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| **Celebration in honour of Brother Alfano 1st March** |
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| **1. Life of simplicity** Here are the first lines of the book entitled Pane di Casa Nostra, which is a short biography of Brother Alfano: ‘’Joseph Carlo Vaser, Brother Alfano, 1873-1943, is an Italian Marist Brother, rather, the first Italian Marist Brother. He has been the first one in the chronological meaning of the word but above all he has been the top one in a spiritual sense. He climbed to the summit of holiness with a greater eagerness and zeal than when as a child, he enjoyed reaching for the heights of his beautiful and rugged native land: the Valley of Aosta.’’ This life, devoid of extraordinary events is however one of interior adventure. This life can also be compared with a mountain range: only those who are courageous enough to climb to its summit can enjoy its beauty.  **Here are the main stages of Brother Alfano’s life:** In 1886, the young Vaser enters St Paul-trois-Châteaux.. In 1891 he professes the vow of obedience. From 1891 to 1903, he teaches at San Leone Magno’s. He falls in love with the city of Rome because of its art, culture and faith. From 1903 to 1941 he is a formator. First, he is the Master of novices for fifteen years from 1907 to1922. Then, he becomes the Director of the student Brothers from 1925 to 1941. \* Note that he was a provincial councillor during thirty-two years… He died on 1 March 1943, right during the world war II. A simple life like the one of so many Brothers, maybe like ours when we remember all those years behind us… Yet, a life all spent at God’s service; God’s great gift to us and to the world.  Hymn: Please choose one to show our gratitude to God.  **2. Brother Alfano’s personality** The first theologian who studied Brother Alfano’s writings declared, " The harvest is really abundant here, there is a vast choice. The servant of God perfectly understood that a totally lived religious life is like a garden where the Holy Spirit’s light makes all virtues bloom. "  a. Human personality: Brother Alfano was very gifted intellectually. At the late age of fifty he had to learn Latin. He then taught this language in an excellent way.  He was remarkable for his great culture. A very righteous person, he was also very tenacious and even of strong will. These qualities did not prevent him from being a very happy and kind man. ‘’He was kindly with everybody; during recreations and outings, his good humour was simply contagious. Although of a strict character, he could show understanding to those who erred and sensitive to the needs of others.’’ He found time to write to the Brothers who were undergoing their military service. Even sent them money to enliven the feast days. One of his colleagues wrote, ‘’That Brother Alfano was severe should be considered as a myth.’’ Brother Antelmo reports: ‘’During the war, he sent duplicated circulars to the soldier-Brothers. These circulars comforted the latter by all types of advice and Institute news. Before Christmas of 1917, he sent me a cheque which helped me entertain those in the trench with me.’’  Action: a hymn of thanksgiving for the human good qualities of Brother Alfano.  b. His spiritual personality The talent Brother Alfano showed in training his novices indicated his great judgment and knowledge of psychology indeed. But one can safely deduct that this success must have been the result of his long moments kneeling and praying. He said it himself, ‘’What a help it is to think calmly and serenely in front of God!’’ The crib, the cross and the altar were also his preferences. He prayed the stations of the cross every day even if on occasions he would have to get up earlier than at the scheduled time. His devotion to the Blessed Lady reveals itself by the expression he had coined, ‘’il rosariante’’ the one who recites the rosary. His days were filled with Hail Marys. Here is what he thought of Mary:  Mary offered herself for everybody She gave herself to the just and the sinners, She opens the treasure of her mercy to all. She unties the shackles of the slaves, She gives back health to the sick and consoles the afflicted ones. She pardons the sinners and encourages the just ones to continue. Her love leaves no-one out.  He trained two hundred and sixty novices. Of that great number, one hundred and forty-four persevered until death. Many of them lived a rich spiritual life. It becomes evident that holiness attracts others to live as good Christians and even to become holy as well.  A pause for reflection  Brother Alfano had a boundless admiration for Father Champagnat’s qualities and charism. He invited his novices to study Champagnat’s life well. ‘’Make his life and doctrine your daily bread.’’ ‘’I have one desire: the good of the institute thanks to the imitation of the founder by all the Brothers.’’  By studying the human and spiritual personality of Brother Alfano we can learn the abundant life that animated him. Let us thank God, source of life, who wants us to enjoy abundant life and invited us at the last chapter to ‘’choose life’’.  Hymn to praise God and his saints  Re-read a passage or a phrase; then return to the chorus.  **3. What was said about Brother Alfano** One Brother reports, ‘’Brother Alfano was considered by his confrères and his superiors as an exceptionally holy, an exemplary Marist brother.’’ This holiness was resting on a strong spirit of faith, a great generosity and a constant fidelity. Others add, ‘’We find in him a religious man totally dedicated to the Institute, concerned with the glory of God and the salvation of people only.’’ ‘’He so lived intently according the rule that we called him, ‘the living Rule’. Seeing him pray and observing his behaviour one could see that he constantly lived in the presence of God and in constant prayer.’’ ‘’He is a religious who practised the virtues of religious life up to a heroic degree.  Hymn to praise God. Re-read any witnessing passage  **Conclusion** Let us receive this grace with gratitude and wonder : a brother from our society who lived the same ordinary simple life as other brothers is now, we believe our intercessor, our friend with God. In Brother Alfano we find an unconditional love for Marcellin and for the Institute, the ‘’rosariante’’, who knows how to fill his free times with Hail Marys. We hope he will take us to Mary so that she will lead us to Jesus who will make us His Father’s faithful servants. Thus, we will feed ourselves of the ‘’home bread’’ as Brother Alfano affectionately said.  **Final prayer:**  Lord, you gave Brother Alfano the grace to faithfully follow Christ poor and humble. You called him to become a Marist Brother to be an apostle and to educate your children. Grant us through him to live with generosity our Marist life. Help us to radiate the enthusiasm of Marcellin, our Founder. And you, Mary, our good Mother, glorify your servant, Brother Alfano, Who loved and glorified you so much among us. Amen  **Final hymn.** |