

# Spiritual Testament of Joseph Benoît Marcellin Champagnat,

## Prieste, Superior and Founder of the Little Marists brothers



“In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So be it. Here, in the presence of God, under the auspices of the Most Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph, wanting to make known to all the Brothers of Mary the expression of my last and dearest wishes, I gather all my strength, to write, as I believe it to be most in conformity with the divine will and most useful to the good of the Society, my Spiritual Testament.

First of all, I very humbly beg all those whom I may have offended or scandalized in any way, although I do not know that I have voluntarily caused pain to anyone, to be kind enough to forgive me in consideration of the infinite charity of Our Lord Jesus. -Christ, and to unite their prayers with mine to obtain from the good God that he deigns to forget the sins of my past life, and to receive my soul into his infinite mercy. I die full of respect, recognition and submission for the Reverend Father Superior General of the Society of Mary and in the feelings of the most perfect union for all the members who compose it, especially for the Brothers whom God had entrusted to my care, and which have always been so dear to my heart.

I desire that complete and perfect obedience always reigns among the Brothers of Mary, that the inferiors, considering in the Superiors the person of Jesus Christ, obey them with heart and mind, always renouncing, if necessary, to their own will and judgment. Let them remember that the obedient Religious will win victories, and that it is obedience mainly which is the basis and support of a Community.

In this spirit, the Little Brothers of Mary will submit, not only to the first Superiors, but also to all those who will be appointed to direct and lead them. They will fully imbue themselves with

this truth of faith, that the Superior represents Jesus Christ, and that he must be obeyed when he commands, as if it were Jesus Christ himself who commanded.

I also ask you, My dear Brothers, with all the affection of my soul and with all that you have for me, to ensure that holy charity is always maintained among you. Love one another as Jesus Christ loved you. May there be among you only one heart and one mind. That we can say of the Little Brothers of Mary, like the first Christians: See how they love each other!... This is the wish of my most ardent heart, at this last moment of my life.

Yes, my dear Brothers, listen to the last words of your Father, they are those of our beloved Savior: Love one another. I desire, my dear Brothers, that this charity which must unite you all together, as members of the same body, also extends to all the other congregations. Ah! I implore you, through the boundless charity of Jesus Christ, take care never to envy anyone and especially those whom the good Lord calls to work, like you, in the religious state, for the instruction of the youth. Be the first to rejoice in their successes and grieve over their disgraces. Recommend them often to the good Lord and to the divine Mary. Give in to them without difficulty. Never listen to speeches that would tend to harm them. May the sole glory of God and the honor of Mary be your sole goal and all your ambition. As your wills must merge with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary, in the will of a single and general Superior, I desire that your hearts and your feelings also always merge in Jesus and in Mary. May their interests be yours, may it be your pleasure to come to their aid, whenever you are needed. Have the same spirit; the same love unites you to them, like branches to the same trunk, and like children of the same family to a good Mother, the divine Mary. The Superior of the Fathers, also being of the branch of the Brothers, must be the center of union of all. As I have only had to praise myself for the submission and obedience that the Brothers of Mary have always shown me, I desire and I intend that the Superior General always finds the same obedience and the same submission. His mind is mine, and his will is mine. I regard this perfect agreement and this complete submission as the basis and support of the Society of the Brothers of Mary.

I again ask the good Lord and I hope with all the affection of my soul, that you faithfully persevere in the holy exercise of the presence of God, the soul of prayer, of oration, of all the virtues. May obedience and simplicity always be the character of the Little Brothers of Mary. May a tender and filial devotion inspire you in all times and in all circumstances for our good Mother. Make her loved everywhere, as much as possible. She is the first Superior of the entire Society. Join devotion to Mary with devotion to the glorious Saint Joseph, her most worthy husband; you know he is one of our first Patrons. You act as guardian angels for the children entrusted to you; also pay to these pure spirits a particular cult of love, respect and trust. "My dear Brothers, be faithful to your vocation, love it and persevere in it with courage.

Keep yourselves in a great spirit of poverty and detachment. May the daily observance of your holy Rules preserve you from ever failing in the sacred vow which binds you to the most beautiful and delicate of virtues. There are penalties for living as a good Religious; but grace softens everything: Jesus and Mary will help you; besides, life is very short, and eternity will never end. Ah! How consoling it is, when appearing before God, to remember that we lived under the auspices of Mary and in her Society! May this good Mother preserve you, multiply

you and sanctify you. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communication of the Holy Spirit be with you always. I leave you with confidence in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, waiting for us to be able to reunite together in blessed eternity.

This is my final and express will for the glory of Jesus and Mary. This Spiritual Testament will be placed in the hands of Mr. Colin, Superior General of the Society of Mary. » Done at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, May 18, 1840.”

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