

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE – *'Easter Disciple – Mary Mother of Jesus!'*

24 / 25 April 2010

Dear Friends

In December 1988 during my first visit to Rome, I visited the Augustinian Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Genazzano. Augustinians throughout the world honour Mary under this title and many shrines centre on the striking image of Mother and Child. The Australasian Province is dedicated to her patronage and the famous picture occupies a place of honour in St James Church.

In Genazzano, I had the privilege of celebrating Mass at the altar where the image is located. People gathered from all parts of the church, and I recall having my back to the people, an experience I haven't had for years. Though close to Christmas, this was an Easter moment, perhaps because of the great devotion to Mary under this title, including recent Popes who prayed at this shrine. John XXIII prayed there before calling the Second Vatican Council. I'm sure Our Lady gave him 'good counsel'!

This coming Monday 26 April is the Feast of Mary Mother of Good Counsel, a Solemnity in the Augustinian Order. Occurring as it does in the Easter Season, the celebration reminds us of the discipleship of Mary, particularly after the death of Jesus. There's no indication that Mary went into retirement but rather was very much a 'faith-presence' to the disciples as they struggled to believe in the Risen Jesus (Acts 1:14). Perhaps Mary struggled too, but I suspect that her attentiveness to Jesus throughout his childhood, adolescence and adult life prepared her to believe in the fulfilment of his mission as he rose from the dead and returned to his Father.

Easter is the season of wisdom, where we discover a whole new perspective on our relationship with God. Knowledge and experience help us discover wisdom but wisdom is really a matter of the heart. Mary represents the best of the human and she offers 'good counsel' because she is in touch with her heart. From the beginning of Jesus' life, Mary is described as 'pondering these things in her heart'. In the joint Anglican-Roman Catholic Statement on Mary put out 5 years or so ago, we read, '*Mary looked beneath the surface of events.*' What an extraordinary model of faith and human living Mary is for us - like Mary, we need to ponder.

On the wall of St James' Church, near Mary's shrine, there are framed pictures of Pope John XXIII praying before the picture in Genazzano, also a special prayer to Mary Mother of Good Counsel. Today, each will receive a holy card with this prayer and the image of Mary and Jesus. You are encouraged to keep it in a safe place and pray the prayer often.

Fr Dave