

Marianist Founders on Faith

[*Editor's Note:* The material below was prepared at the request of Thomas Giardino, SM, for use by the Dayton SM Directors in preparation for Founders Day, 2013. All quotations below pertain to faith, a theme drawn upon during this “Year of Faith” in the Church.]

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

The quotations below appear in *Writings on Faith*, a two-volume set published by NACMS in 2005—the English translation of *Ecrits sur la foi*.

4. (To Mlle de Lamourous) I have often told you, my Daughter, that you would find everything in faith. I have even advised you to make a kind of meditation of faith, and I am convinced that it is an excellent means of sustaining you and of advancing you in virtue. At the same time, it will afford you a kind of interior refreshment and be a preservative against the advice, either too lax or too strict, that you might receive from some who would guide you rather by natural prudence than by the conduct of the Spirit of God. Always drop every idea, judgment, and feeling that your imagination might suggest, so as to be led by that holy simplicity which I have always recommended to you.

39. Then this spirit of faith will become in you a spirit of trust in God, a spirit of zeal, a spirit of strength, of generosity, etc.

94. (To Clouzet) Our worries and embarrassments, far from discouraging us, must ceaselessly reanimate our interest in the work undertaken, which we sincerely believe to be the work of God. We must consider ourselves sufficiently rewarded by the honor which God confers on us by choosing us, and by the means which he gives us to show him our love and our fidelity.

149. (To Lalanne) May our status quo condition, my dear Son, in no way disquiet you. If we remain inviolably united in Our Lord and in his august Mother, we will be very strong. . . . Our real strength must lie in interior dispositions. I am not saying here that there is no place for setting up certain wise defenses; even if these defenses were to seem as impregnable towers, they would be as nothing if the interior were not in perfect order.

164. (To Lalanne, Jan. 23, 1833) Faith, and especially this faith of the heart, is a great gift of God. It is for this reason that we always need to say, “Lord, increase our faith” [Lk 17:5]. God, so to say, easily grants this grace, when we devote ourselves to works of faith. . . . Oh, my dear Son, what happiness for us if for the rest of our lives we can walk along the beautiful paths of faith, act only by faith, and live only by faith! The faith which would not enlighten our mind would not give us the life of justice, which is a divine life.

166. (To Lalanne) The peculiar quality of faith of the heart is to give stability to the faculties of our soul, to our mind and to our will. I call this the will of the new man.

563. Elizabeth had said to Mary, “Blessed is she who believed” [Lk 1:45] the words of the angel, meaning that her faith was at the source of her happiness. Mary develops this truth by adding, “My happiness is great, I grant you, but I attribute it to a purely gratuitous favor from the Lord.”

Here Mary praises especially the three attributes which mark all of God’s words, and she teaches us that all the mysteries and the Gospel itself are founded on the power, the holiness, and the mercy of God. Is there, for the upright soul, any greater motive of faith?

321. (To Chevaux) Your faith will have required of you a great sacrifice, and your obedience will have spoken several times of victory. . . . It is easy to see how this combat and this victory occur in the truly Christian heart. On the one hand, the spirit of humility, which is truth and justice, causes its original and personal unworthiness, and on the other hand, the spirit of faith, which is entire confidence in the grace of Jesus Christ, restores courage, causes the obstacles invincible to nature to be despised, and causes the soul to march on and claim victories by the great attachment to obedience.

331. (To Father Perrodin) It is also faith, my dear Son, which makes us conceive Jesus Christ in ourselves; “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” [Eph 3:17]. All the treasures of the Divinity are reduced in Mary to the faith with which she was animated. It became in her a plentitude of graces, a source of life. As Mary conceived Jesus Christ in the natural order by her faith, we are able to conceive him very really by our faith in the spiritual order. I am saying these words, my dear Son, only to stimulate in some way your confidence in Mary and the love which animates it.

610. (From “On the Faith of Peter”) Saint Peter parts from everything he owns, the affection which he could truly expect, etc. [His] faith is full of confidence. “We have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets” [Lk 5:5]. “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water” [Mt 14:28]. Faith sustains us in the midst of the dangers of the world, the persecutions, the falls into disgrace, the revolutions. . . . The world is the sea on which we are called to walk. . . .

664. *Definition.* Faith is a supernatural enlightenment which bathes our souls and by which we firmly believe all that God has revealed, however incomprehensible it may appear to us. It is the basis of the things which we hope for and a conviction of those which we cannot see. It is a sort of spiritual telescope that allows us to see objects our reason would never have imagined. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” [Heb 11:1].

1128. (From *Précis of Mental Prayer* by Chaminade to novices of Saint Laurent) Faith is the wing of prayer; without it, my prayer will return again to my bosom. . . . All the truths of faith have for object to impart to us a fourfold knowledge: (1) that of God; (2) that of Jesus Christ; (3) that of ourselves; and (4) that of creatures.

1134. In proportion as the truths of faith make a greater impression on the soul or enlighten us as to our duties and the designs of God upon us, we make our resolutions and pray to him that he

might strengthen them. And we put them into practice, etc. We turn to Mary, our heavenly Mother and patroness. . . .

An excellent means to make a good meditation is often to elevate our hearts to Mary. In a meditation on the mysteries of Jesus Christ, consider the part Mary bore in them. In a meditation on moral truths, consider the perfect, the excellent practice of them in the life of Mary.

1137. We must ask especially for the light of faith to enlighten our understanding and to raise us to God. We should desire especially the holy fervor of faith to excite our will. By our considerations we strive for no other knowledge than that bestowed by faith, and we excite our will only by motives of faith. We do not reject the knowledge which the Spirit of God deigns to communicate to our intellect by the gifts of understanding, wisdom, science, and counsel, or the burning impressions he would make upon our will by the gifts of fortitude, piety, and the fear of the Lord; but of our own volition, we must seek the light of faith.

The quotations below are taken from *Writings on Mental Prayer*, published by MRC in 1979, the English translation of *Ecrits d'Oraison*.

When the light of faith penetrates our soul, it is the Word of God who comes to dwell therein. This is not simply imagination. The Apostle, or rather the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the Apostle Paul, has revealed it to us: So that "Christ may live in your hearts through faith" [Eph 3:17]. (p. 203)

(From *Writings on Mental Prayer*, pp. 203-204) If the light of faith is the Word of God, if because of it the adorable Word comes to live within us, then we understand that faith, the conviction resulting from the impression of this light, is precisely the union of Jesus Christ with us; a union which goes so far as to transform us into Jesus Christ. By faith we think as Jesus Christ thinks, it is Jesus Christ who unites himself to our heart. By faith our guided will acts only as Jesus Christ acts, it is Jesus Christ who unites himself to our will. Thus the new self is formed within us. (pp. 203-204)

The quotations below are taken from *Letters of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon*, a two-volume work published by NACMS in 1999: the English edition of *Lettres de Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon: Fondatrice de l'Institut de Marie Immaculée, Marianistes, en collaboration avec le Père Guillaume Joseph Chaminade, Fondateur de la Société de Marie*.

[E]verything we do must be inspired by faith, whatever our own inclinations . . . God alone, in all and for all. (540.4)

Let us put everything into the hands of God. If it is God's work, he will see to it that it succeeds in spite of all our troubles. Should it not be his will or for his glory, God will not allow it to succeed in spite of our efforts. (290.3)

O my God, I put all my trust in you! (276.1)

What a motive for encouragement amid the heartbreaks of this life: to think that all these afflictions will pass, and that they will be followed and rewarded by a blessedness which will be endless.” (267.3)

We must see everything with the eyes of faith. (485)

[W]e would like people to wear kid gloves when dealing with us! This is not the way to interpret things with the eyes of faith. (496.3)

Try to perform all your actions in a spirit of faith. I think that is the path the Lord wants you to take: a very ordinary life, ordinary actions but with more than ordinary intentions, that is what the Lord wants. (532.4)

It is good to want what God wants and to want that alone. (268.4)

His love for us never lessens; may ours for him always increase. (88.3)

What would become of us without the help of God? Let us ask for this help with insistence, with a lively faith and a firm hope, and it will never fail us. We can be battered by a tempest of temptations, but they will do us no harm provided we trust in God. (95.3-3)

We must be guided by faith, not by our heart. (538.4)

[H]ave courage and see with the eyes of faith how much the Lord loves you and the reward which he promises you. (401.3)

Let us take courage, for whoever is faithful in little things will be faithful in more important ones. (67.4)

Let us at least put up with the little trials that are allowed to come our way. Seen with the eyes of faith, they will be precious treasure, our coin for the purchase of heaven. (129.6)

Let us reanimate our faith, our zeal and our love. Let us make saints of ourselves, at whatever price it may be and at whatever cost to ourselves. (201.2-3)

Quotations below are taken from the letters of Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, unpublished material available from NACMS.

(Advice to Directresses) We must often ask the same thing: this good deed, is it done truly according to the principles of faith and for the reasons of faith? The reasons of faith, in our state, are the imitation of our divine Savior, while acting, while speaking, while growing accustomed to asking: my action, such as it is, is it done because God wills it and when God wills it?

(To Rondeau: April 19, 1825) [T]hose who nourish themselves with all the truths of the Gospel; it is in these divine lessons that we must find the rule to guide us, particularly in our work, which is completely spiritual and of which faith alone must be the principle and the end.

(Same letter as above) Take care that the work does not hinder the development of good spirituality: the foot slides easily on the path of faith.

(Advice to Penitents) Take courage then, our God sees you, the Holy Virgin looks upon you, heaven awaits you if you are faithful.

(Laval: March 30, 1822) Let us doubt the determinations which can influence our natural activity and train ourselves more and more to depend on nothing but the Spirit of God.

(On the Occasion of the Restoration of the Church at the Miséricorde in 1823) Let us constantly beg our good mother to strengthen us in our weakness, to increase our courage and our faithfulness, and, by the love she bears us, to preserve us from the misfortune of ever losing sight of what faith has a right to demand of us with greater reason than of others.

(Her motto) Seek first the reign of God and its righteousness and all else will be given to you, over and above.

The quotations below are from other sources.

Teaching is merely a means to the fulfillment of our mission, which is to introduce everywhere the spirit of faith and of religion, and to multiply Christians. (Chaminade in *Marianist Direction*, vol. 4)

The faith of Mary implies several things. First of all, it implies risk. (*New Call*, § 11, no. 42)

“Unless you believe, you will not understand.” (*Retreat of 1818*, tenth meditation by Blessed Chaminade)

(Chaminade, but no source) “Let us hasten to do good; let us work above all to increase in ourselves the spirit of faith, which itself is the soul of all the virtues.”

(Chaminade, but no source) “Be faithful; let faith be the motive of your fidelity. That is all.”

Chaminade often quotes Heb 11:1 “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for” and is the conviction of things not seen.”

(Chaminade, *Retreat of Sept. 1827*, Saint Remy, notes of Jean Cheavaux; material to be published in *The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 6) No doubt faith must be animated by charity. Faith should not only be a light in the mind, but it should be in the heart as well. There must be in faith a disposition of the heart; love of truth. This is why you must savor what you believe.