



CARMELITES OF MARY IMMACULATE

CMI PRIOR GENERAL'S HOUSE

Chavara Hills, P.B. No. 3105, Kakkanad P.O.
Kochi 682 030, Kerala, India



ST. KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA
1805-1871

Fr. Thomas Chathamparampil CMI
Prior General

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Circular on the Feast of Mother of Carmel

Dear Reverend Fathers and Brothers of the CMI Fraternity,

As we celebrate the feast of our Mother of Carmel, let me wish you all the festal wishes and prayers of this great day. There is no doubt that the Marian dimension is one of the constitutive elements of our charism and the CMI legacy we have inherited from the very beginning of our Congregation.

“My Mother I have heard often repeat the tale,
To me, a tiny tot, when reason dawned.
On the day of grace, September eighth
Holding her hand, to Mary’s altar I’ ld go.” (St Chavara in *Atmanutapam*)

This is a text that reveals to us how St Chavara from his very infancy onwards grew in the devotion of our blessed Mother that moves us and at the same time invites us to grow closer to “our Mother, and Patroness” who leads us to the heart of the Gospel and of the Christian life. As we are at the threshold of the third century of the foundation of our congregation, I would like to highlight a few points that could help us facilitate our preparation for the Bicentennial.

One of the touching images of our Mother is her standing by the Cross of her Son, Jesus—a silent mother who keeps pondering everything in her heart. Her silence is not one of emptiness. No, her silence is pregnant with meaning. It’s not that Mary has nothing to say, it’s that she’s already said it all: “Let it be done to me according to Your Word.” The silence of Mary is thundering with the sound of her eternal fiat! Mary’s silence is a deafening yes to the will of God – a yes so powerful that if we let it, it becomes our response as well.

Mary watched her son betrayed, arrested, scourged, and humiliated. She’s seen the blows tear his flesh, the thorns pierce his scalp, and the nails driven through his hands and feet. He is bleeding, weak, gasping for air, and crying out in pain. Yet Mary is there at the foot of the cross, and not only is she there... she is standing. At the moment when we expect a mother to be collapsed on the ground, wailing uncontrollably, unable to watch her son’s excruciating pain, Mary is standing at the foot of the cross.



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Mary's posture says so much more than her words could ever say. She is standing at the foot of the cross not because she is unaffected by the anguish of her son's crucifixion and not because she has some special knowledge as to what this all means. Mary is standing at the foot of the cross because she is a woman of great faith. Amid the most intense darkness and trial that any of us could ever imagine- the death of her son... the death of God Himself- Mary has the faith to trust in God's plan. She is beat down and devastated and could not possibly imagine how this could all be made right, yet she trusts that God will find a way. The silence of Mary standing at the foot of the cross teaches us what it means to be people of faith.

Suffering empties us- it clears away our pride, our self- reliance, the busyness and noise, the comforts and distractions. Why is suffering so powerful in spiritual life? Why has it produced such great saints? Because suffering beats us down to the point where we have no more strength and no other choice but to rely on God. When we are suffering we become so weak that we can do nothing but cry out to Him. "When I am weak, then I am strong!"

So, there's Mary at the foot of the cross- frightened, confused, angry, and completely devastated. This is the moment in her life when she is most weak, yet she is standing. What do we do when we find ourselves faced with the sufferings of our lives, both the big and the small? As Christians, we are called to imitate Mary in our suffering. We are called to stand at the foot of the cross in faith. Let us stand in silence in the face of suffering, hand- in- hand with Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Wishing you all such a strong faith which our Mother is ready to impart to each and everyone who wishes to learn at the School of Mary, our Mother of Carmel.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

Fr Thomas Chathamparampil CMI
Prior General

