

Homily at Closing Mass of the GC

To everything there is a season
and a time to every purpose under the heavens:

Today is a special time – to remember, to celebrate and to believe. This is a time, but not just to say goodbye, it is a time to go forth and witness to what we have lived and experienced here at our General Congregation. In truth we have lived a sacred, blessed and historic moment. We have lived this sacred time as a GC community here in Manresa for the last 3 and a half weeks, and as the global Mary Ward family who have followed proceedings and have prayed and supported us. Today we are different than we were on October 5th, today as delegates and as members of the Institute of the Blessed Mary we are different, we are all new,

In truth our General Congregation journey as an Institute began 18 months ago with the Convocation of the GC in mid-April 2021 but we arrived in this special and sacred space 24 days ago and since our opening mass in this sanctuary we have been on a journey, an adventure. We have delved deep, into our story, into our history, into our desires. Like the disciples we have worked hard and cast our nets into the sea and explored God's call to us, to IBVM, to the Mary Ward family in this 3rd decade of the 3rd millennium.

The call of Jesus often means putting our nets back into the sea even though we are tired and have had no success all night, it means that after a night when we

caught nothing that we listen to that voice on the shore saying to us “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”. It means we hear and believe in this voice.

After over 400 years of attempts to be one Mary Ward family, after all the different steps taken over the years to fulfil Mary Ward’s call and vocation, during this GC we have thrown the nets once again, this time we threw our nets back into the sea, as many did before us, into the sea of our deep desire, the desire of many our sisters over those 400 years, to be one Mary Ward Institute. We cast our nets and we have been privileged and honoured to have filled our nets, to have voted unanimously on October 14th, to Become One with our CI sisters. There is a time and the time for the fulfilment of her story and her vocation is now. We got to throw the net overboard once again and we were overwhelmed with joy and certainty. There was a real sense of “It is the Lord” and our hearts burned within us that day. As our world fragments we offer the witness of union and unity. We have a journey ahead, a journey to grow into this decision, we will have more nets to throw, to claim the fullness of who we are called be, to encounter one another on this journey and to embrace this brave decision. But we believe Jesus stands on the shore!

At the opening mass I spoke about going into the cave of our hearts, now we are all called go deeper into the cave of our hearts, to the cave of our Institute’s heart, to the cave of Mary Ward’s vocation and heart, to touch and experience God’s deep dream and desire for us, the deep longing for oneness that is ours.

We experienced the joy of the election and the affirmation and confirmation of Carmel, Geraldine, Kate, Mary and Natalie, as our new leaders.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." The election of the new team certainly felt like another miraculous catch of fish. And again our hearts were filled with joy and thanksgiving for God's marvellous gifts to us, and again a time of "It is the Lord".

We marked the end of our Bicentenary year, a year when we remembered our ancestors, especially Frances Teresa Ball. How many times in the last months did we sing the mercies of the Lord? Today we remember again our cloud of witnesses, they have been in our consciousness each day as our faith sharing groups were named for 10 great woman of our story. Today in our liturgy we get to bring these women to our consciousness once again as we use the chalice and cruets presented to Mother Michael Corcoran on her Golden Jubilee by the Bishop of Ossory in 1915.

Our statements express our deep joy and desire to become One, to welcome our vulnerability and the vulnerability of our world, to care for our devastated planet and to be women, who search for meaning, women at the heart of our Church.

This evening I want say to the GC delegates Congratulations and well done. Thank you for taking risks, for going to the Cave, for sitting by the river, for hearing the call of Jesus from the shore. Thank you for forming this discerning

community and for searching for meaning and depth as we walked the path. To our sisters online , to our colleagues and friends, thank you for your support, your prayers, your messages, your engagement with us. At all times we knew your presence with us. We ask that you welcome us home, listen to our story, hear our experience with curiosity, with interest and that together we may experience the abundance of God's graciousness in your lives.

There is a time... for coming to a closure, for coming to an end.

We have had sacred moments but now is the time to go forth, to share the gift and to live the decisions that have been taken. We go with confidence because we know that Jesus stands on the shore, that Jesus invites us to breakfast, Jesus waits for us as we cast our nets, Jesus will transform us. May we go forth from this cave, the cave of our hearts and the cave of our GC, to live the newness of who we now are and of who we will become,

Let us remember, let us celebrate and let us believe.