

The art of governing with love

MEETING WITH BROTHER FRANÇOIS

Intensely spiritual and deeply human



❖ A moment of contemplation

Venerable Brother François, successor of Father Champagnat, is considered as "the living image of Marcellin". But, with the responsibility of a disciple, he is at the same time faithful and creative. He will be the man for solid structures: Common Rules. A man of conviction: this is his way of listening to the Spirit and to the signs of the times. His art of governing and loving drives the pace of growth of the Institute. With a life given and consumed by the Kingdom, he resigned at the age of fifty-two.

Imagine the image of Brother François and contemplate the face of that image with the eyes of the heart (an awakened, deep and reflective gaze). What would he remind us of the call of the XXIIInd General Chapter to promote the culture of meeting?

(musical background)

❖ Promoting the culture of meeting

Testimonies:

- "Filled with the spirit of the pious Founder and zealous to imitate him in his style of leading the Brothers and doing good, all saw that Fr Champagnat lived and acted in his successor. This wise conduct won him the esteem of all and made his government loved and gave him great authority over the Brothers" (Testimony of Br Stratonique).
- Brother François did not undertake anything without first having reflected on it. Without having prayed a lot and asked for prayer. I have witnessed this behaviour. He entrusted it to God, examined it carefully, consulted, took his time and did not rush or let himself be carried away by blind passion, obstinacy or vanity... He did not speak without having asked for the light of the Lord... The good God was his great counsellor".
- Brother François seemed to me to be a man of reflection and thoughtfulness. He took advice from wise people". "Colin, the Bishops, the Assistants... He did not disdain any human means, but then he entrusted himself to God and had recourse to supernatural means".

❖ Psalm: It is beautiful to walk together

It is good to walk together; it is gentle to go forward leaning on my brother's shoulder; it is sweet to join in the fellowship and joys; it is good to make the journey anew with hands joined together.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Prayerfully situate your experience of living with your brothers, of being in church with other believers, of joining projects with other Marists, of experiencing a journey of communion.

❖ Love gives meaning to dialogue and to a journey of communion

"Brother François seemed to be able to guess the concerns and problems of the Brothers. He would call them to his room. He asked them questions and listened to them with kindness and patience. He always succeeded in consoling and comforting them. He loved the Brothers like a father. Many times, he assured them that he would always remember them fondly and that he would never cease to care for them... He loved the little ones, the humble, especially the sick. His charity meant that he never reprimanded anyone with passion or bad humour...". (*Testimony of Brother François de Borgia*).

"I love you; you know that I love you and that I wish only your good" (Br. François).

(Silence)

❖ Intentions (inspired by texts of Br. François)

The message of Brother François inspires our prayer to the Lord. We say: MAKE US WALK IN COMMUNION.

- May Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless you all and preserve among us the original spirit, the spirit of humility, simplicity and modesty, and may they make us grow in piety, regularity and all the virtues of our holy state". Let us pray to the Lord.
- To make oneself loved by an unbounded dedication is the art of leadership". That the exercise of authority and leadership may be practised as service, let us pray.
- Everything that happens is wished and permitted by God". That we may be in tune with God's wishes in our encounters, let us pray.
- May the Lord give you the authority of a father and the tenderness of a mother. For all those who lead the way in our Administrative Units, that they may be builders of bridges and messengers of peace, let us pray.
- United in heart and spirit and working in unison for the glory of God, the honour of Mary, and the good of the Institute, as good and faithful servants, as docile and obedient sons, so that we may have the consolation of living and dying in a holy and fervent society...". So that the path of synodality proposed by Pope Francis may be the path that we build in our institutional processes, let us pray.
- My dear Brothers will lighten the weight of the burden by an ardent zeal... by a sincere and real commitment for the good of society, and by a mutual and perfect harmony, united in prayer and good works". That all Marists may become a prophetic reminder of the dignity and fundamental equality of all God's people, let us pray.

With all the Marists of Champagnat we feel united around the same table, in the spirit of unity and fraternity bequeathed to us by Marcellin and François, with which we address God our Father:

Our Father...

❖ Concluding prayer

Lord Jesus,
you who gave us Marcellin and François
as an inspiration of fraternity and communion,
grant that following their example
may we feel that we are companions on the way,
with one heart and one mind,
called to be active subjects
in view of the common good of the Church and of our Institute.

Help us to respond generously
to the invitation of Pope Francis
to live the dimensions of synodality,
walking together as Church communion,
promoting co-responsibility and participation
in the life and mission of our Institute.

Make our desire to live in communion
promoting the culture of encounter,
the reciprocal exchange in the light of truth,
and unity as brothers and sisters in God our Father.
Amen.