

Prayer. What is to you? To me, it is including God in the life he has gifted me with, and the means I have to communicate that. I am at HOME with the Marist perspective of viewing that life. I have had the privilege to know a number of Marist Priests in New Zealand, to lesser or greater extents. They all have a common earthiness; a practical, this is the way it is, so this is what we deal with, way of looking at life and faith. With the tools we have, on hand, here and now. And I love that.

I spent a lot of time away from home in my formative years, in hospital. Going through stuff; BIG stuff, big chunks of it I don't remember. I believe that that is God's grace to keep me sane... some I do remember and some I laugh at still... like two days after a nine and a half hour surgery and still in intensive care unit, the nurse asked the room if we would like a cup of tea, (there were four of us all post op in the unit), before I could raise a hand or utter a peep there was a NOT YOU IN THE corner..... to this day 20+ years later, I often think when I am making a cup of tea, Yes me in the corner!! And I thank God for that nurse, and that surgery because my life would not be the same if I hadn't walked that journey.

Prayer comes to us in many forms, what suits one won't suit another. We are all called to be in relationship with God together, and separately. I love walking uphill, down dale, through bush, or sand - bit of mud if you must; or urban streets nosing at the gardens, and houses I can only dream of living in... I take God on these walks; we share the good the bad, the boring, and exciting. I take music, and God shows me insights - I bet some of the contemporary artists wouldn't have considered. My Grandmothers certainly wouldn't. Like lyrics to a song that PINK recorded speaking to me of reconciliation with God. Or Celine Dion singing Carol King's song, Natural Woman. It helped me to reflect on my relationship with Mary after my first Hearts Aflame Summer School. How Mary makes me feel like a natural woman; with real feelings and issues, questions and answers. And I take my phone... so much easier than taking my camera these days... and allow myself to stop and admire the very real and at time breath-takingly fantastic way the world is. Or conversely when not walking, but stuck in a hospital bed after surgery on a down day, really going at God with Meatloaf's Life's a Lemon and I want my money back! And he comes back to me with Bon Jovi's Bang a Drum... Still have the tapes, don't get them out much, but they got me through a rough day or two....music makes all things possible to get through. Just don't ask ME to sing about it....

I look at The Fourviere Prayer, the prayer to celebrate 200 years of Marist Family, and perhaps we break and pray together:

The Fourvière Prayer

*"O God. Who in your providence continually
send workers into your harvest,
You inspired Marcellin Champagnat,
Jean-Claude Colin,
Etienne Declas, Etienne Terraillon, Pierre Chanel
and their companions to pledge themselves
to the founding of a new Congregation
with the spirit and name of Mary.
May we, their heirs, men and women
of the Marist family, Religious and Lay,
be moved by their example.
Give to us the grace to understand more
clearly our call to carry on their intentions in
our present world; to embrace anew*

*the work of Mary given to us today
for the building up of your Church for
tomorrow in simplicity, humility
and compassionate solidarity; and to step
out into mission,
open to the promptings of the Spirit,
responsive to the needs of God's people
ready to spend ourselves and all we have,
trusting in the help of Mary our good mother
and our first perpetual superior.
Confident that we can do all things in him
who gives us strength, we make our prayer
through Jesus Christ Our Lord,
Amen."*

I reflect on how I am the beneficiary of so much. Beneficiary of the journeys of my ancestors, in family trees, the Marist family, the whole Church family. We are all tied together to share in our communication with God, to walk with him, in harmony of spirit and wonder. To share in the joy, and fulfilment we are offered in him. How in the earth we are gifted with the sources of life and strength - that lead us to acknowledge our smallness, and the Awesomeness of God. How we are guardians of this for the generations to follow. Will we pass it on with mercy and Aroha, in all the depth that it has been given to us. In the broken wounded poor ever forgotten and neglected; restoring them, dignified and renewed with a birthright of their own, to continue the light shining for their future generations also. In this year of Mercy might we not journey together with the heart of Mary, who showed such mercy to all? Mercy in her visitation with Elizabeth, mercy with the wedding couple in Cana, Mercy with her son at the foot of the Cross; mercy with the tired, scared and no doubt scarred group of disciples sitting in the upper room awaiting, for what, they did not know - but managed to have the faith to wait for.

Another form of reflection and prayer for me is, writing..... I'm no Keats, Mansfield, Baxter, or Shakespeare, but I let the moment and the memory speak for me, with God and see where it goes. None of it has been published it won't be but some I have shared on Facebook so here's one I will share with you... reflecting on taking my temporary commitment as a lay Marist in 2013.

Taking steps

solitary steps together

Knowing

not left behind or forgotten on the way.

Bright steps crunching through seasons

soft silent steps

hidden unknown in trust-filled faith.

Along a worn path

of history

of memory

of treasury

Steps of Bravery and fortitude

unchartered pathway

of exploration anticipation of

Hopefilled

Guided presentation

Always Being

*Protected nurtured and Prepared for the Steps,
Ahead.*

May you be blessed as you celebrate your communication with God who is all Mercy, and His Mother our perpetual superior.