

Archbishop Lori's comments on Chapter of Elections, Oblate Sisters of Divine Providence

Let me begin a word of prayerful gratitude to God and a word of appreciation to you, the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Inspired and animated by the charism of the Servant of God Mother Mary Lange, you and your predecessors have been serving the Church and the wider community for some one-hundred and eighty-seven years. The Oblate Sisters are deeply woven into the fabric of this local church of Baltimore. You are part and parcel of the identity and mission of this Archdiocese, even as you serve generously in dioceses that, at one time, were part of us. So please accept, on behalf of the whole Church of Baltimore, a word of deepest appreciation for your witness to the Risen Lord and to the many apostolates you have sponsored and sustained throughout these many years.

You have served a changing landscape. You and your sisters were serving the needs of African-Americans and Africans during the days when, shamefully, slavery was the law of the land. In the midst of segregation, prejudice, and other forms of racial injustice, you and your sisters were a beacon of faith, hope, and love - as you served in parishes, schools, and other apostolates of service. And you are continue to do so in these days in many neighborhoods where, sadly, systemic problems remain. No one really knows how many lives you have saved and transformed. That blessed sum is kept in heaven; it is written in the Book of Life. All I know is that the number is enormous!

Let me also express my appreciation for the leadership of Mother Mary Alexis, your General Superior, together with her Council. You have led your fellow Oblate Sisters with great wisdom and love. Leadership in any field, including the Church, is not easy in these days but you have fulfilled your role with great generosity of spirit.

May the Lord bless you and your co-workers with joy and satisfaction!

A prime expression of the holiness of your way of life and your service is the cause for sainthood for your founder, Mother Mary Lange. I shall never forget the experience of receiving, with Mother Alexis, the remains of Mother Lange and transferring them to a special chapel for veneration. I think we all felt very close to Mother Lange whose faith-filled journey through life continues to amaze and inspire us. Not a day goes by without my praying for her Cause. I am sure you must be storming heaven with prayers for this same intention!

Mother Lange is a witness to hope. When we read her story, we know what St. Paul means when he speaks of those who 'hoped against hope'! On days when problems and challenges seem overwhelming, I have only to think of Mother Lange. And when I think of Mother Lange she prods me to holy and courageous. I imagine she does the same for you but even more forcefully!

Aided by the prayers of Mother Lange, we look to the future with hope. Indeed you have wisely chosen to hold your Chapter of Elections during the Octave of Easter, the eight-day celebration of the Resurrection. Throughout this week and in the weeks to come, our minds and hearts will be opened yet again to the understanding of Scripture as the earliest followers of Jesus encounter the Risen Lord in faith. We too ask for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes of faith more widely so that we can deepen our encounter with the Christ who offered himself on the Cross to the Father for our sakes - who was an oblation holy and pleasing in the sight of God - and who rose triumphant, defeating sin and death.

In your consecrated style of life you are witnesses to hope. You are living the Beatitudes in concentrated form through your vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. And while you labor tirelessly here on earth and encounter all the problems of earthly existence - your hearts are set on what is above where Christ is

seated at the Father's right hand. You teach us all to lift our gaze heavenward - not to escape the world we live in, but rather to make our lives a holy and pleasing gift for others - even as we deepen our trust in the Providence of God.

Moments from now you will elect a Superior General and her closest co-workers. With you I pray that you will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit so that, in all things, you may do the will of Christ to the glory of the Father. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the choices you make, and that, uppermost in your hearts and minds will be the furtherance of that spirit of loving serving and trust in God's Providence that Mother Mary Lange bequeathed to the whole Church.

Your leadership will seek to continue ministries of service, to care for fellow sisters in time of illness and advancing years, to further the cause of Mother Lange, and to share the spirit, the charism of Mother Lange with your many friends and co-workers . . . all this and much, much more!

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you, dear sisters, and may the Risen Lord guide you in this important Chapter of Elections. May God bless you and keep you always in his love!