

Reflection from the Superior General

The recent co-ordinated bombings in Sri Lanka, slaughtering hundreds of people and targeting Christians and foreigners, is yet another tragedy stemming from a fatal combination of xenophobia and excessive nationalism. As in Sri Lanka, so much of the violence in our world is committed under the guise of religion. Yet all religions at their best claim to be harbingers of peace. Whatever happened?

When Jesus met his disciples after his Resurrection he could reasonably have chided them for their faithless despair and cowardliness. Rather he greets them: "*My peace I give to you*". (Lk.24:36). He reconciles them with each other and with himself, gloriously risen from the tomb. He sends them out to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection, a message of peace and new life.

By our Baptism and our Profession we Marists "*live the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. We die daily to this world and herald the new world inaugurated by the risen Jesus.*" (Const. 94). The world we "*die to daily*" is often violent. The new world of the risen Jesus is one of peace and reconciliation. Our mission is to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection in an often violent world.



Recently we rejoiced as we remembered our confrere Pierre Chanel who loved the people of Futuna in the context of rejection and violence from some of them. Resurrection faith and peace gives meaning to his martyrdom.

During this last week we remembered our Australian confrere Lionel Marsden. He was a victim of cruel imprisonment and slave-labour on the construction of the Thai-Burma railroad during the Second World War. He could have become embittered and defeated by his harsh treatment from his Japanese captors. Instead he led a team of Marists to bring the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ to the land of his former oppressors. The Marist Mission Centre in Australia was established to

support that mission and this last week the Centre celebrated 70 years of life. Now it continues to support Marists heralding the Easter message to many parts of the world.

This Easter week there was good news from Bougainville. Marists established the Catholic Church in Bougainville. During the bloody civil war of the 1990's the division among the churches on Bougainville contributed to the factionalism that fueled the war. During Easter week the churches jointly signed an agreement of peace and reconciliation.

In Davao, Philippines, our novitiate community consists of twelve confreres from eight different countries. One of their biggest challenges comes from their need to "*avoid all discrimination which might arise from difference of race, nation, region or culture*" and to "*go beyond their own views and interests for the sake of the Kingdom*". (Const. 29). This is the call to Resurrection faith in a multi-cultural Marist context.

This Easter week Marists gathered in Thailand for the first meeting of the Marist Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Reconciliation. Sri Lanka was nearby as they prayed and reflected together in the light of Easter and visited with Buddhists and Muslims seeking creative new Marist ways to promote dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

Pope Francis has echoed the words of peace and reconciliation of the Risen Lord when he recently greeted our Muslim sisters and brothers in the Middle East and in Morocco with the Arabic greeting of peace: "*Assalam Alaikum*". We Marists continue to hear the call of the risen Lord to bring peace and reconciliation to our conflicted and violent world. The peace of the risen Lord permeates our own hearts, communities and ministries. Shalom. Salaam. Myithar. Pax.

John Larsen s.m.