



OUR FOUNDER TODAY



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THE SMA REMEMBERS: JUNE 25

We all want to be remembered. Memory is a precious gift and when rightly used it can be a powerful gift in our life. When we remember we recall or bring to life that which is past. Our different cultures have different ways of remembering. Call to mind the different celebrations that take place regularly in your own country, in your own tribe or family to keep alive the memory of someone or some important event that is significant for your life now

The Chosen People, our ancestors in the faith, celebrated the Passover each year in remembrance of the great event which was part of their transition from slavery to freedom. When they recalled the memory of this important event they found greater meaning for their lives and a renewed strength to live and work for their ideals. Jesus called his first disciples and while he was still alive he often asked his followers two important questions: "who do people say I am" and "who do you say I am". He was checking to see if they remembered!

As we approach 25 June 2015 we remember our Founder, **Melchior de Marion Brésillac**, Servant of God. His life story is interesting and in some ways unique as a founder of a missionary Society like our own. His family background did not suggest that he would become a priest and more especially a missionary in India with the Paris Foreign Mission.

In this vocation he chose to abandon a lifestyle that was part of the middle class society of his time. And he chose instead to follow another call or his vocation, "**to be a missionary from the depths of his heart**". He committed himself wholeheartedly and for life to this call. His stay in Sierra Leone was very short due to his unexpected death shortly after having founded the Society.

The newly founded Society might have died with him and his companions, but strangely and in some providential way the opposite happened. New members joined and the Society grew in numbers and so the mission in Africa continued. Now today you are part of that mission. In remembering or in reading our history once again we too will be encouraged and we can also find a new sense of identity and inspiration from the life of our Founder and those early missionaries who followed in his footsteps. Remembering is the secret to renewing.

On this important occasion as we celebrate the 156th anniversary of the death of our Founder it will be good for each of us to recall why we joined the SMA. Irrespective of your age you will most likely remember the day you took your first temporary oath as a member of the Society of African Missions. It was a joyful and important day for you as it marked the first major step on your journey to becoming a Brother or a priest in the SMA. It was a major milestone in your vocational journey; it was a time to rejoice and give thanks as you celebrated with classmates, friends and family. Remember also the initial enthusiasm you experienced as you took your permanent oath. Remembering is good for you. Take time to reflect on your first missionary appointment. Recall the years spent on mission and the changes that you witnessed during those years. There were big challenges and many blessings too for each one.

Finally, take some time to look at your commitment today. Try to understand how it has grown over time. Recall what were the major events that helped to deepen your commitment? As we remember our Founder and celebrate his life and gift to all of us members and to many local churches in Africa, it can also be an occasion to look at your commitment to prayer, to celibacy, to faithful commitment to SMA mission priorities and the challenging realities of mission to day where you live.

All of us are invited, like our Founder, to make a commitment to primary evangelisation in Africa; to work among and with the most abandoned; and wherever we work to engage in dialogue at the inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-faith levels. Melchior de Marion Bresillac highlighted the importance of Faith, Hope and Love. Our missionary vocation and life must also be an expression of our faith, our hope and our love.

Blessings and Happy Feast Day to all.

John Dunne SMA