

Reflection from the Superior General

Villa Santa Maria seems quiet now with the ten Marist leaders having left Rome to return home from ARC 2019 after two weeks of prayer, discernment and conversation together.

We began with a retreat day. We prayed with Jesus on his return to Nazareth. There Jesus was able to clarify his mission, with the help of Isaiah, "to bring Good News to the poor". (Lk. 4). Jesus faced opposition, but he had the confidence in his Father's love to step out beyond their narrow provincialism.

As Marists, many of us have responded to the call of our times to serve most of our lives within our own cultures and regions. The future of the mission of the Society will reflect the more multi-cultural reality



of our increasingly mobile world. As leaders we undertook four days of "workshop" on the theme of interculturality. We were challenged to widen our perspectives and our hearts – "enlarge the place of your tents...lengthen your chords and strengthen your pegs", as Isaiah (54,2) proclaims.

On October 19 we witnessed a wonderful expression of generous, dynamic faith within our multi-cultural Society of Mary with the Perpetual Professions of seven young confreres from "Casa di Maria". Together with those who

were Perpetually Professed in Suva earlier this year we are welcoming into the Society young confreres who have been formed together with their peers from many countries.

Each Marist leader shared about the challenges and hopes of life at home. We appreciated that we are widely dispersed over the world with our different histories, languages and cultures but that we share one charism and one call and, for all the differences, we clearly have much in common.

The Society of Mary for the foreseeable future will obviously embody fewer members. This calls for re-imagining our structures for mission which continues to present us with many challenges. This work starts with our conversion of heart. God is embracing us in the realities of our times. We discussed how we can co-operate and share our lives and talents in our one Society as we diminish in size and grow in our creativity in mission.

The new Marist reality, smaller and more multi-cultural, will also call for some new styles of Marist missionary communities. We are calling these new initiatives, complementing our present ministries, "omnes gentes communities". The name reminds us of when Pope Gregory XVI originally approved and commissioned our Society with the letter "Omnium Gentium Salus" in 1836.

Our "omnes gentes communities" will be intentionally intercultural and international serving "the poor, the migrants and the youth" (GC 2017, 22 and 23). We are initially establishing two such communities – one new one in Australia and re-focusing one in Asia – in the near future. We hope more of these "omnes gentes" missionary communities can soon be established in different places.

The one hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament every morning, the prayers and the daily Eucharist, all enhanced the faith-filled ambience for the gathering. A special moment of grace was when we gathered at the tomb of St. Peter himself and celebrated the Eucharist together at the geographical heart of the Church united with all of you, our confreres, with the Marist family and with all whom we serve in our ministries.

Let's hope and pray that the grace of ARC 2019 extends way beyond Rome.

John Larsen s.m.