

# Mother of Good Counsel, Pray for Us

## INTRODUCTION

**The first week of April this year is the joyful celebration of Our Risen Lord! The month also brings a special Marian feast, Our Lady of Good Counsel, April 26. Let us begin by focusing on God's Word.**

### Scripture Reading

*Wisdom instructs her children and admonishes those who seek her. Those who love her love life; those who seek her out win her favour. Those who hold her fast inherit glory, and wherever they dwell God bestows blessings on them. Those who serve her serve the Holy One; those who love her are loved by the Lord. Those who trust her will possess her, and their descendants too will inherit her. Those who listen to Wisdom dwell in her innermost sanctuary.*

**SIRACH 4: 11-16**

### Reflection

The year is 1885 and Mary Potter is in the throes of considerable problems. These include the new foundation in far-off Australia, which caused her great anxiety and serious deterioration in her health. Then, true to her amazing concern for her Sisters and despite being gravely ill, she travelled to Naples to farewell the first six Sisters sailing for the Southern Hemisphere. En route back to

Rome, Mary expressed a wish to visit the famous image of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Genezzano so she and her companions digressed there by horse and carriage. What a terrible journey it was! A storm blew up, the horses bolted, and the driver tried to leave the poor travellers by the side of the road! Eventually they reached Genezzano, Mary in a state of collapse. The local people were convinced she was dying. But then, while she and the two Sisters were praying the Rosary, Mary suddenly rose from her bed and walked with a firm step. Next day, she walked to the church for Mass, received Holy Communion and spent a long thanksgiving on her knees. Everyone's joy was unbounded! Mary refused to regard this as a miracle, referring to it as 'a favour.' The improvement in her health lasted about two years, giving her time to sort out issues that were troubling her in the fledging congregation.

Mary Potter stayed at Genezzano for a week, spending long hours in prayer at Our Lady's shrine. She wrote to the Sisters in Rome: *"You must all come here and learn to love Our Lady better."* We can imagine her pouring out her heart and soul in prayer, seeking Our Lady's counsel, commending the young and still fragile Little Company to her loving care, and learning ever more deeply to "let go and let God" in all the circumstances of her life. This episode in the life story of Mary Potter is a wonderful inspiration, especially perhaps in this year post-Chapter in which our Congregation faces many issues and challenges. It refers us back to the Scripture Reading, showing that Mary Potter turned to Mary the Wisdom of God to help her in all her problems, even in her need for improved physical health. Surely we too would gain infallible counsel if we were to turn often to Mary of Nazareth under her title *"Good Counsel"* and be prepared to spend time listening to her in the silence



of our hearts, for she always leads us to Jesus. This year's motto, from Mary Potter's writings, reflects that: *"Let Mary lead you to her Son."* In another place, Mary Potter writes: *"We shall learn from Mary to seek nothing but the will of God."* What inspiration! May Our Lady of Good Counsel be our special guide and hope this month!

*"Let Mary lead you to her Son."*

**MARY POTTER**



# Resurrection: Hope and Joy

## INTRODUCTION

**April this year is filled with horror and hope as we celebrate Holy Week and Easter, Mary Potter's anniversary of death, and ANZAC Day remembrance. We focus on God's Word to centre us.**

### Scripture Reading

*Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in my love. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. One can have no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. I have told you all this so that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."*

**JOHN 13: SELECTED VERSES**

### Reflection

A symbol of Easter which resonates with me is the empty tomb. It's a powerful image of Resurrection, new life, hope and joy. We have journeyed with Jesus and Mary through Lent, stayed close to Mary as she accompanied her Son in his terrible sufferings, and grieved with her as He is laid in the tomb.

It's my quiet belief that when Jesus rose from the dead, he came first to his mother, before appearing to Mary of Magdala. It is now early Sunday morning. The Sabbath is over and Jesus' faithful



women companions are planning to go to the tomb with the spices they have prepared. Mary had intended to accompany them. But wait! She is at early prayer when the room becomes dazzlingly bright and filled with fragrance. And there He is, holding her in the loving embrace she knows so well. The Son she has brought to birth, nurtured, loved and supported these thirty years, and who died most violently a few days ago, is with her again. And yet, He is different. His body, now glorified, is filled with a radiance that is indescribable, other-wordly. Mary understands as no-one else could ever understand. She does not need to go to the tomb. That symbol is for the women and for us down the ages. We who can be sceptical and dismissive are the ones who need to visit the empty tomb, and use our senses to take in and to believe what is, naturally speaking, unbelievable. We already love Mary as our model and companion, but in this glorious moment of Resurrection she assumes an even deeper significance for us. As the moon reflects the sun, she shines even more brightly in her glorious Son.

Our loved Founder Mary Potter lived her life under the shadow of the Cross with Jesus and Mary, yet joy was her song. As we celebrate her day of death on April 9, we are filled anew with gratitude for her life, and for her calling each of us to the Little Company of Mary. She leads us on a journey of love, with and for all the suffering and dying of our world.

Our own lives may be framed with suffering, loss and death, but if we journey with Mary of Nazareth and Mary Potter, we will experience the joy and the hope of being beloved of God. Our motto for the year captures this with Mary Potter's wonderful insight: *"We live in the joy of the Resurrection; it should be a fresh joy to us each day!"* On April 25, we also honour the centenary of the ANZACs landing in Gallipoli, where thousands of men from New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries gave their lives that peace may reign on this beautiful planet. Peace still seems far away, that is but another reminder of hope in the empty tomb. Jesus is not there. He has gone before us to welcome us into Eternal Life. Hope and Joy are our song!

*"Mary understands as no-one else could ever understand. She does not need to go to the tomb."*



# With Mary in Horror and in Hope

## INTRODUCTION

**This year, April is filled with death and resurrection, horror and hope, jaundice and joy. Mary Potter's anniversary of death; Holy Week and Easter; Anzac Day Remembrance. To help us enter these sacred mysteries, let's join Mary in her journey with her Son, for it is only in their company that we find our way. We centre ourselves by listening to God's Word in Scripture.**

### Scripture reading

*Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in my love. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. One can have no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. I have told you all this so that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."*

**JOHN 13: SELECTED VERSES**

### Reflection

Having journeyed with Jesus and Mary through Lent, having stayed close to Mary as she accompanied her Son in his terrible sufferings of Holy Week, we are filled with so many emotions. Getting older ourselves, we experience aches and pains in all sorts of places and so many bits of us hurt. Our hurtings help us to relate to Jesus' appalling pain, experienced in every tiny part of his

beautiful and innocent body. That awareness that he endured every dreadful moment for each one of us causes us both deep sorrow and great gratitude.

We turn to Mary, our companion, our model, our inspiration, as she stands in her own silent and overwhelming suffering, and we recall that she still was able to sing her *Magnificat* even amid the violent death scene unfolding around her. Our loved Mary Potter writes: “*As Mary stood on the heights of Calvary, her Magnificat was in her heart unchanged.*” What joy, more overwhelming than the sorrow, can be ours!! This is indeed the joy of Resurrection! Jesus has not only Risen: he has remained with us for ever! He is there with the ANZACs who also gave their lives for our world; he is there with every one of us in our hurtings, sufferings, violence and death.

In John Masefield’s *The Trial of Jesus*, the following conversation takes place between the centurion and Pilate’s wife: “*Do you think he is dead?*” “*No, Lady, I don’t.*” “*Then where is he?*” “*Let loose in the world, Lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.*” Let Mary Potter, who also died for us on April 9, further inspire us: “*We live in the joy of the Resurrection, a fresh joy to us each day!*”



# From Cross to Glory

## INTRODUCTION

**April: surely our most significant month dealing as it does with violence, death and resurrection. Let us begin by focusing on God's Word.**

### Reading

*I love you, God my strength. You are like a rock at my back. You keep me safe. Death held me in its grip. I felt swept away in a fierce current. Out of these depths I cried in my fear. You heard me, my rock. I give thanks because you anchored me. You freed me from the clinging weeds of fear, enabling me to give thanks for your fidelity.*

– FROM PSALM 18 IN “SONGS FROM A PIERCED HEART” BY SR PATRICIA STEVENSON, RSJ, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

### Reflection

During my Retreat in October last year, the Lord gifted me with a special day with Jesus as he agonised in the garden on the eve of his suffering. Over the 65 years of my LCM journey, I have prayed often with Jesus during the hours of his suffering; but strangely, inexplicably really, spent little time with him in the garden of Gethsemane. But on this day, I was drawn, most powerfully and poignantly, into the terror that must have gripped him as in his imagination he knew instinctively the appalling sufferings that lay ahead. He'd grown up with the unbelievable level of violence that the Romans used on their 'enemies.'

I'll share with you a few lines of the poem that arose within me during this day of my contemplation in his company. *"It's come to this. Abba, my Abba, where are you? I thought we had an agreement. I thought you promised never to leave me to this world of human misery, to my journey of love and hope. Where are you? One day they'll make a documentary 'This is your Life.' They'll call it the Final Chapter. They'll miss the point, of course ... I'm terrified, alone. My friends? Look at them. They're all asleep. Can't blame them. The evening is heavy, heavy-hanging with foreboding. My Abba, where are you? Come with me now into a weekend that humankind will always remember; my destiny, Hope of the Cosmos."*

Then, as Sr Patricia expressed in her Psalm paraphrase above, we read: *"You freed me from the gripping weeds of fear."* Yes, in the companionship of Jesus and Mary, we come through the pain, humiliation and death into the glory of the Resurrection! And we are indeed enabled to give thanks! Thanks, dear Lord, for your fidelity, thanks for Mary's step-by-step fidelity, thanks too for our own fidelity. During Holy Week and its living-out of the Paschal Mystery, we come to know afresh that Jesus' suffering and death, and Mary's supportive role in them, were for a purpose – God's divine purpose, the salvation of the entire universe. That profound realisation sends us back to the opening phrase of our Scripture: *"I love you, God my strength, my rock!"* Our fidelity is thanks entirely to Jesus and his commitment to living to the full and final moment of his destiny, for he is our hope, our joy and our glory for all time. His strength, of course, is Love, God's overwhelming Love that continually hits the cosmic fan! Now, we can rejoice in and commit ourselves anew to our motto for the year. *In union with Mary's Maternal Heart, we are messengers of God's infinite and inclusive Love.* It's up to us to walk with Mary, being God's Love to all, so that Jesus' death is not in vain and his Resurrection fills the world.



*“His strength, of course, is Love, God’s  
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