



## **Mass - A Day of Celebration.**

Friday 30th May was not a day I was looking forward to. I had told Br Robert Sutton (Principal of St Patrick's, Dundas) that I would attend a Mass at Homebush Stadium to celebrate the coming World Youth Day and the Feast of the Founder of the Marist Brothers, Saint Marcellin Champagnat (June 6th). There were 10 other Marist Brothers in attendance for the occasion.

Everything was against Mass being a prayerful experience:

1. It was at Homebush Basketball Stadium.
2. 4000 students and their teachers from 4 Marist schools were to attend. (Marist Parramatta; Marist Eastwood; St Patrick's Dundas and Trinity College, Auburn).

The logistics appeared to be to say, 'No, it won't work, don't even think about it, let alone try it'. But the Four Principals: (Br Patrick Howlett, Parramatta, Mr Paul Fensom, Trinity, Mr Danny Delmarge, Eastwood and Br Robert Sutton, Dundas) ploughed on regardless - and how glad was I that they did. The experience was a moving, prayerful and joyful occasion.

Father Peter Williams (Director of Liturgy for World Youth Day) was the chief celebrant. From the opening Hymn, 'We are Called', one could not help but be taken in by the enthusiasm and prayerfulness of all present (yes, including the 4000 students). The atmosphere was filled with an aura of the occasion.

As I reflect on the day, I saw that the Church can (even under adverse circumstances) create an atmosphere, in her liturgy, for young people to gather together and share their Baptismal faith.

It was not all what we would call 'modern hymns' either. During Communion Mr Raffael Perno sang the 'Ave Maria' and followed with the 'Panis Angelicus' (in Latin) to a group of students who were quite obviously moved by the experience. We had a Cimbalo solo by Lucy Doronov, a music teacher from St Patricks, Dundas. The final hymn the 'Sub Tuum Praesidium' (the traditional Marist Brothers' hymn sung by students in all our schools) nearly brought the house down as students from all four schools gave it their all.

There is no doubt that one could 'feel' the presence of Our Lord at the celebration and that the students were not only moved by the experience but were taken up/in by it.

Why do I write this short article? Well, I drew some conclusions, some may say are obvious, but here goes:

1. Liturgy can be meaningful to young people.
2. Young people can be 'caught up in the traditional', as well as, the 'modern' in our liturgies. We don't need to entertain young people at Mass (sorry Hill Song) to have them involved. We simply need to make it a prayerful, joyful and faith-filled experience.
3. There is hope for the Church when Catholic Schools can produce students, such as, those who attended Mass at Homebush.
4. Some of our Parish Masses are not providing this experience for young people and older people alike and therein lies some of the

problem concerning Mass attendance. If we can't provide the experience at our parish Mass (or at least make an attempt) then we are going to see a continual drop off of people going.

5. Young people are searching - the Catholic Church's 2000 year history/tradition has the answers - let's put them into a reality.

Once again congratulation to the four principals, the teachers and the 4000 students from four of our Marist Schools who made the Mass a memorable experience for myself and the other Marist Brothers who were fortunate enough to attend.  
This augurs well for World Youth Day, I hope and pray.

**Dr Luke Saker, fms.**