

## Fleming's Little Dictionary of the Family of Mary

### SOUP TO NUTS: KINDS OF MEMBERSHIP

Affiliates: Lay members of the Family of Mary who are associated in a very close way with the religious of the Society of Mary or the Marianist Sisters. After a period of formation introducing them to the basic concepts of Father Chaminade, affiliates are officially received in the name of the Superior General of the Marianists (male or female branch) and make an act of consecration. They are distinguished from other lay groups in the Family of Mary by their close connection with the religious and their dependence on acceptance by the religious societies.

Sodality: A group of lay Christians who form a community in order to deepen their Christian life under the inspiration of the ideals of Father Chaminade. Father Chaminade's own Sodality, the Madeleine, was the first of the groups he founded and became a large lay movement in Bordeaux, France, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Bordeaux Sodality was mother of all Chaminade's later foundations. Any group of lay Christians which meets regularly and attempts to base its ideals on those of Father Chaminade can be called a Sodality.

State: Short for "State of Religious Living in the World," Father Chaminade's organization which was a forerunner of the modern day secular institute. Members of the State usually were members of a Sodality who wished to deepen their consecration further and who took a vow or a series of vows to express their commitment. In Father Chaminade's day, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience often were included, understood as a way of living as a lay Christian in the normal structures of the world but with an especially deep commitment. Today, the term "State" often is applied to groups of lay members of the Family of Mary who took a vow of service to the Family of Mary in order to indicate their deep and firm commitment.

CLC: Short for Christian Life Community. The Jesuit sodality, traditional throughout the world for four-hundred years, attempted to renew itself after the Second Vatican Council and changed its name to CLC, at least in English-speaking countries. Many groups of the Family of Mary, attempting to be "Sodalites" in Father Chaminade's sense, have taken this title. Some kind of collaboration between Jesuit and Marianist sodalities exists and is a frequent topic of discussion and investigation.

Marianist Priests and Brothers: Members of the Family of Mary who live in religious communities and take the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In addition, all perpetually professed Marianists add a fourth vow of "stability," understood as a vow of consecration to the service of Mary, much in the sense of the vow taken by the State members.

Marianist Sisters: Sisters who live in a religious community and take the same vows as the Marianist Priests and Brothers. They also are known as Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

Family of Mary: Not an organization, but a movement comprising all those independent groups which attempt to live out the spirit of Father Chaminade in practice. All the groups mentioned in the definitions so far are considered parts of the Family of Mary movement. They are all characterized by a common

Marianist spirituality, by some level of consecration, by autonomy, by a friendly interdependence and exchange with one another, and by some orientation of service to the world around them.

## SMART MARIANIST IDEAS

System of Virtues: Father Chaminade's pattern for spiritual growth. He advised beginners in the spiritual life to concentrate on "preparation virtues" (silence of word, signs, mind, emotion, imagination; "recollection" or concentration; "preparatory obedience" or docility "support of mortifications," or "knowing-how-to-put-up-with-problems"). These virtues were to cultivate an attitude of listening and patient growth. Next he advised his novices to focus on the virtues of purification, which would get deep down to the roots of our failings and vices and allow us to experience God's action more fully. Finally, he hoped to lead people to the "virtues of consummation," virtues in which an entire offering and dedication to God were made.

Interdependence: The idea that each group within the Family of Mary, although autonomous and independent, becomes acquainted with other groups and learns to rely on their help. Thus the Family of Mary is a kind of loose "community of communities," each of which is able to develop its own pace but to draw on the resources of the other communities. Thus the religious, State members, sodalists, affiliates, and all others are able to profit by their interaction.

Multiplication of Christians: Father Chaminade's key concept of apostolate. He wished Marianist apostles to form other apostles, that is to "multiply their influence" by working with others who themselves would have further influence. Thus, one person could touch, although indirectly, the lives of many. Father Chaminade felt that all of society could be transformed by Christians acting through "multiplication of influence."

Mission: Father Chaminade was fond of telling his disciples that they were "missionaries." By this he meant that all were called to help spread the faith everywhere. The Marianist apostle was to be involved in a dynamic task-not focusing selfishly on his own soul to the exclusion of all others, but being very concerned with the spread of the teachings of Christ and the love of Mary everywhere. Like Mary, every member of the Family of Mary was to bring forth Christ in the World.

Charism: The particular spiritual gift that characterizes a person or a group. St. Paul indicated that each Christian has his own charism, his own gift from God (prophecy, healing, administration, preaching, teaching, etc.). Groups like the Family of Mary have a charism, too. The particular gift given to the Family of Mary involved a love for Mary, a dynamic sense of mission, and a deep sense of consecration.

The Office System: Father Chaminade organized all groups he founded in terms of three offices: zeal, instruction, and temporalities. Most groups of the Family of Mary retain these three offices. They are a way of sharing authority and responsibility, as well as a way of making sure that all possible tasks are covered. Father Chaminade thought that the offices and the system of virtues would work hand in hand in forming an adult, responsible, and dynamic Christian.

Zeal: The Office of Zeal was charged with everything that relates to prayer, spiritual direction, growth in the spiritual life, etc.

Instruction: The Office of Instruction is charged with all the activities of the Family of Mary group that related to education, group discussion, to improving the cultural level of the group, to organizing learning activities, to directing meetings and planning their content, etc.

Temporalities: The Office of Temporalities is concerned with all the practical details necessary for the life of a Family of Mary group: financial matters, culinary delights, transportation, upkeep, etc.

## KNOTS THAT BIND: COMMITMENTS

Act of Consecration: A public declaration, usually made as part of a Mass or other religious ceremony, in which a member of the Family of Mary indicates his or her intention to live very faithfully to the spirit of the Family of Mary, to participate in the life of a given Family of Mary group, and to place a high priority on the values of the Family of Mary. People make this kind of commitment in order to publicly acknowledge their dedication, in order to receive the support of other members, and in order to stimulate other members to challenge them to live up to their ideals.

Vow: Some members of the Family of Mary take a vow by which they promise to make the Family of Mary a very high priority in their life. A vow is a promise made to God which is considered as binding in a very formal way, even under sin. Those who take vows of service to the Family of Mary indicate that this kind of service is so important in their life that they would feel that they would be failing in a very serious way against God if they neglected it. Like acts of consecration, vows are normally taken for a specified period of time (six months, one year, etc.).

## VIPS: VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Father Chaminade: William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850), Founder of the Family of Mary. A priest of the diocese of Bordeaux, Father Chaminade was engaged in a subversive ministry during the French Revolution and was eventually exiled to Spain. Returning to France in 1800, he founded , first, the Sodality (1800), the State (about 1809), the Marianist Sisters (1816), and the Marianist priests and brothers (1817). He lived a long and fruitful life, spending the last thirty years mainly involved in strengthening and deepening the religious societies that he founded.

Mother Adèle: Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon (1789-1828), Foundress, together with Father Chaminade of the Marianist Sisters. Mother Adèle, like Father Chaminade, went into exile with her family during the French Revolution and returned to her native Agen afterward. She was the head of an enthusiastic group of young women who formed a Sodality in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Eventually the sodality was affiliated with that of Father Chaminade, and Mother Adèle and her companions decided on becoming full-fledged religious.

Mlle de Lamourous: Marie Thérèse de Lamourous (1754-1836), one of the first of the many laypeople who chose Father Chaminade as a spiritual director. Under his influence, Mlle de Lamourous founded a group of sisters, known as Miséricorde, dedicated to working with wayward women. Some of Father Chaminade's first letters were addressed to Mlle de Lamourous.

Moderators: Religious members of the Family of Mary (priests, brothers, sisters) who work very closely with a lay group of the Family and attempt to share the riches and the expertise of the religious with these

groups. Father Chaminade founded his religious societies in order to have a “director that would never die” to head his Family of Mary. Moderators are a central element in this “director that never dies.”

#### BEST SELLERS: IMPORTANT BOOKS

*Grand Institut*: The first rule of the Marianist Sisters, composed under Father Chaminade’s direction about 1816. Many of Father Chaminade’s key concepts of the System of Virtues, the Three Offices, the prayer of faith, and the multiplication of Christians are found in the *Grand Institut*.

*Petit Institut*: A shortened form of the *Grand Institut*, written a few years later, containing many of the same ideas in a more concise way. Father Chaminade’s secretary, M. David Monier, drafted both of these documents. His style is heavy (he could have used a refresher course in composition), but the doctrine is a good index to the mind of the Founder.

*Grain of Wheat*: A booklet by Father Quentin Hakenewerth that is a very helpful presentation of the System of Virtues in contemporary terms. Good for your spiritual life!