

BICENTENARY PAINTINGS

Commentary for the Commencement Mass at OLSH Alice Springs, 17 February 2017

The **four paintings** [SLIDE 1] you see before you tell four different Marist stories. And yet, viewed all together, these four paintings tell us one story - the story of the mission of Marists in the way of St Marcellin Champagnat: *to make Jesus known and loved*. [SLIDE 2]



The first of these paintings [SLIDE 3] captures the dream of 12 newly ordained priests 200 hundred years ago in Lyon, France. Their dream is known as the promise or pledge of Fourviere. When you look at this painting you will notice that the central image is that of Mary holding the child Jesus. This image is significant, because it was before Mary that St Marcellin and these young priests made a promise to form a new society, to be known as the Society of Mary. It's simple aim and mission was to *make Jesus known and loved* in the way of Mary.

The next painting [SLIDE 4] is the story you may have already heard. It is the story of St Marcellin visiting a young boy who was dying knowing nothing of God. You will notice in the painting that the artist has chosen much darker colours to emphasise this crisis for this young boy and the local church.

While the painting shows the boy has already died and is in the care of the angels, St Marcellin is depicted contemplating how he can respond to this crisis to *make Jesus known and loved*. This mission is now urgent!



The third and fourth paintings require a little more imagination to interpret. **This painting is of the interior of the house** [SLIDE 5] at La Valla that St Marcellin acquired to accommodate the first two Marist Brothers, or Little Brothers of Mary as they were known locally. In this painting the artist has included a section of the table that St Marcellin built for this infant community as well as some other rustic features of this first house. In the middle of the table is a loaf of bread symbolising the sacredness of the community gathered around the table. The Marist mission *to make Jesus known and loved* had begun in earnest.

The last painting [SLIDE 6] represents the difficult situation that the first community of Marist Brothers had in establishing the school at the Rocks, in Sydney in 1872. Put simply, the students were undisciplined and out of control! It wasn't until the

Brother in charge invited the students to build an altar to Mary and to pray to her daily during the month of May, that things turned around. You will notice that the chaotic bottom of the painting quickly gives way to the more ordered church stained glass windows. The bright golden intrusion of colour from the top left hand corner suggests that this change of attitude and behaviour was a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Marist mission *to make Jesus known and loved* had come to birth in this young colony in Australia.

Four different stories, [SLIDE 7] one common aim: *to make Jesus known and loved*.

