

Reflection from the Superior General

Today in Rome we are wondering whether all the bells of the local churches will soon begin to toll, honouring the death of the Pontiff, or whether the Holy Father will live to continue leading us for some considerable time to come. Official communications report: “both doors are open”.

The plight of the Holy Father helps us to consider the critical role of leadership in our own lives.

Leadership concerns all Marists. Individually and communally we all take responsibility for our common Work of Mary by our generous availability for whatever is asked of us and by participating as fully as we can in the life and mission of the Society. While all of us may not be able to assume positions of authority – and it is increasingly difficult to find confreres for the ministry of Superior - we are all called to accept responsibility for our common Work of Mary, generously and courageously, starting from where we are. This is our shared leadership.

One of the particularly sacred moments of our common leadership comes with the General Chapter we hold every eight years. Our next General Chapter is scheduled for September and October of this year.



Recently the pre-capitular committee proposed the theme for the 2025 Chapter: “With Mary at Pentecost”. The theme and the logo can help us to deepen our reflection on the ministry of leadership within the Society that everyone is called to exercise, whether we are attending the Chapter or not.

The theme, “with Mary at Pentecost”, transports us to the Upper Room where the apostles and the women are gathered with Mary, “of one mind and one heart”. Leadership at all levels involves contemplative listening to the voice of the Spirit speaking as each one tells their story. We can be driven by endless distractions, both interior and exterior, and we can find it difficult to remain silent and lovingly attentive to what is really happening around us. Contemplative listening for leadership, the basis of the synodal way, is an art to be cultivated; it rarely comes naturally.

Pentecost is one of those privileged moments when the Spirit of God comes upon Mary and the disciples. We know leadership involves all sorts of practical planning, goal setting, tasking and evaluation. However, at the heart of leadership is the prayer of discernment. How is the Spirit leading us? What languages are we being asked to speak to the people of today who often come from worlds very different from our own? “With Mary at Pentecost” is a call to discerning prayer, waiting upon the Spirit, and responding courageously when gales blow and fiery tongues scorch our heads.

We are all invited to be involved in preparing for the Chapter. Soon our local delegates will invite us to consider the results of the Society-wide survey recently conducted and to work together to deepen our on-going discernment towards the future. We are also invited to pray daily that the Spirit will direct and guide the work of the Chapter. By our intense interest in the whole Society, by our shared discussion and by our prayer, we all participate in discerning how the Spirit is directing the Society of Mary now and into the future.

“With Mary at Pentecost” is a dynamic, faith-filled moment which bears fruit in mission, whether very local or far from home. There is the danger of isolated resignation, keeping the wider Society at a safe distance. The challenge is to continue to be as passionate as possible to bring the Good News of Jesus, died and risen, the revelation of God’s love, to those around us. We’re on this mission together and pray that this General Chapter to 2025 will inspire us well into a bright future.

A blessed Lenten Season and celebration of the fiestas of Saint Joseph (on March 19) and the Annunciation of the Lord (on March 25).

John Larsen s.m.