

18 Mayo 1840

SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF

JOSEPH BENEDICT MARCELLIN
CHAMPAGNAT, PRIEST, SUPERIOR
AND FOUNDER OF THE LITTLE
BROTHERS OF MARY



In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Amen.

Here, in the presence of God, with the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph as heavenly witnesses, desirous of recording for all the Brothers of Mary, the last and dearest wishes of my heart, I summon all my strength to make my Spiritual Testament, in terms of what I believe most in accordance with the will of God, and most conducive to the good of the Society.

In the first place, I humbly beseech all those whom I may have offended or disedified in any way, albeit I am not conscious of any wilful offence on my part towards anybody, graciously to grant me pardon, pressed by the boundless charity of Christ, and to add their prayers to mine, as king of God in his goodness to overlook the sins of my past life, and admit my soul to the embrace of his all-loving mercy. I die with sentiments of grateful and respectful submission to the Superior General of the Society of Mary, and in the closest bonds of union with all its members, especially the Brothers, who in the designs of Providence were to come under my care, and who have always had a special claim on my affection.

I desire that absolute and perfect obedience should always prevail among the Brothers of Mary: that those under authority see in their Superiors the representatives of Jesus Christ, and render them willing and implicit obedience, being ever ready to sacrifice at need their own will and judgment. Let them remember that the obedient religious will speak of victories, and that it is mainly obedience that forms the base and buttress of a community. With hearts thus disposed, the Little Brothers of Mary will submit blindly to the guidance, not only of the Major Superiors, but also to all those whose duty it is to lead and direct them. They will let this truth of faith sink deep into their minds, that the Superior takes the place of Jesus Christ, and that when he commands, he should be obeyed as if it were Christ himself commanding.

Also, dear Brothers, I beg of you with all the love of my heart, and by all the love you bear me, keep ever alive among you the charity of Christ. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians: 'See how they love one another!' That is the desire of my heart and my burning wish, at this last moment of my life. Yes, my dearest Brothers, hear these last words of your Father, which are those of our Blessed Saviour: 'Love one another!'

It is my wish also, dear Brothers, that the same charity that must bind you to one another as members of a single body, should embrace all the other congregations. Oh, I implore you by the boundless love of Jesus Christ, cast out of your hearts all envy of everyone, and especially of those whome God calls like yourselves to the religious state, to labour for the education of youth. Be the first to rejoice at their success and grieve at their misfortunes. Commend them often in your prayers to God and to Mary, the Mother of God. Give way to them readily. Turn away from any talk that would seek to discredit them. Let the glory of God alone and the honor of Mary be your one aim and total ambition.

Just as your wills are to be united with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary, in the will of one and the same Superior, I desire that your hearts and feelings mingle with theirs, in Jesus and Mary. Let their interests be yours; let it be a pleasure for you to spring to their help, as often as required. May the same spirit and the same love unite you to them as branches to the same trunk and as children of one family to a good Mother, blessed Mary. The Superior of the Fathers, being responsible for the branch of the Brothers, must be the centre of unity for both. I had nothing but praise for the submission and obedience accorded me at all times by the Brothers of Mary, and my wish and expectation is that the Superior General experience the same. His spirit is mine; his will is mine. I regard this perfect harmony and entire submission as the foundation and support of the Brothers of Mary.

I ask also of God, and I desire with all my soul, that you be constantly faithful to the devout practice of the presence of God, which is the soul of prayer, of meditation, and of all the virtues; that humility and simplicity may ever be the distinguishing mark of the Little Brothers of Mary; that a tender and filial love for our good Mother never fail you in all the changes of time and circumstance. Proclaim her love in every place, as far as lies in your power. She is the first Superior of the whole Society.

With devotion to Mary couple devotion to her noble spouse, glorious St Joseph. He is, as you know, one of our leading patrons. You act as guardian angels of the children entrusted to your care, so, to these pure spirits also, pay a special homage of love, respect and confidence.

Dear Brothers, love your vocation, be faithful and steadfast to the end, with manly courage. Remain true to the spirit of poverty and detachment, and let the daily observance

Ainsi soit-il

of your holy Rule preserve you from ever violating the sacred vow by which you are bound to the fairest of all the virtues, and the frailest. There are difficulties in leading the life of a good religious, but grace sweetens all their bitterness. Jesus and Mary will come to your aid, and besides, life is soon over and eternity never ends. Oh, what consolation we have, when about to appear before God, to remember that we have lived in the favour of Mary, and in her own Society. May it please that good Mother to preserve you, give you increase and bring you to holiness.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with you always. I leave you trustfully within the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, until we all meet again in eternal bliss.

This is my full and final will for the glory of Jesus and Mary.

The present Spiritual Testament shall be delivered into the hands of Father Colin, Superior General of the Society of Mary.

Declared at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, the eighteenth of May, eighteen hundred and forty.

Joseph Benedict Marcellin CHAMPAGNAT,
"Priest of the Society of Mary
and Superior of the Brothers".

Brothers François

Louis-Marie

Jean-Marie

Louis Stanislas Bonaventure