

February 1823

“The Memorare in the Snow”



In February 1823, the young Brother Jean Baptiste, aged 16, was struck with a serious illness during his work while teaching in the school at Bourg-Argental. As soon as Marcellin heard of this Brother's sickness, he set out immediately for Bourg-Argental which was over 20 km (12 miles) away across a very rugged terrain. Brother Stanislaus went with him, but on their return journey they lost their way in the heavily timbered area at the height of a snow storm. Both were young and strong, Marcellin being 34 and Stanislaus 22, but human strength has its limits.

After some hours of walking in various directions on the slopes of the Pilat range, darkness overtook them and death in the severe cold seemed a distinct possibility. After a while, young Stanislaus had to be helped along by Marcellin, but eventually even he tired and had to stop.

"We are doomed," he said, "if the Blessed Virgin does not come to our assistance." Together in the snow and high wind they recited the "Memorare", a prayer used throughout the centuries by Christians seeking Our Lady's help in desperate situations. Shortly after terminating their prayer, they observed a lamplight not far away up one of the nearby slopes.

The light came from the house of the Donnet family: father, mother and young daughter of five years. Later Mr. Donnet claimed that it was most unusual for him to have gone outside to reach the stable by the outer door when he normally stayed inside and used an inner-door entrance to the stable. He said that the stormy weather outside would have normally been a further reason for not venturing outside on such a night. Naturally, Marcellin and his Brothers were to always regard this event as providential.



Achievement from the Depths, pp. 89-90
Brother Stephen Farrell, FMS

Reflection by Br. Hank Hammer

This experience forged a bond between Marcellin and Stanislaus which lasted for the rest of their lives.

After Stanislaus finished his novitiate, Marcellin was prepared to send him out on a teaching assignment, but before he could do that, Stanislaus approached Marcellin and asked if he could remain at the Hermitage and help oversee its operation. Marcellin was delighted with Stanislaus' request because, at that time, there was no one in that needed role.

Stanislaus proved to be a very capable administrator as he oversaw all facets of the Hermitage. In addition to his job competencies, Stanislaus was a great role model for the postulants, novices, and young brothers. In a Circular written to the brothers in February 1854, a few months after Stanislaus' death, Brother François, Marcellin's successor, said of Stanislaus, *"So many brothers, so many postulants were able to overcome their first difficulties of the novitiate and persevere in their vocation thanks to the passion and guidance of his advice and exhortations."*

In that same Circular, Brother François states, *"Linked from the outset with all the struggles and all the works of our good Father (Marcellin), at all times, the faithful imitator of his virtues and filled by his spirit, he was the Founder's living copy until the end."*

More than likely, the "Memorare in the Snow" experience had a profound effect on Stanislaus (and Marcellin). The faith, born of that moment, enabled Stanislaus to say throughout his life as a Marist Brother, *"God and the Blessed Virgin have always helped us. Have trust, they will not abandon us."* May these be our heartfelt words too.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection
or sought your intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto you, O virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you do I come,
before you I stand sinful and sorrowful.

O mother of the Word incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me.
Amen.