

# **BULLETIN**

## **December Novena**

### **Jean Marie, a missionary of a « fiery zeal »**

Throughout his life, Jean Marie was filled with "a fiery zeal and an iron courage", according to the known traditional formula within the Congregation.

Already as a child and then as a teenager, Jean Marie admired the zeal of clandestine priests, who risked their lives to defend their faith. He himself lived this Christian persecution and spiritual resistance. He decided to remain faithful to the Church and to the Pope: for that reason, he accepted renunciations and faced the perils, without ever questioning his choices.

When the revolutionary storm ended, he devoted himself to studies despite the difficult times that he continued to experience. He chose teachers and associations that would guide him in the way of fidelity to the Church of Rome, to the Pope and to the great Christian tradition while working hard on the project of renewing the faith and spreading it to a society that was beginning to become secularised.

His first pastoral experiences were commensurate with the needs of the "new mission" after the Revolution had destroyed the old ecclesiastical institutions. In this spirit he trained new generations of priests at the minor seminary of Saint-Malo. He was very active as a Parish priest. He and his brother Féli reflected on bold plans to open new building sites of the 19th century Church: missions, ecclesiastical studies, Catholic newspapers, a culture of quality inspired by the faith, ecumenism, the renewal of the clergy, the commitment of the laity in political life, the universities of the Church ...

As an adult, he was absorbed by pastoral activities; especially from 1815 when he became vicar of the bishop of Saint-Brieuc and thereafter his replacement. Since then we notice an increasingly frenetic activity, supported by a profound "*spirituality of a man of action*" (see F Friot): frequent contacts with priests, reconciliation of unfaithful priests, Popular missions in which he participated actively, extraordinary confessions, animation of youth associations, activities crowned by the founding of two Congregations for Christian education and instruction of young people.

We must also add the ambitious project of the Congregation of St. Peter, which was to bring to France - and the world - an important contribution to the dissemination of the faith in the new secular social context.

With his own formation and with the collaboration of well-trained priests, all invested in the field of communication, culture and politics, he had to make his contribution to the construction of the new society on a Christian basis. But this project did not succeed in developing, not so much because of the "rebellion" of Féli, but because it lacked the general preparation needed to carry out such a grandiose missionary project.

But Jean-Marie did not stop there. He began to devote himself, even more intensively, to his two teaching congregations of religious men and women, counting on them to rebuild the foundations of a just, fraternal, free and united society through the Christian education of the new generations. Subsequently, he extended this work also to the French overseas colonies, a veritable epic of heroic devotion, sacrifice and social revolution to the oppressed populations and without prospects.

The whole life of Jean-Marie was a great missionary adventure, to announce in all forms the Kingdom of God: a lesson for us today.