DECEMBER REFLECTION FROM FR. PAUL LANDOLFI

For December you may want to give a good book on Adele as a Christmas gift. There are many available at NACMS.

I am presently reading ADELE, written by Fr. Joseph Stefanelli, which you can order from NACMS at nacmsorders@udayton.edu. It is fascinating. If you want to hear about the background of the French Revolution, through which Blessed Fr. Chaminade, Adele, and Therese de Lamourous lived, this will give you the overview and help you appreciate what our “saints” were going through. It is also well documented so that you know you are getting an authentic picture.

Adele led a unique life. She seems fearless. She has such a big heart, especially for the marginalized. She helps them without ever being patronizing. She is a leader who organizes her friends in the Association.

I am grateful to Sr. Nicole Trajan, FMI for sending me a kind of time line of this period for Adele. This December presentation is based on this time-line. It was reading through these few pages that led me to want to read her life story. I hope you also will be captivated by her life.

If you look at the Marianist Sisters website you will find the many intentions people are praying through the intercession of Venerable Adele. Pray hard this month that the Lord will show us His mercy in granting these requests. Pray each day to our Marianist “Saints” for all the intentions for which people are begging. It is prayer that is most necessary.

Adele Charlotte de Batz de Trenquelléon

On June 10, 1789 Venerable Adele de Trenquelléon was born and baptized on the same day. A week later, June 17th, the National Assembly took the “tennis court oath”. They vowed not to disperse until France had a new Constitution limiting the powers of the King, of the Nobles, and of the Church. The King gave permission to form the Constituent Assembly that was to write a new Constitution. Less than a month later, on July 14th, mobs stormed the Bastile and so began the French Revolution.
Changes were swift and radical. The national deputies voted the abolition of all feudal, noble, and aristocratic privileges. And it passed. This would affect the Trenquelléons forcing them into exile. Adele’s father opted to join the Royal militia which would fight to defend the monarchy. The King was taken from Versailles to the Palace of the Tuileries and held captive. The Constituent Assembly, meanwhile, confiscated the property of the clergy. All education was placed in the hands of the civil powers. All parish and conventual schools were closed.

The Revolutionaries went even further. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was voted into effect. Clergy were asked to pledge allegiance. This would severely change the structure of the Catholic Church in France. From 134 dioceses France dropped to 83. The King, probably under great duress, approved the vote. We know that many priests did not sign, among them the Chaminade brothers. Priests who signed the Constitution were called jurors or constitutionals. Those who did not were called non-jurors or recalcitrants. Fewer than half of the 100,000 priests in France and very few of the bishops signed the new Constitution. However Agen, Adele’s diocese, had the greatest number of jurors. Her pastor took the oath. Fr. Chaminade, a non-juror, was forbidden to exercise any public ministry.

IN 1791, religious vows were declared null and void by the government and religious property was declared a possession of the State.

Pope Pius VI declared the jurors as schismatics and not in good standing with the Church. Many, who had taken the oath with good intentions, now regretted their choice and retracted. Fr. Chaminade was one of those given the task of reconciling those who had signed the Constitution with the Catholic Church. This was a time of great stress for everyone. Families were forced to flee. Baron de Trenquelléon decided to join the effort to save the monarchy. He rejoined the Royal Guard in the Rhineland. He left his pregnant wife and Adele, his 2 1/2-old daughter. Charles, his son, was born 2 months later, January 26, 1792.

Much happened that year. The Legislative Assembly that succeeded the Constituent Assembly directed that a complete inventory of all the property and possessions of the emigrants be made so that in time it could be impounded for the Nation. The emigrants were banned from returning to France. Baron de Trenquelléon’s name is on that list. Try to visualize the fear and consternation in that family’s life and then multiply that anxiety for the hundreds of other
families facing the Inspectors and officers coming to the door ready to take inventory.

Non-juring priests, such as Fr. Chaminade, were to be denounced, even if they were not exercising public ministry. The King refused to sign this decree. His palace was invaded and he was stripped of all his functions. The King and his whole family were imprisoned.

Religious throughout France were expelled from their convents and monasteries and all their property confiscated. Those religious who would take an oath of allegiance to the State received a small pension. Unfortunately, nearly half of the religious, mostly male, took the oath. Adele’s two aunts, who were Dominicans, refused to take the oath.

On January 21st, 1793, the King was tried for treason for his refusal to sanction the laws passed by the Assembly and executed.
Ed. Note: Matt Sweeney, writer for Tarmac 1, wrote to Bro. Mike McAward, Secretary-General of the Society of Mary, in order to get this information which he presented in the School’s Freshman Newspaper.

As some of you may know, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, the patron of our school, is in the final stages of the process to become a saint. Our founder was born in Périgueux, France, in 1761 to a large, deeply religious family. He entered the seminary in 1771 and became a priest 14 years later. Blessed William Joseph Chaminade was living in France during the time of the French Revolution, which didn’t support Catholicism. He stood up against these persecutors of Catholicism and prevailed. In Zaragoza, Spain, he was inspired by a vision to found the Society of Mary. So, here we are today, more than 200 years later, still going strong.

As I mentioned before, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, is in the final stages of becoming a saint, but this does not mean that his canonization is near. In order to become a saint, a person has to have a minimum of two miracles and have a following, or “cult,” of people. The miracles that the saint has supposedly performed have to be thoroughly investigated by a process that may take years or even decades.

The canonization process is very detailed. First, the person’s life must be accepted as holy and a good example of how to live. Then, there must be a following of people who believe this, and they have to present this to their local bishop. If the bishop believes in the cause, he can then petition Rome to open the person’s “Cause.” If the Vatican approves the person’s “Cause,” the person will be considered a “Servant of God.” Then, there will be a trial held at the local diocese of the person being considered to be a saint. After the investigative report is sent to the Vatican and is approved, the person will be declared “Venerable.” If the first miracle has passed through the process of being declared true, and the person being considered to be a saint has been declared “Venerable” as well, the person is then beatified. The title of “Blessed” is then added to the person’s name. That is why “Blessed” is part of the title of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade. Finally, if a second miracle has passed through the process of being proven, and the Pope believes that the person should become a
saint, he will canonize that person. The person will then be forever considered a saint.

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade has passed all of the stages up to beatification. Currently, there are two miracles that have been accomplished through the intercession of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade. To become a saint, both of the miracles have to be confirmed, and the Pope has to canonize him. Only one of the two miracles has been confirmed, and the process is ongoing in confirming the second. Miracles are performed through the intercession of a saint, not through the saint’s own power, because only God can perform miracles.

The first miracle occurred when a woman in Argentina was diagnosed with a very serious form of cancer and wasn’t expected to live. She prayed to then-Venerable William Joseph Chaminade and was cured. This miracle led to the beatification of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade in 2000. The second miracle occurred when a young girl in St. Louis, Missouri was found to have a very aggressive and serious form of cancer. She had multiple surgeries, procedures, and treatments, but nothing worked. For a child to have this type of cancer and live was unheard of. The girl, her family, and friends prayed to Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, and when the doctors went to try and remove the tumor, they found that the tumor and all the cancer cells were dead. So, when and if this second miracle finishes going through the process, and the Pope believes Blessed William Joseph Chaminade should be a saint, God willing, our patron will become Saint William Joseph Chaminade.