

Australian Marist Students step up as Leaders in 2020

160 motivated and enthusiastic students from 40 Marist Secondary Schools throughout Australia recently participated in the annual Marist Student Leaders Gathering, held in one of the three locations across Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

The annual gathering, hosted by Marist Schools Australia and facilitated by regional Marist Youth Ministry Teams provided student leaders with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the characteristics that underpin authentic Christian leadership in the ways of Jesus, Mary and St Marcellin Champagnat and to empower them to become transformative leaders or *'game changers'* within their own school communities this year.

The 3-day event provided a combination of formative experiences including daily prayer, Eucharist, keynote presentations, outdoor challenges, small group discussions, motivational talks by former student leaders and strategic planning sessions for individual school teams.

A particular emphasis of the gathering was given to experiencing contemplative moments, as a way of providing students with a balance to their already active and hectic year of leadership and studies. Students participated in Taize prayer, Dadirri listening - practised by our First Nations people, and a labyrinth walk. Throughout the gathering each participant was invited to reflect on the question: *"how am I called to live Mary's spirit as a student leader?"*

During the gathering, each school leadership team was given an opportunity to identify a particular Marist characteristic they wished to emphasise in their community during the coming year and create practical strategies around this characteristic. A number of schools focussed on providing greater opportunities for students to participate in sustainable environmental practices, and building a more inclusive community that mirrored our Marist family spirit.

The gathering concluded with a celebratory Mass and formal dinner with students and their school principals, as they shared goals and strategies for 2020.

Every blessing and good wishes to our Marist Student Leaders as they strive to live the spirit of Jesus, Mary and Champagnat through their lives this year!