



The Marianists

A Dream Realized!

By Bro. David Betz

May 25 is the Feast of Mary, Help of Christian. This day in 1816 Blessed Adèle and several of her companions traveled to Agen to start a religious community with the assistance of Blessed Chaminade and Venerable Marie Thérèse. It was a dream come true for Blessed Adèle. At a young age she considered entering the Carmelites because she wanted to commit herself to a life of service to her God. The seeds of this desire started when she was only 4 years old and when she was 13, she expressed the desire again by asking to spend time in a Carmelite monastery in preparation for her Confirmation. But her friendship with Jeanne Diché, whom she met during this preparation time, led to an entirely different direction.

From their friendship grew an Association – a large network of young women in the rural areas that surrounded the Chateau de Trenquelléon. She and fellow associates were involved with providing material goods to local families in need and religious education to young girls. Her Association eventually connected with Blessed Chaminade's Sodality in Bordeaux. In her correspondence with Blessed Chaminade, she mentioned her desire for religious life. With the assistance from Blessed Chaminade, Blessed Adèle's desire finally came to fruition, but it was not joining the Carmelites but being part of a new venture, The Daughters of Mary.

I would like to share with you some excerpts from Fr. Joseph Stefanelli's book, Adèle, about the beginning of the Daughters of Mary.

(From page 183) The next morning, Saturday, May 25, she and her three companions slip quietly out of the chateau at 4:00 a.m. and proceed on foot the five miles to the Garonne. They cross over on the ferry, then take a carriage the fifteen miles from Port-Sainte-Marie to Agen. They arrive around 9:00 a.m. (47 N76) and dismount at the Refuge (48), situated in the southeastern corner of the old city. There they are met by Souer Francoise Arnaudel and Souer Marthe (49 N76, 77). Adèle embraces them with enthusiasm and she immediately entrusts to Souer Francoise the purse with her monies (50). Belloc, of course is there, and Agathe and many of the Associates and friends from the area. Ducourneau from Notre Dame is also there, and perhaps Dubrana. They all go into the chapel, which has been prepared and decorated for the occasion by Belloc and the others. There they sing a hymn of thanksgiving.

(From page 184) Adèle is finally “at home,” (55) in her convent, named after the Conception of Mary (56). Between her arrival in the morning and the visit to the Bishop in the evening, she is able to see all the work that Belloc has been supervising these past few weeks. . . .

I invite you to consider spending time reading Fr. Stefanelli’s biography of Adèle (1989, Marianist Resources Commission). It can be purchased through the North American Center for Marianist Studies (www.nacms.org/). Let us pray for the Daughters of Mary Immaculate as they remember their foundation and thank God for their invaluable presence in the Marianist Family.