

## **Relationships Between the Society of Mary and The Daughters of Mary**

by Joseph Stefanelli, SM

[*Editor's note:* The following material was presented on May 25, 2013, in the Cupertino Marianist Community.]

In place of a homily on today's readings, I would like to refresh our memories on the relationships between the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary. Adèle called the little society the "masculine branch of our institute." It is clear that she and Chaminade both saw the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary as two members of the same Family, two branches of the same vine, as siblings.

The first rule of the Daughters, the Grand Institut, was used, with some minor adaptations, by the Society of Mary for more than twenty years. The spirit of both groups was founded on that document, and developed by Chaminade in his various retreats, conferences, and regulations to both groups. The first Constitutions of the Society, in 1839, with some minor adjustments, became the Constitutions of the Daughters as well. Chaminade submitted them both, together, to the pope in 1838, explaining the common spirit of his two foundations. The Vatican response was the brief of commendation from Gregory XVI. Encouraged by the pope's words to inculcate the spirit of the foundation into all its members, Chaminade drafted his famous letter to the retreat masters of 1839 on the spirit of his foundations.

During the troubled last years of the Founder, Mother St. Vincent, the second Mother General, and her council, sided with Chaminade. After the Holy See's approval of Caillet's election by the Chapter of 1845, she submitted and acknowledged him as Superior also of the Daughters, as provided for in the Constitutions of both groups. In 1866 official relations of the GAs of the Daughters and the Society were ruptured (an interesting event indeed). Both groups began to update their Constitutions in the 1860s, but independently of one another. The Constitutions of the Sisters were approved by Rome in 1888. It was a bone-dry document with almost nothing of the original spirit. Ours, after prolonged exchanges with Rome (animadversions), was approved in 1891.

In an attic in 1871, during the Prussian siege of Paris, Simler, Assistant for Education, discovered Chaminade's documents that had been moved from Bordeaux to Paris in 1861. As Superior General (1876) he reached out to the Daughters, sending to Mother Sophie a copy of his Guide to Mental Prayer, and Life of Father Lagarde. That initial contact developed into a series of correspondence and personal meetings.

After the First World War, contacts continued. Father Hoffer, not yet Superior General, gave a series of retreats and conferences to the Sisters that led them

to revise their Constitutions. The process was interrupted by World War II, when both GAs were dispersed. They were immediately resumed, and on Christmas Day, 1947, all the perpetually professed Daughters of Mary pronounced their vow of stability, which they had lost in 1888. Relations between the two groups had come a long way in a half-century.

And the future?

We already have an International Council of the Family of Mary. Perhaps a truly Marianist General Chapter of the two religious institutes is not far off. In any case, let us celebrate with our Sisters today.