



41st World Day of Marianist Prayer October 12, 2025 SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE - ROME

CONTEXT OF THE 41ST MARIANIST DAY OF PRAYER

We have the joy of living this 41st World Day of Marianist Prayer in the Jubilee Year and coinciding with the Jubilee of the 'Marian Movements.' In addition, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the beatification of Fr. William Joseph Chaminade (September 3, 2000, in Rome by Pope John Paul II) to whom we wish to ask for intercession for new and holy vocations in the Marianist Family.

We are all spiritually gathered in prayer in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, Italy, where Mary is honored as the "Salus Populi Romani."

BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE



The Papal Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore has dominated the city of Rome for sixteen centuries: Marian temple par excellence and cradle of artistic civilization, it is the oldest in the West dedicated to Mary.

According to tradition, the Virgin herself would have inspired, in a dream, Pope Liberius, the construction of her home on the top of the Esquiline Hill, indicating exactly the place through the miracle of the snowfall on August 5th. Its construction is linked to the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, which proclaimed Mary *Theotokos*, Mother of God.

The numerous treasures contained in it make the Basilica a place where art and spirituality come together in a perfect union, offering visitors those unique emotions typical of the great works of man inspired by God.

Source: Di NikonZ7II - Opera propria, CC BY-SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=115230147>

ICON OF THE "SALUS POPULI ROMANI"

The Basilica houses the most important Marian icon in Rome, the "**Salus Populi Romani**" which, traditionally believed to have originated in Jerusalem, is attributed to having been painted by St. Luke, evangelist and patron saint of painters.

The icon is placed above the altar of the Pauline Chapel and depicts the Virgin with the Child in her arms; it is in an upright position in front of the viewer; she wears a reddish-brown cloak with bluish reflections. On her forehead and shoulders the stars of virginity. At the top of the painting, in Greek, is written Mother of God. The head of the Child, with the deep shadows around the eyes, the eyebrows that rejoin the root of the eyes, are characteristic features of the Byzantine type of the ninth century. Her loosely pleated robe is furrowed by golden strokes.

However, there are typical signs of Western painting of that time: the Mother of God surrounds and holds the Child with her arms, holding her left hand in her right hand and the Child holds the book of the Gospel in his left hand and not the parchment as is usual in the Byzantine icon. The cross is also missing in his halo as well as the inscription. What is most striking is the oval face of the Mother of God, the well-cut eyes, the broad root of the nose. It is a face that has no equal in Western art or even in Byzantine paintings.

The title "*Salus Populi Romani*" shows how much the Roman people consider Mary their protector, in calamities, in dangers, in wars.

All the Popes have shown veneration and invoked intercession with this Virgin Mother. Let us recall the most recent popes: St. John Paul II, who in the Jubilee year of 2000, on the occasion of World Youth Day, wished to present this icon at the meeting.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis brought the icon to St. Peter's Square, to invoke Mary, to curb the wave of death that was hitting Italy and the whole world hard. He also used to go to St. Mary Major, before and after each apostolic journey, to entrust the peoples he had to visit to the *Salus populi Romani*. To prayer, he always combined the floral tribute, as a sign of gratitude and affection. Pope Francis wished to be buried in this Basilica, in a simple tomb, located in the chapel next to Our Lady.



NOTES ON THE PRESENCE OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY IN ROME – ITALY

On 2 October 1887, 70 years after the foundation of the Institute, the Marianists arrived in Rome, in a spirit of ecclesial service and obedience to Pope Leo XIII, who wished to see schools established in Italy, as in other parts of the world, that would take care of the integral formation of young children, preparing them to respond to the demands of modernity with human wisdom and enlightened faith. Fr. Auguste Subiger and Fr. Henri Lebon were the pioneers in the Eternal City; they founded the first SM community in Via Merulana while waiting to proceed with the construction of the "Santa Maria" in Viale Manzoni.

The educational commitment to young people was soon accompanied by the formative commitment for those who responded enthusiastically to the Marianist vocation. Some vocation promoters, endowed with a singular charism, stimulated the laity for a fellowship that promoted the life

of the spirit and social life at the Collegio Santa Maria. Let's not forget that those were the years of totalitarianism and wars. But, since Mary's strength did not diminish, the Marianist brothers also instilled in the feminine world the joy of placing themselves at the service of the One who generates Life.

They accompanied the vocational journey and the presence of the first communities of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, with deep esteem, fraternal affection and encouragement, receiving in return a maternal and kindly feminine presence, especially in the formation centers and at the SM Generalate in Via Latina. The sisters now offer their missionary presence and action in three different cities of Italy and in a new community in Madagascar.

The natural families of men and women religious became the first members of the great Marianist Family; they are joined by friends, students, teachers, priests from the different dioceses where they are present.

In the 1980s, the first Lay Communities were established with the innovations aroused by the new awareness, the result of Vatican II. And here, we have two great mothers to remember: Marica Testa and Bina Coppola, national animators of the MLC.

We cannot forget that the grace of participating in the meetings of charismatic families, which constituted a synodal experience between the religious institutes present in Rome, was prepared by over sixty years of family spirit, cultivated with care, initially by the religious, and then by the religious and lay people together. We want to magnify the Lord for the institutions that have brought us together and formed us in recent years and that we live with hope: the Three Marian Days, the MLC Conferences and the Family Meetings.

Hospitality, simplicity, and missionary spirit, even in our current poverty of the Three Branches, will continue to be our courageous and humble contribution, which contains within itself the dynamism of the young people of Calabria and of the nascent FMI mission in Madagascar. MAGNIFICAT!

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We now join in prayer to thank Mary for her constant presence and that she may rekindle in us the hope of new vocations in the Marianist Family, in the world, and that her spiritual motherhood may be prolonged everywhere.

1. Lord, we thank you for having inspired Blessed Chaminade to found a Family, especially dedicated to Mary.
As we celebrate today the 25th anniversary of his beatification, through his intercession, we ask you, Lord, to help us live faithfully the Marian spirit that he passed on to us. We pray to the Lord:
2. Lord, increase our faith, so that transmitted with joy to our brothers and sisters, it may instill strength to face the difficulties of life.
May Mary, our ally, grant us a profound gaze of faith, to discern the signs of love that flow from God's presence. We pray to the Lord:
3. May Mary, who lived in the light of the Word of God, be an example for us too to become credible witnesses of divine love, to awaken in young people the desire to be part of the Marianist Family to make the Kingdom of God grow, a kingdom of peace, union and fraternity. We pray to the Lord:

4. As we celebrate the Jubilee of Consecrated Life, with Marian spirituality, let us ask the Lord for the grace to know how to present Mary through the witness of our lives. We pray to the Lord:
5. We ask Our Lady "Salus populi Romani", invoked in calamities, dangers and wars, for her special intercession to obtain peace throughout the world and to always foster union between the Pope and human persons as disciples of Christ. We pray to the Lord:
6. Let us remember Pope Francis, may the Lord reward him with eternal joy for all the good he has done, for the universal love he has lavished, especially towards the least of the earth. We pray to the Lord:
7. We thank the Lord for having given us Pope Leo XIV. May the Lord sustain him in his mission, so that he may truly be the Good Shepherd who guides the people, with wisdom, humility and truth, in these turbulent times of human history. We pray to the Lord:

CONCLUSION: prayer to Father Chaminade

On this final day of the novena of thanksgiving for the gift of the beatification of Blessed W. Joseph Chaminade, 25 years ago, let us all entrust ourselves to the intercession of our Founder:

Blessed William-Joseph, let us give thanks for our Marianist Family, which the Holy Spirit created with your help and that of Blessed Marie of the Conception. Intercede for us now, so that this Family may grow more and more for the glory of God and the honor of Mary.

PRAYER FOR CANONIZATION OF BLESSED W. JOSEPH CHAMINADE

[Before prayer, the intentions entrusted to the intercession of the Blessed can be expressed]

O God,
You are constantly at work in your Church
and, through individuals and communities,
you manifest your Spirit for the good of your people.

In a special way, you bestowed your Spirit
on your servant, William Joseph Chaminade,
so that he might live fully according to the Gospel,
and with love devote himself to your saving work.
You have inspired communities of men and women
to follow his example by consecrating themselves to you
to serve the Church under the leadership of Mary.

We now pray to you
to give us visible signs of your grace and holiness in his life
by granting us the special favors we ask
through his intercession (especially . . .). AMEN.

Our Father, Ave Maria (3x), Glory be to the Father ...
Blessed William-Joseph Chaminade, *Pray for us!*
Our Lady of Pilar, *Pray for us!*
Mary, Salus Populi Romani, *Pray for us!*

