



## VIA LATINA 22

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News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

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### Priestly Ordination in the District of Côte d'Ivoire

Bro. Claudel Noël was ordained a priest during Mass at the National Marian Shrine in Abidjan on Saturday, November 15, 2025, by H.E. Mauricio Rueda Beltz, Apostolic Nuncio to Côte d'Ivoire.

The highlights of the ceremony were:

**The laying on of hands** : an essential gesture of the sacrament, performed by the Nuncio.

**Prostration** : a sign of total abandonment.

**The presentation of the vestments** : wearing of the stole and chasuble.



**The laying on of hands by H.E. Mauricio Rueda Beltz**

Many brothers of the Society of Mary and members of the Marianist lay communities attended the celebration. After the Mass, lunch was served in the brothers' residence.

The next day, Sunday, November 16, Father Claudel Noël celebrated his first Eucharist, a Mass of thanksgiving, at the Marian Shrine. It was an opportunity to express his gratitude and share his joy with all his colleagues.

We give thanks to God for the ordination of Father Claudel Noël, and pray to the Virgin Mary to accompany every step of his ministry.

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## **Appointment of New Superior for the Region of Japan**

As leadership changes happen across different units, the Region of Japan also is going through an important change. The Superior General, with the approval of his council, has appointed **Fr. Isao Jean-Baptiste Aoki** as the new Regional Superior, starting on April 1, 2026. Fr. Aoki returns to this role, having served as regional superior before **Fr. Koichi Ichise**, who is finishing his second term after six years of service.



We are grateful to Father Ichise for his hard work and leadership during his time as regional superior. We also thank Father Aoki for agreeing to take on this important responsibility again. Please keep the Region of Japan in your prayers as they move through this time of change and look ahead to the future.

The Region of Japan has a total of 25 religious (12 lay and 13 priests) in six communities. Their four schools are Kaisei Gakuen in Nagasaki, Osaka Meisei Gakuen, Sapporo Kosei Gakuen and Gyosei Gakuen in Tokyo.

**Fr. Isao Jean-Baptiste Aoki** was born in Hyogo, Japan, professed his first vows in 1963 and was ordained in 1976. He earned a bachelor's degree in religion-social sciences in 1967 in Tokyo. From 1978 to 2011, he served in leadership positions in Brazil. After serving as the regional superior of Japan from 2011-2020, he was Novice Master and is currently Chairman of the Board of Gyosei Gakuen in Tokyo. He currently resides in the Gyosei Shudoin community in Tokyo.



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## Appointment of New Provincial and Assistant Provincial for the Province of the USA

After consulting the members of the Province of the USA, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has appointed **Bro. Ed Violett** as the next Provincial and **Fr. Bob Jones** as Assistant Provincial for a first term of five years beginning July 1, 2026. They will succeed **Fr. Oscar Vasquez** and **Bro. Bernie Ploeger**, who are completing their second term after serving in these roles since 2018; we are grateful for their steady leadership and generous service during these past years. We also express our appreciation to Brother Ed and Father Bob for accepting this significant responsibility in the life of the Province.

Please keep the Province of the USA in your prayers during this time of transition and as the discernment continues in naming the additional members of the next provincial council.



The Province of the USA consists of 179 members (130 lay and 49 priests) in 24 communities across Ireland, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i and the continental USA. Their work includes three universities, seventeen schools, three parishes, three retreat centers, and a range of programs, such as youth ministries, faith and spiritual formation, as well as initiatives focused on justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.



**Bro. Edward Violett** is a native of Agana, Guam, and grew up in El Paso, Texas. He professed first vows in 1982. He holds a bachelor's degree in financial management from St. Mary's University, a master's degree in administration from the University of Notre Dame and a doctorate in social policy and administration from the London School of Economics. His ministry has included leadership and international service, with assignments in Rome, India and the United States. He served as Assistant General for Temporalities in Rome from 2006-2013 before

becoming provost at Our Lady of the Lake College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He currently is the Vice President of the Marianist Center of Hawai'i, a member



of the Provincial Council, and resides at the Kalaepōhaku Marianist Community in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

**Fr. Robert Jones** is a native of Indiana. He professed first vows in 2007 and was ordained in 2015. He holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Dayton and a master's degree in pastoral ministry from Boston College. His formation included study at the Marianist International Seminary in Rome, along with service in school and parish ministries. Following his ordination, he taught math and served in campus ministry at Chaminade-Julienne High School in Dayton, Ohio. Recently,



he completed a 500-mile pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago in Spain. He currently serves as chaplain at the University of Dayton, is a member of the Provincial Council, and resides at the Chambers Street Marianist Community in Dayton.

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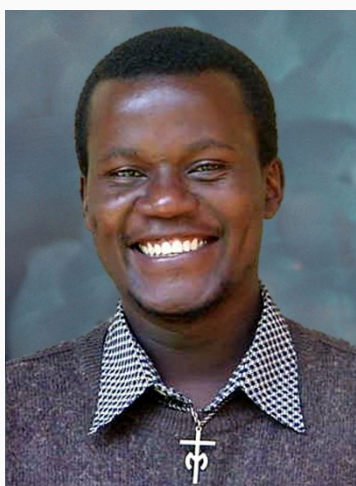
## Change of Rector at the Chaminade International Seminary

Next July, Fr. Miguel Ángel Cortés, SM, will have completed his second term as Rector of the Chaminade International Seminary in Rome. In discernment with their respective Units, the General Council has appointed Fr. Michael Otieno Ochieng', SM, Rector of the Chaminade International Seminary for a first term of three years (2026-2029). We thank him for his availability as well as for that of the Region of Eastern Africa, which will release him for this responsibility.

Fr. **Miguel Angel Cortés** has done excellent work with seminarians during his six years of responsibility. With method, rigor and benevolence, he accompanied the seminarians in their preparation for the diaconate and the priesthood. He transmitted to them our beautiful charismatic tradition concerning the exercise of the priesthood in the context of mixed composition; he also guided them in their pastoral preparation, a preparation that each one must then continue in the context of his Unit.



We thank Fr. Miguel Ángel ("Manque") for this great service, so important for the whole Society of Mary. He will continue his ministry in his province, that of Spain, which we thank for having made Manque available to the Society of Mary during all these years.



Fr. **Michael (Mike) June Ochieng'** was born in Kenya in 1971. He made his first vows in 1998 and his final vows in 2004. After formation in Rome, at the Chaminade International Seminary and at the Gregorian University, he was ordained a priest in 2007. From 2013 to 2016 he prepared a licentiate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. After serving in a parish in Mombasa, Kenya, he was also chaplain of our new High-school in Lilongwe, Malawi, before taking charge

of the scholasticate in Nairobi. We assure him of our prayers for his new function which he will carry out in collaboration with the Vice-Rector, Bro. Hervé Dagbo of the District of Ivory Coast.

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## World Council of the Marianist Family

From November 7 to 9, the World Council of the Marianist Family met in Rome. As in previous years, this year we have also dedicated three days to being

together, praying together, living together and talking about various issues that affect us as a Family.

There have been two major themes that have occupied our reflections. The first was listening to **the call of young people**, as it resounded in our tradition and more recently during our last General Chapter.

Most of our meeting was dedicated to the elaboration of the **objectives of the World Council of the Marianist Family** for the next four years **(2026-2029)**. We believe that these goals can serve as inspiration for your local Marianist Family, and for this reason each branch has passed them on to its members. The Marianist religious received them just a few days ago.



Finally, we dedicated some time to the discussion and planning of **the various common themes and celebrations** of our Family: the Marianist Magnificat, the Liturgical Calendar of the Marianist Family, World Days of Prayer 2026 and 2027; the Patronal Feast of the Marianist Family 2026...

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## Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, man of strength

It is worth reading slowly the definition of the virtue of fortitude that we find in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and then asking ourselves if this is, in a way, a portrait of our Founder.

*Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. (1808).*



Artist: Luis Lonjedo, Valencia, Spain

These lines have probably brought to mind rather quickly the difficulties and obstacles that Father Chaminade encountered in his long life, the risks he took, the persecutions he suffered, both from outside the Church and from within, and the constancy and perseverance with which he lived all these difficulties and obstacles.

The French Revolution imposed a 180-degree turn in the life of Blessed Chaminade. Without it he would probably have continued to belong to the Congregation of St. Charles in Mussidan, a science teacher and treasurer of the *collège*-seminary without major disruptions or complications. At the age of thirty, having refused to swear to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he had leave the school where he had lived for twenty decisive years of his life, move to Bordeaux with his parents, and begin a new stage of an uncertain future. He lived his priesthood in hiding during the worst moments of the Terror, even risking his own life. In 1797, under the rule of the Directory, he was forced into exile abroad, spending three years in Zaragoza. In a letter written to Thérèse de Lamourous shortly before leaving for exile, Father Chaminade expressed himself as follows:



*They say, my dear Daughter, that we die only once. Quite true, but what lessons we receive from **Providence** to forewarn us of the fact and to prepare us for it! And each one of these lessons is **a kind of death**. What is a faithful soul to do in the chaos of events which seem to swallow it up? **Sustain itself calmly by that faith** which, **while making us adore the eternal plan of God**, assures us that to those who love God all things work together unto good. (Letters, I n. 10)*

On his return from exile, he began to be very active and set up a pastoral project of great importance, the Sodality (the foundations of the men's and women's religious congregations, the support of the Miséricorde, normal schools to train teachers...), which involved very intense and continuous work. When it seemed that these projects were consolidating and bearing good fruit, the revolution of 1830 occurred, jeopardizing the continuity of everything that had been built up until then with so much effort. Under the new King Louis Philippe his home next to the Madeleine Chapel was subjected to an exhaustive search by the police.

At the age of 69, he had to get back on track. He spent the next five years quietly in Agen. In letters to Father Lalanne, Father Chaminade described how he was living through that experience:

*We are in the midst of so new a world! I am in France almost like one in a foreign land. **I seem not to know any longer what to say or do**. For my part, I am awaiting for events to come my way instead of going forward to meet them. I have no other policy than that of **having daily recourse to the Blessed Virgin**. (Letters, II n. 575)*

*It is to be presumed that the further we go, the more our worries will increase. May God be blessed! **Let us do all we can to serve Him well**. Let us try to avoid all imprudences and let us remain quiet. (...) There is somewhere talk about the time of **patience of the saints**. I don't know if that reference is to the present time, but what we do we risk in seeking it that way? (Letters III, n. 588)*

The letter to the retreat preachers of August 1839 represents the overcoming of the crisis. He writes it with the aim that preachers will make the brothers "appreciate the excellence and special character of our divine mission." At the age of 78, Fr. Chaminade is an old man full of strength and enthusiasm and who wants to pass on this feeling to his sons and daughters:

*Ours 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, we are all missionaries: each one of us has received from the Blessed Virgin a commission to work at the salvation of his brothers in the world. (Letters V, n. 1163)*



**Superior General, Fr. David Fleming, thanks Pope St. John Paul II for the promulgation of the decree of beatification of Fr. Chaminade.**

The decade of the 1840s, full of conflicts with the General Council, with various bishops, even with the Holy See, would definitively test the strength of our Founder. It was perhaps the crucible that ended up bringing to light the treasure of his virtues. Let's read directly some of what he wrote in some of his letters about his experience of those difficult years:

*My trust is in the Lord and his august Mother, for whom I wish to live and die. (1844, to M. Faye, Letters, VI n. 1.308)*

*I am becoming old, my dear Son, and I am aware that soon I shall go to give an account to our Lord Jesus Christ of the mission which is deigned to give me during the course of my life, both before the first Revolution and after. I have survived **my trials** and the greatest was not that of 1793 when only a step*

separated me from the scaffold: the thickness of a plank. The trials of 1844 are much more serious. **May God be praised! May Mary be glorified!** (1844, to Caillet, Letters, VI n. 1313)

**I have never attacked but I have always resisted**, because **my conscience** as Founder of the Society of Mary, Founder also of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of their Third Order (...) had forbidden me to abandon them, which, on my part, would have been a manifest betrayal (1845, to His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI, Letters, VI n. 1369)

**Truth and conscience are my only weapons, and I shall be strong enough** if it is in the designs of God to preserve the Society of Mary. I can say, in my extreme weakness, in my wretchedness: **"In him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything"** (1845, to L. Meyer, Letters, VI n. 1418)

You speak of peace (...) But in similar circumstances, did our Lord not say: I have come not to bring peace but war? What kind of war? Surely not the war that is rebellion, revolt, anarchy, but rather the war which consists **in absence of attack, but resistance to all evil** (...) The peace of which our Lord speaks: "I give you my peace", is precisely that peace which takes possession of a man's soul when he adheres to his duty in spite of contradictions and persecutions which, far from lessening that peace, increase it. (1847, to Caillet, Letters VII n. 1480)

These brushstrokes are enough to approach with admiration and gratitude this strong man, who found the source of his strength, not in himself, but in the Lord and in Mary, who had wanted to count on him to carry out their work. Let us ask Blessed William Joseph Chaminade to share with us this virtue that he lived in depth.

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## Enrique Llano death notice



On November 14, Mr. Enrique Llano died in Madrid. Enrique Llano was the first president of the MLC, elected at the international meeting in Chile in 1993. In addition, he was also the first president of the World Council of the Marianist Family, elected during the first meeting of the Council in June 1996. His dedication and wholehearted devotion gave a great boost to the MLC and the World Council in their early days. May He Rest in Peace.

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### Novena of Prayer to Blessed Chaminade

We ask for a novena of prayer to Blessed William Joseph Chaminade for the healing of **Mrs. Erika**, gravely ill with ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease of the motor neurons. The doctors' prognosis is very poor. This intention was requested by Fr. Victor Müller, S.M., Superior of the Sector of Peru.

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## Faustino

### Notice to our readers:

Starting with this issue, Via Latina will regularly offer its readers the bulletins published on the Cause of the Venerable Faustino. These will be available in the three official languages via a link.

[Boletín n. 42](#)

We invite you to read them and share them.



## G.A. Communications recently sent

- Death Notice: N. 25
- Nov. 20 : *Message from the World Council of the Marianist Family (WCMF)*, in three languages, to all Marianist religious.

## G. A. Calendar

- Nov. 24 - Dec. 14 : The General Council visits the Region of Italy



The Community of the General Administration and the Community of the Chaminade International Seminary wish all our brothers and sisters, their collaborators and families, a Holy Christmas and a Blessed New Year!