Blessed Brother Scubilion (Jean-Bernard Rousseau) – The catechist of the slaves

On 27 September the Catholic Church celebrates the memory of Blessed Brother Jean-Bernard Rousseau, a Brother of the Christian Schools, who received the name of Scubilion when he entered the novitiate.



Born in France on 21 March 1797, Jean Bernard lived through the harshness of the revolution of those years. His parents were Bernardo, a stone carver, and Reina.

He was able to go to school thanks to their effort and support. He soon discovered his fascination for education and became an assistant to the village teacher. The parish priest thought it would be good to direct him to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. And so it was that at the age of 25 he entered the novitiate.

After ten years of teaching, in 1833 Brother Scubilion and two other Brothers volunteered to educate and catechise on the island of Reunion, a French colony in the Indian Ocean. The voyage lasted 84 days. It was a voyage of no return: for 34 years he carried out his missionary apostolate teaching and catechising French and Creole children, as well as slaves.

For more than three decades Brother Scubilion opted for the marginalised, for the poorest of the poor, going out to meet the African slaves in the coffee and sugar cane plantations. He was recognised as “the catechist of the slaves”. He taught

them in the evenings, prepared them for the sacraments and for the social integration that their coming liberation would bring. Even after their emancipation in 1848, he continued to give his life for them, helping them to assume their new reality with dignity and responsibility.

Brother Scubilion died on 13 April 1867 in Santa Maria, a village in La Réunion. His tomb has been a place of pilgrimage ever since. He was beatified by St. John Paul II on the island of La Réunion on 2 May 1989.

We ask Brother Scubilion to intercede for us and to inspire us in our commitment to those excluded from society, to those who are still victims of the human trafficking that leads to so many forms of enslaved life. May his witness encourage us to work for human dignity and especially for the rights of children and young people.

Blessed Brother Scubilion, pray for us.

Live Jesus in our hearts… forever!

Images Blessed Scubilion Rousseau

Lasallian Liturgical Text approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

27 September – B. SCUBILION