

## **Blessed Chaminade and Blessed Marie of the Conception: ILLUMINATORS!**

In our Marianist World, January is a time that we celebrate our founders, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade (January 22) and Blessed Marie of the Conception (Adèle) de Batz de Trenquelléon (January 10). They are two individuals that we Marianists, hold dear in our hearts because they are the foundation of what we believe in as we continue their legacy in our present communities and works.

As I write this introduction, my mind becomes focused on the question, “What is a founder?” What can we find essential in these two important people in our lives as Marianists? Let us begin with a definition (Miriam-Webster): *Founding Father or Mother: one who starts or helps to start an institution or a movement.*

In looking at Chaminade and Adèle, they started or helped start, first of all, a movement. They gathered men and women around them in communities to deepen individuals’ faith journeys. Through formation and inviting men and women to intentionally seek ways to find God in their lives, they created a movement under the auspices of Mary to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Would you say, then, that Chaminade and Adèle were influencers (a popular term today)?

Influencers may be a good term, but I found another word that may describe Chaminade and Adèle, even better, Illuminators. **David Brook**, a commentator from the New York Times, recently wrote a book, [How to Know a Person: The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen](#), which I just started reading. In his first chapter, he describes Illuminators as the following:

“Illuminators, on the other hand, have a persistent curiosity about other people. They have been trained or have trained themselves in the craft of understanding others. They know what to look for and how to ask the right questions at the right time. They shine the brightness of their care on people and make them feel bigger, deeper, respected, and lit up.” (page 13)

I found myself saying, “YES, YES!” as I related this description to both Chaminade and Adèle. Through their interactions and writings, both Chaminade and Adèle found ways to instill faith, hope and love in their followers. They illuminated the lives of the men and women who sought to deepen their relationship with God and others, especially after the turmoil of the French Revolution. It was this care and concern shown by Chaminade and Adèle that led some men and women in wanting a deeper commitment to this Marian movement. It was from this desire that the institutions of the Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary were founded.

And today, the Marianist Family is an international community of lay and religious sisters, brothers, and priests that strive to continue the Spirit of our founders, Chaminade and Adèle, in bringing Jesus to our world as Mary did. We are being called to instill faith, hope, and love with the people to whom and with whom we minister. Blessed Chaminade said it poignantly in 1839 after he received the Pontifical Degree of Holiness for the religious communities (It can also be said of the lay branch as well):

“Our is a great work, a magnificent work. If it is universal, it is because we are missionaries of Mary, who has said to us: “Do whatever He tells you.” Yes, all of us are missionaries; each one of us has received from the Blessed Virgin a commission to work at the salvation of his brothers and sisters in the world.”  
(Letter of August 24, 1839, to the Retreat Masters)