

NOVENA

IN HONOUR

OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

BISHOP MELCHIOR DE MARION
BRÉSILLAC

Founder of the S.M.A. –

(1813 – 1859)

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1 Real Prayer

THE WORD OF GOD

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« Prayer, my Brothers, prayer, I come back to it always [...]. All is promised in prayer and without it what can we weak mortals do? » (1839, to the Faithful of Castelnaudary).

« The Lord [...] could give us what we ask for when we first pray but, however, he does not do this ordinarily; he wants us to persevere in prayer. [...] Persevere in prayer and remain at peace. The hour of God has not yet come. It is he who does all things; let us hope in him ». (1846, to a seminarian in India).

Bishop Melchior de Brésillac had a profound experience of prayer. This was at the heart of his missionary life. Everything passed through it: joys and sufferings, plans and aspirations, success and failure, worries and doubts, the past, the present and the future.

Lord Jesus, through the intercession of your Servant Melchior de Brésillac, grant us the grace to grow in prayer in order that what we ask for may always be in line with the Kingdom of God throughout the world. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

2. OUR VOCATION AND OUR MISSION

THE WORD OF GOD

“On the following day John was standing there again with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and said, “There is the Lamb of God.” On hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. He turned and saw them following, and he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They answered, “Rabbi (which means Master), where are you staying? Jesus said, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where he stayed and spent the rest of that day with him” (Jn 1, 35:39).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

“Let each one study his vocation carefully – “Each receives from God his own particular gift” (1Cor 7, 7) – and let him stir himself to follow it regardless of everything that tries to set itself against God’s will”. (1842, to Carcassonne Seminarians).

« On the first of January 1841 I started my Missionary Diary, with these words: Will I be a missionary? I still don’t know for sure. But, today, everything points that way. [...] May Heaven bless the resolve I have made, of crossing the seas to work for the salvation of my brothers. God is our only Master. He holds sovereign dominion over our entire existence. It is for him to speak, for us to obey” (1841, Souvenirs, 11)

The entire life of Bishop de Brésillac was a passionate response to the call of the Lord. He discerned this call over a long period of time; he renounced his family, his home, his country, he put himself into the hands of God in order to serve the mission of Christ, the Redeemer of all humanity.

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Brésillac, help us to respond well to your call and to make of our lives a precious gift for the salvation of humanity. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Listening to and at the service of God's Word.

THE WORD OF GOD

“As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return till they have watered the earth, making it yield seed for the sower and food for the reaper, so is my word that goes forth out of my mouth: it will not return to me idle, but it shall accomplish my will, the purpose for which it has been sent” (Is 55, 10:11).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

“I come to you with the holy Gospel in my hand. I desire that, during this retreat, this divine book be constantly under your eyes, and that we consider the truths that it contains as being addressed personally by Jesus Christ, who speaks directly to us. However, as it is sometimes sufficient for one of these words to penetrate the soul, to captivate it, and to hold it for entire weeks in the exercise of the most active meditation, permit me to give you the advice of seeking less to hear all these words than to have one of them penetrate deeply. Keep to the one that speaks most to your heart and only leave it when Jesus, in whose holy company you keep yourselves constantly during these six days, has said to you in your hearts all that it pleases him to say” (1849, *Retreat to Missionaries*, 24).

Among the resolutions of his retreat, before leaving on mission, Bishop de Brésillac had formulated the following : ‘Avail of every opportunity to preach the Holy Word’.

Lord Jesus, through the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Bresillac, we thank you for the gift of your Word, send us your Holy Spirit in order to make us humble, docile, open and capable to make it bear fruit for our Salvation and the Salvation of the world. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

4. OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

THE WORD OF GOD

“Also, when Jesus had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered these words and they believed both the Scripture and the words he had spoken. Whilst Jesus was staying in Jerusalem, during the Passover Festival, many believed in his Name because of the miraculous signs he performed. But Jesus did not trust himself to

them, because he knew all of them and he had no need of evidence from anyone for he himself knew what there is in human nature” (Jn 2, 22:25).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« Yes, my brothers, if we live by faith, we will have more trust in God, and more peace in our souls, because in everything we will recognize the hand of God that directs all things according to his will for the good of those he has elected.

Because it is something truly surprising that Christians who believe in one infinite God, infinite in his wisdom, infinite in his knowledge for which even the future is not obscure, infinite in his goodness, infinite in his mercy, that the children of this same God, who have felt a thousand times his paternal protection, are always agitated, restless, in difficulty. And that the affairs of the world occupy them to such an extent that they are completely taken over by them, that the future is for them a subject of such intense anxiety that it does not leave them a moment of calm or of rest. And why all of this my brothers? Because we do not have faith, or, rather, because we are not living in accordance with our faith. (1840, Castelnaudary).

Everything that Bishop de Bresillac said, did, suffered, the choice of his missionary vocation, his departure from the Coimbatore mission that he loved so much, the work of the African Missions launched without any human support, the Churches born in West African countries, are the signs and the fruit of a profound faith that was constant, courageous and attentive to the will of God and to the needs of the Mission of Christ the Redeemer.

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Bresillac, give us the gift of a solid and lively faith, that is always growing in charity and is open to the needs of humanity in our age. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

5. OUR HOPE IN THE LORD

THE WORD OF GOD

“I consider that the suffering of our present life cannot be compared with the Glory that will be revealed and given to us. All creation is eagerly expecting the transformation of the children of God [...]. We know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pangs of birth. Not creation alone, but even ourselves, although the Spirit was given to us as a foretaste of what we are to receive, we groan in our innermost being, eagerly awaiting the day when God will adopt us and take to himself our bodies as well” (Rom 8, 18:23).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« Here is, My Lord, what I am coming to you to ask of the Holy Father for me. I have no illusions about the difficulties, of even the apparent impossibility of succeeding. But everything is possible with God and we place all our hope in him. My desire would be to throw myself blind into the arms of Divine Providence and to go

absolutely to the apostolate, straight to these people, be it alone, be it with one or two companions, if I find ones who wish to follow me in this way of life, or, naturally, where death must soon find us and then heaven. (1855, to Mgr. Barnabò, Secretary of Propaganda Fide).

Bishop de Bresillac uses the word 'hope' several times before his death. With faith and charity, hope is part of his Christian, priestly, and missionary life. *'That God alone be our hope'*, he had said to the missionaries of Pondicherry. This prayer was the expression of a life offered totally to the will of God for the good of all who, in the world, do not have hope.

Lord Jesus, through the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Bresillac, help us to know how to hope beyond hope, to remember that with you all is possible, to recall that 'all the darkness of the universe cannot extinguish the light of a candle' (Chinese proverb). You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

6. Charity is as big as God.

THE WORD OF GOD

"My dear friends let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love has not known God, for God is love. How did the love of God appear among us? God sent his only Son into this world that we might have life through him. This is love: not that we loved God but that he first loved us and sent his Son as atoning sacrifice for our sins"(1 Jn 4, 7:10).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« The goal of this discours, brothers, is to show you that the Christian religion is charity and not something else. Charity is our institution, charity is our continuation under the protection of the Church; my subject is entirely it. But how can one talk of charity if one's heart is not burning with love? And how does one understand words of love if one does not have in his heart at least the beginning of charity? » (1854, Paris).

« Faith, hope, cha...rity » : The last words that Bishop de Bresillac pronounced before leaving this world. The last word was completed by Mr. Bremond who was with him. We can do the same thing every day: continue 'to say' charity to everyone and everywhere. »

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Bresillac, send us your Spirit of love so that we can grow in charity towards our God and towards our neighbour. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen

7. True justice for the world.

THE WORD OF GOD

"Then the Pharisees left and made plans to kill him. Jesus was aware of the plot, so he went away from that place. Many people followed him. He cured all who were sick and gave them strict orders not to make him known. In this way Isaiah's prophecy

was fulfilled: Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one loved, and with whom I am pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him and he will announce my judgment to the nations. [...] And in him all the nations will put their hope” (Mt 12, 14:21).

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« And since I have spoken of our old injustices regarding the Negros, it has just come to me, my Brothers, that we could be indebted for something to these peoples that European trade has more than once oppressed. We have inherited, my Brothers, from those who have launched a primitive attack on these people, in order to snatch from them their riches by violence or by trickery, by the deceptive lure of a trifling sum of which they did not know the value; who were not ashamed sometimes to exchange men for vile objects of hardware, or to seize them without reason, to buy them and to resell them, without going out of their way on the grounds that they had been made slaves. (1856-1858, *Sermon in favour of the SMA*).

Bishop de Bresillac possessed a very well developed sense of justice towards God, towards every type of person, especially towards the poorest and the smallest, and towards himself. ‘Lumen rectis’ was his motto : light for blameless men.

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant Melchior de Besillac, help us to make justice an important virtue and to respond like your disciples to all the injustices in the world. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

8. Creation : A marvel of God for humanity.

THE WORD OF GOD

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; he was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be.

Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light.

Light that shines in the dark: light that darkness could not overcome” (Jn 1, 1:5).

- *Creation was in God, it came from God, through the Word, by the Word, turned towards God because he was God. The new creation exists following the mission of Christ, the Incarnate Word.*
- *« Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away and no longer was there any sea.[...] A loud voice came from the throne, “Here is the dwelling of God among men: he will pitch his tent among them and they will be his people. God will be with them and wipe every tear from their eyes. There shall be no more death or mourning, no more crying out or suffering for the old world has passed away”(Rev 21, 1:4).*

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

“I have contemplated more than a hundred tropical sunrises and sunsets and each time the magnificence of Nature gave me a completely new scene. On land it is nothing, compared with what the open sea displays, even if the latitudes are the same. Think of a picture as wide as half the world, with every imaginable and unimaginable colour, in brilliant tints of every shade – contrasting, even

incompatible (you would think) but blending marvelously in the vivid sky, with the harmony, a perfection that cannot even be described, much less imitated”(*Souvenirs, 100*).

Bishop de Bresillac was naturally given to contemplating God and his works. He turned with pleasure towards all that was able to lead him to the contemplation of the power, the wisdom, the bounty, the mercy of God and of his will that reconciled all in Christ. He was touched by the harmony that comes from God and that leads to God.

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant Melchior de Bresillac, teach us to love, to respect, to contemplate your creation and the work of your redemption that must join all peoples. Let the new heavens and the new earth sing forever of your infinite love. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

9. GOD OF ALL GRACE

THE WORD OF GOD

“Jesus replied (to the Samaritan woman), “If you only knew the Gift of God and who it is who says to you ‘give me something to drink’ you yourself would have asked me and I would have given you living water”. [...] Whoever drinks of this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never be thirsty; for the water that I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”(Jn 4, 10, 14).

- Jesus Christ is the gift of God for humanity for all time: salvation comes from him and he is the beginning and end of all.
- Grace is the life of Jesus given to his Brothers. Through his Word, the mystery of his person, the Sacraments celebrated by the Church, the light and strength of his Spirit, the life of Jesus, pour out abundantly on all those who recognize him as the Lord.

THE WORD OF OUR FOUNDER

« Whatever it may please the Lord to ordain, I accept its most terrible trials: I only pray him to grant me the grace always to do his holy Will and to inspire those I cherish to want to do it too. I count on his all-powerful grace for you, for my good mother, my brothers and sisters, for myself” (1841, to his Father. *Souvenirs, 36*).

« The Lord has made me sensitive and since I received the grace to be engaged in his service in the missions, the difficulty of the missions is my only difficulty and the well being of the missions is my only good. » (1845, to Mgr Charbonnaux).

In the writings of Bishop de Bresillac the word ‘grace’ arises many times. Very often it is in the prayers raised to the Lord at the heart of his missionary life. Our Founder is very conscious that, without the grace of God, nothing could be done so that the mission is always that of Christ the Redeemer.

Lord Jesus, by the intercession of your Servant, Melchior de Bresillac, we ask you each day for the gift of your grace and for all the particular graces that you consider necessary for our lives. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.