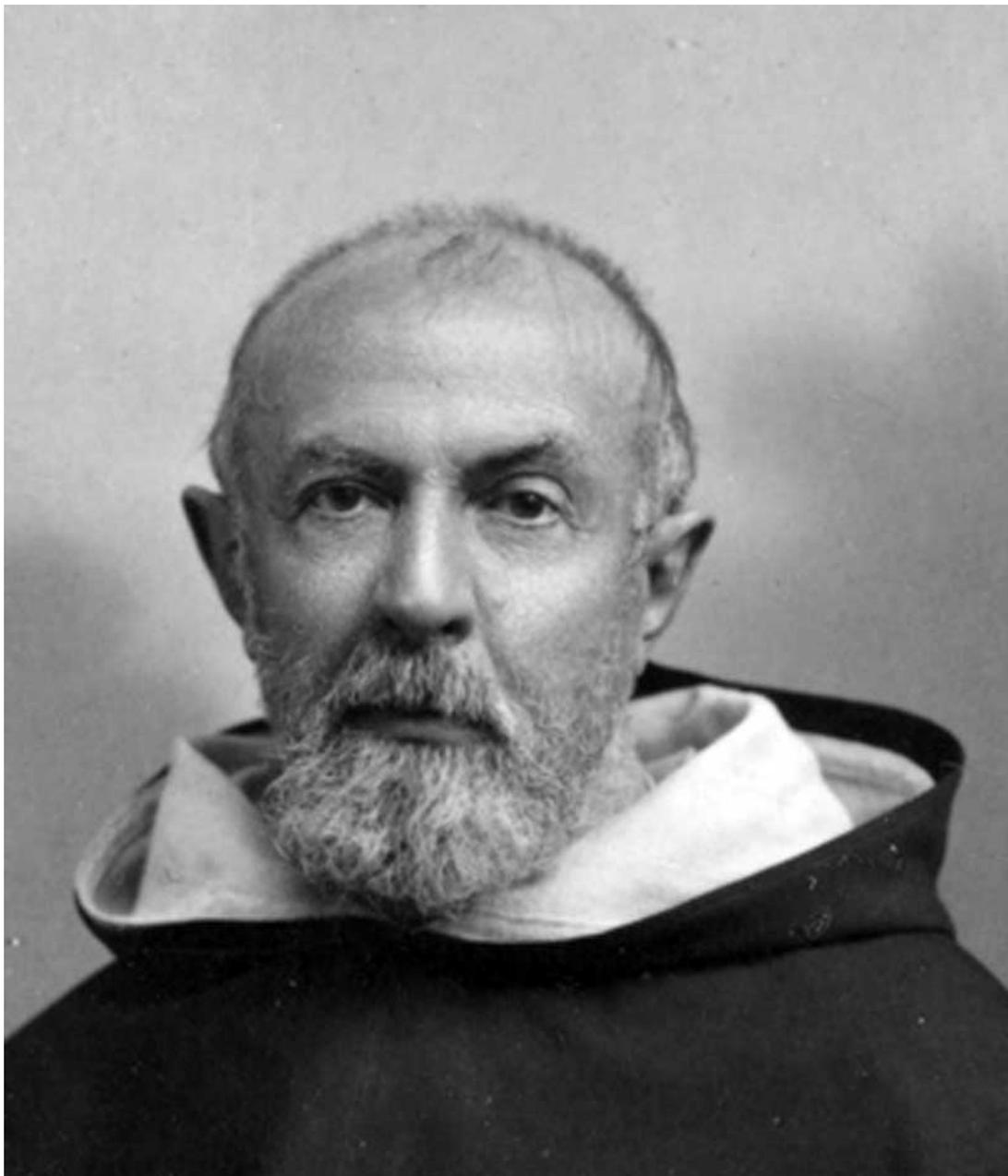


**10 March 1938 – 10 March 2026**

***Dies natalis***

**of the Servant of God**

**Marie-Joseph Lagrange OP**



Jerusalem, 10 March 2026

On this anniversary of the passing of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, founder of the *École Biblique et Archéologique Française* in Jerusalem, it seems fitting to recall the spiritual portrait of this servant of God. The day after Father Lagrange's death, the Master of the Order wrote: "Everyone knows that he was an incomparable exegete, a scholar of rare culture, a very sharp mind, a tireless worker, but most people do not know that he was also, and remained throughout his life, a holy religious"... In what way, then, was he a saint?

His greatness of soul lay first and foremost in his humility. He knew how to make himself accessible to those who listened to him: a priest who often welcomed him into his home for times of rest recounts that he loved to attend the children's catechism classes. He would sit among them on an upturned prie-dieu, so as to be at their level, and he spoke their language. Sister Josephine, a leading figure at Saint Louis Hospital in Jerusalem, said she loved talking to him because he was so simple, almost childlike. Behind the learned scholar with a somewhat cold demeanour lay a warm man who was attentive to others.

A man of prayer, Father Lagrange placed everything he undertook in God's hands and often recommended himself to the saints he was familiar with: he invoked St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert and St. Mary Magdalene, but also St. Margaret Mary, his relative, St. Teresa of Avila and the Curé d'Ars, who had blessed him at the age of three (a piece of this saint's cassock was even placed in the foundations of the *École Biblique* building). Above all, it was to the Virgin Mary that Father Lagrange liked to confide, and it was to her that he entrusted, from the very beginning, the direction of the *École Biblique* he was founding.

Lively and passionate, putting all his energy into working in the service of Truth, he was nicknamed by his students the Saint Jerome of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A "tireless interpreter of Holy Scripture," he studied the Bible in books, but also in the field, which led him into more than one adventure and even nearly cost him his life during a shootout... Only his keffiyeh was hit by bullets, thanks to God. The Gospel was not a dead letter for him; he lived it and meditated on it in his heart, rosary in hand.

He was a "holy religious" above all because of his admirable obedience. The Virgin of Autun, which he kept on his desk, was the image of this: he wanted to be, in the Church, "like the baby Jesus in Mary's arms: a swaddled child, held tightly, who lets himself be taken and carried without moving his arms or legs".

In his youth, he had asked for the grace to "die in the Order of Saint Dominic, even as a martyr". God did not give him the palm of martyrdom, but he did give him "the pen", for he had to endure all kinds of persecution because of his writings and teachings. Perhaps this is why, in 1967, the brothers placed his body in the crypt of the protomartyr, where it still rests today. The example he set by his life was as beneficial to his students as his exegesis lessons and certainly helped to prepare the hearts of two of them in particular: Giuseppe Girotti and Luiz Suarez Velasco, Dominicans who died for their faith and were recently beatified.

According to the testimonies left behind, the last words Father Lagrange whispered before he died were: "Jerusalem... Jerusalem." He had arrived at the gates of the Holy City for the first time on 10 March, and it was also on 10 March, forty-eight years later, that he left this earth to join the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us not doubt, then, that on this anniversary, he can be a powerful intercessor for us. Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, pray for us!

## **Prayer for the glorification of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange OP**

*"Holy Father, you placed in your servant Brother Marie-Joseph Lagrange a desire for truth and a passionate love for the Word of God. In the light of the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, he scrutinised the mystery of Jesus Christ and his heart became burning. With the Virgin Mary, he meditated on the Gospel in the prayer of the Rosary. He devoted his life to the scientific study of the Bible in the evangelical harmony of faith and reason in order to save souls troubled by scientific criticism.*

*Those who knew him testified to his radiant faith and his exemplary obedience in trials.*

*We pray to you, Father, to hasten the day when the Church will publicly recognise the holiness of his life, so that his beneficial example may lead our brothers and sisters to believe in the Word of God.*

*May the intercession of Brother Marie-Joseph Lagrange obtain for us the graces we need, and in particular: (specify which ones).*

*We ask this of you, Father, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, in the communion of the Holy Spirit, one living God for ever and ever. Amen.*