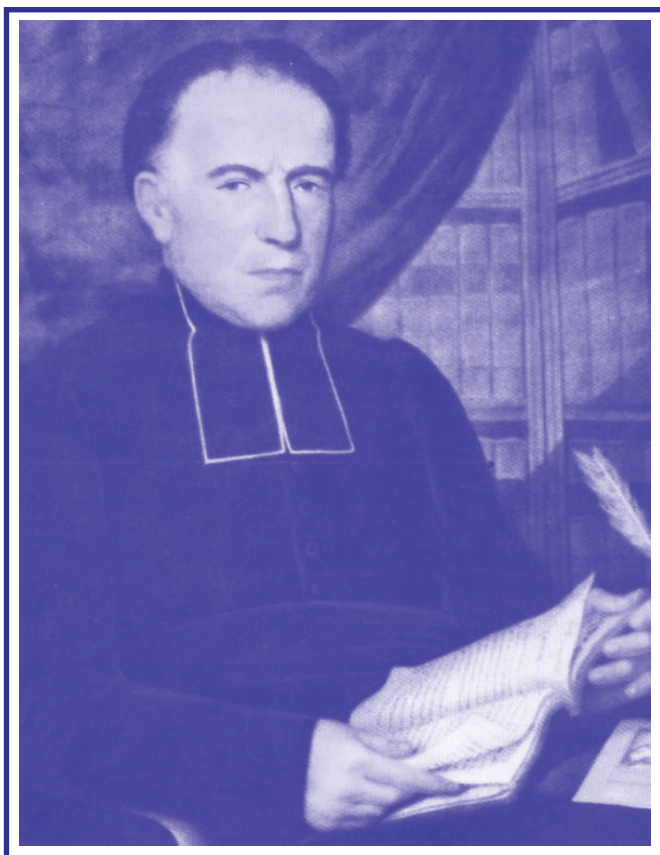


Novena in Preparation for Founder's Day

21st Sept. – 29th Sept.



Servant of God
Fr. Peter Mary Mermier
(1790 - 1862)

NOVENA DAY 1

A MISSIONARY FOR WHOM LOVE WAS THE ONE THING NECESSARY

"To read Father Mermier's letters or his personal notes is to feel more and more imbued with the Salesian doctrine of the primacy of the Love of God" (Fr. Duval, Monsieur Mermier Pg. 112)

"Our aim is to love God with an undivided heart and to love our neighbor with Christ's own love" (const 51, end lines)

Fervour is the overflow of love with which the heart is filled. It shows itself in external attitudes. The same love which filled the heart of St. Francis de Sales also filled the heart of Father Mermier. He had acquired a keen insight into the Salesian doctrine of the primacy of love" (Circular of Fr. Mayoraz)

For Reflection and Prayer: 1. Is my love for God the Father central to my life? (Pause) 2. Am I trying to deepen my awareness of the loving presence and action of the Lord and of His spirit in my life? (P) 3. Am I alert to discern the lord's repeated call and the Spirit's frequent inspirations, and do I respond with generous Love? (P)

Prayer for the Glorification Fr. Mermier:

God of love, YOU care for us and you guide us in numerous ways. We thank you for inflaming the heart of Fr. Peter Mermier with an intense love for you and a zeal for the salvation of souls. You blessed him with a total trust in you and humble surrender to your holy Will.

It was your will that he should found the congregation of Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, and the Congregation of Sisters of the cross of Chavanod, to spread your mercy and compassion to all, by witnessing to your love and through their prophetic ministries. His life of holiness was his supreme act of glory to you.

Loving father, while he was on earth, you blessed many through him, especially in the renewal of Christian faith and family through the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. You raised him to the saintly state of Servant of God, thereby You testify that he is Your highly favoured son for whom You refuse nothing. So we pray that through his holy intercession, you bless us now with the favour we request and pray for

We make this prayer through Christ Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever

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Servant of God, Peter Mermier: intercede for us**

NOVENA DAY 2

A MISSIONARY COMMITTED TO THE LORD THROUGH A LIFE OF PRAYER

"The obstacles to a spirit of prayer can be overcome only by strong spiritual motivation, in the determined effort to die to oneself and to oneself and to unite oneself closely to our Lord. Such is the spiritual man, such is the man of prayer, the Priest, the Apostolic Man.

What happens to the apostolic ministry of a Priest who is not a man of Prayer? He is by nature as weak as other men, and so his ministry is barren, without any result, even harmful. It is a ministry of death, which instead of giving light causes blindness, instead of healing takes away life.

To pray, my dear brother, to pray in a worthy manner and to pray at all times, is a duty as well as a need for all, but especially for all priests (Letter of Mermier addressed to Fathers & Brothers in India 1852)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Am I striving each day and every day to make personal prayer a vital part of my life? (P) 2. By my daily prayer do I open myself more and more to the Lord and to his Spirit in order to know better His personal love for me, to know myself better, to let myself be changed and transformed into what he wants me to become? (P)

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NOVENA DAY 3

A MISSIONARY FULL OF LOVE AND CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Father Mermier's portrait gives us the impression of someone who is severe and with little feelings. Severe he certainly was with himself because of a whole hearted response to what God was asking from him. But this severity is softened by his humaneness and sense of humour, by an unusual thoughtfulness and by a kindly respect for persons and their shortcomings.

One of his first companions, Fr. Petit Jean, says this about him: Father Mermier who appeared to be the sternest of all was the one who was most cheerful. He used to make everyone feel at ease. He was strict towards himself and considerate towards others" (Fr. Adrian Duval, article in msfs Bulletin 1978)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Do I always try to make adjustments, small and great, in my dealings with others? 2. Do I look out for the interests of others and not just for my own?

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NOVENA DAY 4

A MISSIONARY WHOSE LIFE REVOLVED AROUND THE EUCHARIST

Blindness deprived Fr. Mermier of the comfort of celebrating Holy Mass (during the last two years of his life) what a trial this was for a priest who has been able to say, some years before, that he never suffered distractings during Mass and that he was used to enjoying great consolations. His resigned himself, and went to the communion each day"

Fr. Gaiddon reposts as follows: "Always the first at the spiritual exercises made in common, he continued to get up at four o' clock in the morning. He attended two masses every day. Generally with a smile on his lips presented a serene and radiant face to everyone" (Fr. Duval "Monsieur Mermier – 276")

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Each day, do I rry toake Holy Mass ("memorial of Christ's Suffering, Death and Resurrection") the sun of my spiritual exercises? (P) 2. Do I find my Light, my Strength, my Life, my Joy in the person of Jesus in the Eucharist and in the Word He speaks to me? (P)

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NOVENA DAY 5

A MISSIONARY WHO WAS TOTALLY IMBUED WITH THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

"Humility, abandonment to God, serenity: three basic elements of Salesian Spirituality, which Fr. Mermier put into practice. With the passage of time, these dispositions of humility, abandonment to God and serenity took possession of his life and were reflected quite simply in his letters to the Missionaries." (Fr. Mayoraz – circular Jan 1990)

Reflections and Prayer: 1. Am I constantly deepening my knowledge of the life and teaching of our Patron in order to imitate him? (P) 2. Is my life a witness to the Gospel of Jesus lived in the Spirit of St. Francis de Sales? (P)

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NOVENA DAY 6

A MISSIONARY WHO LIVED AS A LOVING CHILD OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

"Among the innumerable favour I received daily from this good Mother I count the most notable to have been, time to see how I stand before God and Men. Mary taught me to be different man – humbler, gentler, more mortified, more retiring, more religious. I can say, in short, that the Blessed Virgin practically forced me, and continues to force me, to be entirely hers/here" Fr. Mermier at shrine of our lady of la Salette, France 1859)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. In what way do iTry to show a special love for Our Lady? (P) 2. Do I find inspiration in Mary as the Mother of Compassion, the model of my consecrated life and of my apostolic activity? (P) 3. Do I show her my filial love by praying the Rosary every day? (P)

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NOVENA DAY 7

A MISSIONARY WHO WAS DARING BECAUSE HE WAS COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON GOD AND ALWAYS ALERT TO RESPOND TO GOD'S CALL

"Fr. Duval has helped us to discover in Fr. Mermier a man of great kindness and at the same time very uncompromising; a man of incessant activity as well as intensely prayerful. He was a very humble man, filled with power from God (Fr. Mayoraz)

"We discover God's will in the reality of life and to remain faithful to it—that was one of the characteristics of Fr. Mermier's activity. He never begins with a preconceived idea. Rather, in what we refer to today as the signs of the times, he discovers God's call, he seeks solutions to problems, he adjusts himself to the flow of reality and is careful not to hold back progress by hastily setting up structures that are inflexible. He always shows a balanced blend of determination and adaptability." (Fr. Duval, French MSFS Bulletin Dec 1978)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Is my prayer and my life a constant openness to God in order to know His will, accept His will and do His will with loving generosity? 2. Do I dream of doing extraordinary things or do I rather "seek to do everything, even those things which seem trivial and unimportant, in faithfulness and in love? (P)

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NOVENA DAY 8

A MISSIONARY WHO WAS HARD WORKING, MAKING THE BEST USE OF HIS TIME

"As Assistant parish priest at Magland, Fr. Mermier was a "tireless worker". At the end of the day he spent a great part of his nights in continuing his theological studies, and in preparing his instructions. The Parish Priest made some fatherly remonstrance's, and added in a playful tone: "I will not allow you to burn all my candles"... Although, from this time onwards Fr. Mermier spared the candles of his Parish Priest, he spared neither pain nor zeal in the service of the parishioners" (Fr. Jean Rey. Fr. Peter Mermier" Pg 15)

Between 1828 and 1857, Fr. Mermier conducted at least 90 Parish Missions. He gave, in addition, a number of Parish Retreats and other exercises. After 1857 (he was then 67) he did not take further part in large missions, but he frequently preached Retreats" (Fr. Duval Monsieur Mermier Pg 138-139)

"The MSFS who had gone to India remained very close to Fr. Mermier. The Superior kept in touch with all, instating on a regular correspondence... He spent daily a great deal of time writing letters, all personal, filled with his concern for all the details of each one's life: health, worries difficulties. He felt responsible for the spiritual health and the well- being of each member of the Congregation.

In the mist of the activities of his two congregations, he is the father whose heart is large enough to embrace all, and who directs their work, assists them by his constant prayer" (Fr. Moget- Article MG Bulletin 1990)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Am I always in control of my life, making deliberate choices to use my time according to a right sense of priorities? Or do I let moods and circumstances dominate me, so that trivialities and trifles tend to devour many precious hours of my time? (P)2. Do I use the means of social communication (newspapers, reviews, books, radio, files, TV, mobiles, internet and others) with necessary discrimination and prudence, in keeping with the demands of my consecrated life and my apostolate?

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NOVENA DAY 9

A MISSIONARY WHO WAS A DEDICATED AND ZEALOUS APOSTLE

"According to the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, the Apostle of the Chablais Mission, You inspired him with the charism of apostolic zeal to spend himself without reserve in Your Sacred Ministry and the evangelization of Your people at home and abroad (shorter prayer for Beatification of Fr. Mermier)

"Apostolic zeal took hold of his existence making of him an Apostle who gave his whole life to missionary work and the Founder of two Congregations dedicated to the apostolate in humble fidelity to the Lord's call" (Fr. Duval- French MSFS bulletin 1978)

"It is for the honour of the saintly Apostle of the Chablais that we reside at Les Allinges. Let us do it with totally pure intentions, so that the members of our Congregation may obtain, from this lovable and perfect model, a little of the spirit of zeal and gentleness which will make us die to ourselves completely in order to live only for God and for the welfare of our people like other Saint Francis de Sales". (Fr. Mermier- letter to Fr. Neyret, 1846)

Reflection and Prayer: 1. Am I missionary according to the vision of Bishop Joseph Rey "filled with the zeal of charity, to work untiringly for the salvation of all by the example of virtues, the preaching of the word of God, the celebration of the Sacraments and the constant instruction of the people? (P) 2. Whatever my apostolic activity, do I have a sincere concern for professional and pastoral competence, taking appropriate steps to deepen my knowledge of Holy Scripture, theology and Salesian Spirituality? (P)

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