



Transcription of the Pentecost Video Message

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Marists throughout the world, wherever you may be, from this beautiful early summer morning at the General House in Rome, a very warm fiesta of Pentecost coming up this Sunday.

It's a beautiful feast, and it helps us to focus on the work that we're trying to do now as we prepare for the chapter, because the theme that we're working with as Marists throughout the world is "With Mary at Pentecost." And so we pray with her in the Upper Room, with the women and with the disciples, in preparation for the Chapter. Ideally, we don't say, well, that's for somebody else.

Ideally, each one of us is using that theme with Mary at Pentecost in our own prayer life, in our own hearts, as we celebrate Pentecost, sure, but as we prepare in the months ahead for the General Chapter as well. We are, in a sense, with Mary, with the women, with the disciples, in that Upper Room, and what's happening for us, individually, and then as we come to the time of the chapter, collectively, as one family gathered in Mary's name. It might help us as we pray with Mary at Pentecost just to be thinking of some of the aspects of the story in the early chapters of Acts of the Apostles.

You'll remember that the disciples are gathered there together in the Upper Room with Mary, with the women, and they are, first of all, just among themselves. They're doing what they need to do. They appoint Matthias, for example, to take the place of Judas.

But above all, they're remembering. They're remembering all that has happened. They remember the joys of being with Jesus in His earthly life. They remember the words that He spoke to them and to others, and how they participated in His miracles and in the events of His life. And Mary reminds them of all of that, and they share. They remember also their grief and sadness at that horrible moment of the crucifixion of Jesus, the cruel death.

And they remember with a little bit of shame too, most of them, for their having abandoned Jesus in His moment of need. It's not a good memory. It's a bad memory.

But above all, they remember the joy of the unexpected new life of Easter Sunday morning. And that gives them energy and strength. And as we gather with them in the Upper Room, we too remember among ourselves and individually. We remember the joys of our lives as Marists. All the conversations, the friendships, the projects, the relationships. A joyful life. And we remember that. And as I move around the society, I think I hear quite a lot of Marists grieving too. It's hard to put your finger on it, but it's something around, well, we had hoped for more.

And why isn't it working out the way that we had hoped? And there's sadness. There's also sometimes shame that we haven't lived as well as we had hoped we were living. We'd put on a brave face, but there was another reality underneath. And there's shame that goes with that. But above all, we remember signs that give us new life. Signs of hope.

This year is the Jubilee year, and the theme is 'Pilgrims of Hope.' What's giving us hope? So with the disciples, we remember the joys, the sadness and grief, but above all, hope. And we're not just old people reminiscing about the past, boring the younger ones. We're remembering it through spiritual conversations with each other. These conversations do remember what happened, but always in the light of faith, paschal faith, the Death and the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus. They're not idle memories.

They're memories full of faith. And as the disciples, with Mary, with the other women, are remembering and doing their business, they're overcome with the Spirit. And Luke uses beautiful imagery. It's a very short passage. It's only four verses at the beginning of the second chapter. Very short.

But it's caught the prophetic imagination of the Christians ever since, because of the powerful imagery of noise of wind and fire and tongues of flame. We remember Moses finding the Lord in the burning bush and learning His name and a new experience of God. Above all, in Exodus 19, we think of the theophany on Sinai.

All those images present wind, fire, flame, noise, and the new law, the Torah given, the new people being created around the Torah. And the imagery there. We think of the prophet Elijah who found God in the still, quiet voice of the gentle breeze. And how

often we pray Psalm 28 in the breviary. The voice of the Lord blazes out with flames of fire. There's so much imagery there.

It's so much depth and beauty. And that's the Spirit transforming that group in the Upper Room. Transforming their minds and their hearts into a new church. The church that's been formed in Pentecost. Just as it was formed originally, the 'Ecclesia', the people of God in Sinai, now there's a new formation. And it's the 'Feast of Pentecost.'

That's when people gathered to remember the Law being given. And so, their attitudes are changed from being rather timid to bold discipleship. We too, as we prepare for our chapter, are asking the Spirit to transform our hearts and our minds and our society and our ministry in the church.

We could be rather fearful and timid of the world around us. But the Spirit's calling us to let go of our fears and our timidity and be brave. We could, and this might be a little bit of a common fault within the society, we could think that it all depends on us. And we become very active and we do it all. But the Spirit's calling us to 'kenosis', to emptying, so that we may be Spirit-led people. And it's quite possible too in our modern world that we're losing a little bit of confidence.

We once had confidence, perhaps too much confidence in ourselves. But now we're losing it. We wonder if we had it right. And we might even lose confidence in our charism, which is about discretion in a world that likes pop stars and boldness. And the Spirit is calling us to change that attitude from loss of confidence to courage and strength.

Mary appears only twice in Luke's Gospel. The infancy narratives where the Holy Spirit comes upon her and she gives the word to the world. And in this passage in Pentecost where the Spirit comes upon her and the others again and it's new life, the church. But in the infancy narratives she was challenged by the angel Gabriel.

Nothing is impossible for God! Do you believe this? She's challenged. And the Spirit is challenging us too as we prepare for chapter.

Nothing is impossible for God! Do you believe this? So the Spirit transforms our attitudes and our minds. The Spirit also sends us out in boldness. It emboldens. It encourages the disciples to go out. And that's the image of the languages and all the people gathered there.

We live in a world where there's a fondness for building walls and making ourselves safe within. Where sometimes it's a nightmare to get visas. Where migrants are used for scapegoats. "Keep us safe." "Keep us within." The world is saying. And that's the air that we breathe as Marists.

It's easy for us to think the same way as everyone around us. But Pentecost is calling us to go out. The book of the Acts of the Apostles takes the word of God from Jerusalem

through North Africa, through Turkey, through Greece, to the centre of the world then, which was Rome. It's a whole story of the courageous spreading of the word of God that we are called to. And those of our Confreres, those of our Marists, who are able to go out to the ends of the world, let them go. Don't hold on.

It's also the story of people of different places and languages and mindsets coming in to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage. Likewise for us, as we move around our cities, people who are very different from us are coming to us. And the Spirit calls us to go out to them. Everybody hears the disciples in his or her own language. But it's not a question of grammar or syntax or vocabulary. It's a question of heart speaking to heart.

In my experience of missionaries, it's not those who are most fluent who are necessarily the best missionaries. It's the missionaries who have a heart for the people. And the people in their hearts know the heart of the missionary. And so heart speaks to heart. And all of us can be doing that whatever our stage of Marist life, wherever we are in the world, to speak to the hearts of people who are different from us because the language of our heart speaks to them.

So this is a beautiful feast of Pentecost. I'm really inviting each one of us to prepare for the chapter by praying with the theme With Mary at Pentecost, not only this Sunday, but in the months ahead. By remembering all that's happened, good and bad, in the light of the Paschal Mystery. Not endless reminiscing the Paschal Mystery. By opening our hearts and our minds to be transformed by the Spirit so there's new life and we are truly pilgrims of hope. And by being encouraged to go out to people who are different and to have a heart for the people who are different among us. God willing, I hope to be celebrating the feast of Pentecost this Sunday in La Neylière together with some Marists from France, but especially with the French lay Marists.

And we'll be praying with you this Sunday. But especially we'll be praying with Jean-Claude Colin in La Neylière, a place so close to his own heart. Let's invite Jean-Claude Colin too into the Upper Room in our prayer and hear him challenge us to renew our memories with great faith, to transform our attitudes of mind and heart, and to be encouraged to go out even to the ends of the earth.

Thank you, a blessed feast of Pentecost wherever you may be, and have a good day.

In Mary's name, John.