

## PREPARATION TO RECEIVE THE FRUITS OF THE INTERCESSION OF SAINT JOSEPH

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As we know, Saint Joseph has been very present and active in our Marianist history.

Today we only know a few anecdotes from our brothers linked to Saint Joseph, but almost always in relation to economic questions: when it was a question of buying, for example, with Father Léon Meyer, the farm in Dayton; the Marianist orphanage of Gremois, near Sion, in Switzerland, also benefited from the invaluable help of Saint Joseph to settle a loan. Some of us, or communities of the Society of Mary, imitating Saint Joseph, have become "Sweet Dads" for people in need.

Works of charity are important, but I would like to speak of Saint Joseph as spouse of Mary, on this occasion of the celebration of the solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of Mary.

Saint Joseph is presented by God himself as "Spouse of Mary" when he asks him not to be afraid to take Mary, his Bride, under his roof (cf. Mt1, 19). To welcome such a request is certainly not easy for this great-grandson of David; as a righteous man, his first decision was to return Mary discreetly to her parents. But, also as a righteous man, he did the will of God. This is how he welcomes Mary to his home. Saint Joseph thus becomes the father of Jesus who was born of Mary. In his presentation of the genealogy of that son, St. Matthew expressly notes that Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, from whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ (Mt1, 16). The three persons, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph now form a family, the Family of Nazareth, which certain theologians already before Father Chaminade have called: "The created Trinity".

Saint Joseph intervenes in our life not only to resolve our financial worries, such as acquiring an estate, building a house, but above all as Spouse of Mary and father of Jesus. Our devotion to this figure who is above all saints is called to be special and to be expressed in various ways. Anyone can invoke him: the "great" can pray to him, he who is of the line of David; couples and families can invoke him, he who was the faithful and kind Bridegroom to Mary and responsible head of the family; educators and children / young people can ask for his intercession, he who took care of Jesus; finally the poor can also turn to him, for he was a carpenter.

Saint Joseph inspires us to pray to him, but also to imitate him: the "Saints Joseph next door", we meet them every day. The Region of Togo is currently welcoming the Superior General who evaluates the brothers, the communities and the works in the context of his canonical visit. He will celebrate the solemnity of Saint Joseph in our Unit and with us. A grace for us! It is no longer so much a tradition that communities exchange vows with "the Good Father". However, we who have welcomed him with his Council for a month, can already imagine what the report he will give to the Regional Council could be: encouragement, exhortations and fatherly guidance! I am particularly touched by his humility, his listening, his discretion, his sense of humor, the depth of his reflections and his calls to go beyond superficiality to go deep into the spiritual life, at "the School of Nazareth" . Many other Marianists, through their lives and works, reveal to us who Saint Joseph is.

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Let us conclude with this prayer from Father Chaminade which comes from the instructions he gave in the early hours of his foundations (see *Ecrits et Paroles*, vol. IV, p. 633):

O faithful guardian of the Mother of God,

.....

Kind tutor of JESUS,

Assist your servants....

Make them feel

The effects of your charity. Get them

Devotion to your wife, fidelity towards her Son,

Inviolable respect for the Eternal Father, Who reigns with the Holy Spirit

Throughout the centuries.

Happy celebration of the Solemnity of Saint Joseph!

Fr. Ignace Pagnan, SM