

*Novena of Prayer for Vocations
to the Society of Mary,
through the Intercession of St Peter Chanel
19 -- 27 April 2020*



Our Lady of Perseverance



A sketch of St Peter Chanel by V Urlich, c. 1950

The *Reflection* section for each day is designed for personal use. The first part of the reflection for Days One to Eight is taken from Pope Francis' message for Vocations Sunday 2020, entitled 'The courage to take a risk for God's promise'. The second part is from Marist Messenger articles in the April issues of 2017 and 2019; and from the 2nd reading from the Prayer of the Church for the Feast of St Peter Chanel. The prayers of intercession and the prayers for vocations are proposed for use at community prayer or Eucharist, or in your private prayer.

Day One Reflection

Two pairs of brothers – Simon and Andrew, and James and John – are going about their daily tasks as fishermen (Mark:1 16-20). As with every call, the Gospel speaks of an encounter. Jesus walks by, sees those fishermen, and walks up to them... The same thing happened when we first felt the attraction of a life of consecration: we were surprised by an

encounter, and at that moment we glimpsed the promise of a joy capable of bringing fulfilment to our lives. That day, by the sea of Galilee, Jesus drew near to those fishermen, breaking through the “paralysis of routine”, and he immediately made them a promise: “I will make you fishers of men”.

Given his long interest in foreign missions, it is not surprising that Peter put forward his name for Oceania. He was chosen to be one of the first band of missionaries, four priests and three catechist brothers, under the leadership of Bishop Pompallier. Having visited his family and slipped away in the early morning, Peter made for Lyons and on 15 October, with his companions, took part in a service of consecration to Mary before her statue in the shrine of Fourvière. (MM April 2017)

We pray

For all disciples of Christ, that their hearts might burn with the desire to follow the Lord more closely. Lord, hear us.

For all Marists, that we may imitate St Peter Chanel’s courage and commitment to living and preaching the Gospel. Lord, hear us.

That the witness of our lives may inspire many young people to follow the Lord in Marist life. Lord, hear us.

Prayer for Vocations

St Peter Chanel, you left your homeland to proclaim Jesus, Saviour of the world, to the peoples of Oceania. Guided by the Spirit of God, who is the strength of the gentle, you bore witness to love, even laying down your life. Grant that, like you, we may live our daily life in peace, in joy, and in fraternal love. May your prayer and your example call forth from our midst many workers for the Gospel, so that God’s kingdom may reach to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Day Two Reflection

The Lord’s call is not an intrusion of God in our freedom; it is not a ‘cage’ or a burden to be borne. On the contrary, it is the loving initiative whereby God encounters us and invites us to be part of a

great undertaking. He opens before our eyes the horizon of a greater sea and an abundant catch.

Finally, after a long wait at the port of Le Havre, the band set forth on Christmas Eve in the sailing ship *Delphine*. The journey took almost a year, round Cape Horn and up to Valparaiso on the Pacific coast of South America. In March 1837, one of the priests, Claude Bret, contracted a fever. He and Peter had been friends for a number of years, and Peter looked after him in his illness. Despite all efforts to save him, Bret died off the Canary Isles, and was buried at sea. (MM April 2017)

We pray

St Peter Chanel's kindness and care for Claude Bret and for the sick and infirm on Futuna gave witness to God's love for them. May we follow his example of practical love. Lord hear us.

St Peter Chanel was faithful to prayer, to God's Word and the Sacraments. May his example and intercession inspire similar fidelity in us. Lord, hear us.

We pray that many young people will answer the Lord's call to follow him in Marist religious and priestly life. Lord, hear us.

Prayer for Vocations of Pope Francis

Lord of the Harvest, bless young people with the gift of courage to respond to your call. Open their hearts to great ideals, to great things. Inspire all of your disciples to mutual love and giving, for vocations blossom in the good soil of faithful people. Instil those in religious life, parish ministries, and families with the confidence and grace to invite others to embrace the bold and noble path of a life consecrated to you. Unite us to Jesus through prayer and sacrament, so that we may cooperate with you in building your reign of mercy and truth, of justice and peace. Amen.

Day Three

Reflection

God in fact desires that our lives not become banal and predictable, imprisoned by daily routine, or unresponsive before decisions that could give it meaning. The Lord does not want us to live from day to day, thinking that nothing is worth fighting for, slowly losing our desire to set out on new and exciting paths.

The missionaries sailed into the Pacific, fact-finding and considering possibilities. On All Saints Day 1837, Pompallier placed Fr Peter Bataillon and Br Joseph Luzy on Wallis Island, in an island group north of Fiji. A week later he founded a second mission, leaving Fr Peter Chanel and Br Marie-Nizier Delorme 170km away on Futuna, the smaller island of the two. (MM April 2017)

We pray

That in times of difficulty and discouragement, you strengthen our faith in you, so that we remember and rejoice in the wonders you work for us. Lord, hear us.

From the earliest days, St Peter Chanel knew the possibility of a violent death. Give courage to the missionaries of today who work in hostile communities and in constant danger. Lord, hear us.

For the brothers and priests of the Society of Mary, that the witness of their lives may inspire many young people to say 'yes' in response to God's loving call to religious and priestly life.

Lord, hear us.

*Pray the Prayer for Vocations
as on Day One*

Statue: Studio of St John the Baptist



Day Four

Reflection

If at times he makes us experience a “miraculous catch”, it is because he wants us to discover that each of us is called – in a variety of ways – to something grand, and that our lives should not grow entangled in the nets of an *ennui* that dulls the heart. Every vocation is a summons not to stand on the shore, nets in hand, but to follow Jesus on the path he has marked out for us, for our own happiness and for the good of those around us.

Peter and Marie-Nizier were well received by the king of one of the two factions into which the islanders were split and they were allowed to stay. Pompallier left, promising to return with another missionary in six months, a promise he proved unable to keep, and which seriously undermined the missionaries’ position in the eyes of the islanders. The missionaries tried to help the islanders with primitive medicine, to discourage tribal warfare and practices such as abortion, and to seize whatever opportunities arose for giving instruction and administering baptism. (MM April 2017)

We pray

For young people, that they will consider each Christian vocation – to single life, marriage, priesthood and consecrated life – and discern carefully the path the Lord wants them to take. Lord, hear us.

For all Marists, that faithful to the spirit of Mary and to the insights of our Founders, we may act always in a spirit of love and service, as did St Peter Chanel. Lord, hear us.

For the Marist Sisters, that, inspired by the spirit of Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, many young women may join them to continue the work of Mary. Lord, hear us.

Pray the Prayer for Vocations as on Day Two

Day Five Reflection

In encountering the Lord, some may feel the attraction of a call to the consecrated life or to the ordained priesthood. It is a discovery that can excite and at the same time frighten us ... [and] carries the risk of leaving everything behind to follow the Lord, to devote ourselves completely to him, and to share in his work. Many kinds of interior resistance can stand in the way of making this decision ...

Progress was painfully slow and uncertain. For three and a half years on Futuna, Peter and Marie-Nizier battled with language difficulties, strange customs and food, sickness, malnutrition, loneliness. Hardest to bear was the seeming lack of success in adult conversions. But they persevered, living and preaching the Gospel, in spite of the king's tolerance wearing thin. (MM April 2017)

We pray

St Peter Chanel knew that he might meet a violent death. Give courage to the missionaries of today who work in hostile communities and in constant danger. Lord, hear us.

For ourselves, that in times of difficulty and discouragement, you strengthen our faith in you so that we remember and rejoice in the wonders you work for us. Lord, hear us.

For Marist postulants, novices and seminarians, that in their prayer they may "taste God", and dedicate themselves to serving God in God's people. Lord, hear us.

Pray the Prayer for Vocations as on Day One



The Basilica on Futuna

Day Six Reflection

In the demanding work of fishing, the first disciples had learned the laws of nature ... On some days, the catch of fish amply repaid their efforts, but on others, an entire night's work was not sufficient to fill their nets, and they had to return to shore weary and disappointed. Much of life is like that. ... we put out on a sea of possibilities in the hope of steering the right course, one that will satisfy our thirst for happiness. Sometimes we enjoy a good catch, while at others, we need courage to keep our boat from being tossed by the waves, or we are frustrated at seeing our nets come up empty.

"Because of his labours he was often burned by the heat of the sun, and famished with hunger, and he would return home wet with perspiration and completely exhausted. Yet he always remained in good spirits, courageous and energetic, as if he were returning from a pleasure jaunt, and this would happen almost every day". (Prayer of the Church, 2nd Reading)

We pray

For young people, that the example and intercession of St Peter Chanel may inspire them to dedicate their lives to spreading the Good News of God's infinite love for all people. Lord, hear us.

For immigrants and refugees, that they may find support, understanding and patience among those who welcome them. Lord, hear us.

For Marist Laity, that women and men might join with all the Marist Congregations to continue the work of Mary in the spirit of Jean-Claude Colin. Lord, hear us.

*Pray the Prayer for Vocations
as on Day Two*

Futuna and Alofi



Day Seven

Reflection

There can be no greater joy than to risk one's life for the Lord! If he calls you to follow this path, do not pull your oars into the boat, but trust him. Do not yield to fear, which paralyses us before the great heights to which the Lord points us. Always remember that to those who leave their nets and boat behind, and follow him, the Lord promises the joy of a new life that can fill our hearts and enliven our journey.

The eventual conversion of the king's son proved to be Peter's death warrant. With the king's approval, a small group of his tribal leaders clubbed Peter to death while Marie-Nizier was absent visiting elsewhere. It was on 28 April 1841.

When he heard the news of Peter's brutal death, Pompallier sailed to Wallis, accompanied by Fr Philippe Viard. Viard went ashore on Futuna, refusing any armed escort, and gathered Peter's remains, which were then brought to New Zealand. These were kept reverently at Kororareka (Russell) till 1849 when they were returned to France. They are now once again on Futuna, venerated in a shrine that has become a pilgrimage centre for the whole Pacific. (MM April 2017)

We pray

For today's missionaries who work in hostile environments and in constant danger. Give them perseverance and courage. Lord, hear us.

For our parents and our families, in thanksgiving for the goodness of their lives and their supporting us in our Marist life, and for all who promote and pray for vocations to religious and priestly life. Lord, hear us.

For the Marist Brothers of the Schools, that many young men, inspired by the life of St Marcellin Champagnat, may join them to continue the work of Mary. Lord, hear us.

Pray the Prayer for Vocations as on Day One

Day Eight

Reflection

We should always look to Mary. It was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had ... Mary's would undoubtedly be a difficult mission, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason to say 'no'. Things would get complicated, of course, but not in the same way as happens when cowardice paralyses us because things are not clear or sure in advance.

When he was a 13-year-old student in Cras in January 1817, Peter felt discouraged and decided to return home. On his way, he met the school mistress, who asked, "Have you at least prayed to the Virgin Mary?" He turned around, prayed beneath the statue of Mary and the child Jesus in the church, and changed his mind about returning home. The statue is still in the church in Cras-sur-Reyssouze and is known as 'Our Lady of Perseverance'. Peter made his first Communion in Cras on 23 March 1817. Years later he told Br Marie-Nizier that it was at this time that he decided to become a missionary.
(MM April 2019)



The altar at which St Peter Chanel received his First Communion and celebrated his first Mass

We pray

For all Christian parents, that they may teach their children the value and beauty of priesthood and consecrated life. Lord, hear us.

For our Marist community, that you help us always, Lord, to encourage and support one another in living our lives faithfully in the spirit of Mary, inspired by the Gospel and the intuitions of Fr Colin. Lord, hear us.

For the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, that many young women, inspired by the life of Françoise Perroton, might join them to continue the work of Mary. Lord, hear us.

Pray the Prayer for Vocations as on Day Two

Day Nine *Reflection*

On the day before his martyrdom he had said “It does not matter if I die. Christ’s religion is so deeply rooted on this island that it cannot be destroyed by my death.”

He could never refuse anything to the Futunians, even to those who persecuted him; he always made excuses for them and never rejected them, even though they were often rude and troublesome. He displayed an unparalleled mildness towards everyone on all occasions without exception.

The blood of this martyr benefited, in the first place, the natives of Futuna, for a few years later they were all converted to the faith of Christ. But it benefited as well the other islands of Oceania, where Christian churches, which claim Peter as their first martyr, are now flourishing. (Prayer of the Church, 2nd Reading)

St Peter Chanel was beatified by Pope Leo XIII on 17 November 1889. Monseigneur Luçon, the Bishop of Belley at the time, in a pastoral letter of 8 December 1889, decreed that Peter Chanel’s parish would be the official place of pilgrimage and a prayer centre for all the diocese of Belley. *L1visible*, a Belley-Ars Diocese publication, describes the shrine at Cuet as “a humble and hidden place. It is in the likeness of the human and Christian roots of the life and vocation of Peter Chanel, the source of which is in this place. Paradoxically, this very simple place

has a universal missionary vocation by reason of its role as a diocesan shrine". (MM April 2019)

We pray

For Christian parents, that they may be blessed in their life together and be models of faith and goodness for their children. Lord, hear us.

For those discerning a call to serve God and God's people as religious and priests. May they receive the guidance and support they need. Lord, hear us.

For all Marists, lay and religious, that faithful to the spirit of Mary and to the intuitions of our Founders, we may act with a sense of love and service, as did St Peter Chanel, and inspire others to dedicate themselves to God as Marists. Lord, hear us.

Pray the Prayer for Vocations as on Day One



Statue in the church in Cuét