

## Novena for Vocations in honour of St Peter Chanel

### Pope Benedict's Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2012

1. The source of every perfect gift is God who is Love – “He chose us, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him in love” (Eph 1:4). We are loved by God even “before” we come into existence! ... to bring us into full communion with Him.

*God calls us to a life of intimate union with Christ, to share in his mission and to live out our consecration as Marist Sisters. God himself takes the initiative in forming us in the image of his Son through the action of the Holy Spirit. Const 55* **Express your gratitude for God's gift.**

2. The profound truth of our existence is that every creature, and in particular every human person, is the fruit of God's thought and an act of his love, a love that is boundless, faithful and everlasting (cf. Jer 31:3). The discovery of this reality is what truly and profoundly changes our lives.

**When did you experience this & how did it change you?**

*It is before this image of Our Lady of Perseverance in his parish Church that Peter Chanel prayed for God's guidance for his vocation.*



3. Every specific vocation is in fact born of the initiative of God; it is a gift of the Love of God! He is the One who takes the “first step”, and not because he has found something good in us, but

because of the presence of his own love “poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5).

*Fr. Jean Claude Colin wrote to Peter and his companions as they ventured into the unknown of the Pacific mission: “Never lose sight of God’s presence. It is in His name that you go; it is he who sends you.”* **How do you seek to retain a sense of God’s presence daily?**

4. The appealing beauty of this divine love, which precedes and accompanies us, needs to be proclaimed ever anew, especially to younger generations. This divine love is the hidden impulse, the motivation which never fails, even in the most difficult circumstances. We need to open our lives to this love.

*“Oh! Father Chanel what a great grace God has shown you!” And to keep up his courage, she Jeanne Marie Chavoine added a few words about priests who grow mouldy in the midst of comfort and do nothing for God’s glory. RMJ 105:3.* **What makes you aware of God’s presence even in the difficult moments of your vocation?**

5. It is in this soil of self-offering and openness to the love of God, and as the fruit of that love, that all vocations are born and grow. By drawing from this wellspring through prayer, constant recourse to God’s word and to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, it becomes possible to live a life of love for our neighbours, in whom we come to perceive the face of Christ the Lord (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

*Diary - 5 May 1839, Sunday. Fifth after Pentecost. 339<sup>th</sup> Mass. Rising at 5.45. Holy Mass, prayer. Meditation was in private because I sent Br Marie-Nizier to Sigave to fetch some remedies for Thomas who was in great pain. We spoke a little about religion. He often prays. Would that he would open his eyes to the light and enter the bosom of the Church.* **How do you daily cultivate the soil of self-offering to God and neighbour?**

6. These two expressions of the one divine love must be lived with a particular intensity and purity of heart by those who have decided to set out on the path of vocation discernment towards the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; they are its distinguishing mark.

*We are determined to place no obstacle in the way of God's mercy towards the Islanders committed to our care. But alas! we are better at wishing than we are at doing. Letter 16 May 1839.* **Which young people you know have the qualities to respond to this call? Have you told them?**

7. Love of God, which priests and consecrated persons are called to mirror, however imperfectly, is the motivation for answering the Lord's call. "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (Jn 21:15) contains the secret of a life fully given and lived out, and thus one which is deeply joyful.

*He let himself be persuaded by [Jeanne Marie's] enthusiasm and they thanked God together for the great favour he had received in being so chosen [as one of the first missionaries to Oceania]*

*Donal Kerr; Jean-Claude Colin Marist*

**Who has supported and encouraged you in your vocation?**

8. The other practical expression of love, that towards our neighbour, and especially those who suffer and are in greatest need, is the decisive impulse that leads the priest and the consecrated person to be a builder of communion between people and a sower of hope.

*The island is not yet Christian; apart from my lack of zeal, there are a thousand and one fears and prejudices to be expelled.... Twenty baptisms, four of which were adults and the rest children, and all in danger of death, make up the entire harvest I have reaped in 18 months. Letter May 16 1839.*

**How can I be attentive to the needs of others today?**

9. All priests, religious men and women, catechists, pastoral workers, all parents, and all engaged in the field of educating young people: I fervently exhort you to



pay close attention to those members of parish communities, associations and ecclesial movements who sense a call to the priesthood or to religious life. It is important for the Church to create the conditions that will permit many young people to say “yes” in generous response to God’s loving call.

*Your father’s news regarding your health greatly distressed me. ... we are inclined to the view that this deterioration in your health is due to your eagerness to work. ...Continue to improve your mind with care, to acquire all the knowledge that can serve to help you to fulfil the plans that the good Lord and your parents have for you. Letter to a former student, 23 May 1835. Are your hopes for the young people in your care focussed only on “secular” career interests?*

***Prayer:***

Gracious God you called St Peter Chanel, to leave his homeland to proclaim Jesus the Saviour of the world, to the peoples of the Pacific.

Guided by the Spirit of God who is the strength of the gentle, he bore witness to love, even laying down his life. Grant, that like him we may live our daily life in peace, joy and in love. May his prayer and example call forth from our midst many workers for the Gospel so that God’s Kingdom may reach the ends of the earth. Amen