



## **Faith, Mission and Community: Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat Launches Its 2026–2028 Pastoral Plan**

After eighteen months of prayer, spiritual conversation, and community-wide discernment, the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat has launched its Pastoral Plan 2026–2028, a document that charts a bold and hopeful course for the Marist mission in Australia.

The Plan was launched during a national online gathering on Tuesday 24 March, with 80 members of the Association participating from across the country. The event was hosted by Executive Director Richard Quinn.

Br Darren Burge, Leader of the Association, welcomed those present and officially launched the Plan. He expressed his hope that it would speak personally to each member - that they would see themselves in it, find what resonates deeply, encounter moments that gently challenge them, and discover inspiration for further action. He also invited the community to engage with the document in a spirit of prayer.

The development of the Pastoral Plan was initiated following the Association's Fourth National Assembly at Marist College Ashgrove, held from 27 to 29 June in 2025, where more than 120 Marists gathered for three days of dialogue, reflection, and discernment. A key outcome of the Assembly was the need to translate the Association's vision into concrete priorities to guide its mission in a changing social and economic landscape.

After the Assembly, a structured national consultation process followed. A writing group prepared an initial draft grounded in Assembly insights, which was then opened to members across Australia for feedback. Contributions received through this process helped shape and strengthen the final document, ensuring it reflects the lived experience, hopes, and priorities of the wider Marist community.

The Association Council - comprising Br Darren Burge (Leader), Julia Lederwasch (Deputy Leader), Jasmine Brown, Maddy Forde-Doolabh, Br David Hall, Daniel Lynch, Donna McLaughlin, Br Michael Callinan, Joe McCarthy, Lee MacMaster, and Zack Pizzingrilli - served as custodians of the process, carefully reviewing national feedback and refining the document before approving the final version for release.

Executive Director Richard Quinn said the plan and the national consultation process demonstrate both strong participation and a clear commitment to action.

“This is not a one-person document. It is the result of a community that has listened deeply - to one another and to where God is calling us. It captures our shared commitment to follow Christ



in the way of Mary and gives us a clear and practical pathway forward. It is also about ensuring the Marist vision continues to respond to the realities of our time,” he said.

### **Six Priorities, One Vision**

The Pastoral Plan 2026–2028 is structured around six pastoral priorities that together form a coherent and ambitious vision for the Association’s next chapter.

At its spiritual core is a **commitment to deepening Marist identity and spirituality** - ensuring that everything the Association does flows from a living, personal encounter with Christ in the way of Mary. Alongside this sits a strong focus on **engaging and empowering young people**, investing meaningfully in their formation and leadership as the future of the movement.

The Plan also calls the Association to strengthen **community and belonging**, building inclusive and intergenerational communities where all are genuinely welcomed. This connects directly to a priority of **mission and outreach** - reaching those on the margins, advancing greater gender inclusivity, and responding seriously to the urgent call of climate change.

Recognising that mission requires strong foundations, the Plan addresses **governance, leadership, and sustainability** - building the structures and capacity that will allow the Association to serve its mission well into the future. And finally, a priority of **community and connection** calls Marists to share their story with enthusiasm and clarity, while deepening ties across parishes, dioceses, ministries, and the global Marist family.

Association Leader Br Darren Burge said the plan is grounded in the heart of the Marist charism and its call to mission. “As Catholics, we are part of a rich and ancient tradition of faith - and within that, Marists bring something distinctive: a way of following the Gospel shaped by the spirit and example of Mary. Her ‘Yes’ continues to guide us, calling us to respond with courage, compassion, and closeness to those most in need. It is that same spirit that animates this plan and calls us to put the Gospel into action in practical and meaningful ways today.,” he said.

The launch of the Pastoral Plan 2026 - 2028 marks a significant step forward for the Marist Association in Australia, providing a clear, shared direction for the years ahead.

### **About the Marist Brothers**

The Marist Brothers are a Catholic religious congregation founded by St Marcellin Champagnat in France in 1817, dedicated to making Jesus Christ known and loved through the education of young people, particularly those most in need. Today the Brothers serve in more than 80 countries, bringing the warmth and simplicity of Mary’s spirit to schools, communities, and missions across the world.

### **About the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat**



The Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat brings together Marist Brothers, clergy, and laity inspired by the charism of St Marcellin Champagnat and the spirituality of the Marist family. Together, its members are committed to living the Gospel in the spirit of Mary and to serving young people and those on the margins of society.

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