

BLESSED BERNARD MARY SILVESTRELLI

Religious and priest

Optional Memorial

Blessed Bernard Maria Silvestrelli was born in Rome on 7 November 1831 to a noble and wealthy family. He was ordained a priest at Mount Argentario (Grosseto) on 22 December 1855 and made religious profession on 28 April 1857 in Morrovalle (Macerata) where he had as a novitiate companion Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin. In the Congregation he held important positions: he was director of students, master of novices, local superior, Consultor and Provincial Superior, and Superior General for 25 years. Pope Pius X reluctantly accepted his renunciation for health reasons but wanted him to retain the honorary title of Superior General. He died in Moricone, Rome, on 9 December 1911.

The period of Father Bernard's Generalate was among the most difficult in the history of the Congregation both because of the internal problems due to its presence in new nations and the political storm in Italy that led to the suppression of religious orders. Father Bernard opened or reopened new monasteries after the suppression. He worked for the expansion of the Institute, while guarding it from the menacing thought of some who tried to relegate the community and contemplative dimensions of the Congregation to a secondary role. He established minor seminaries for boys who wanted to be Passionists. In his service as Superior General, he encountered many joys but also many sufferings. He lived the joys with a grateful spirit; he faced the difficult moments serenely even though at times, bitterly; he was patient but determined, humble but firm. He was an enlightened and prudent Superior, paternal and determined, intuitive and capable, wise and insightful. He was broad-minded and concrete in projects concerned with healthy traditions and open to the demands of new ventures. The holy General continually recalled the religious to be faithful to the Founder. He constantly invited them to remain anchored in the sources of the Institute in order to draw genuine vitality in dealing with new situations. During his term as Superior, the Congregation experienced an extraordinary flowering of activities, personnel and new religious houses. By the time he died, the number of religious, monasteries and provinces had doubled.

Father Bernard was above all a religious and holy Superior, full of the wisdom that is the fruit of prayer and therefore, a gift of God. He used his family wealth for the good of the Congregation, while personally living in great and beloved poverty. He wrote many books to promote and safeguard the Passionist charism. He was beatified by Saint John Paul II on 16 October 1988.

COLLECT

**Lord our God,
you taught Blessed Bernard Mary
to love the crucified Christ
by perfect detachment from material goods.
Following his example and prayers,
grant that through constant meditation
on the Passion of our Lord,
we may live and die for him who is our Redeemer.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.**