

Echoes from the Plenary Council - 26th November 2019

At the service of the confreres and of the Mission.

Martin introduced the morning with the beautiful story of Emmaus taken from St. Luke 24: 13-25. This also served as a springboard to put across some important points of his talk. For those of us in leadership we know that much of our ministry is directed towards the accompaniment and animation of our confreres. Such care encompasses all confreres from the young, to the elderly, those that are well and those that are sick, those that find themselves in difficulty and those that seem to be losing some of their energy and dynamism. Our ministry is all about sustaining the confreres in their steady and genuine living out of the gospel. In Luke 24: 15 we read: 'while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them.'

We see clearly here how it is Jesus who takes the initiative to draw close to the two disciples. In the gospels we see how often this was the way Jesus ministered taking the initiative just as he had done in the calling of the disciples. This is also the challenge for all those in leadership. There are often spontaneous moments for drawing close, coincidental or unplanned encounters but no doubt there will be the scheduled meetings during canonical visits. He asked them; 'what are you discussing as you walk along.'

The main concern is the concern for their welfare, a concern for the way things are going. This of course involves our capacity to listen attentively to their story. Emmaus is a hauntingly beautiful story for the two disciples are very honest about their disappointments, their lost hopes and yet they will be touched by the wisdom of the one who listens to them; who takes the time to share with them, to stay with them when they ask him. This is real encounter and should be a lesson for us all in leadership for the quality of our visits and the time we spend is of the utmost importance. Time for sharing, for relaxing and for praying. A moment of grace of being touched by the very presence of the Lord at the heart of such encounter. Walking the Emmaus road is the wonderful experience of encounter that we are called to make with all our confreres, to allow them to speak out their story, their dreams, their hopes and to be touched by grace.

Francis Barnes