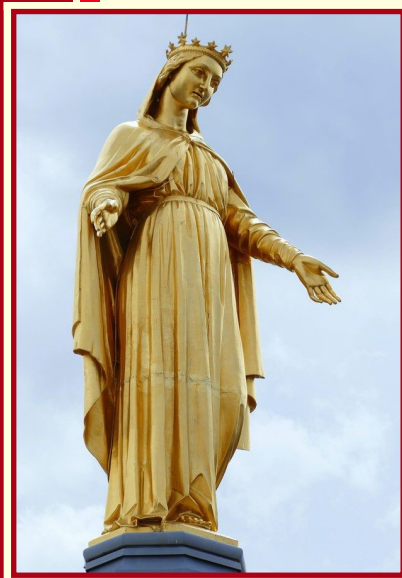


Reflection from the Superior General

This month we celebrate "Fourvière" when, in 1816, those twelve young men committed themselves to build a Congregation bearing the Name of Mary. More than two centuries later, how does their commitment speak to us today?

Fourvière proposed a distinctive Marian presence in the Church. Just as Mary discreetly but powerfully supported the early Church, so we are called to support the Church discreetly but robustly in our own time. We support the leadership of our Church, especially the Bishops, in every



way we can, and most especially we support the Bishop of Rome. As we gaze on the icon of Mary and the Venerable Jean-Claude hanging in most of our communities, we pray with Mary as the contemplative woman, carrying her Son, and caring for her Son's people with mercy and compassion. In that same icon, the scroll which unites Mary with the Venerable Jean-Claude reminds us that we live our lives "Sub Mariae Nomine". Fourvière calls us to live and breathe Mary's Spirit, and this determines our charismatic way of living and serving in the Church. This is our "raison d'être".

Fourvière inspires us to faithfulness and perseverance, especially when the times are tough. Some of those who pledged themselves in Fourvière were unable to persevere. Sometimes we, too, can become discouraged and we need to recall our first enthusiasm. Those who signed that commitment in Fourvière looked around them at their church in disarray and at a civil society in turmoil – as, sometimes, for us today - and saw Mary's presence in

the early Church as offering the way forward. "Cor unum at anima una". Those young men battled over several decades to bring the dream to fruition. They could easily have just surrendered. They persevered. Today many of our faithful senior confreres, often bearing great difficulties, breathe a sense of peace of joy, a real holiness. They persevere inspiringly.

At Fourvière those young men, several of whom were ordained the previous day, gathered around the altar of the Eucharist under the venerated statue of Mary, placed their pledge under the corporal and, after signing their commitment, heard the words: "Ite, missa est". "The Mass is ended. Go!". They went out to their various new ministries. Last Friday, at the Vigil Mass of Saints Peter and Paul, thirteen of our young confreres committed themselves to serve in the Church as Lectors and Acolytes. The next day they started leaving Rome for their summer mission assignments. We all gather around the altar each day, usually with a statue of Mary nearby, and listen to the Word and celebrate the Eucharist which sends each of us out on our Marist mission in the heart of our world. Fourvière is a missionary commitment rooted in the Eucharist. So, for us. "Ite! Go!".

Let's resolve that on this July 23 our celebration of Fourvière will be more than merely a passing mention at morning Mass, or a special bottle of wine for dinner. Let's celebrate with special prayer and some significant fasting and re-commit ourselves, preferably within our Community Liturgy, to our Marist vocation in the Church. The commitment of Fourvière so long ago challenges us today to re-dedicate ourselves, by God's grace, to a renewed spirit of mission in our world, embracing daily "the Work of Mary". Buona festa!

Fraternally, in Mary's Name.

John Larsen s.m.