



Blessed Chaminade and Blessed Adèle – Models of Faith and Perseverance

By Bro. David Betz

When I reflect on our two Blesseds, Chaminade and Adèle, faithfulness and perseverance are dominant themes that arise. They lived in the tumultuous time of the French Revolution and to survive they undoubtedly had to have much faith and perseverance. And so, I wonder where they got these attributes since they modeled them throughout their entire lives. And of course, family comes to mind. It was their families that instilled these characteristics. Since many of the institutions during the French Revolution were non-existent, they had to depend on the people who were essential in their lives.

Blessed Adèle's mother, Marie-Ursule de Saint-Chamarand, was the primary person in her life. From the beginning of Adèle's life her mother was her mentor, nurturer, educator, and model of faith. It was from her mother that Adèle's deep devotion to the poor and marginalized was developed. Fr. Joseph Stefanelli's writes in his biography of Adèle, that the Baron de Batz de Trenquelléon was so impressed with his wife that he described her as the "the tenderest of mothers and a truly incomparable woman." Incomparable meant that she was a "strong woman in the scriptural mold." And the Baron called her a saint because of her devotion to the poor and lowly. So, Adèle's love for Jesus and Mary and her persistence was present from her early beginnings and continued throughout her entire life.

Blessed Chaminade was the youngest in his family and you can imagine that his concerns and welfare was a primary goal for his parents and siblings. It was his brothers, Jean- Baptiste and Louis Xavier who took him under their wings as he grew older and were especially important in his early religious and secular education. I believe that this support from his brothers enabled Chaminade to develop a strong faith especially in recognizing the role of Mary and nurtured his religious life. It also gave him the perseverance which sustained him for the rest of his life. Fr. Vincent Gizard mentions that while the three brothers were responsible for the St. Charles Seminary in Mussidan, the success of the school was "due to teamwork. All decision were made together in a family atmosphere."

Now let me share with some words of Blessed Chaminade and Adèle that demonstrate their faithfulness and perseverance.

Blessed Adèle: Letter 657 to Sister Dosithée Gatty, Tonneins, June 27, 1926

“Let us have confidence in Holy Providence. We must love to feel some of the effects of the poverty we have vowed. Consider it a grace to have been found worthy to suffer something for Jesus Christ. It is on just such occasions that we can best prove to him our love. The saints knew how to appreciate this type of spiritual good fortune. These are the treasures of eternity; they should be the only object of our longing.”

Blessed Chaminade: Letter 7.1521 to Father Caillet, November 20, 1849 (Near the end of his life when he was having difficulties within the Society of Mary)

“Let us take for our rule of the life the motto “Each one sacrifices himself for the group and the group for the individual, to the extent that conscience will allow.” The members of the present administration and of its successors will rejoice rather than be distressed because Divine Providence has given them numerous opportunities to bear with one another. How consoling these will be to their faith because they will be a means of sustaining the spirit of abnegation which those in authority find it hard to develop in the absence of opposition. It is in the spirit which is proper to the beautiful Society of Mary that all superiors should be proof against every adversity. May I add that therein lies the only safeguard of our faith in these times, when lies can so transform themselves in the hearts of men that they appear under the trappings of virtues.”

See:

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Blessed William Joseph Chaminade: Founder of the Marianist Family, Vincent Gizard, SM, Servant of God Series, North American Center of Marianist Center, Dayton, OH, 2000

Writings on Faith by William Joseph Chaminade, Volume One, translated by Joseph Roy, SM, North American Center for Marianist Studies, Dayton, OH, 2005

Letters of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, Volume Two: 1816-1827, edited by Joseph Stefanelli, SM, Monograph Series-Document No. 41, Volume Two, North American Center for Marianist Studies, Dayton, OH, 1999