

Brother Jeffrey Barrington, Marist Brother and member of the original Teaching Staff: (written in 2021)

EARLY DAYS OF TRINITY COLLEGE – The Marist Brothers and their involvement, 1982 – 1987.

Brother John Mullins began his role in preparing Trinity College from about August of 1981. At that time he was living with the Brothers in Rosalie, Brisbane, and travelled to Beenleigh each day, where, from the presbytery, he began interviewing prospective students, formed a group of parents who helped design a uniform, and attended to the many tasks associated with building and commencing a new college.

Concerning the naming of the College, it was already in place sometime before the commencement of classes. It may well have been decided back in the very early planning days, and it certainly would have had to have been approved by Archbishop Rush and the Director of the Catholic Education office, Mr Vince O'Rourke, before becoming official.

From my recollections from the early days of the College the name of the College came from Mr Neil McBrien. Neil McBrien was the secondary consultant of schools for BCE, then Brisbane CEO. He left a short time later, but he and Br John were the two main ones who set up the school. Neil went on to the Board of Studies for a number of years making a significant contribution at the time of ROSBA. Neil was a former Christian Brother and he himself went to school at Trinity College in Perth. I believe that is where the name came from.

The Trinity College symbol was found by Br John Mullins in a Celtic book of prayers.

Brother Jeffrey Barrington and Brother Paul Bailey arrived in mid-January. Brother Paul was to help form the Brothers community of three, but taught at St Joseph's Primary School, next door. There being no accommodation for the Brothers in Beenleigh, Brothers Paul and Jeff also went to Rosalie until about a week before school was to begin. At that stage Brother John moved into a spare bedroom in the presbytery and Brothers Jeffrey and Paul slept on camp stretchers in the primary school library.

With school about to begin, and there still being no accommodation for the Brothers, as it was to be an old convent house transferred from Carina, Father Bill O'Shea, the parish priest, organised two families, the Gordons and the Rogers, to loan the Brothers a caravan each and they were parked behind the presbytery. The Brothers used the parish toilet block as their bathroom and cooked and ate in the primary school staffroom, moving off early each day as staff arrived for school. This arrangement went on for the first part of the year until Easter when the families needed their caravans for the Easter holiday period. At this stage the three Brothers, John, Jeffrey and Paul then moved into a flat above a factory in the industrial estate a few kilometres west of Beenleigh.

The Brothers' house finally arrived in four pieces and was in need of a good renovation to make it liveable. By the end of May the house was ready to be lived in and the Brothers stayed there at the bottom of Scott St. adjacent to the college for the next five and a half years while at Trinity College.

Brother John Mullins, the founding principal of Trinity College, came to Beenleigh with much teaching experience from schools in Far North Queensland, plus others in northern New South Wales. With an initial staff of five, Brother John spent a good deal of his six year appointment building a staff to accommodate a full 'Years Eight to Twelve' high school with its many and varied subjects. Much of that time was spent interviewing and selecting staff, as well as meeting prospective students for the following year's intake. In addition to his task of being principal, he taught mathematics, developed the Parents and Friends Association, began a Mothers Club, and

negotiated with the Brisbane Catholic Education Office regarding the college's future expansion and its associated building program. As well, he was committed to the local St. Patrick's church and the parish council. Brother John enjoyed meeting, greeting and mixing with people.

The other religious person who joined the foundation staff was Sister Cecilia Anning, a brown Josephite sister. Sr. Cecilia was on staff for the first three years. She lived opposite the church with the Sisters who were on staff at St. Joseph's Primary School.

In the second year of Trinity College, 1983, Brother Sergius Mullins, a retired Brother, joined the community, now four in number. He helped in the college canteen, counting the takings each day and kept the volunteer mothers happy. He also pottered around in the garden each day trying to claim back bushland, attempting to turn it into lawn. Brother Sergius during this time endeared himself to many of the families and others at the St. Patricks Parish. He was in Beenleigh for two years.

At the end of 1984, Br. Sergius and Br. Paul were both appointed away from Beenleigh. Brother Paul went to work in the Marcellin College primary school at Enoggera and Brother Sergius went to the Brothers' retirement centre on the outskirts of Sydney at Campbelltown.

1985 saw the arrival of Brother Peter Rodney a well experienced and clever history teacher, from Cairns. He was to become the Trinity College APRE. His thorough and fine intellect soon had the R.E. program and classes in good shape.

From the beginning Brother Jeffrey enthusiastically went about organising the manual arts rooms and department. Having just graduated in Industrial Arts (Sydney) he was able to attend to establishing the workshops, as well as addressing the new curriculum and the ROSBA form of school assessment which was just beginning across Queensland. Brother Jeff enjoyed the woodwork classes and graphics in Grades 8 -10 and GDP through to the end of 1985, with the first Grade 11 cohort. At the end of 1985 Brother Jeff was re-appointed by the Brothers administration to a large all boys, all boarding, school in Sydney, St. Joseph's College Hunters Hill. He was replaced by Brother Luke McMahon, who interestingly enough came from St. Joseph's College. For Br. Jeffrey a most memorable time was in 1984 when he was able to make his Final Vows as a Marist Brother, involving the whole college and the parish.

In 1986 and 1987 the Brothers community consisted of Br. John, Br. Peter and Br. Luke. This was to be the community that saw the completion of the Brothers' tenure at Beenleigh.

At that time the Marist Brothers Sydney Province policy for new schools was for the Brothers to move into an area, set up a school, create the foundations, and then move on. In later years this model was to be extended to at least include a consolidation phase, so maybe, another Brother principal and/or additional Brothers.

Integral to the success of Trinity College was the influence and support of Father Bill O'Shea at St. Patrick's Parish, and his assistants Fr. Tom Elich, at first, and then Fr. Brian Horton. Certainly, the adjoining and feeder parishes of Daisy Hill, Beaudesert, Kingston, and Woodridge were of great support and were enthusiastic about the college, but because St. Patrick's Beenleigh was the local parish and had contributed the majority of the initial intake of students there was much positive contact between the two. Many families were involved in both the parish and the college.

The Brothers' time in Beenleigh was characterised by a wonderful family spirit, one of the defining characteristics of the Marist charism. The Marist characteristic of 'family' includes being involved in families, supporting families to be family to one another, and building relationships such as those

found in good families. The Brothers became involved in the lives of many Beenleigh families. It was a time of much happiness. Involvement with families of the college as well as the parish was significant. Not confined to the families of the college and parish they also were an integral part of the lives of the college staff which grew significantly during those first few founding years. The college's Parent and Friends Association was a source of much united effort to provide the best for the students. Many times parents, students and the Brothers were seen working shoulder to shoulder providing facilities and opportunities for the college, but most importantly, building the family spirit which carried the college through those founding years. But not confined just to Beenleigh, the Brothers were also involved in the various other places from where the students came, from Beaudesert to Daisy Hill and Pimpama to Woodridge. It was also the town of Beenleigh itself in which they were also immersed. Whatever was on, the Brothers were there. Many family birthdays, christenings and special events were common and regular. The Brothers were happy to be part of most occasions.

A significant part of the parish-college relationship was the parish youth group. From the time of their arrival Brothers Paul and Jeffrey organised a youth activity every week for four years, except during school holiday time. It was normally on a Friday night but sometimes it was a Saturday evening or afternoon event. Roller skating, ten-pin bowling, pool parties, bus trips to the beach, film nights, dances, and water parks were all part of the weekly youth group schedule. It was mainly organised by Brothers Jeff and Paul but for some larger functions there was a loyal group of parents willing to assist.

The youth group itself was not confined to the Beenleigh parish as most of the St. Patrick's Parish students had now broadened their group of friends through the college. So, in reality the youth group, 1982 to 1985 was a combination of St. Patrick's Parish and any Trinity College students.

It was with much sadness for all when the Brothers were withdrawn at the end of 1987. However, since then a number of the original students and families have remained in contact with those particular Brothers. They formed life-long friendships with some. Over the years the Brothers have returned to attend marriages, christenings, significant birthdays and sadly some funerals.

To this day, it is with much delight to the Brothers, that Trinity College is still claiming to be a Marist school, still embracing the spirituality and charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers and Marist Education, which was first brought to Trinity College by the Brothers in the 1980s.