

## **JANUARY MESSAGE FROM FR. PAUL LANDOLFI**

This month, we reflect on our founder, Adele ( Mother Mary of the Incarnation), and Therese de Lamourous. They were key players in the Sodality of Bordeaux, Blessed Fr. Chaminade's work of predilection. They were partners in the origins of the Marianist Family. I am finding that these lives of our "saints" blend together. Isn't this the way it works for all of us? Saints make saints. The Marianist Family produces saints because its members are trying to become saints. Mary Immaculate was their original inspiration. She still is that for us today. Many of the Marianist religious and lay communities still renew their consecration to Mary around this feast. The offering this month was the homily for the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception's celebration this year. Once again after many years it was held in the chapel at Chaminade High School, Mineola, N.Y., where the group came together on Dec. 28, 1958, more than 50 years ago.

We have some good news to share. While I attended a meeting in St. Louis, I was able to telephone Rachel Lozano. We celebrated this year, her 10th anniversary since she heard the news that she had cancer. It will be nine years in May that there is no sign of cancer. She attributes this to the intercession of our Founder. May God be glorified! Let us redouble our prayers that the cause of Blessed Fr. Chaminade will continue to move forward in Rome. We await God's "fullness of time."

We have also heard that the Province of France has introduced the cause of Fr. Emil Neubert. Fr. Neubert has ties with the United States. He served as Novice Master here for some time. He was the Rector of the Seminary in Fribourg for many years. He was a pioneer in placing Mariology on a sure theological footing.

We also heard of another cause which seems well on its way. Archbishop Fulton Sheen was a student in our school in Peoria, Ill.

Fr. Enrique Torres has approved the translation made by Bro. Mike Galvin of his short biography of Fr. Domingo Lazaro. Our next step is to see how we can have it printed and distributed.

Finally do not forget our "unknown saints." We don't know their names, their causes may never be introduced, but they led holy lives, did so much good, and are now with God. We ask them to keep interceding for us also.

*Mary Immaculate, the Sodality of Bordeaux,  
and Blessed W.J. Chaminade*

1. The *Historica Inquisitio* of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade sums up the research on his candidacy for beatification with a message that comes through loud and clear. *Blessed Fr. Chaminade desired and constantly worked at multiplying Christians.*

After three years of exile, Blessed Fr. Chaminade returned to France in December, 1800. He noticed at Mass two young persons. He invited them to bring two others. Fr. Chaminade was acting on the charism he had received at Saragossa at the feet of Our Lady of the Pillar. With these two, Blessed Fr. Chaminade, ever attentive to God's inspirations, began the Sodality of Bordeaux, his work of predilection. From its beginning, he named it the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception. Within a year, through a process of geometric progression, membership grew to 100. In fact the Sodality developed and multiplied itself so well that later the Archbishop of Bordeaux would claim that: *If I consider any good work in Bordeaux, I find the name of the Sodality and Fr. Chaminade behind it.*

Blessed Fr. Chaminade's insight, gained at the feet of Our Lady of the Pillar, seemed to be the need for *multiplication*. Sodalists were formed in order to become apostles themselves who would then form others. The charism of the Founder was *to associate ourselves with Mary's mission of faith in order to multiply Christians*. The driving force behind the charism was Mary herself. The Historical Inquisition is clear: *When he proposed to multiply Christians, the Servant of God had in view to multiply Children and Apostles of Mary.*

Inspired at Saragossa by Mary, Blessed Chaminade set out for France to form communities of faith which would work for the conversion of the masses. It was a non-Christian world to which he preached. Yet somehow Mary played a key role in this, almost as though she epitomized the ideal of what the Church had to be – i.e. the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world. Chaminade would say: *Our work is grand; it is magnificent. Why? Because it is the work of Mary, who tells us. Do whatever He tells you.*

Blessed Chaminade was open to all the means of attaining this goal, but the Sodality of Bordeaux was his preference. We must view our Sodality groups (

i.e. our Marianist religious and lay communities ) as the Marianist Family or *Family of Mary*. If later the religious communities seemed to become independent of the Family, looking upon the Family as one of its works, this was never the thought of the Founder. He always saw the religious as religious sodalists, members of the Sodality. In fact they were to assure the permanence of the Sodality, the Marianist Family.

The Society of Mary's Rule of Life captures this perspective once again. *Guided by the Holy Spirit, members of the Sodality sought increasingly intense forms of dedication. Eventually some formed the nucleus of two religious congregations: the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and the Society of Mary. Fr. Chaminade saw in these two foundations a "person who would never die". They would maintain, inspire, and extend the network of communities and works founded under his inspiration. Today the varied groups which recognize their common link in the charism of Fr. Chaminade are usually designated by the generic name of Family of Mary.* Now the term being used to express this reality is *The Marianist Family*.

In article 63 of the same Rule of Life we read: *Faithful to the Founder's word: "You are all Missionaries", the Society as a whole as well as each individual community, considers itself in a permanent state of mission. We are committed to the multiplication of Christians, forming persons and communities in a lived faith expressed in service, responsive to the needs of the times. Thus, in every age we become collectively, as our Founder wished, "the man who never dies".*

In Article 71, again it is repeated. *Our primary objective is formation in faith. In particular, we aim to motivate and train apostles and to foster communities of dedicated lay people.*

2. Mary Immaculate is the key to understanding all that happened as Blessed Fr. Chaminade returned from exile to France.

Why did he focus on her Immaculate Conception? He gave talks about Mary often, but what seems to be remarkable is that it is Mary Immaculate who becomes his focal point of faith in this period. Lourdes had not happened; the dogma had not yet been proclaimed. The air was thick with attacks and rationalistic arguments. To believe in the Immaculate Conception was really to express a profound attitude of faith in the Church. The Act of Consecration at that time professed that we would do all we could *"to defend the Immaculate Conception.:"*

Mary Immaculate becomes the symbol most appropriate in Blessed Chaminade's mind of the true Catholic Faith. Belief in Mary Immaculate portrays a loyal member of the Church permeated with the true spirit of Christ. Blessed Fr. Chaminade marshals as many as he can to this cause. Mary Immaculate is the sign of victory over all evil. She is the rallying point for youth. The seminarians at Auch wish to have their sodality affiliated with that of Bordeaux. Fr. Chaminade responds noting their enthusiasm to cooperate with Mary in her mission. He is frank about the combat this will entail. He challenges their idealism to desire accomplishing even more. He offers Mary Immaculate as the Model of Youth.

*"We must give proof of valor, not only once or twice but very often, constantly. We must fight the battles of the Blessed Virgin. Let me explain. I mean that you must acquire and preserve, no matter what the cost, that unstained purity which you promised on the day you entered the Sodality."*

Blessed Chaminade continues showing the seminarians that being devoted to Mary as the Immaculate One goes beyond the strict obligations of faith. It really is an act of love.

*It means to offer her a devotion beyond the ordinary; to give proof of a love that does not limit itself to that which is of precept (i.e. a dogma of the Church); to express to her an admiration that believes all that it is permitted to believe; in a word, it is a profession of the very highest devotedness.*

Therefore Blessed Chaminade chose the feast of the Immaculate Conception as the patronal feast of the Sodality of Bordeaux. He defined this Sodality (as now we the Marianist Family) as *a society of fervent<sup>1</sup> Christians.....which in order to imitate the Christians of the primitive Church (Jerusalem) strive by frequent reunions(meetings, faith sharing, activities) to possess but one heart and one soul (i.e. embody the Good News of Jesus' Presence), and to form but one family, not only as children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, and members of His Mystical Body, but also as children of Mary through a special consecration to her veneration, and an open profession (public) of the privilege of her Immaculate Conception. Therefore it is easy to see that the nature and essence of the Sodality consists in the frequent gathering of the members, already united in mind and heart by the bond of charity, the principle of all solid union on earth and in heaven.*

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Chaminade here inserted the word "zealous".

It is this image that remains with Blessed Chaminade throughout his life. At the end of his life, while visiting the novices, he places his hand on the foot of Mary Immaculate's statue and he speaks to the serpent, sign of all evil. *She has crushed your head.* Then turning to the novice with him...*Let us in all humility be the heel of the Woman.*

To sum up Blessed Fr. Chaminade's thought: To preserve the faith in Jesus and to advance it, which is the mission of the Church, we must dedicate ourselves to Mary and to work with her. Making her better known, loved, and served is the key to leading people to Jesus.

3. Mary Immaculate is important, not so much because we heap many privileges upon her; not even, though it is very significant, that we try to make her a symbol people will rally around. It is faith which leads Blessed Fr. Chaminade to see Mary Immaculate as the key to the renewal of the Church. Faith for Blessed Chaminade means to enter into God's way of thinking. The purpose of the prayer of faith, which the Founder promotes, is to be open to what God is saying to us. In those hours in prayer before Our Lady of the Pillar holding her Child, Chaminade enters into the mystery of Mary Immaculate in faith. And he begins to look at Mary the way God did. He saw the uniqueness of this gift to Mary. She alone in all the world had been so graced and this through an incomprehensible favor of God.

*What right have we to deny Mary her Immaculate Conception? If God would ask us what He should give to Mary, we would want her to be preserved from all sin. Doesn't God have thoughts as grandiose as ours?*

In looking towards Mary Immaculate, Chaminade saw the mystery of God's holiness and His abhorrence of sin. We really do not understand the evil of sin; we do not detest it enough for what it is. But God knows and abhors it. To enter into God's view, we would be sorry for the least fault.

Before Pentecost, it was Mary Immaculate who cried out for the Holy Spirit to come upon the Church and the world. Mary was the one who appreciated how much we needed healing and strength. She who was sinless looked upon sin in its reality and prayed in reparation.

Blessed Fr. Chaminade loved to show in his conferences the relationship between the Holy Trinity and Mary. Perhaps this is why one of his favorite

prayers becomes: *May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.*

Not only is Mary free from all sin, she is also filled with all grace. While all of us, at least for a moment, were enemies of God, Mary, through the grace of her Son was never separated from God.

*It is of Mary that Jesus is born. He did not separate her from Himself during the whole course of His earthly life. He was deferential to her, and He associated her in all His mysteries. Devotion to Mary, then, is the most salient point of the imitation of Jesus Christ.*

## Conclusions

The times in which Blessed Chaminade lived are very much like our own - times of transition, times of turmoil. Yet we are hopeful people because we belong to Mary. To her has been given the mission of the evangelization of humanity. She wishes to bring everyone back to Jesus.

We take our consecration seriously. If we really want to be like Jesus, then Blessed Chaminade says the best way is to go to Mary. Proclaim her as Mother and Leader! Listen to her and follow the ways she asks us to bring Jesus to the world. *Do whatever He tells you.*

This implies a conscious personal spiritual life – prayer, union with Mary allowing her to form us in the mysteries of Jesus. Also a very intentional apostolic life! No matter what work we undertake, we see it as a way for us *“to multiply Christians*. We consciously gather together persons who are willing to grow in faith.

The heart of these efforts will be the vibrant faith-sharing community we create ourselves. These are the communities in the Marianist Family. This is the legacy that Blessed Fr. Chaminade, Venerable Adele de Trenquellion, and Venerable Therese de Lamourous have left us.