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MARIST ASSOCIATION OF SAINT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

Pilgrims of Hope - Stan Grant Delivers Inspiring 2025 Marian Lecture

Marist Association of Saint Marcellin Champagnat – 13 May 2025

On the evening of Tuesday 13th May, over 700 people gathered online and in person in small groups across the country for the Marist Association of Saint Marcellin Champagnat's annual Marian Lecture. This year's lecture was delivered by award winning journalist, author, philosopher, film maker and academic, Professor Stan Grant.

Professor Grant, a Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi and Dharrawal man, has blazed a trail for First Nations journalists in a four-decade career, reporting from more than 80 countries. His latest book, *Murriyang: Song of Time*, offers a profound path to peace and forgiveness, grounded in the Wiradjuri spiritual practice of deep silence and respect.

In his opening, Stan recounts a recent spiritual experience in the Oxfordshire countryside that stirred his sense of wonder, time, and divine presence. Using this setting as a launching point, he explored the themes of faith, modern alienation, freedom, love, and hope, rooted in Christian theology and challenged by contemporary secularism.

"I wake early before sunrise to walk and think. It is my sacred time.... in the distance I heard the tolling of a church bell. I visited there and walked in the footsteps of forty generations of Christian pilgrims."

At the heart of the lecture, Stan highlights Mary, the mother of Christ, whose "yes" to God, what Hans Urs von Balthasar called *Geschehenlassen*, or "letting be", embodies divine obedience and radical agency. He presents this Marian consent not as passive submission, but as a profound act of freedom: a deliberate choice to participate in God's creative love. Stan said,

"What a beautiful gift to locate creation in the mother's love. In the smile of the mother the child is awakened to the grace of God."

He critiqued sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "*liquid modernity*", a phase of modern society marked by constant change, and uncertainty where humans become unmoored from deep truth and tradition.

Instead of despair, Stan calls for a return to the mystery, magic, and miracle of faith. A space he calls, "*the miracle of small things*", referring to the truth of God's gratuitous gift of grace and love. He said,

"I believe God's transcendence and immanence is the source of human flourishing and our pursuit of individual freedom has left us isolated and adrift from each other and our souls."

He urged the audience to reclaim freedom not as self-determination but as “unity with God’s will”, drawing from both Greek (freedom as the good) and Jewish (freedom as covenant) traditions, synthesised in Christianity. Stan said, “*freedom is not individual will; it is unity with God’s will.*”

Stan concluded the lecture by reaffirming hope, not political or rational, but transcendent:

“Hope is not to stare into the distance and long for something better; it is to look inside ourselves and know that hope resides in that place in our souls where we find God.”

The lecture was hosted by Ms Marina Ugonotti, Principal of Loreto Normanhurst and member of the Marist Schools Australia Regional Council for NSW & ACT. She expressed heartfelt thanks to Professor Grant, offering the collective gratitude of all present for his invitation to journey as *Pilgrims of Hope* in this Jubilee year, and to rediscover the mystery and small miracle that connect our lives to the Divine.

Further Information: Mark O’Farrell – Marist Schools Australia mark.ofarrell@marists.org.au



Photo: Professor Stan Grant delivering the 2025 Marian Lecture