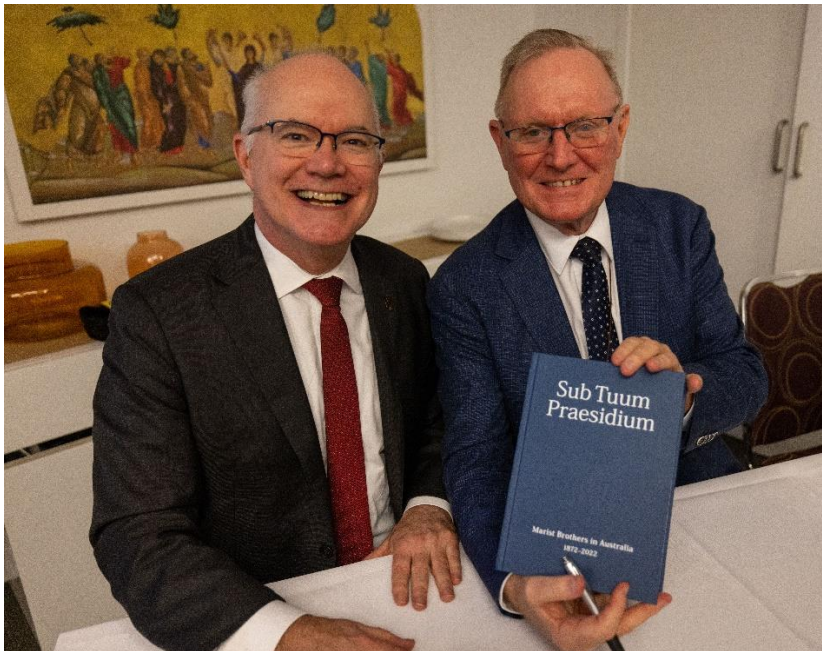
Provincial Peter Carroll sees this new history as significant for the Marist sesquicentenary in Australia – an opportunity 'to celebrate achievements, apologise for our failures and give thanks to God and all those who have supported us in our life and mission'. It is available from The Hermitage, Mittagong, <https://www.thehermitage.org.au/product-category/marist-resources/>.

380 words above.

Images for the news item could be selected from the following:



On 8 April 2022 St Patrick's Parish Church Hill Sydney unveiled a bronze bust of Br Ludovic Laboureyras, Director of the first Marist Brothers' school in Australia, opened 8 April 1872.



Provincial Br Peter Carroll (left) and Br Neville Solomon, author, at the launch of *Sub Tuum Praesidium* in Brisbane on 3 June 2022.



Stan Lamond (designer), Fiona Sim (editor) and Br John Luttrell (author) at the Sydney launch of *Sub Tuum Praesidium* on 7 June 2022.



Michael Evison, executive officer of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat (left) and Provincial Br Peter Carroll at the Sydney launch of *Sub Tuum Praesidium* on 7 June 2022.