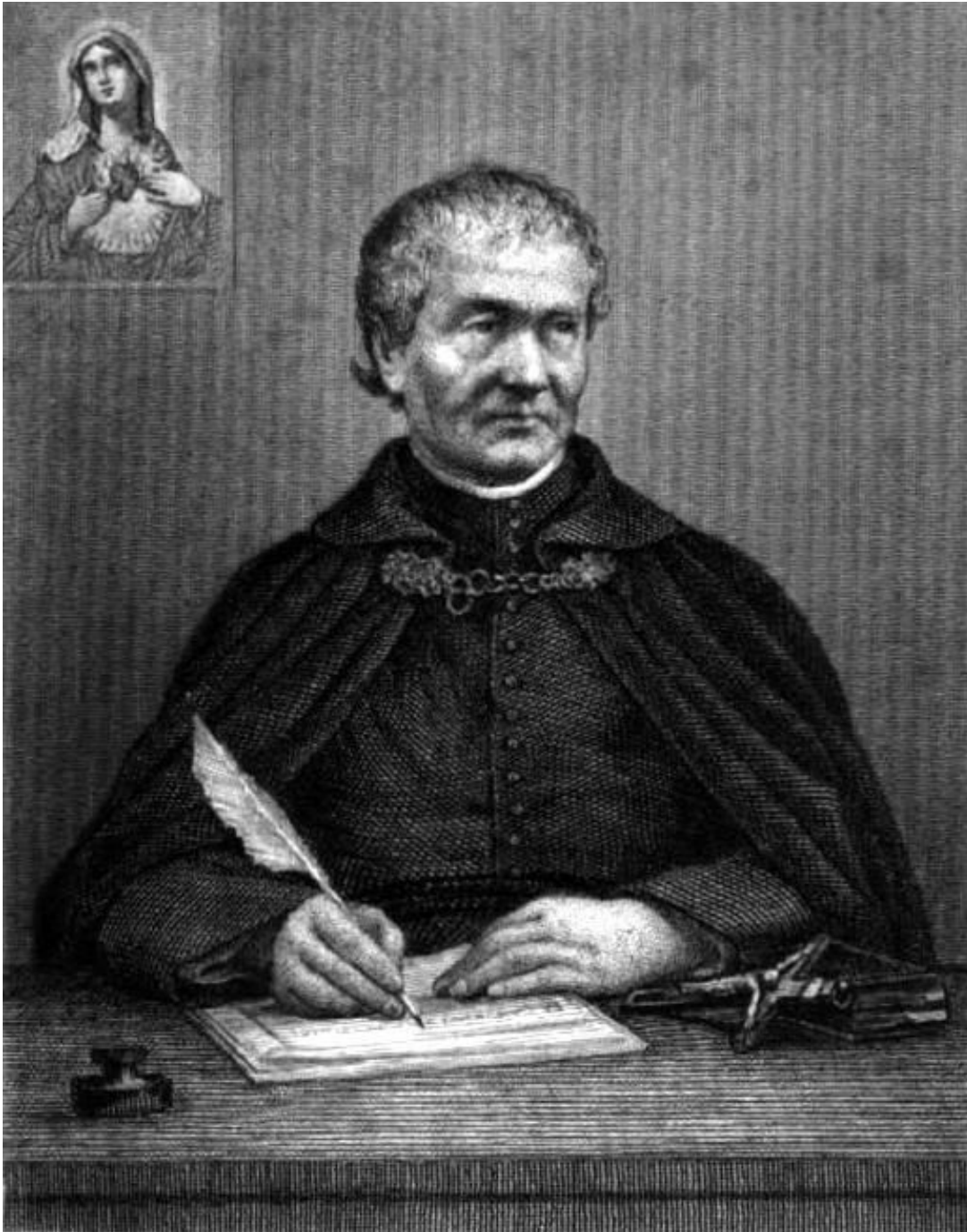


NOVENA WITH LIBERMANN

2 FEBRUARY 2019



Libermann (1802-1852)

Group of Mauritius

24 January – 1st February

NOVENA WITH LIBERMANN 2ND FEBRUARY 2019



1840. "O divine Spirit, I wish to be before you like a light feather, so that your breath carries me where it will and I never make the least resistance to it" (Commentary on the Gospel of St. John)



***I am like a watchman before the good Lord, I watch and am attentive to his divine will
(N.D. VI, 171)***

Novena Prayer

Holy Father,

Your love for us is boundless.

Grant to us the grace of seeing the wonderful witness of faith and holiness

Bequeathed to us by Fr. Libermann, confirmed by the Church.

Enlightened by the witness of his missionary life,

We are aware of being led by the Spirit,

To proclaim the Good News of salvation with renewed zeal.

Grant to us we pray, through the Holy Heart of Mary,

His beatification and the graces which we now ask through his intercession.

(mention the intentions)

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen

Novena for 2 February 2019

As a Congregation, we are now in the final phase of our journey of missionary animation centred on our Spiritan mission. Mission must be at the heart of our lives if we wish to follow authentically in the footsteps of Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann.

“The evangelisation of the ‘poor’ is our purpose” the Spiritan Rule of Life reminds us. Libermann was attracted to serving the poor and the abandoned of his time (N.D.XIII, 170) and he saw mission as the essential goal of the Society he founded, with the religious life, community life and the internal organisation of his Society at the service of this goal.

In listening to our founders, we will rediscover this clarity of vision, enabling us to readjust the direction of our lives to be more rooted in the Word of God and our founding charism. The images which Fr. Libermann uses to reveal his teaching and the depths of his soul, are inspirational and will help us in fulfilling our Mission. We will also listen to what our Holy Father Pope Francis has to say to us in his Apostolic Exhortation ***GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE - ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY’S WORLD.***

1st day: the image of the sea



“A sea of confidence”

Fifty years before St. Theresa of Lisieux, Fr. Libermann showed a firm understanding of trusting in God. The basis for this lies in listening to everything that comes from God and nothing from anyone else. This abandonment to God consumed him during his experience of the dark night of faith. He wrote the following from Rome, in 1840 when he could not see any way ahead:

“We remain close to Our Lord without fear, without worry, without realising or understanding what he expects of us; we are following him blindly”. It is in this new climate where confidence in God comes about, that interior renewal is active: “Disturbances which come are harmful and displeasing to the Good Lord... Once our soul is calm and confident in God, these faults diminish daily and finally disappear”. We can be confident in God because we expect everything from him, and we expect everything from him because we have absolute certainty in his infinite love for us: “It is a great grace for someone to know that they are loved by Jesus; and this knowledge becomes and abundant source of limitless confidence”.

John 7:37 “If anyone is thirsty let him come to me, let him come and drink whoever believes in me”.

Prayer

“Let he who thirsts come and drink”. Yes my Lord Jesus, I hear your cry, for you are calling me. Here I am Lord; I thirst my dear Jesus! I have a great thirst weakening me; because I am completely empty and I am burning within me; take me into yourself and give me to drink from your fountain of salvation; plunge me, submerge me and drown me in your heavenly waters. Yes Lord, drown me in these refreshing and desirable waters, drown my sensuality, drown my pride, drown all my faults and vices so that everything which is in me and of me is dead; that all which is of the old man ceases to live and that there is no room in me but for you alone. Give me this grace, my gentle, lovable and loving Jesus, so that I only live your life in you, in the same way you live in the Father and in the hearts of your elect. Amen.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

2nd day: the image of the oil



October 1839 To M. Clair

“..be at peace in Jesus, pour out your soul before him like oil, that is to say quietly, unexcitedly, with a smooth and peaceful gentleness”.

(L.S., II 114 and N.D. II.199)

Gaudete et Exultate no. 70: “St. Luke does not speak of poverty ‘of spirit’ but simply of those who are “poor” (Lk.6:20). In this way, he too invites us to live a plain and austere life. He calls us to share in the life of those most in need, the life lived by the Apostles, and ultimately to configure ourselves to Jesus who, though rich, “made himself poor” (2Cor:8,9)”.

Being poor of heart: that is holiness.

Reflection: Endurance, patience and gentleness: how do we live these in our lives today?

John1:14 – And the Word was made flesh and lived among us. [...]

Prayer

“O dear love, incomprehensible love of my God, of my Jesus! What can I do to love you as you love me? I am constrained to remain in my nothingness and worthlessness before your adorable love; because, O my dear Love, you are so great for me to dare of even thinking of doing anything for you. At least, O adorable Love, do with me whatever is pleasing to you; come Lord Jesus and take up your dwelling in your humble servant”.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

3rd day: the image of the blind man



16th February 1839. A.M. Richaud. A blind man entrusts himself to a little dog which leads him wherever he goes and he follows it; and you would not like to entrust your blind soul into the hands of Jesus, the light of heaven and earth. (L.S. II, 200)

Gaudete et Exsultate no.74: “Meekness is yet another expression of the interior poverty of those who put their trust God alone. Indeed, in the Bible the same word - *anawim* - usually refers to the poor and to the meek. Someone might object: ‘If I am that meek, they will think I am an idiot, a fool or a weakling’. This may be the case, but let others think what they like. It is better to be always meek and in this way our deepest desires will be fulfilled: ‘the meek shall inherit the earth’, for they will see God’s promises accomplished in their lives. In every situation, the meek put their hope in the Lord, and those who hope for him shall possess the land and enjoy the fullness of peace. (cf.Ps.37:9,11). For his part, the Lord trusts in them: ‘But my eyes are drawn to the person of humbled and contrite spirit, who trembles at my word’. (Is.66:2)”.

Reacting with meekness and humility: that is holiness.

Reflection: Joy and a sense of humour: which of these makes us most happy in these days?

John 3:3: Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God

Prayer

“Oh Jesus, what love you have for us poor people. I know nothing and am full of imperfections and faults, as Nicodemus was. Accept me with the same overwhelming openness and teach me your ways”.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

4th day: the image of the toy



“In God’s hands, be like a toy in the hands of a child, that he may do with you and in you his good pleasure, without seeking to know if it is according to your tastes or ideas that he is leading you”.
(L.S.II,330)

The Torre d’Aguilha general chapter of 2004, emphasised the importance of handing on the Spiritan charism to future generations and of “maintaining unity in a Congregation of increasing diversity”. “The Spiritan charism cannot become an integral part of our way of life and mission without knowledge of the founders, their spiritual experience and the history of the foundation. We are not just passing on theoretical knowledge, but also practical approaches: openness to the Spirit, availability, going to the poor, simplicity, community life, welcome others and missionary witness”.
(TA 1.2)

Gaudete et Exsultate no.76: “A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathises with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. They sense that the other is flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. In this way they can embrace St. Paul’s exhortation: “Weep with those who weep”(Rm.12:15).”

Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness.

Reflection: Boldness and fervour: what fears might paralyse us or slow down our journey to holiness?

John 5:16: “The Jews began to harass Jesus because he healed a paralytic on the Sabbath”.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus, how these withdrawals into self-love are terrible and dangerous! How we must be on our guard in judging someone whose conduct in seeking the life of perfection is different to our own, above all when these judgements are accompanied by bitterness, sadness, worries and other such influences, or when we become over-zealous. O Lord Jesus, preserve me from such self-love, I pray you, and set up your gentle humility in me”.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

5th day: the image of the clay



25 November 1842. To Fr. Schwindenhammer

“Remain before Our Lord like clay in the hands of the potter. He works on it according to his wishes; he begins by kneading it, pressing it, then kneading it again to make it soft, and the poor clay has no way of resisting; it allows itself to be worked according to the intentions of the potter. He wants to create a vase but often when it is half-formed, he stops and starts again with a shapeless mass; he starts again to form the vase he wants to make. The more the clay has been kneaded and re-worked, the better it is to be finally formed; it is in such a way that the best vases are created. From clay that has been poorly kneaded, only vases of poor quality are made, and they are sometimes rejected. (L.S. 5, 11 160; N.D.III,346).

Gaudete et Exsultate no.79: “True justice comes about in people’s lives when they themselves are just in their decisions; it is expressed in their pursuit of justice for the poor and the weak. While it is true that the word ‘justice’ can be a synonym for faithfulness to God’s will in every aspect of our life, if we give the word too general a meaning, we forget that it is shown especially in justice towards those who are most vulnerable: ‘Seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow’. (Is:17)

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness: that is holiness.

Reflection: What are the areas of community life that help us to avoid falling into an individualistic consumerism and those which help us to follow the path of holiness?

John 11:11: Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep but I am going to waken him.

Prayer

“O my Jesus, my love for you is weak and miserable, but I am your friend just as much as Lazarus. I am dead as he was; my soul is lifeless and incapable of anything. Come to me as well with the same tenderness and feeling. Give me your grace to raise me up from my dangerous and harmful sleep. I wait for you Lord with great desire; come then with your goodness, your gentleness, your love”.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

6th day: the image of the potter



June 16, 1850. A F.-X. Libermann. May your soul be in his hands like the soft clay in the potter's hands; let yourself be kneaded by the skilful hand that handles you, so that it gives you the form that the great master of your soul wants you to have (L.5., IV, 616 and N.D., XII, 232). - E.S., 288-289. De l'orgueil, ch. 1.

Gaudete et Exsultate no. 82: Jesus does not say: "Blessed are those who plot revenge". He calls "blessed" those who forgive and do so "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22). We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion. If we approach the Lord with sincerity and listen carefully, there may well be times when we hear his reproach: "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33).

Seeing and acting with mercy: that is holiness.

Reflection: In constant prayer: "Are there times when you put yourself in the presence of the face of Christ in silence, when you remain with him without haste, and let yourself be looked at by him? Do you let his fire embrace your heart?"

John 4:15: Lord, give me this water so that I may not be thirsty anymore. [...]

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, give me this living water to satisfy my soul, which lacks these good things, surrenders itself to its passions and feeds itself with earthly things; my passions are alive, they always ask for satisfaction; I am always thirsty, and not having your divine water of grace, I will throw myself on the goods of the earth, I seek pleasures there. Lord, give me your living water, so that my passions may be satisfied, and that I no longer need to go and draw from earthly pleasures."

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father

7th day: the image of the vessel



August 10, 1841. To Mr. Cahier.

Let us therefore stay in his hands like empty vessels; if he deigns to make us serve the purpose of his house, he knows how to do it, in due course, when he pleases (L.S., II, 547-548 and N.D., II, 491-492).

Gaudete et Exsultate no. 86: A heart that loves God and neighbour (cf. Mt 22:36-40), genuinely and not merely in words, is a pure heart; it can see God. In his hymn to charity, Saint Paul says that "now we see in a mirror, dimly" (1 Cor 13:12), but to the extent that truth and love prevail, we will be able to see "face to face". Jesus promises that those who are pure in heart "will see God".

Keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes love: that is holiness.

Reflection: At the end of the prayer taught by Jesus, we ask God to deliver us from evil. What do we think about when we say these last words of the Lord's Prayer?

John 4:8: A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her: Give me something to drink.

Prayer

"Jesus, my most adorable Lord, I too am miserable, despicable in the eyes of men and all your creatures: I also come to draw water, but heavenly water from the fountain of my most gentle Saviour; reveal yourself also to me, and teach me what I must do to accomplish what is pleasing in your sight and in the sight of your heavenly Father."

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father

8th day: The image of the ploughman



June 16, 1850. A F.-X. Libermann.

Be before him (God) as the earth before the ploughman; he turns it, turns it around, turns it around, breaks it and works it in all directions; it lets him do so; do the same before God, who is ploughing you at this time; he will destroy all the weeds and dispose you by this way to true virtue (L.5., IV, 616 and N.D., XII, 232).

Gaudete et Exsultate no. 89: It is not easy to make this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work; it calls for great openness of mind and heart, since it is not about creating "a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority", or a project "by a few for the few". Nor can it attempt to ignore or disregard conflict; instead, it must "face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process". We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill. Sowing peace all around us: that is holiness.

Reflection: Among the eight Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus, which one seems to you to be the most important in your life today to respond to Christ's call to holiness?

John 3:15: [...] Thus it is necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes may obtain eternal life through him.

Prayer

"O most merciful, most gentle and good Jesus, I have the joy of living after your crucifixion, you have attracted me admirably to you, you have had this great mercy for a poor soul like mine; you have given me the precious gift of faith in you; please increase it, for it is still very weak because of my fault, and let me, by this faith full of love, live only for you and in you, and that I sacrifice myself for your love, as you sacrificed yourself for mine."

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father

9th day: the image of the sheep



December 10, 1850. To Sister Sainte-Agnès.

Be... like a poor sheep resting on its pastor or in the shadow of his power and tenderness (N.D., XII, 7).

"For the perfection of apostolic life which is its goal... the Congregation has taken as its fundamental rule the common life," he declared in the revised Rule after the merger with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (N.D. X, 454). "Mission is the goal," he wrote to Bishop Kobes in 1851, "but religious life is an essential means sine qua non" (N.D. XIII, 354-355). "The special purpose of our vocation is not to practice poverty; it must be a means for us to practice life and apostolic virtues... if we must be brilliant to save souls, let us be brilliant," notes his commentary on the original Provisional Rule (R. P. 64, 74; also N. D. XIII, 678).

Gaudete et Exsultate no. 94: Persecutions are not a reality of the past, for today too we experience them, whether by the shedding of blood, as is the case with so many contemporary martyrs, or by more subtle means, by slander and lies. Jesus calls us blessed when people "utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Mt 5:11). At other times, persecution can take the form of gibes that try to caricature our faith and make us seem ridiculous.

Accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems: that is holiness.

Reflection: Who are the saints whose lives we like to talk about? What examples do they give us?

John 6:69: As for us, we believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

Prayer

To whom shall we go? You have the Word of eternal life.

Our only desire is in you, our sovereign Master, we only want to think of you, and our only joy and happiness is in the divine words, so full of graces, that come out of your adorable mouth and penetrate us with love and sweetness. These words are words of life, and of eternal life; they give us that life for which you have come, and we want no other life than this. And why then, my dear Master, do you ask us if we want to leave you too? Oh no, we do not want to leave you, but we want to become more and more attached to you, because no one else but you has this word of life that rejoices us so much and gives us life: to whom shall we go?"

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father