

October 9, 2011



MARIANIST WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



Our Lady of the Pillar

Saragossa, Spain



THE SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR SARAGOSSA, SPAIN

1. The Sanctuary



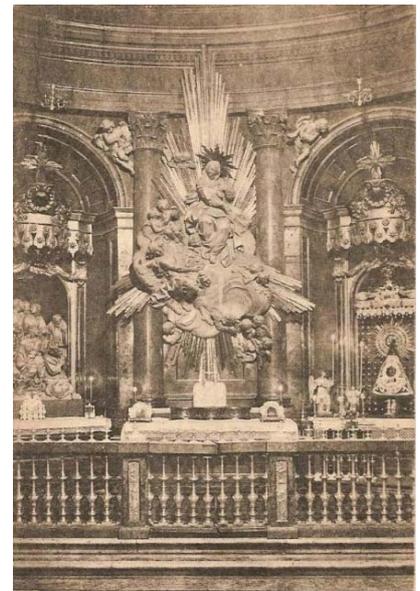
According to a centuries-old tradition, the Mother of God appeared to the Apostle James on the banks of the Ebro River, in the city which in Roman times was called Caesaraugusta, to comfort and encourage him in the proclamation of the Gospel. As a sign, she left a pillar or column of stone, to signify that in that place the faith would be strong and lasting, like stone.

In the earliest Christian centuries, there was a hermitage there, which was later replaced by a series of churches,

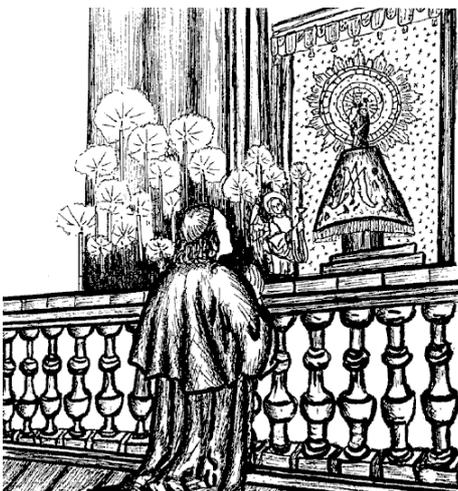
Romanesque, then Gothic, then Renaissance, and finally a Baroque basilica. The constant flow of pilgrims over the centuries caused each church to be built larger than its predecessors. Currently, the great Basilica of the Virgin of the Pillar stands out from afar in the city of Saragossa, with its four great towers and its eleven beautiful cupolas.

It is, without a doubt, the number one Marian shrine of Spain. The little image of Mary, standing on the Pillar of Stone, is a striking contrast to the grandiosity of the building. It continues to be visited daily by thousands of people, who come from far and near to pray before it.

The Virgin of the Pillar was also declared Patroness of all the Spanish-speaking peoples. Her feastday is celebrated on October 12.



2. Blessed William Joseph Chaminade and the Shrine of the Pillar.



William Joseph Chaminade was forced into exile during the French Revolution. He arrived in Saragossa on October 11, 1797, on the eve of the Fiesta of Our Lady of the Pillar.

He remained there for three years.

Those were three years of hardship, scarcity and apparent inaction. But they were also three years in the desert, in which his faith matured, his hope was strengthened and his love purified. Three years in which he could pass long periods of prayer before the little image of Mary. Three years in which Mary transmitted to him the Spirit of her Son, which he would later call "the Spirit of Mary."



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The man who returned to France after those three years was a new man, full of the fire of that Spirit and apostolic drive. A man transformed, like Mary and with Mary, by the action of that Spirit. And so, all of us who call ourselves “Marianists” consider ourselves as engendered by this Spirit at the feet of the Virgin of the Pillar.



3. The Marianist Family before the Virgin of the Pillar



This “Chaminade Year,” in which the entire Marianist Family celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of our Founder, we have a spiritual appointment in the Shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa (Spain), in the same place where we were conceived in faith, by the work of the Holy Spirit, like Mary.

We are men and women of the entire world, of all states of life, of all cultures, but united by the charism which has given us our reason for being. And we unite ourselves in the same privileged place in which Blessed Chaminade received this charism.

In this year that is so special for all the Family, this meeting ought to have a very distinct character of “return to the sources.” It ought to constitute a “new birth,” a magnificent opportunity for renewing ourselves and return to the freshness of our beginnings.

May our community prayer before the Virgin of the Pillar renew and give new life to all the Marianist Family.



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4. Prayers

For the Church, that it might be a living witness to truth, to justice, to unity, to peace and that we as the Marianist Family might collaborate to make it grow and prolong Mary's maternal love. **LET US PRAY.**

In this Chaminade Year, we pray for the Marianist Family: the lay members, the religious and all who live and share in the Marianist charism left to us by Father Chaminade, that this gift of the Spirit be a source of life and missionary dynamism in the Church and in society. **LET US PRAY.**

Jesus told us: "pray to the lord of the harvest that he send workers into his harvest." We pray to the Lord for vocations to the Marianist Family. May our young people live their call with joy and gratitude and commit themselves to a generous response. **LET US PRAY.**



For our Marianist works: schools, parishes, social centers, centers of spirituality and all the places where any Marianist works. That all of us who work there or are close to them might do all possible that they be places of evangelization, of shared mission; and may the Lord grant us the grace to form vital and missionary communities that will multiply Christians, making present the Kingdom of God. **LET US PRAY.**

For all of us who share in this celebration of thanksgiving for our Marianist life, that we might be one in love and that the world might believe in Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the entire human race. **LET US PRAY.**