

Reflection from the Superior General

Rome, Good Friday 2018

Dear Confreres

Holy Week celebrates the harsh truth and sublime beauty of death and new life that permeates all of reality, including the way we live as Marists. On Good Friday all eyes are focussed on the saving Cross of Jesus Christ.

Recently I was in Australia to attend a Special Chapter that reviewed their ways of leadership and governance towards a renewed mission into the future.

It was enlightening for me, encouraging too, to visit one community in Sydney called Montbel. I met there many senior confrères whose wisdom and fortitude shone forth. They are deeply prayerful men and still intensely concerned for our Society, proffering many ideas, some of them quite revolutionary.

For me, Montbel was an important context for the discussion of the Chapter in Sydney which led to the decision that the Australian Province – as 'Province' – must die. They must look for new ways of living and working together. It may be a Delegation or a District or Something Else.

But the Province as such is finishing.



It was a Good Friday moment. Our confrères gave an estimation of how much more life there was for the Province. They have given it two years. The Province, as 'Province', will die in 2020. Our confrères used the legislation from the 2017 General Chapter to decide on different ways of (s)electing leadership to accompany the dying process and discern the future. I sensed

that Mary was standing with us, as in John's Gospel, along with the other women and the Beloved Disciple. She stands gazing at her own Son. She does not collapse. She endures what she has to endure. Mary is with them in their death.

Holy Saturday follows Good Friday, as the dark of night follows the sunset. The disciples tried to fathom the grief of death, without anything to say. There's disillusionment, bewilderment and fear. It's also the Jewish Sabbath, a time of family prayer and remembering the Covenant. Perhaps the next two years will be a 'Holy Saturday' time for our Australian confrères.

All this leads inexorably, as night to dawn, to the emptiness of the tomb, the angels, the linen cloths and incomprehension. Where is Jesus, the Son? All were slow to understand, some were sceptical. Slowly the meaning of 'new life' dawned on them as they recommitted themselves to believe in the Son. The Australian 'Province' will die, our confrères are saying but there will be new life, even though they are not so sure what it will look like. They believe in the Resurrection.

Jesus 'breathed out his Spirit' on Mary and the Beloved Disciples and the other women in John's Gospel. It's an allusion to the Upper Room and Pentecost in Luke's writings. Mary is still sending out our Australian confrères, all of us, to undertake her Work. It's all rather wonderful how the grace of the Paschal Mystery illuminates the dark days of death, but like Mary with the Beloved Disciple forming a new community, a new Church at the foot of the Cross, we believe that life conquers death. The brave decisions of our Australian confrères are an ultimate act of faith in the Lord who will bring new forms of Marist life into a bright but very different future.

John Larsen s.m.