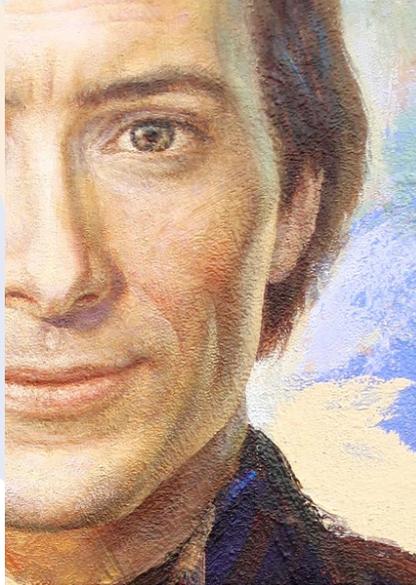




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LET
MARY'S
HEART BEAT
IN US: THE
GREAT GIFT
THAT MARCELLIN
LEFT US

6|6|2019

MESSAGE OF BR. ERNESTO SÁNCHEZ, SUPERIOR GENERAL,
FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



During the month of May, I was able to enjoy some days of silence and personal retreat in the Monastery of Sant Scholastica in Subiaco, Italy. Higher up the mountain is the Monastery of the ‘Sacro Speco’ (Holy Cave). There one can find a grotto which preserves the memory of where Saint Benedict withdrew for three years, living as a hermit. It is a holy and inspiring spot.

When visiting this Monastery, beneath the upper Church, and alongside the grotto of St Benedict, one finds *the chapel of the Virgin*. It is a beautiful chapel decorated with stunning frescos (from the 13th century) that depict various marian moments: the Annunciation, the Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, Mary at the foot of the Cross, Mary’s Assumption, Mary Mother of the Church ... This last image shows Mary with her arms extended and wearing a large cloak under which she gathers each and everyone of us, her sons and daughters.

Although I had visited this place previously, probably in a hurry, on this occasion I took my time to be present in a spirit of calm, prayer and reflection. I experienced the grace of a strong sense of the presence and embrace of Mary.

FACES AND EXPRESSIONS

I spent time studying the faces and their expressions.

In the Annunciation image, Mary looks at the angel with surprise and wonder; in the Birth image, an expression of tenderness and full of curiosity passes between Her and the new-born; in the Adoration image, there is a look of pleasure appropriate in a mother showing her little child to others ...; in the Flight into Egypt, she is holding the Child tightly to herself to shield him against being frightened or feeling unsafe ...



At the foot of the Cross, her face and expression express sorrow, loss, confusion, disorientation ... I spent a long time contemplating this scene, asking myself, “What did Mary have in her heart to cope with the sight of her son now dead, after having been unjustly condemned, scourged and crucified ...?”



There she was, at the foot of the Cross, her heart beating in tune with that of Jesus, who after feeling abandoned, “gave up his spirit” in trust. I do not know exactly why but I felt quite disturbed in the face of the mystery of this scene ...

Was it that the heart of Mary, so free and full of the fire of God, was being put to its greatest test?

The test of the ‘dark night’, of doubt and of futility? Something like that described by Scripture: *“though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed”* (1 Pet. 1, 6-7).



Her serene and trusting gaze depicted in the fresco of the Assumption, in which she is embraced and her hand held by Jesus, surrounded by a choir of angels, communicates the moment she finally appears to understand many things ... even those that defy ordinary human understanding.

The “yes” of Mary pronounced at the Annunciation thus takes on its full meaning, thanks to her heart that was free and full of the fire of God.

It was a “yes” that allowed her to risk all and that sustained her throughout her life, even in its most difficult moments.

THE GREAT GIFT

Sheltered within this chapel dedicated to Mary, trying to relive each of the scenes of her life, I started to think of *the great gift left to us by Marcellin* in giving us the name of Mary, inviting us and engaging us *to let her heart beat in us*. What a wonderful gift!

Marcellin’s life shows us the many ways in which his heart beat in tune with that of Mary.

At every instant he felt himself to be under her protective watch; he spoke or wrote of her in phrases like, “I leave you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary”, “the Good Mother”, “She is our Ordinary Resource”, “With Mary, we have everything; without her, we are nothing; because Mary has her adorable son, either in her arms or in her heart”, “She has done everything for us”, “Mary, this is your work”, “Remember O most gracious Virgin Mary”.



Humility and simplicity were the marian virtues most evident in the life of Champagnat and in the language he used when addressing the Brothers. They inspire a way of being present to young people that is warm and welcoming; they inspire us to be genuine in our relationships within our home communities or families as well as our workplaces, where we seek to live lives that are transparent, characterised by fraternal dialogue, reconciliation and peace.

Mary, woman of silence, inspires in us a heart that knows how to listen, that empties itself of itself, that is free of addictions or pretence, and so makes room for and welcomes our God who is close, at work, merciful and faithful. She inspires us to say with full trust, “You alone, Lord”, “You know”.

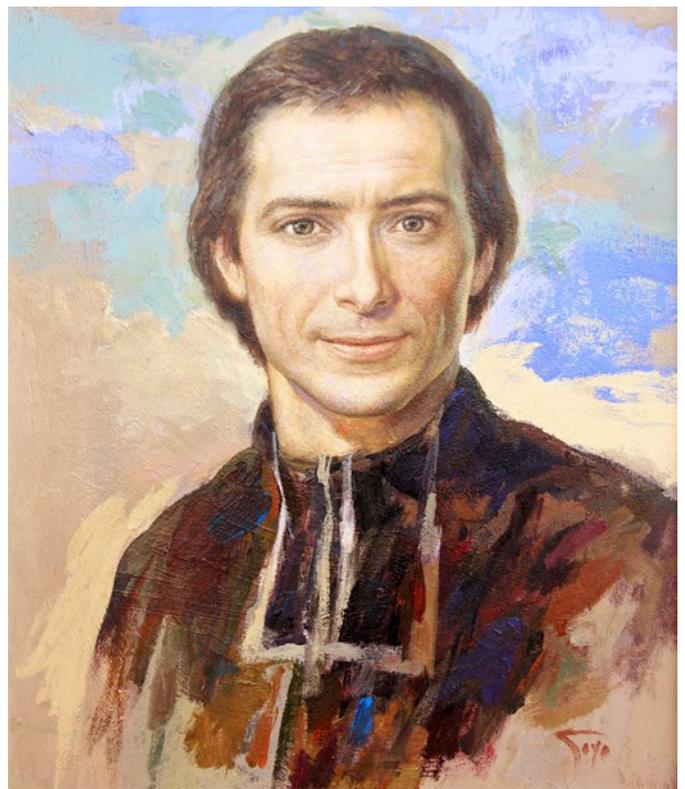
Mary, at the foot of the Cross, inspires us as she did to Champagnat to know how to face up with faith to times of crisis, darkness and disbelief. Situations in our “turbulent world” like senseless wars, terrorist attacks, the rights of children being trampled on in different forms of abuse, political crises, migrants constantly on the move ... or else, crises within the Church and within our own communities or families as well ... in



the midst of all of this, we pray and want to respond to the call of the Chapter to *be beacons of hope in this turbulent world.*

As Champagnat Marists we take our inspiration from Mary and her attitudes. We see ourselves as bearers of her name. We contemplate her heart that was free and full of the warmth of God our Father. We admire her daring in setting out to be with someone in need or appealing to Jesus to perform his first miracle... We contemplate her capacity to stand by the Cross, holding out against the irresistible, bearing up to her pain with jeers ringing in her ears and injustice playing out before her eyes.

From Mary let us learn how to be *beacons of hope* for our times, not only as individuals but also as a community.



She was open to the action of the Spirit and gave us Jesus, the light of the world. At Nazareth, she created a *home of light* and we also want to make our communities and families *homes of light*. After the Resurrection, she was a close but discreet presence among the apostles. Together at Pentecost, they received the light and power of the Spirit to overcome fear and go out to proclaim the good news.

Above all, let us learn from having her as mother, realising that we are all children under the protection of the same mantle, able to cry with her and like her for the pain and sorrow of every sister and brother. And so, inspired by such a good mother, we may be present in a tender and merciful way among those most in need of this.

Let Mary’s heart beat in us! This is the great gift that Champagnat has left us.

Fraternally,
Br. Ernesto



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