

Called to *prophetic* Action



Priority
P1
STORIES

Mary McPhee, Santa Teresa

Sustaining and growing Marist education for young people in need

As an educator I have always wanted to share my skills and teach in an Isolated Catholic Community or overseas in a developing country.

Our parents raised me and my five siblings with a great sense of social justice and awareness of those less fortunate than ourselves. We spent five years in PNG where my parents were volunteer teachers; in this developing world environment I learnt that we are all equal; that there is no difference between black and white. Life does not have to be based on expensive toys; clothes etc. and our lives need to model a preferential option for the poor. These are values I now want my two young daughters to be exposed to and embrace at Santa Teresa.

I attended a Marist High School (St Francis de Sales Regional College Leeton) where I was College Captain in year 12. Both parents still teach at St. Francis after 40 years. My first teaching experience was at Our Lady of The Sacred Heart, Alice Springs, where I witnessed a distinct Marist style through the presence of the four brothers' in community at OLSH. They certainly all were fine examples of Marcellin's main value 'To teach children well, you must love them and love them all equally.'

Wanting to share my passion for justice and to expose our students at OLSH to this challenge and enrichment, I took Immersion student groups to Timor Leste.

I connected to this priority through these Immersions; other ways of connecting with this priority was through visits to Santa Teresa, involvement in Remar, and Marist sporting carnivals as well as the Marist International Festival.

I've been drawn to the Marist characteristics of the Marist style of educating, presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following the way of Mary. I seek to adopt these attitudes and values as a way of sustaining and growing Marist education for young people in need in Santa Teresa. I believe a prophet is recognised more through action than word; I endeavour to act out of this prophetic model in my relationship with our Santa Teresa students, their families and the community here.

Often we go to a third world situation expecting to give, certainly I came to Santa Teresa wanting to teach and support the education of the students. Hopefully I have been able to do this and to give of my own skills as a teacher. But I feel I have gained more than I have given. I have enjoyed many opportunities this year in which I have been taught and I have been enriched by the knowledge of my students and the Assistant teachers at the school. One such example is our weekly walk up the hill to the cross overlooking the community. On this walk the students talk to me about 'bush medicine', 'significant rocks', caves and tracks and tell me many stories. They also 'try' to teach me Arrente.

It is a privilege to be able to work here and for myself and my daughters to gain this knowledge from the people of Santa Teresa.

My ongoing commitment to sustaining and growing Marist education for young people in need is to remain involved as an Educator in Marist schools. Like St. Marcellin I endeavour to remain an effective educator of faith today and try to be prophetic in my actions. Not that I believe I am any different to any other committed teacher, but I do believe our world today lacks prophetic leadership. In a simple way I like to model in the classroom prophetic qualities, like setting a good example: for instance, caring equally for all students, being personally interested in them and their families and ideally letting them see that I like them.

As a Marist educator I relate to students in a Marial manner, bringing the face of Mary to them; compassion and developing a 'family spirit' in the classroom, love and forgiveness, support and help. And as a mother with two daughters trying to reflect the gentleness and love of Mary.

As an educator in the Marist tradition I strive to be a person of integrity, as well as being truthful, open-hearted and transparent in relationships with students, families and the wider community at Santa Teresa.

I am looking forward to developing my Marist Spirit further by continuing to work in Marist schools and to have the opportunity of being involved in a 'footsteps' retreat.

Mary McPhee