

The Institute

Chapter 8

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Lalanne's "Official Report" of the Foundation



Jean-Baptiste Lalanne

At the meeting of the "Council of the Little Society" held on Thursday afternoon, September 2, 1819, it was decided that an official report be drawn up of "all that has transpired from the time of the consent given at the first meeting to the time of the retreat." Lalanne was assigned the task of writing this official report. Here is the text. The first half of the report is quoted by Lebon in *Our First Century* (pp. 10-11).

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Foundation of the Society of Mary

It was on October 2, 1817, the feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, that the first of those who had decided to embrace religious life in a new Institute were gathered as a group for the first time at Father Chaminade's residence at St. Laurent. They were M. Auguste Perrière, M. Collineau, M. Daguzan, M. Clouzet, and M. Lalanne. On that day all of them declared that they had made their resolution and that they believed they were called by God, not only to renounce the world, but also to work with all their might to bring about the foundation of the planned Institute.

During the first meetings, which took place weekly at the beginning of this period, the following principles were laid down: 1) that what was being conceived was a true religious body

in all the fervor of primitive times; 2) that this body would be mixed, that is to say, composed of priests and laymen; 3) that its principal works would be the education of middle-class youth, missions, retreats, and the establishment and direction of sodalities; 4) that it would not show itself openly at first, but that precautions which circumstances required would be used; 5) above all, that it would be under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and be, as it were, her property.

On November 13, 1817, the members of the Society adopted a provisional rule, expressed in six articles, of which the principal ones were: 1) that for the time being they would make temporary vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, with the modifications which each one's situation required; 2) that they would adopt the practice of weekly Communion.

At this juncture, the search for a suitable dwelling, which M. Auguste had been making since the first meeting, ended in his finding a very small secluded house at 14 Impasse Ségur. It was rented. On November 24, it was blessed; and the next day, November 25, M. Auguste came to live there by himself.

The following December 11, during the octave of the Immaculate Conception, the first temporary vows were pronounced in the sacristy of the church of the Madeleine, in more or less these words: "I promise to observe until the feast of the Annunciation the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty which I am making before you just as they have been agreed upon among us."

Meanwhile, the members of the Society continued making every effort to hasten their moving in to live together in the small house. Brother Clouzet was the first to be free. He moved in during the first days of January 1818. Brother Daguzan followed him shortly in mid-Lent of the same year. Brother Lalanne did not join them until sometime around Pentecost.

During this period, they continued to assemble frequently. Every Wednesday and Friday they made a common meditation, which one of them suggested.

[Lebon stops his citation of the "Official Report" here.]

M. Lestonnat, a young man of great virtue, came forward to enter the Society. However, he had serious doubts about his vocation. In fact, it was determined that he was not called. A letter was written to him. He had already made up his mind to go to the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools.

Two others came forward: M. Cantau, who for several years while he was still in the world had made vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity; and M. Laugeay. They were admitted, and around the end of the month of August they joined the four who were already living together. It was at about this same time that Brother Collineau came to live in the community.

Until then, the Society had only two of the four officers who were supposed to direct it according to the terms of the *Institut*: The Superior, Brother Auguste, and the Head of Zeal, Brother Lalanne. The rule was not observed in every one of its provisions. The premises did not permit more perfection or expansion. Serious plans were made to find another place that was larger and that would be purchased. Temporal needs of the Society of Mary were placed in the hands of Saint Joseph. The title "Temporal Father" of the community was proposed to M. Changeur, a rich and pious man. He accepted with the understanding that he would do what he could for the Society.

On his last trip to Agen, Father Chaminade had communicated his ideas about the Institute to Father Mourand [Mouran] and Father Lhomond [Laumont], two prominent ecclesiastics of this town who were already attached to the convent of the Daughters of Mary. They agreed to come to Bordeaux toward the end of the year to get better acquainted with the Society firsthand and to examine their own vocations in a retreat.

This retreat had the same purpose for all the members of the Society. It was meant to be decisive for each one of them and basic for the Institute. It had been prepared for and awaited in the course of a period of several months, and it started at St. Laurent on August 28, 1818. Immediately before the retreat began, there occurred an incident which we do not omit mentioning. Four young men from the town of St. Loubès, two brothers named Armenaud and two others named Mesmain [Mémain] and Neuvielle [Neuvielle], had for several years experienced a very lively desire to be in religious life, even though they did not then know that there was any possibility of realizing their pious desire. They had nevertheless just made vows of chastity in their hearts. When they disclosed this fact to a woman devoted to the Institute, she directed them to Father Chaminade. From the time they knew of the existence of the Society, they believed they had found what their hearts were looking for. It was decided that two of them would come to the retreat.

Brother Lalanne

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The original manuscript of Lalanne's "Official Report" does not seem to have been preserved. The above translation was made from the handwritten copy found in the rear of a *Registre* kept by François Boby, SM [AGMAR 17.7.1]. The original manuscript of the handwritten minutes of the council meeting of September 2, 1819, has been preserved [AGMAR 14.1.6]. The minutes are written in the hand of David Monier, SM.

Aside from inserting more common spellings of proper names, no attempt has been made in this translation to give the text the historical annotations it needs. Verrier reproduces almost all of the text and interpolates into it corresponding passages from Lalanne's *Notice historique* of 1858 in *Jalons* (English translation), vol. 2 (4th series, chap. 8), pp. 580-82. Chapter 8, in its entirety, is an excellent and minutely documented account of the foundation of the Society of Mary and its first year up to the annual retreat of 1818.

Benedictine, Jesuit, and Franciscan Influence on the Marianists

Notes taken by Lawrence Cada, SM, from class taught by Joseph Stefanelli, SM,
on SM History, 1985-86

In our tradition, these things are Benedictine.

1. Superior is "Father"
Not a "general" (SJ) nor a servant (Franciscan), but a fraternal approach
 - all levels of superior: Good "Father," "Father" Provincial
 - collegial authority
 - Father is not autocrat
 - monastery governs
2. Mixed Composition
 - equality of all members
 - for Benedictines, no distinction between lay brothers and lay people
3. Strong emphasis on community life
 - the Marianist Family
4. Adaptation and mitigation of Rule
 - abbot has authority to make all kinds of exceptions and adjustments for the monks
5. Priority of communal worship (*Opus Dei*)
 - as opposed to personal prayer
6. Relative local autonomy
 - local community has a lot to say about how it runs itself
 - accountable to provincial; but very free
 - provinces are almost independent in SM
7. Controlled environment
 - set up a whole set of behaviors which enhance (do not compromise) the purposes or goals
 - exclude things that would detract

In our tradition, these things come from the Society of Jesus.

1. Absence of monastic habit
 - priests dress like the other priests of the area
2. No liturgical choir office
3. Centralized authority (military model)
 - Benedictines are a welfare model; they exist for themselves
 - SJ exists for sake of the work (no collegiality)
4. Priority of ministry (*ad extra*)
 - an SJ is not the object of ministry; he is an agent
 - the Benedictine is the object of the life
 - formation of an SJ is different from Benedictines; SJ formed to stand on his own to go where evil is strongest
 - contrast with Benedictine missionary style
5. Very little communal life or communal prayer
6. Strong emphasis on personal spiritual development
 - Benedictine monastery will take almost anyone
7. Emphasis on long periods of meditation and examen; know yourself
 - be honest with yourself
8. A very highly-developed sense of mission

These things are almost opposites, point for point; e.g., controlled environment. Chaminade very consciously, deliberately, pulled together these two diverse traditions. Why? Times were different. For better or worse, we have a new world, with new conditions that require a new form.

He gave certain things to help weld the two together:

- Three Offices
 - o to blend the Benedictine Abbot with the SJ General
 - o before 1966, the Superior General admitted brothers to perpetual vows.
 - o Now we have a compromise (the provincial and his council admit, superior general ratifies)

In our tradition, these things are Franciscan:

1. Tradition of poverty
2. Simplicity
 - in manners; not much ostentation
 - no special chairs or thrones for the director (compare with the Benedictine Abbot or the SJ Superior)
3. Powerlessness
 - but we function very well under these conditions
4. Humility
 - closeness to the masses (SJ tends to elite). Franciscan tradition was to be with the ordinary people. SJ says, "Who controls this world? We want to teach them."

Chaminade says

- common, modest garb
- a common nonmonastic office
- mental prayer in common
- blend of centralized and collegial authority (like a constitutional monarchy; a limited monarch)
- combine contemplative and active life
- very strong sense of mission
- equally strong sense of separation from the world
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It would be very destructive to try and live both traditions (unless ways and means are provided to do so).

Founding of the Society of Mary

The “Springtime Years” of the 1820s

May 1, 1817 - Lalanne goes to see Chaminade and states his desire to associate himself in Chaminade's work. Lalanne had just made the “Great Mission” of Bordeaux, which had been preached by Father Rauzan at the Cathedral from March 16 to April 27, 1817.

Lalanne contacts Collineau and Auguste. Chaminade contacts Daguzan and Clouzet.

October 2, 1817 - At the close of a retreat at Villa St. Laurent, the first five members declare their intention to establish the new Society. They are:

Jean Philippe Auguste Lalanne	(1795-1879)
Auguste Brougnon Perrière	(1790-1874)
Bruno Daguzan	(1789-1831)
Jean Baptiste Collineau	(1796-1852)
Dominique Clouzet	(1789-1861)

November 13, 1817 - First members adopt a provisional rule in six articles, the two principal ones being: 1) temporary vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity; and 2) weekly Communion.

November 24, 1817 - Society rents a house at 14 Impasse Ségur. The next day, November 25, Auguste is the first to move in.

December 11, 1817 - First temporary vows professed in the sacristy of the Madeleine Chapel.

During the course of the year 1817-18, the four other founding members move into the Impasse Ségur community. As the months go by, two more members join the first five. They are:

Antoine Cantau	(1791-1819)
Jean Baptiste Bidon	(1778-1854)

The members of the new community keep their old jobs. Auguste, Collineau, and Lalanne continue teaching at Estebenet's school on Rue des Menuts. Clouzet and Daguzan continue their business jobs. Bidon and Cantau continue working as coopers or barrelmakers.

They also continue their membership in the Madeleine Sodality. In 1818, Collineau is elected prefect. Auguste is secretary, and Clouzet and Daguzan are assistants. Bidon is head of the 2nd Division, and Cantau is president of one of its sections. Lalanne is an orator at the Sunday evening assemblies. During the course of this year, Collineau revives the ministry to the chimneysweeps.

August 25, 1818 - The community on Impasse Ségur is joined by an aspirant:
Bernard Laugeay (1796-1848)

August 31 - September 5, 1818 - First solemn retreat of the SM at Villa St. Laurent and first public profession of vows with the blessing and approval of Archbishop d'Aviau. Chaminade writes to d'Aviau on the closing day of the retreat and says 16 people had attended. Lebon has reconstructed the following list of retreatants:

Definitely present:

Chaminade

Lalanne
Auguste
Daguzan
Cantau
Bidon

(these five made perpetual vows)

Collineau
Clouzet

(these two made three-year vows)

Monier

(made first vows in 1821)

Mouran

Laumont (two priests of the Agen Diocese who helped preach the retreat)

Further data on the above persons:

David Monier (1757-1849)

Jean Armenaud (1794-1862)

Pierre Bousquet (1795-1869)

Jean Neuvielle (1796-1821)

Léon Lapause (1759-1832)

Joseph Antoine Mouran (1766-1844)

Pierre Laumont (1758-1827)

Cantau and Neuvielle are the first two to die in the Society. Jean Armenaud has a younger brother Louis (1798-1879), who will make his first vows in 1822.

Thus, in 1818 at the close of the first annual retreat of the Society, it has nine members:

Chaminade	Lalanne	Cantau
	Auguste	Bidon
	Collineau	Laugeay
	Daguzan	
	Clouzet	

When Cantau dies on August 20, 1819, the figure drops to eight. Then, after the first professions of the 1819 retreat, it rises to 12 by the addition of:

Armedaud
Bousquet
Neuvielle
*Mémain

* Jean Marie Mémain (b. 1797) will leave the SM in 1838

November 1818 - SM Community moves from Impasse Ségur to a house it purchases on Rue des Menuts, next door to Estebenet's boarding school. David Monier moves in as an aspirant to the SM. Auguste applies for government authorization to open a secondary school in the new house.

May 1819 - Authorization received and classes start, even though the school year is almost over. Estebenet had been planning to move his school to larger premises. Even before June, the students from his school were using the backyard of the SM house next door as a playground. Estebenet spends most of the 1818-19 school year fruitlessly searching for an alternate site. As a result, he decides to abandon his plan and instead sells his school to the SM.

October 1819 - Estebenet cedes his school and the property on which it operates to the SM in exchange for a lifetime annuity of 1500 francs per year. When vacation is over and classes resume on November 3, the two schools merge into a single SM institution with Auguste in charge.

1820 - SM opens its first primary school in Agen. Laugeay is director.

1822 - Collineau sent to Villeneuve-sur-Lot to direct collège.

1823 - SM buys château of St. Remy in Franche-Comté. Clouzet leads first colony of the SM to start a community there. Besides opening a school at St. Remy, the SM also starts a school of arts and crafts as well as an agricultural school. In the same year of 1823, Laugeay moves to Villeneuve-sur-Lot to assume direction of another primary school under SM auspices.

1824 - Early in the year, Chaminade is in correspondence with Étienne Louis O'Lombel in Paris about the possibilities of founding a Marianist sodality there. These dreams are never realized.

Chaminade writes his "Answers to the Objections of the Pastors of Bordeaux Concerning Sodalities."

Summer retreats and summer school for teachers start at St. Remy. These retreats and courses eventually develop into a normal school. In the fall, SM takes charge of primary school in Colmar in Alsace.

1825 - In Bordeaux, SM school on Rue des Menuts moves to larger quarters on Rue du Mirail and is renamed "Institution Sainte Marie," the start of a long tradition of giving SM schools this name.

1826 - Archbishop d'Aviau dies in July. He is succeeded by Archbishop de Cheverus, who assumes office in December.

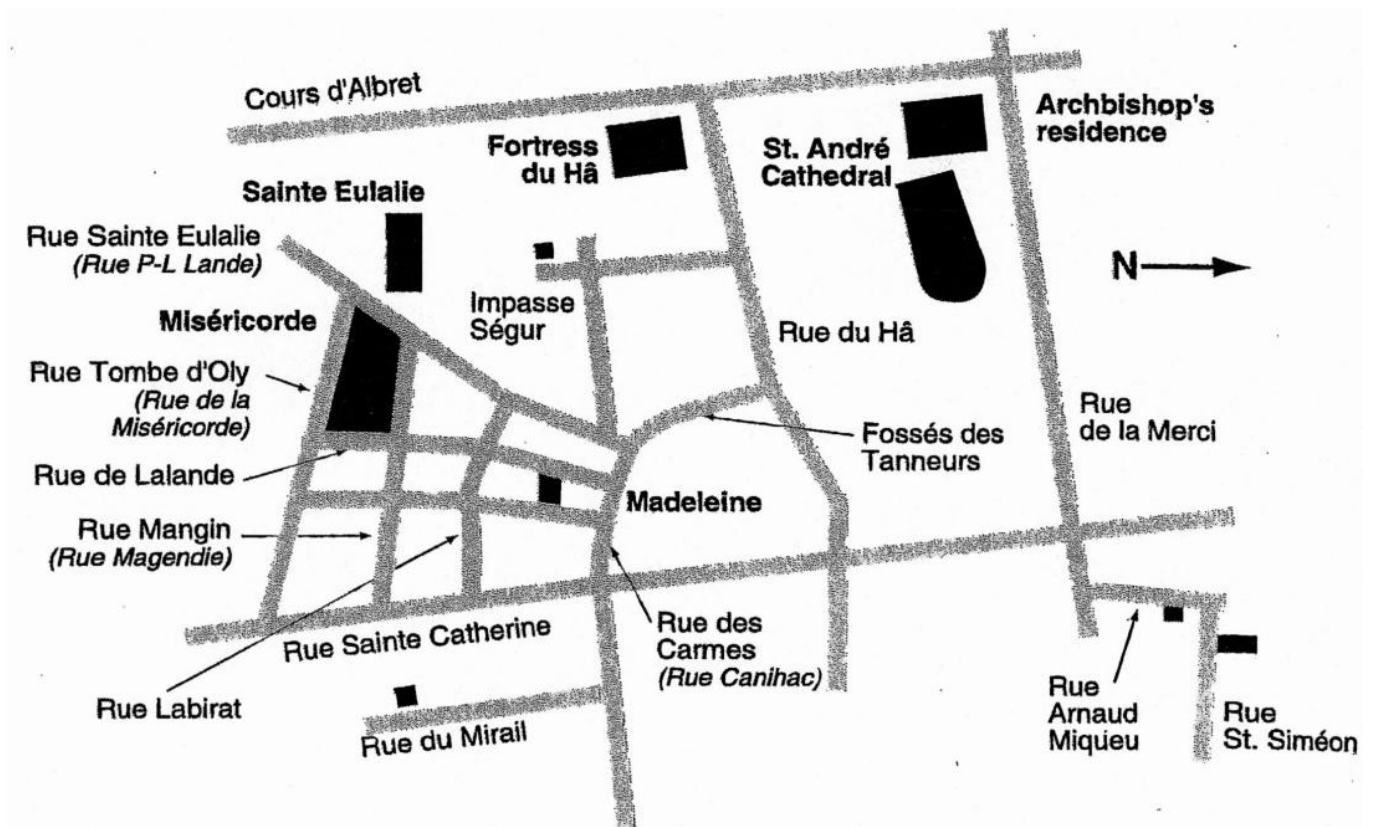
The SM detached itself from the Madeleine Sodality and formed a distinct sodality. It has two sections: priests' section based at the Madeleine and laymen's section based at St. Laurent. The original prefects and assistants are Loetsch, Bouly, Chopart, Pelleteret, and Fontaine. In 1828, Leo Meyer will become the director of this sodality under the care and guidance of Chaminade. This sodality keeps regular records, and the names of all the religious are listed, even after they are transferred to other cities. This arrangement will last until the July Revolution of 1830.

1827 - SM assumes responsibility for orphanage in Besançon.

1828 - Adèle dies on January 10.

1829 - SM opens its second normal school in Courtefontaine.

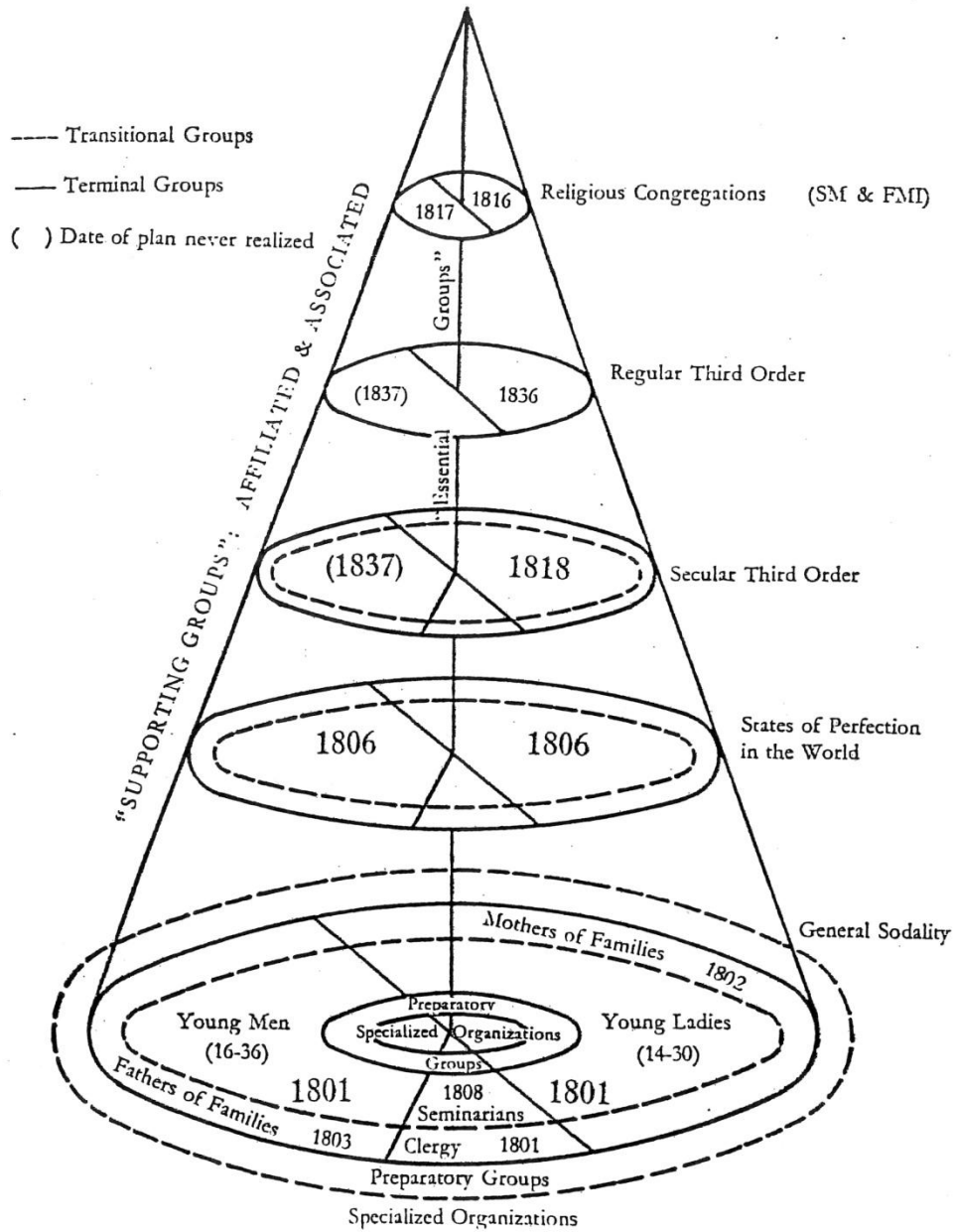
1830 - July Revolution ends the Restoration Monarchy and installs the July Monarchy. The new government is hostile to Church and enterprises of religious orders. SM loses direction of normal schools. Because of his political leanings, O'Lombel moves to Spain. Sodality is outlawed. Officially the Madeleine Sodality changes itself into a confraternity, even though the name "sodality" is retained in common parlance. Much of the old zeal and fervor of the sodality is diluted.



Bordeaux around 1815

HISTO-STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE MARIANIST SYSTEM

(centered on the Family of Mary)



WINDISCH "Marianist Social System: w.J.Chaminade" 1964 pp 101-116