

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon
June 10, 1789- January 10, 1828
Foundress of the Marianist Sisters
Beatification June 10, 2018

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon was from a wealthy and aristocratic family. Her father, the Baron de Trenquelléon, was an officer in the king's own Royal Guard. When Adèle was two and a half, he went into exile to support the anti-revolutionary movement. In 1797 the Baroness and her two children were forced into exile by the same law that had entrapped Father Chaminade; that is, for mistakenly appearing on the list of *émigrés*. Only after six years of separation was the Baron able to rejoin his family.

Shortly after the family's return to Trenquelléon, some 15 miles west of the city of Agen, Adèle embarked on a twofold career of spiritual growth. When she was not yet 13, she pestered her brother's tutor to give her a personal Rule of Life to prepare herself for the Carmelite vocation she desired to follow, having made her first communion in Spain under the instruction of Carmelite sisters. By the time she was 15, she and a small group of friends had formed an association of prayer and support to promote their own spiritual growth and to prepare themselves for a good death. With the health hazards of the time, and the ever-present possibility of renewed anti-Catholic persecution, it was not unusual for even young girls to think seriously of their own death. This spiritual union spread rapidly and soon counted some 200 young women scattered over an area the size of the state of Ohio. "*Chère Adèle*," as she was called, was its heart as well as its official leader and solidified their bonds by means of extensive letter writing.

By 1810, a number of these young women, like other young men and women of the Sodality of the Madeleine in Bordeaux, were looking for some form of religious life. By 1814 their plans had taken clear shape. After the abdication of Napoleon and the death of her paralyzed father, Adèle was able to move freely and openly and put her plan into motion. In 1816, under Father Chaminade's guidance and with the encouragement of Bishop Jacoupy of Agen, she and her companions inaugurated their religious community: the Daughters of Mary (who later would come to be known as Marianist Sisters). Like the Bordeaux Sodality, the community saw itself as called to give its members mutual support, to engage in Christian outreach to the world, and to carry on Mary's mission of birthing Christ in every age. They integrated remarkably well the characteristics of the contemplative life of the Carmelites and the active missionary thrust of the Sodality.

After the foundation of the religious community, the Sodality continued to be the primary concern of the Foundress. Though church law of the time required that women religious be cloistered, each of the five convents founded during Adèle's brief 12 years in religious life was the center of a Sodality for young women, a married women's sodality and a Third Order secular which carried the community's mission beyond the walls of its enclosure. The Daughters of Mary and the Third Order combined in 1918, when new Church law redefined them both as "religious institutes."

From the members of the Sodality also came the first nucleus of Society of Mary, founded in 1817. Dedicated to the mission of Mary and centered on conformity with Jesus her Son, the "male religious of our Order," as Adèle called them, performed various ministries. With the foundation of the Society of Mary, the three branches of the Family found their unity in the person of Father Chaminade, who was head of all three. More importantly for us, they found their unity in a common spirit flowing from the personality and insights of three remarkable people. Today, these foundations are known as Marianist Lay Communities, The Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Society of Mary and the Alliance Mariale. Together they continue the legacy of the founders in our contemporary world, in concern for the dynamic spiritual development of the members, and in outreach to the most impoverished and the needy segments of our world.

Adapted from Joseph Stefanelli' SM: *Things Marianist*, "Who Started all this anyway?"
a publication of the North American Center for Marianist Studies