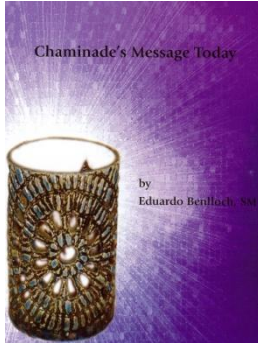


How to Use *Chaminade's Message Today* Reading Guide



The purpose of *Chaminade's Message Today Reading Guide* is to draw out key points that the author, Eduardo Benlloch, SM, addresses regarding the circumstances surrounding the founding of the Marianist Family and what gifts the Marianist Family offers our world today.

This reading guide can be used individually, in groups, or in classrooms. It is the intent of the *Chaminade's Message Today Reading Guide* to support someone new to or inquisitive about the Marianist Family or to challenge those already immersed in Marianist life to delve deeper into what being a Marianist means. *Chaminade's Message Today Reading Guide* is not intended to replace reading the actual text, but it is to be used as a support to understanding and processing important elements of Marianist life.

Each chapter of this *Reading Guide* has been summarized briefly to address key issues and vocabulary terms or to highlight ideas for further reflection. Textboxes throughout the Reading Guide are intended to flesh out the summarized material with content from the original text or excerpts from other Marianist resources. Each section ends with reflection questions that are intended to help in understanding the meaning of the content and that ask the reader to personally process the information discussed in each chapter.

This *Reading Guide* concludes with a glossary of terms that may be new or confusing to the reader.

Benlloch writes in his introduction to *Chaminade's Message Today*: "This book intends to search through the pastoral plan, discover the missionary project, and identify the various means of evangelization which blossomed from the creative genius of Father Chaminade" (*CMT*, x). It is our hope that this Reading Guide will facilitate deeper understanding of Benlloch's stated purpose on a personal and global manner.

Chaminade eagerly sought the rechristianization of France through the evangelical means he created, constantly attempting to mold them and animate them with a true spirit. (*CMT*, vii)

Introduction

Chaminade's Message Today discusses the founding of the Marianist Family and is intended not as a biographical reference of Father William Chaminade, but as a study in the spiritual guidance of the founding and proliferation of the Marianist Family today.

As the title infers, in *Chaminade's Message Today* Father Benlloch looks at the message Chaminade received by divine inspiration and asks these questions: What is the value of this message today? How do we continue to prosper with this message?

To answer these questions we will look at the roots of the Marianist Family, the stone upon which it was built, and apply these principles today.

A brief history of Father Chaminade's life and times will be reviewed to set the stage for this discussion. We will be asking big questions throughout our reading. What is divine inspiration? Does divine inspiration have an expiration date? Was this inspiration only applicable during Father Chaminade's lifetime?

Reflection Questions

Before we begin it is important to answer these questions:

- 1) Define the term *message*. Do you think of the word *message* in positive or negative terms?
- 2) How do you typically convey or receive a *message*? Through actions, words, deeds?

This book intends to search through the pastoral plan, discover the missionary project, and identify the various means of evangelization which blossomed from the creative genius of Father Chaminade. Once this has been done, it will be considerably easier to understand why the Marianist Family today seems to be budding forth in a rich complexity, and what Spirit should give it life. I believe this is how we will discover Chaminade's message today. (*CMT*, x)

Chapter 1

The Divine Inspiration

Bordeaux, May 26, 1803

For some years the Church of Jesus Christ has had the consolation of seeing established in the City of Bordeaux and growing considerably from day to day a group of young people of both sexes placed under the patronage . . . of the Blessed Virgin Mary. . . . We have every reason to hope that by the grace of God this interesting nursery of servants of Mary is called to propagate the spirit of religion and of fervor in the various classes of society which its products are destined to enter eventually. (*Letters*, no. 26)

Father Benlloch briefly discusses the occasion of William Joseph Chaminade's divine inspiration regarding the formation of the Marianist Sodalities under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Did this happen in Mussidan, where William Joseph Chaminade boarded from the age of ten and began his priestly work as a young man? Was he inspired at the foot of Our Lady of the Pillar during his exile in Saragossa? Even the testimonials, given by those who worked with him directly or who knew of him indirectly, do not agree on this information. There is not one definitive piece of writing that answers this question.

Jean Baptiste Lalanne was the first member of the Society of Mary. He quotes Father Chaminade as saying, "This is what I have been awaiting [for] such as long time. Blessed be God! God has manifested his will, and the moment has come to carry out the plan I have been seeking since God inspired me thirty years ago!" (*CMT*, 12)

Father Benlloch surmises that although this statement puts into question whether Chaminade's inspiration was at Mussidan or Saragossa, the main thrust of this quotation is "Chaminade was putting into practice what God had inspired in him" (*CMT*, 13).

More questions arise when discussing what plan was divinely inspired for Father Chaminade. When he began the Bordeaux Sodality, did he know that he also wanted to create religious congregations for men and women, or did those plans reveal themselves as time passed?

Father Simler, the fourth Superior General of the Society of Mary and the author of the most comprehensive biography of Father Chaminade, writes:

[Father Chaminade] established gatherings of Sodalities under the patronage of the Immaculate Virgin Mary for young men, for fathers of families, for young women, and for Christian mothers. This was only the beginning. For a long time Father Chaminade had kept some very great plans in the depths of his heart. (*CMT*, 14)

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, July 12, 1790

IV. No church or parish of France nor any French citizen may acknowledge upon any occasion, or upon any pretext whatsoever, the authority of an ordinary bishop or of an archbishop whose see shall be under the supremacy of a foreign power, nor that of his representatives residing in France or elsewhere; without prejudice, however, to the unity of the faith and the intercourse which shall be maintained with the visible head of the universal Church, as hereafter provided.

Chaminade's Message Today will proceed under the assumption that the creation of the Marianist foundations through Father Chaminade is intricately inspired and may not be pinpointed to one place, one experience, or one moment.

To put the birth of the religious congregations into proper historical perspective is much more important than it might seem at first glance—not only to determine their fundamental mission, but also to show and live faithfully the spirit which should animate them. If the truly central thing in Chaminade's work is a pastoral plan and the beginning of a missionary project as a response to this plan, neither the elements of the plan nor the factors of the project can be separated or isolated from one another. Together they find their real meaning, placed in true perspective. (*CMT*, x)

Important Facts

- Father Chaminade refused to sign the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (7/12/1790).
- Father Chaminade was exiled in Saragossa and spent many hours faithfully praying and meditating by the statue of Our Lady of the Pillar.
- When Father Chaminade returned to France in 1800, he immediately began creating the Bordeaux Sodality that came to fruition in 1801. The Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary came into existence in 1816 and 1817, respectively.

Reflection Questions

- 1) Describe or define what “divine inspiration” means to you.
- 2) Chaminade went into exile in Saragossa. Share your personal exile/retreat.
- 3) Do you think Chaminade was given the seed of an idea or a fully-displayed plan? Give a basis for your answer.
- 4) Does this debate matter to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

A Project in Gestation

Father Chaminade was always prayerful, even as a child. Often, through his letters, Father Chaminade encouraged others to be prayerful in order to gain an insight into their interior life.

To Marie Thérèse de Lamourous he wrote (May 27, 1796):

You will add to your morning prayer a meditation lasting at first a good quarter of an hour. You will begin by adoring God interiorly and by saying to yourself, "Though I am but dust and ashes, I will enter the presence of my God!" . . . You will conclude your meditation by asking God to give you the grace to remain recollected all day and to act solely from motives of faith. (*CMT*, 23-24)

Chaminade's devotion to prayer repeatedly shows up throughout his life, especially during the more turbulent times. The French Revolution challenged many people, including clergy, on their devotion to prayer and faith. When asked to sign the Civil Constitution, Father Chaminade refused. He had to go into hiding to perform his priestly duties and had many hours to pray and meditate. This continued during his exile in Saragossa.

Father Chaminade had a close relationship with his mother, who loved Mary. A young William Joseph Chaminade duplicated this love. As a child, William Joseph Chaminade went to the school in Mussidan that was noted for its devotion to Mary. So, when Father Chaminade was exiled to Saragossa, his love of Mary was firmly instilled in his heart.

Word of God: Acts 1:12-14

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying. Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

William Joseph Chaminade took religious vows at ages 14 and 15. He did not feel called to a particular religious order, just to religious life.

While in Saragossa, Father Chaminade met many other priests and bishops. A true ecclesiastical community was formed.

Father Chaminade was probably exposed to publications during his exile in Saragossa. One such publication, *Traité de la conduite à tenir après la persécution*, considers the problem of reconciling the priests that signed the constitution and those in exile. The book also discusses how to proceed with the shortage of priests. The book suggests that the Church needed to adapt to the times, to be flexible. Chapter 10 deals with missions and states:

One of the surest means for reestablishing religion soon in France is that of missions, above all if they are done by missionaries who combine light and exactness with true zeal. This group of good workers who have brought so many back to God has not been extinguished among us. There are many virtuous ecclesiastics who would be very fit for this kind of ministry. (CMT, 37)

In Saragossa, Father Chaminade partook in many discussions regarding the new organization of the Church, remembering the early Church, and reorganization of the priestly ministry. The help of the laity needed to be considered for the fruition of this plan.

The French emigrant priests formed a fraternal community in Saragossa; we know for certain they also held meetings in which they discussed, among other things, practical questions not foreseen up to that time which the new situation of the Church in France had brought about. They asked themselves what obligations a situation which had nothing in common with the previous one would impose. (CMT, 35)

Important Facts

- Father Chaminade read studies reviewing the new situation of the Church of France and on the state of the clergy.
- Father Chaminade is greatly influenced by his reflections on the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles.

Reflection Questions

- 1) Do you think you would have signed the Civil Constitution? Why or why not?
- 2) How do you feel Father Chaminade's devotion to Mary affected his mission on his return to Bordeaux?
- 3) Imagine life in France after the revolution. Describe what was being changed or renewed in France.
- 4) Compare and contrast the Church in the world today and the Church of postrevolutionary France.

Chapter 3

The Project Gets Underway

Part 1

No distinction could have pleased him more [being named Missionary Apostolic] and have more fully satisfied his aspirations. His special vocation was a missionary one, and in this he had been in some manner confirmed at Saragossa by Our Lady of the Pillar. If he aspired to any honor, it was that of seeing himself designated by the Holy See as a missionary of the most holy Virgin in order to reestablish the empire of religion in souls. (Simler, *William Joseph Chaminade*, 94)

In France Father Chaminade had many opportunities waiting for him. He was asked to participate in the administration of the Diocese of Bazas by Archbishop de La Tour du Pin. This position had the potential of leading Father Chaminade on a successful track within the hierarchy of the Church. He also felt some allegiance to the Archbishop for support he had given Father Chaminade during his exile. He did accept the position, but asked to be called Missionary Apostolic. He also delegated responsibility so he could proceed with the work he felt he was called to do in Saragossa. He resigned from administration work as soon as the diocese was on its way back to some normalcy, and began working full time on his mission to rechristianize France.

Throughout Church history religious foundations are created first with the religious order of men, then religious orders of women, and lastly, lay groups. Father Chaminade did not follow this sequence:

The foundations of Father Chaminade occurred in a completely reverse order. First the lay group was established, with its own well-defined spirit. Then, as a consequence and a need of this Marianist lay group, the two religious congregations arose—first that for women, and secondly the one for men. Again, this historical order of Marianist foundations reveals that the essence of the project was the evangelization of society, the rechristianization of France, the multiplication of Christians, and the groupings of lay men and women into communities which were bound together by fraternal life and missionary expansion. The reason the two religious congregations existed was to serve these lay communities. (*CMT*, 47)

Father Chaminade began the Bordeaux Sodality. Sodalities before the war were based on social status. The Bordeaux Sodality consisted of people from all walks of life, both genders, and various age groups. The Sodality began on December 8, 1800, with 12 members.

The vision of Father Chaminade's Sodalities needed to meet several criteria:

- Be under patronage to Mary.
- Have a communitarian spirit.
- Promote missionary dynamism.
- Be a community formative in faith.
- Be an apostolically fruitful community.

Father Chaminade pursued the ideal of the first Christian community at Jerusalem as described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, a society marked by union, sharing, mutual help, and communion. As the Gospel spread, the Church organized communities everywhere. . . . Father Chaminade adapted his organization to the times, avoiding classifications and social strata out of harmony with the spirit of his age and the laudable aspirations of the French Revolution. He united all classes in his organization in honor of the Immaculate Conception; this so-called leveling is pure Christianity, which embraces all [people]. (*Chaminade, Another Portrait*, 96-97)

In the next chapter we will read about the providential meeting of Father Chaminade and Adèle de Trenquelléon and see the beginnings of the female and male religious orders.

Reflection Questions

The heat of a body is not preserved except by the proximity of one or several other warm bodies. There is a reciprocal communication of heat, and in this way it is continually dissipated into the air around it, which is unceasingly renewed. . . . Because this is the case, there are two solutions; either become a total hermit in order to have no other communication than with God who is the fire, or join other Christians closely in community in order to sustain one another through an intense environment of mutual charity. (*CMT*, 52)

- 1) What does the above quote state about the importance of community and being Christian?
- 2) Compare and contrast the structure of authority in the Bordeaux Sodality with the Catholic Church?
- 3) Which of the criteria needed to fulfill Father Chaminade's vision of Sodalities do you find easiest to achieve? Which is the most difficult?
- 4) The Marianist Family founded the lay communities first, then the women religious, and lastly the male religious. Is this significant to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

The Project is Consolidated

Daughters of Mary

In the summer of 1808 a member of Father Chaminade's Sodality, Jean Baptiste Lafon, met Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon's mother at a hospital. Adèle's mother began talking to Jean Baptiste about Adèle's small prayer society, called the Association. Jean Baptiste thought Father Chaminade would be interested in this work, and gave Adèle's mother Father Chaminade's address. Adèle and Father Chaminade began writing and realized they had similar goals. Adèle's group, like the Sodality, prayed each day at 3 o'clock, and they both revered Mary. Father Chaminade welcomed Adèle's Association into the Sodality.

Father Chaminade felt that any religious congregation should live without outward signs of their vocation, with the main thrust of their work to be to gather more Christians. Adèle foresaw a religious congregation that would show outward signs of their vocation and work to help the poor. After much correspondence and prayer Adèle and Father Chaminade compromised.

The Daughters of Mary secretly took their vows of religion on July 25, 1817.

Society of Mary

The Society of Mary is a religious congregation of men founded to work alongside the Daughters of Mary to support the Sodalities. Jean Baptiste Lalanne decided not to join the Jesuits and asked Father Chaminade to become active in his projects. Father Chaminade had a religious congregation of men in mind, so he eagerly accepted Lalanne's offer.

Criteria for this new foundation consisted of the following:

- Meeting together every eight days.
- Be true religious, like the very first Christians.
- Consist of a mix of priests and laymen.
- Educate middle-class youth, hold missions and retreats, and have an established director of Sodalists.
- Not be public at first.
- Be under the protection of Mary and be her possessions.

In order to evangelize and become missionaries in the full sense, it would sometimes be necessary to begin with works of education or charity, according to the needs and urgencies of the times and places. Adèle, who knew the great need for education for the poor in Agen, explained to Chaminade that there would be great disappointment in the city if she did not dedicate some of her future religious to it. . . . It was, in fact, the animation of the Sodality and the free classes for the poor girls in Agen which were the activities, perfectly compatible and complementary in practice, which gave rise to another series of apostolic initiatives of the first community of the Daughters of Mary. (CMT, 77-78)

On May 1, 1817, the Society of Mary was born. Throughout the following decades the SM took different forms, but the mission remained to rechristianize France.

During all the changes and compromises while the Marianist Family was forming, Father Chaminade often asked for guidance from the Holy Spirit. When have you asked for guidance from the Holy Spirit in your life?

. . . what is needed is a man who will not die, that is to say, a Society of men who will give themselves to God for this work, who will fulfill their task in the maturity of life, after having been formed to it under holy obedience, and who will transmit from one to the other the same spirit and the same means: it is these views which have given birth to the Society of Mary.

—*Spirit of our Foundation*, vol. 3, 93.

Reflection Questions

- 1) Are there ways Adèle's *Cher Projet* could work in today's society?
- 2) What does the following passage mean to you?
"Let us put everything under the protection of Mary, to whom her divine Son has reserved the final victory over hell . . . 'Let us be, in our humility, the heel of the Woman.'" (CMT, 81)
- 3) During Father Chaminade's religious retreats he spoke often of the gift of faith and the action this faith calls us to do. How does this speak to you in your life?

Body and Spirit

Introduction to Part Two

Part 2 of our book discusses the missionary spirit of the Marianist Family today. We will look at the *body* of the Marianist Family, the groups around the world that determine the physical form of the Marianist charism. Next, we will discuss the *spirit* of the Marianist Family. What gives each group and member life? Members of the Marianist Family are located around the world. What are the common factors that unite our Family?

Prayer for the Marianist Family

Written by: Bob Bouffier, SM/Cathy Olds

Mary, inspired by our readiness
To accept all the wonders God would work in
you,
We offer you our desire to conceive in our
hearts,
Bear in our lives, and bring forth into our
world
Jesus, Son of God, who became your Son
For the salvation of all.
May the Holy Spirit who came upon you
And overshadowed you be with us today
As we endeavor, members of one Family,
To live the Marianist Mission
Of building God's reign.

Amen.

(*The Marianist Family Prayer Book*, 76)

Also, how can Marianists survive in today's world? We will ask ourselves what we can do as Marianists today, inviting the discussion of *body* and *spirit*. There have been great advances in basic human living conditions and technology compared to the time of Chaminade. However, our world is still suffering from hunger, poverty, war, social injustice, etc. How has the role of Marianists changed from the time of Father Chaminade?

Finally, where does the Church fit into this picture? How does Mary continue to inspire the Marianist Family to reach out around the world? Having the Church and Mary represent the *body* and *spirit* of Marianists today may help us continue the mission outlined by Father Chaminade more than two hundred years ago.

Reflection Questions

- 1) What do you think are the most crucial areas of the world that need urgent attention?
- 2) Do you feel you have a shared purpose in your life? Meaning, have you found time in your life to devote to the issues you mentioned in question two?

Chapter 5 The Marianist Family

The suppliant presents for your Apostolic Blessing at least two groups that have taken rise in the bosom of these Sodalities, one in the city of Agen, and the other in the city of Bordeaux. The first is a group of virgins who, under the authority of a prelate who leaves no good work undone [Mother Adèle], consecrated themselves to the propagation of the faith when they made their religious vows. The Bordeaux group is made up of men who, in the same spirit as the Daughters of Mary, have followed with the same vows. The more particular spirit of these groups is to provide a special leader for zeal, another for instruction, and still another for work, while obliging the Superior of the Society to have all the members act together along these three lines without interruption.

(Letters, no. 110, To Our Holy Father the Pope, Pius VII, Rome, Jan. 18, 1819.)

The Marianist Sisters (FMI) and the Society of Mary (SM) have existed continually since the time of Father Chaminade. Their relationship has gone through many transformations throughout history. In recent times, these two groups have increasingly become more linked, and lay groups are reemerging and gaining importance.

Closer Relationship of the Marianist Sisters and the Society of Mary

When the SM and FMI were first established, Father Chaminade saw them as one Institute, with the goal of supporting lay communities. Throughout history this cooperation has gone through several transformations. However, these two groups have operated in many similar ways and have maintained many of the same goals and purposes. There seems to be a concerted effort to collaborate on their missions. Some of these similarities include

training of novices, sharing of meetings throughout the world, joint celebrations of Mass and feast days, and their intention of working with and supporting Marianist lay groups.

History of the Growth of Marianist Lay Communities Around the World

The history of Marianist lay groups are not well documented, between 1850 and 1950. Conversely, Chaminade's message found new life in the 1960s. Paul Joseph Hoffer, SM, ninth Superior General of the Society of Mary, suggests:

The present circular is a consequence of circumstances whereby Divine Providence usually deigns to manifest its will. Since the last war various groups have come into the orbit of the Society of Mary, some to soak up the life-giving sap of its eminently Marian spirituality, others to sustain its work and apostolate. . . . But, may we not see in this a sign of the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, desirous of furthering along the realization of the plans which she inspired in our Founder. (*CMT*, 106)

The growth of lay groups throughout the world has continued. How to encourage this growth has been brought into conversation within the religious congregations.

Types of Lay Groups of the Marianist Family

- Affiliates: Belong to the Marianist Family because they are united or joined to the SM or FMI through prayers, merits, and works. There would be no affiliates without these religious congregations.
- Marianist Lay Communities: Are Christian communities of lay adults animated by Chaminade, but have their own commitment.

These two types of lay groups share the same spirit. They are both created by the inspiration of Father Chaminade—the Marianist charism.

The Family of Mary used to operate with a hierarchical vision, with the SM and the FMI as the instigators of Marianist charism. Today, there is more equality within the Marianist Family. Although each body may look different, the spirit is the same. They are partners in hope and mission.

The Marianist Family is growing throughout the world by leaps and bounds (see table *CMT*, 115 for details).

The Future of the *Body* of the Marianist Family

- We must become a social body with great interior strength and be present in the world.
- We must try to interrelate the Marianist Family worldwide.
- There is a need to return to a strong laity, as in Father Chaminade's time.
- There needs to be apostolic collaboration between the SM, FMI, and lay groups.

Reflection Questions

- 1) Who are the members of the Marianist Family? How has the Marianist Family changed since Father Chaminade's time?
- 2) Father Hoffer says that the growth of the Marianist Family is the Holy Spirit at work again. Is this a continuance of Father Chaminade's divine inspiration or a new plan?
- 3) Define Father Chaminade's Marianist inspiration or charism.
- 4) Use your imagination. What do you think the Marianist Family will look like in 10 or 20 years?

Chapter 6 The Marianist Spirit

Mary in Marianist Spirituality

Chaminade recognized Mary's role in salvation and redemption. He was inspired by Mary's unwavering faith in Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana. Chaminade admired her grace and fidelity at the foot of the cross.

By honoring Mary we are leading people to Jesus. Through an alliance with Mary we can count on her love, help, and protection. As part of this alliance she counts on us to use our resources to fight evil and sin and bring others to Christ. Father Chaminade says a group of Marianists "is a group of Mary."

Not only does Mary, as our mother, "form our evangelical attitudes and lead us, under the action of the Holy Spirit, to conformity with Jesus Christ," (*CMT*, 124) but also she guides us into integrating prayer and service. In Luke we are shown her compassion toward Elizabeth, when she visits her older cousin to help her in her pregnancy. "In prayer [Mary] has received God; in service she takes God to others" (*CMT*, 131).

At the foot of the cross Jesus said to Mary about his disciple John, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother" (Jn 19:26).

Faith cannot remain only in the mind. Faith is a gift of God which descends to the heart and gives it a new taste for the things of God, for the reign of God. . . . Our hearts are purified of their too-human attachments, of their fears, and their egoism. (*CMT*, 138)

Faith and Poverty Should Mold Marianist Life

Father Benlloch gives many examples of Mary facing poverty and using prayer and faith to help herself and others (*CMT*, 131-36). A strong example of her integrating faith and service is at the wedding at Cana. Mary empathizes with the wedding couple for lack of sufficient wine. Mary tells Jesus to solve the problem and fully trusts his decision. Jesus had not yet performed a miracle, so he did not have this reputation for the servants to trust. The servants trusted on faith, following Mary's example. Jesus was obeyed. Marianists must act in this manner—"Do whatever he tells you."

Each mystery of faith, once meditated on, has its own purification. Praying with faith opens our hearts and minds and our own desires. We can see others more clearly. Praying with faith helps us to follow God's plan.

A goal of prayer is to realize new horizons in God's love and to dedicate service to our neighbor. To totally surrender to God is a lifetime goal. Marianists are called to share their faith. This must be shared in community. Communities are missions, and we are missionaries.

Here, she is confirmed in something her faith had already guessed: she is going to be the mother, like the Church, of all Christians. . . . With a discrete presence in the early Church, she brings her formative mission (Acts 1:14), persevering in prayer and in the same spirit. The early community in Jerusalem, the model of every Marianist community, shared Mary's spirit—as every Marianist group must do. (*CMT*, 136)

Community Life of Early Church

The first community of Christians consisted of twelve apostles, Mary, several women, and a few relatives of Jesus. A few days later the community grew to 120 persons. This community constantly attracted converts. The attractive force was due to Christian presence, witness of life, communication of faith by words and actions, and signs of liberation from evil.

The core of the first Christian community was the sharing of the Eucharist. "Celebration of the Eucharist is the most sublime expression of those who believe in Jesus Christ and is at the same time an inexhaustible source of union and apostolic strength" (*CMT*, 146). Community prayer, sharing of goods, and sharing of life were also integral parts of the first Christian community. Father Chaminade's desire was to imitate these actions in Marianist communities.

The Communitarian Spirit

The Church received direct inheritance from the Risen Jesus Christ. This Church is ideal for every Marianist. Mary's presence in every Marianist community is without question:

This will never be only a mere detail in a Marianist community. Mary gives us our name as Marianists. If Mary is not in our communities, we can never be Marianists. Her presence will always be a formative presence which will infuse simplicity and humility, union and reconciliation among all. It will impel us to walk and advance together along the ways of the Lord. It will open us to be hospitable and welcome. It will guide us in determined and courageous apostolic action. (*CMT*, 144)

Marianists must also be united in heart and soul. It is this union of heart and soul that is the "family spirit" of Marianist communities. This "family" should be founded in the Gospel.

Using Mary as a symbol of the Church will give us a strong ecclesial dimension to the community activities. Living in communion with the Church will enhance Christian life and lead to conversion of the world.

Reflection Questions

- 1) In what ways is divine inspiration immovable?
- 2) What are some poverty issues that Mary faced that we are still facing today?
- 3) Is it possible to be faithful but not prayerful?
- 4) What are some major roadblocks to good community?

Conclusion

New Needs

It is up to us to figure out where Jesus is leading us, using Mary as model of “Do whatever he tells you.” Following Father Chaminade’s example we know that Marianists must be adaptable and ready to read the “signs of the times.” Some suggested areas Marianists could apply their Apostolic Mission:

- Education in faith for young and old
- Trying to get mass media to project positive, Christian values
- Be parish apostolic in all its forms
- Work for social justice throughout the world
- Evangelize

Our work is great; it is magnificent. If it is universal, it is because we are the missionaries of Mary who says to us: “Do Whatever He will tell you!” Yes, we are all missionaries. To each of us the most Blessed Virgin has confided a mandate to work at the salvation of our brothers in the world. (*Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839*)

To accomplish these vast goals Marianists can count on other Marianists. Most especially, Marianists can count on Mary.

Final Reflection Questions

- 1) “Do whatever he tells you.”
What does that mean to you? Take time to prayerfully ask yourself that question.
- 2) What’s next? Write a short essay describing your hopes and dreams for the Marianist Family. Do not be afraid to dream big.

Glossary

Apostle: A term meaning one who is sent as Jesus was sent by the Father, and as he sent his chosen disciples to preach the Gospel to the whole world. He called the Twelve to become his Apostles, chosen witnesses of his resurrection and the foundation on which the Church is built (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 857).

Apostolate: The activity of the Christian which fulfills the apostolic nature of the whole Church by working to extend the reign of Christ to the entire world (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 863).

Apostolic Missionary: The word “apostolic” is derived from the Greek term for “sent.” “Missionary,” from Latin, means “one who is sent.” From this combination of Latin and Greek, the two-word term “apostolic missionary” was developed to “signify a call from God to a human being to proclaim the divine plan revealed in Jesus” (“Mission,” *Commentary on the Rule of Life of the Society of Mary*).

Charism: A specific gift or grace of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefits the Church, given in order to help a person live out the Christian life or serve the common good in building up the Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§ 799, 951).

Civil Constitution on the Clergy: Law that placed the Catholic Church in France under the control of civil authority and required the clergy to take an oath of allegiance to the king and constitution. The State would pay the clergy its salary. The Constitution did not recognize the spiritual authority of the pope.

Daughters of Mary Immaculate (FMI): The complete title for the female religious branch of the Marianists: Marianist Sisters. The initials FMI are taken from the French, *Filles de Marie Immaculée*.

Disciple: Those who accepted Jesus’ message to follow him are called his disciples. Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples and gave them a share in his mission, his joy, and his sufferings (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§ 767, 787).

Ecclesiastical: Pertaining to or of the Church (Greek/ Latin: *ecclesia*). Hence ecclesiastical government is church government (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 857); an ecclesiastical province is a grouping of church jurisdictions or dioceses (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 887).

Ecclesiology: This is the body of knowledge on the theology of the Church or the study of church doctrine (*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*).

Generativity: The Marianist Family is reproducing itself for new generations, which is a sign of health growth. Erik Erikson states that generativity is a mark of maturity. “It [generativity] is not possible until we meet a certain level of development” (David J. Fleming, SM, “Patterns of Growth in the Worldwide Marianist Family,” p. 9, located in *Marianist Soundings*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2003).

Juring and Nonjuring Priests: Juring priest, one who took the loyalty oath to the king and constitution. Nonjuring priests, such as Chaminade, refused to take the oath. (See Civil Constitution.)

Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839: Father Chaminade addressed the letter of August 1839 to the retreat masters who were to instruct the brothers. This letter delineated the spirit of the Society of Mary and in particular that of the vow of stability.

Madeleine: Chapel and residence in Bordeaux, France, that served as a meeting and worship area for the original Sodality. It remains a site of Marianist ministry today.

Marianist Affiliation: Members of the Marianist Family through a spiritual bond with the Society of Mary or the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. This person feels called to live according to the *spirit* of the *Rule of Life*, to dedicate oneself to Mary and her mission, and to support the life and works of the Society of Mary or the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Carol P. Ramey, *Things Marianist*, "Who Makes up the Marianist Family?").

Marianist Sodalities: Sodalities founded by Father Chaminade were to be the instruments for the rechristianization of France. Father Chaminade used the early Christian communities as his model. Members of the Sodality all were consecrated to Mary. In 1801, Chaminade established the first of these.

Mary's Apostolic Mission: A term used to describe Father Chaminade's teaching on the task God gave Mary in helping to save humankind. Father Chaminade believed that Mary brings Christ to all persons in all times. She formed Jesus both in her womb and during the years she raised him. Just as she loved, nurtured, and taught Jesus, she loves, nurtures, and teaches us. In collaboration with the Holy Spirit, she forms us to live more like Jesus. We, in turn, bring Jesus to others through our lives as Christians.

Miséricorde: French term for "mercy." In Marianist parlance, it refers to the home/program begun by Marie Thérèse de Lamourous to aid prostitutes in obtaining skills and dignity so as to redirect their lives.

Ministry: The service or work of sanctification performed by the preaching of the word and the celebration of the sacraments by those in Holy Orders (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§ 893, 1536), or in determined circumstances, by laity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 903). The New Testament speaks of a variety of ministries in the Church; Christ himself is the source of ministry in the Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 873-74).

Missionary Apostolic: Title given to Chaminade by the pope that allowed Chaminade to venture beyond diocesan boundaries to preach and teach, meaning that he was not directly responsible to a bishop, but to the pope himself. However, Chaminade always worked closely with local bishops.

National Assembly or Constituent Assembly: Name of the governing body that ruled France from 1789 to 1791. Primarily composed of former members of the First and Third Estates, it enacted legislation abolishing clergy and nobles as distinct classes of French citizens. It effectively eliminated powers of the Church and expressions of religious life.

Our Lady of the Pillar: According to an ancient story, in 40 AD before her death, Mary came to the Apostle James in Saragossa, Spain, and directed him to build a church in which he was to place her image on a pillar. Construction of the present basilica that houses the statue began in 1681. Father Chaminade spent much of his exile in prayer before the statue.

Rechristianization: Term used to describe the task of reconstituting the faith life of a culture. Father Chaminade used the word to characterize a goal of forming those deprived of spiritual life during the Revolution, as well as those who had neither education in nor experience of the Christian faith.

Refractory Priests: Ordained men who had taken the oath under the requirements of the Civil Constitution on the Clergy, but who, after the Revolution, wished to return to ministry in the Church. These men were counseled by a designate of the bishop and asked to make a public confession before returning to the active priesthood.

Reign of Terror: The most violent time of the French Revolution—out of the 10 years of the Revolution, this period spanned only 11 months—September 1793 to July 1794. It was during the Reign of Terror that Robespierre, as chairman of the Committee of Public Safety, ordered Queen Marie Antoinette, priests, and anyone harboring priests to be guillotined.

Restoration: A term used to refer to a time in history when a monarchy is “restored” to power within a country. Specific to our history, this refers to Louis XVIII, of the Bourbon dynasty, becoming king after Napoleon lost political power.

Rule of Life: A document that includes the theological beliefs and the concrete practices to support a person’s commitment to a spiritual journey. For religious, Rules are approved by Rome; for lay, spiritual directors usually guide a person in developing a rule.

Saragossa: A city in Spain, just across the Pyrenees Mountains from France. Many French exiled priests were welcomed in this city during the French Revolution.

Sodality: First begun by Jesuits, the sodalities were assemblies of lay, usually men, that fostered prayer, good works, and instruction in the faith. Father Chaminade modeled the Bordeaux Sodality on the Jesuit groups, but he incorporated more diversity in membership and greater complexity in organization and works.

Virtue: A habitual and firm disposition to do good. The moral virtues are acquired through human effort aided by God’s grace; the theological virtues are gifts of God (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1803).

Vow of Stability: In its original form, the vow was to remain at a specific place—such as a monastery. In Marianist life it expresses a bond or alliance with Mary and the Family consecrated to her. It means loving this Family, sharing its ideals, and dedicating oneself unconditionally to its works and its development. It means to make Mary known, loved, and served, so as in union with her, to bring Christ to the world.