

## Venerable Adèle de Trenquelléon

Adèle is called Venerable because she “practiced, to a heroic degree, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity towards God and neighbor, as well as the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.” (Decree on the Heroicity of Virtues)

The following was written by Fr. Joseph Verrier, SM, as part of the Historical Inquisition to study Adèle’s cause. He hoped that it would be for the entire Marianist Family “*an illuminating and invigorating rediscovery.*” We thank Bro. Robert Facht, SM, for his translation into English so that we might all profit from this reflection on the life of Venerable Adèle.



*Venerable Adèle de Trenquelléon*

### **Letters of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon**

Foundress of the Institute of the Daughters  
of Mary Immaculate Marianists

In collaboration with Father William Joseph Chaminade  
Founder of the Society of Mary

### **VOLUME I 1805-1816**

#### Introduction

The religious life too often forgets, despite the constant reminders of hierarchical texts, the charism proper to each founder and which ought to be perpetuated in each religious congregation to give it life and to preserve its reason for being. The reading of this correspondence will be, then, for the entire institute an

illuminating and invigorating rediscovery. May it contribute also, in increasing the filial devotion of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate toward their mother and foundress, to the progress of her cause and hasten a deserved glorification!

Rome, August 20, 1971

December 8, 1983

J. Verrier, Marianist

### **Biographical Chronology of Mother Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon**

1789 June 10: Born at Feugarolles at the Chateau Trenquelléon (Lot et Garonne); baptized at the parish church.

1791: Her father, Baron Charles de Trenquelléon, a superior officer in the French Guard, leaves his family and takes part in the campaign of the Prince of Conde to restore the absolute monarchy. The campaign was unsuccessful, and he is forced to take refuge in England.

1792 January 26: The birth of Adèle's brother, Charles Polycarp.

1793-96: Adèle manifests for the first time her desire to become a Carmelite.

1797 September 27: The Baroness de Trenquelléon, inscribed at Cahors (Lot) on the list of émigrés, must seek refuge in Spain, accompanied by her children.

1798 Spring: The Spanish government expels the French refugees upon demand of the French government. Madame de Trenquelléon and her children move on to Portugal.

1798 July: The Baron de Trenquelléon rejoins his family in Portugal, at Bragança.

1799 June 12: The birth of Desirée, sister to Adèle.

1800 September 8: The family returns to Spain and settles in Saint-Sebastián.

1801 January 6: First Holy Communion of Adèle at the Church of Santa Maria in Saint-Sebastián. Adèle is eleven and a half years old.

1801 November 14: The family reenters France; returns to the Chateau de Trenquelléon.

1802 January: Adèle expresses again her desire to become a Carmelite. Her mother dissuades her on account of her young age, but counsels and helps her to obtain from Monsieur Ducourneau (the religious instructor of her brother) a "Rule of Life" in view of preparing herself for the cloistered life.

1803 February 6: Adèle receives the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of Monseigneur Jacoupy, bishop of Agen, with Jeanne and Agatha Diche, of Agen. With Jeanne (who was four years older) she immediately formed a friendship that would last her whole life.

1804 August 5: At the incentive of Monsieur Ducourneau, Adèle and Jeanne Diche found the "Little Society" a prayer group to prepare themselves for a happy death, but also an association of mutual support, through prayer and emulation, for the exercise of Christian virtues, with a commitment to attract other young women, other members.

1805 April 23: Jeanne Diche marries Dr. Belloc. Adèle fears for the future of the "Little Society" and for her friendship with Jeanne.

1805: At age 16, Adèle, who is living by herself in the countryside, begins an apostolate of letter-writing with the members of the "Little Society." One of the friends to whom she will send a letter every week is Agatha Diche (Agen) who will be among the first Daughters of Mary, under the name of Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart.

1807 February: M. Ducourneau follows to Paris the brother of Adèle, who goes there to continue his studies. Monsieur Larribeau, cure of Lompian, succeeds Ducourneau as head of the "Little Society," and also becomes spiritual director to Adèle.

1808: Under the impetus of Adèle the “Little Society” moves forward. From seven members in 1805, it counts 80 members in 1808, of which a number are priests of the region of Agen.

1808 summer: During a stay at Figeac at the home of her mother, the Baroness de Trenquelléon, meets from time to time L’abbe Lafon of Bordeaux. This man is a friend and collaborator with Father Chaminade. She learns that Father Chaminade has founded in Bordeaux “Marian Congregations” (sodalities), divided into groups according to age and sex. The sodality for young women bears, in the eyes of Madame de Trenquelléon, many similarities to the “Little Society” founded by her daughter.

At the request of Abbe Lafon she proposes that Adèle affiliate herself to the “Congregation” of Bordeaux. For his part Abbe Lafon speaks of Adèle and of the “Little Society” to Father Chaminade who provides to Madame de Trenquelléon some notes on his Congregations (sodalities). [Translator’s note: It is assumed that the French word “congregation,” used throughout this text is in reference to Fr. Chaminade’s sodalities, as we call them, especially since no term other than “congregation” is employed to describe Chaminade’s groups.]

1808 November 20: Adèle is now 20 years old. She is sought in marriage by a “young man of great merit and high social position.” Despite favorable advice from her parents and the example of her friend, Jeanne Diche, she turns down marriage decisively and for life.

1808 November-December: Correspondence begins between Adèle and Father Chaminade. The “Little Society,” thanks to the directives of Father Chaminade—carefully shared and discussed among the members—forms itself in the image of the works in Bordeaux, and in a special way imbues itself with the Marian spirit.

1809 November 4: Marian sodalities are suppressed in France. The “Little Society” escapes this measure thanks to the cleverness of Adèle, and the discreet, almost secret, sending of letters.

1810: Adèle falls seriously ill, and there is fear for her life. She recovers, but the sense of the precariousness of life becomes stronger in her. The idea of Carmel

resurfaces, and at the same time she becomes more involved in the apostolate: teaching catechism to poor children, primary school, visits to the sick, help to the needy. This is what she calls “her missions.” At the same time she continues her correspondence with her friends.

1812: Adèle’s father is afflicted with a progressive paralysis. His daughter becomes his care-giver and inseparable companion: the “faithful Antigone,” as he likes to call her.

1810-1813: In her letters to the “Little Society” Adèle speaks in terms sometimes veiled, sometimes clear, depending on the political climate, of a “cherished project” to be carried out, that is to say of the establishment, involving her and her friends, of a religious community having for its end first of all the personal sanctification of its members through prayer and the observance of the three traditional vows, then the practice of work of charity to remedy the spiritual and material poverty of the people of the countryside.

Informed of the “cherished project” Father Chaminade invites Adèle to Bordeaux where he has undertaken something similar with the most devout members of the Marian sodalities (men and women). The political circumstances do not permit Adèle to respond to the invitation of Father Chaminade.

1813 July-August: Adèle and her companions in the “Little Society” are affiliated to the sodality of young women of Bordeaux by Abbe Laumont, delegate of Father Chaminade.

1814 June-July: With the abdication of Napoleon (April 11) and his exile to the Island of Elba, the monarchy is restored and with it a climate of relative religious freedom. Adèle begins to give shape to her “cherished project.” With Agatha Diche and several friends they decide to live as religious in their own setting, and they give themselves a religious name. They obtain from M. Laumont the promise to prepare a rough draft of a Rule which would then be submitted for the revision and approbation of Father Chaminade. Adele secures also from the Vicar-general of Agen authorization that Messieurs Laumont and Larribeau recognize the association of members in the chapel of the Chateau de Tranquelléon.

1814 August-October 8: Adèle brings Father Chaminade up to date on the progress of her “cherished project.” Chaminade welcomes her news at the outset, then reveals in several letters that he is Missionary Apostolic in France, his own undertaking, cultivated over 14 years. He proposes to Adèle and her friends that they become with him “missionaries” for the purpose of multiplying and cultivating among the people “Marian Congregations.” This eminently apostolic goal states precisely (in defining specifically) the goal of the “Little Society.” Father Chaminade asks Adèle and her friends their opinion of the proposition.

1814 October 10-11: The proposal of Father Chaminade is discussed by this group of friends and M. Laumont, and it is adopted with enthusiasm. Adèle is charged with expediting it with Father Chaminade. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary, for all intents and purposes, is founded.

1814: Adèle sends to Father Chaminade the draft of the constitutions prepared by M. Laumont. She adds to it her observations. Father Chaminade, in accord with the remarks of Adèle, finds it too imperfect. At the same time it curbs the impatience of Adèle and her companions who would like to begin the novitiate on December 8. He invites them to profess the Vow of Chastity and offers to write the Constitutions. Adèle accepts the counsels of Father Chaminade, and proposes to those companions who join themselves to her in (making) the Vow of Chastity that they wear a silver ring as a symbol of their total commitment to Christ.

1815 March 15: Father Chaminade postpones for a time the organization in canonical form of a religious community. In view of the specific goal of the future institute, he believes it more expedient, for the moment, to develop and to expand as much as possible and to organize carefully the Marian sodalities in the Diocese of Agen where the bishop, Monseigneur Jacoupy, approves of and encourages them.

1815 March-May: This delay proves providential. With the return to power of Napoleon (March 20), religious repression resumes. Father Chaminade is detained, assigned to residence in central France and forced to break off all contact with Adèle.

1815 June 18: The death of Baron de Trenquelléon after long months of suffering.

1815 September-October: Free with regard to her family, Adèle resumes contact with Father Chaminade (freed on his part by the fall of Napoleon and the return of Louis XVIII.) In the exchange of letters that follows, Father Chaminade is led to a defined statement of the specific end of the future Institute: it will be missionary, working at the multiplication of Christians through the development of Marian sodalities. In view of the approaching assembly of the community, Father Chaminade gives approval for Adèle to rent in Agen part of a former convent called the "Refuge."

1815 December 6: Father Chaminade writes to Adèle that the Constitutions are ready and that he expects to go to Agen in January.

1815 December 28: Adèle proposes to the members of the "Little Society" a novena of prayers to begin on the First of January, praying that God make known to each one that state of life He wishes for her.

1816 Beginning of January: Adèle communicates to her companions who aspire to the religious life the desire expressed by Father Chaminade that he receive from each one a personal letter in which she will indicate why she feels herself attracted to the religious state and the eventual difficulties or obstacles that she thinks she will encounter.

1816 January 11: Responding to a request from Adèle, Father Chaminade specifies that the new order will make of each religious a missionary under the protection of the Virgin Mary.

1816 January 18: Adèle gives power-of-attorney to Monsieur Diche to rent at Agen part of the former convent of the "Refuge" where the future religious will lodge.

1816 February 2: The signing of the lease.

1816 April 17: Adèle divests herself of her possessions in favor of her brother.

1816 May 24: Final goodbyes to her family.

1816 May 25: With three friends, Adèle leaves the Chateau de Tranquelléon for the "Refuge" at Agen, where there are already two other future religious. Mademoiselle de Lamourous, foundress of Misericorde in Bordeaux, arrives a few hours later, sent by Father Chaminade to (help) launch the new foundation.

1816 June 8: Father Chaminade arrives with the text of the Constitutions. He anticipates admitting the young women to religious profession after several days of retreat. But he comes up against the refusal of Agen's bishop, Mgr. Jacoupy, who is not agreeable to the authorization of perpetual vows, and who also delays the moment when the sisters take the religious habit. During his stay which is extended to the beginning of July, Father Chaminade explains the Constitutions and initiates (the young women) in the practice of religious life. Before leaving for Bordeaux he names Adèle Superior of the convent. On his part, Mgr. Jacoupy names Monsieur Mouran (Superior of the major seminary of Agen) confessor and local ecclesiastical superior.

1816 September 6: In order to overcome the hesitations of Mgr. Jacoupy on the subject of cloister inherent to perpetual vows, Father Chaminade proposes to make the cloister the object of a special vow from which superiors would be able to give dispensation in case of necessity.

1816 November 18: Father Chaminade authorizes the opening of an elementary school for poor young girls.

1816 December 25: Mgr. Jacoupy allows the wearing of the religious habit on Christmas Day. Monsieur Mouran gets the permission prolonged throughout the Octave, then sine die.

1817 July 25: After 14 months preparation Mgr. Jacoupy authorizes the sisters to profess their vows, but without ceremony, in the secret of the confessional. Father Chaminade receives these vows.

1819 January 18: Father Chaminade informs the Holy See of the foundation of the Daughters of Mary and solicits diverse spiritual favors.

1819 May 25: Rome grants the requested favors.

1819 June 21: Correspondence begins between Adèle and (Saint) Emilie de Rodat; this correspondence will continue until the death of Mother [Adele] de Trenquelléon.

1819 December 27: Purchase of one part of the former convent of the Augustins at Agen. The goal is to transfer the community there.

1820 March 11: Purchase of a second section of the convent of the Augustins.

1820 April 1: (Saint) Emilie de Rodat invites Mother de Tranquelléon to Villefranche. From the correspondence between the two foundresses was born the desire to see the sisters of Agen and those of Villefranche form just a single institute.

1820 April 5: Mgr. Jacoupy is opposed to this trip, desiring that the Sisters of Villefranche come first to Agen.

1820 June 5: Purchase of a house at Tonneins (Lot et Garonne) in order to found a new community.

1820 Last days of August: Visit of Father Chaminade to Agen where he stays for a little more than a week.

1820 September 6: Transfer of the Daughters of Mary from the "Refuge" to the former convent of the Augustins.

1820 September 7: Father Chaminade and Mother de Tranquelléon accompany to Tonniens the sisters who are to make up the new community under the direction of Mother Therese Yannasch.

1821 October 7: Mother de Trenquelléon admits to the novitiate her cousin Elizabeth de Casteras, who will become the third Superior General.

1822 July 3: The desire for the union between the Daughters of Mary and the Sisters of Villesfranche continues. Mother de Trenquelléon invites Emilie de Rodat to come to Agen during the stay that Father Chaminade will make there. This visit will take place. Mother Emilie de Rodat will come with Monsieur Marty, Ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters of Villefranche. At the end of their stay the union is decided upon in principle, but at Villefranche the sisters, fearing to be separated from their Mother Superior, are against the union. This will not prevent the friendship and the correspondence between the two foundresses from continuing.

1823 February 6: Acquisition of a new part of the former convent of the Augustins.

1824 July 16: Mother de Trenquelléon goes to Condom (Gers) with Father Chaminade to set up a community there under the direction of Mother Mary of the Incarnation of Lachapelle.

1824 July 27: Transfer of the novitiate from Agen to Bordeaux. Mother de Trenquelléon goes there together with Father Chaminade and stays there for a couple of days.

1824 August 10: Mother de Trenquelléon signs the contract which makes her proprietress of the novitiate house at Bordeaux. Then she returns to Agen.

1824 August 20: Bishop of Agen, Monseigneur Jacoupy, approves in writing the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.

1825 May 24: The Assembly passes a law authorizing female congregations.

1825: Mother de Trenquelléon is ill. Father Chaminade forbids her to do apostolic works and obliges her to rest. This is a time during which she strengthens her connections, by mean of correspondence, with her sisters, especially the superiors and the novices. She draws up "little catechisms" for the formation of the novices and an account of the origins of the Institute, unfortunately now lost.

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1826: The health of Mother de Tranquelléon grows more and more precarious. She suffers stomach trouble, and it is difficult for her to recoup strength. She guides her daughters through correspondence, comforting them (on her own account) [sur son propre compte]\* attentive to fidelity to the Rule, to respect for the cloister, to growth in devotion to Mary and to Jesus in the Eucharist. \*[exact meaning here unclear to the translator]

1826 July-mid-August: Father Chaminade visits the convents at Agen, Condom, Tonneins.

1826: A new foundation at Arbois (Jura) has been decided upon during the visit of Father Chaminade.

1826 October 27: Mother de Trenquelléon goes to Bordeaux to make her recommendations to the sisters due to leave for Arbois.

1826 October 29: The departure of the sisters for Arbois. Mother Mary Joseph de Casteras is named superior.

1826 November 18: Arrival of the sisters at Arbois.

1826 December 23: A letter informs Mother de Trenquelléon that Mother Mary Joseph has typhoid fever and has received Last Rites. Mother de Trenquelléon asks the prayers of all the communities, and they are so offered.

1827 January 29: The state of the health of Mother de Trenquelléon grows worse and worse. Father Chaminade prescribes prayers in all the convents of the Daughters of Mary to bring about the stabilization and recovery of their superior-general.

1828 February 12: Mother Saint Vincent de Labastide informs Mother Emilie de Rodat of the state of health of Mother de Trenquelléon and asks for prayers.

1827 February 16: Mother de Trenquelléon details on stamped paper the sum total of amounts received from each religious sister for the purchase of the properties of the Institute.

1827 July 14: Mother de Trenquelléon calls together her Council, desiring to ask for the approbations of the Institute by the government.

1827 July 18: Father Chaminade leaves Agen after having paid a visit to the convent.

1827 October 27: Mother de Trenquelléon draws up her will and testament.

1827 November 15: Mother de Trenquelléon writes to the mayor of Agen to ask him to call for a resolution of the Municipal Council attesting to the benefits of the convent of the Daughters of Mary in view of its recognition by the government.

1827 November 22: The bishop of Agen approves the civil statutes of the Institute.

1827 November 28: The last letter of Mother de Trenquelléon. It is addressed to Mother Marie of the Sacred Heart (Agatha Diche), superior of the convent of Tonneins.

1828 January 7: Letter of Monsieur Larribeau to Mother Saint Vincent in order that she prepare Mother de Trenquelléon for death.

1828 January 10: Death of Mother de Trenquelléon

1828 January 11: Funeral services in the chapel of the convent.

1828 January 12: Interment in the cemetery of the convent of the Daughters of Mary at Agen