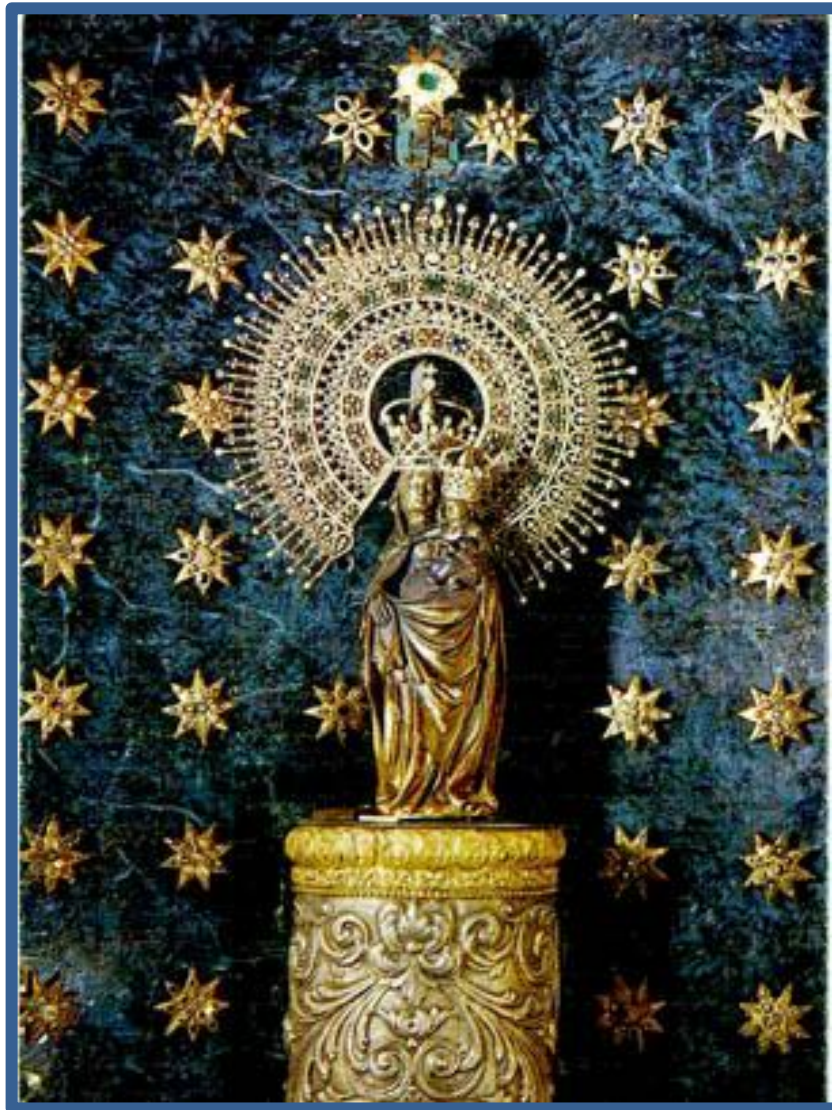


# Monographs

## Additional Resources



### Part 3

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## Chronology Society of Mary

### Superiors General

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1817-1845 (28 years)</li> <li>2. 1845-1868 (23 years)</li> <li>3. 1868-1875 (8 years)</li> <li>4. 1876-1905 (29 years)</li> <li>5. 1905-1922 (17 years)</li> <li>6. 1922-1933 (11 years)</li> <li>7. 1934-1940 ( 6 years)</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">1940-1946 ( 6 years)</li> <li>8. 1946-1956 (10 years)</li> <li>9. 1956-1971 (15 years)</li> <li>10. 1971-1981 (10 years)</li> <li>11. 1981-1991 (10 years)</li> <li>12. 1991-1996 (5 years)</li> <li>13. 1996-2006 (10 years)</li> <li>14. 2006-</li> </ol> | <p>William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850)<br/>         Georges J. Caillet (1790-1874)<br/>         Jean J. Chevaux (1796-1875)<br/>         Joseph Simler (1833-1905)<br/>         Joseph Hiss (1846-1922)<br/>         Ernest J. Sorret (1866-1960)<br/>         François J. Kieffer (1864-1940)<br/>         François J. Jung (Vic. Gen.) (1874-1960)<br/>         Sylvester J. Juergens (1894-1969)<br/>         Paul J. Hoffer (1906-1976)<br/>         Stephen J. Tutas (1926- )<br/>         José Maria Salaverri (1926- )<br/>         Quentin W. J. Hakenewerth (1930- )<br/>         David J. Fleming (1939- )<br/>         Manuel Cortés (1945- )</p> |
|--|---|

### General Chapters

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caillet</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1845            St. Remy</li> <li>2. 1858            St. Remy</li> <li>3. 1864            St. Remy</li> <li>4. 1865-66        Paris</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Simler</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. 1876            Paris</li> <li>8. 1881            Bellevue</li> <li>9. 1886            Bellevue</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hiss</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. 1905           Rèves</li> <li>14. 1910           Rèves</li> <li>15. 1920           Rèves</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Kieffer</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. 1934           Rèves</li> <li>20. 1939           Fribourg</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hoffer</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23. 1956           Fribourg</li> <li>24. 1961           Fribourg</li> <li>25. 1966-67       Fribourg</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Salverri</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. 1981           Linz</li> <li>29. 1986           Arricia (near Rome)</li> </ol> | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chevaux</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. 1868            Paris</li> <li>6. 1873            Besançon</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sorret</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. 1891           Bellevue</li> <li>11. 1896           Bellevue</li> <li>12. 1901           Antony</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Juergens</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. 1922-23       Rèves</li> <li>17. 1928           Rèves</li> <li>18. 1933           Rèves</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tutas</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. 1946           Fribourg</li> <li>22. 1951           Fribourg</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hakenewerth</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. 1971           San Antonio</li> <li>27. 1976           Pallanza</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Dayton</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30. 1991           Dayton</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

	<i>Fleming</i>		<i>Cortés</i>
31. 1996	Rome	33. 2006	Rome
32. 2001	Rome	34. 2012	Rome

### **Province and Vice-Province Foundations before 1905**

- 1841 – Alsace (1)  
In 1841, the communities in Alsace were joined to form a province. The rest of the SM was directly under the jurisdiction of the GA in Bordeaux.
- 1849 – Bordeaux, Midi, and Franche-Comté (4)
- 1855 – America (5)
- 1861 – Paris (6)  
In 1863, the two communities in Austria were constituted into a province. However, in 1865, these communities were attached to the Paris Province.
- 1865 – Bordeaux joined to Midi, Austrian communities joined to Paris (5)
- 1895 – Spain (6)
- 1898 - Vice-Province of Japan (6 + 1)

### **Province and Vice-Province Foundations 1905-1947**

- 1905 – Six provinces in the SM: Paris, Midi, Franche-Comté, Alsace, Spain, and (North) America. Japan had been a vice-province since 1898. (6 + 1)
- 1906 – Austria – Alsace joined to France-Comté (6 + 1)
- 1908 – America divided into Cincinnati and St. Louis (7 + 1)
- 1931 – Vice-province of Italy (7 + 2)
- 1946 – Switzerland and Japan (9 + 1)

### **Provinces and Regions 1947-2004**

- 1948 – Italy and Pacific (11)
- 1950 – Spain divided into Madrid and Saragossa (12)
- 1952 – Paris, Midi, and Franch-Comté combined to form France (10)
- 1961 – New York (11)
- 1964 – Canada (12)
- 1965 – Andes (13)
- 1976 – Meribah became a province (14)
- 1979 – Peru became a province (15)
- 1982 – Andes divided into provinces of Argentina and Chile (16)
- 1994 – Canadian Province became a region (15 + 8)
- 1997 – Chile becomes region (14 + 2)
- 1998 – Argentina, Austria-Germany, Peru, Switzerland become regions (10 + 6)
- 2000 – Japan becomes a region (9 + 7)
- 2001 – Colombia-Ecuador becomes region (9 + 8)
- 2002 – Province of the United States Inaugurated (6 + 8)
- 2004 – New categories and terminology added at General Leadership Assembly

### After 2004

SM Provinces – France, Italy, Madrid, Meribah, Saragossa, United States

SM Regions – Argentina (1998), Austria-Germany (1998), Canada (1994), Chile, Colombia-Ecuador (2001), Japan (2000), Korea (2005), Peru (1998), Switzerland(1998), Togo (2004), Eastern Africa (2010) (Region of Eastern Africa includes, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia)

SM Districts – Ivory Coast (2004), India (2004), Mexico (2005)

SM Foundations and Missionary Groups – Albania (Italy), Belgium (France), Brazil (Madrid), China (Korea), Cuba (Saragossa), Haiti (Canada), Philippines (US), Poland (GA)

SM Apostolic Services – Bangladesh (US), Benin (Togo), Bolivia (Madrid), Congo Democratic Republic (France), Congo Republic (France), Guatemala (Madrid), Ireland (US), Nepal (India), Solomon Islands, Sudan, Tunisia (France), Venezuela (Madrid)

### Expansion beyond France

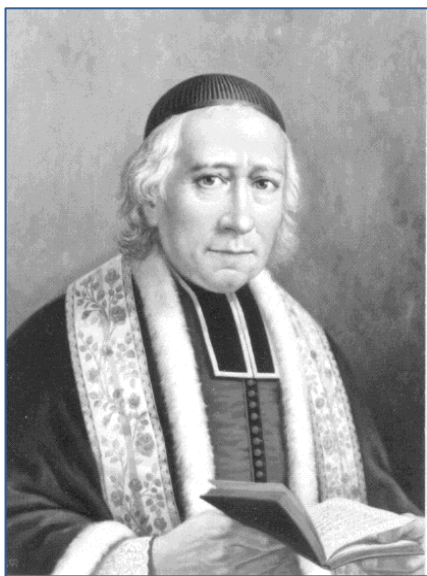
- 1839 Switzerland [Region of Switzerland]
- 1849 United States [Province of the United States]
- 1851 Germany [Region of Austria-Germany]
- 1857 Austria [Region of Austria-Germany]
- 1874 Belgium [Province of France]
- 1880 Canada [Region of Canada]
- 1881 Libya (until 1910)
- 1882 Tunisia [Province of France]
- 1883 Hawaii [Province of the United States]
- 1887 Holland (until 1889)
- 1887 Italy [Province of Italy]
- 1887 Spain [Province of Madrid and Province of Saragossa]
- 1887 Japan [Region of Japan]
- 1889 Monaco (until 1895)
- 1899 Luxembourg (until 1907)
- 1899 Syria (until 1903)
- 1903 Czech Republic (first entry, until 1905)
- 1903 China (first entry, until 1909)
- 1904 Mexico (first entry, until 1914)
- 1915 Morocco (until 1980)
- 1930 Puerto Rico [Province of the United States]
- 1932 Argentina [Region of Argentina]
- 1933 China \*(until 1947)
- 1938 Turkey (until 1944)
- 1939 Hungary (until 1965)
- 1939 Peru [Region of Peru]
- 1946 Congo [Province of France]
- 1949 Chile [Region of Chile]
- 1955 Central African Republic (until 1962)
- 1957 Nigeria (until 1985)
- 1958 Togo [Region of Togo]
- 1960 Korea [Region of Korea]
- 1960 Malawi [Region of Eastern Africa]
- 1961 Kenya [Region of Eastern Africa]
- 1961 Ivory Coast [District of Ivory Coast, Province of France]
- 1963 Lebanon (until 1974)
- 1964 Australia (until 1987)
- 1965 Colombia [Region of Colombia-Ecuador]

- 1966 Zambia [Region of Eastern Africa]
- 1967 Ireland [Province of the United States]
- 1975 Brazil [Province of Madrid]
- 1975 Ecuador [Region of Colombia-Ecuador]
- 1980 India [District of India, Province of the United States]
- 1980 Mexico\* [District of Mexico, Province of the United States]
- 1982 Nepal (first entry, until 1992)
- 1994 Poland [Administered directly by the General Administration]
- 1995-96 Zaire (Congo) [Province of France]
- 1997 Czech Republic\* (until 2005)
- 2001 Albania [Province of Italy]
- 2003 Cuba [Province of Saragossa]
- 2003 China\* [District of Korea]
- 2003 Haiti [Region of Canada] (until 2012)
- 2004 Philippines [Province of the United States] (until 2013)
- 2005 Nepal\* [District of India, Province of the United States]
- 2008 Benin (Togo) [Region of Togo]

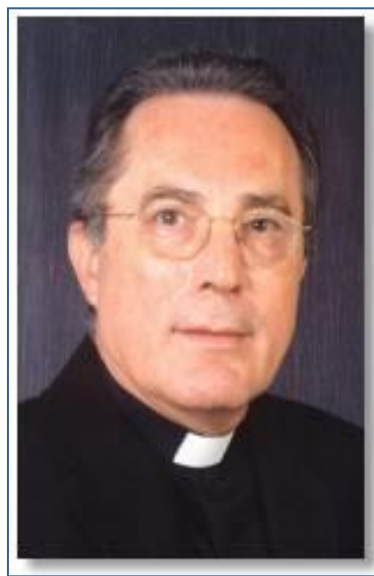
\*=re-entry

**Location of General Administrations**

- 1817-1861 Bordeaux, France
- 1861-1903 Paris, France
- 1903-1949 Nivelles, Belgium
- 1949-present Rome



Father Chaminade –  
1<sup>st</sup> Superior General



Manuel Cortés, SM –  
14<sup>th</sup> Superior General

**Answers to Objections that are Ordinarily Made  
Against Sodalities Established on the Plan  
of the One of Bordeaux, on the Form Given them, and on  
their Relations with Parishes**

*Note.* This document was written by Father Chaminade in 1824. *The Spirit of Our Foundation* calls it one of the Founder's most remarkable and full expressions on the role and operation of the Sodalities.

It is in this document that two of the Founder's often repeated and well-known quotations occur: 1) the need for **a new fulcrum for the lever to move the modern world** (Reply to the Third Objection, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph); and 2) the characterization of the Society of Mary as **the director of the Sodality who never dies** (2<sup>nd</sup> last paragraph).

Two versions of this document are preserved in the archives of the SM General Administration: a rough draft (AGMAR 47.4.10) and a polished final version (AGMAR 47.4.9). Both are included in *The Chaminade Legacy*, volume 1. The rough draft is Document 153 (vol. 1, pp. 670-82); the final text is Document 154 (vol. 1, pp. 683-94).

The rough draft also appears as an appendix in Philippe Pierrel, SM, *A Missionary Journey with William Joseph Chaminade, Founder of the Marianists: 1761-1850* (Dayton: MRC Monograph Series, Document 33, 1986), pp. 81-91.

The polished final text is also found in *The Spirit of Our Foundation* (vol. 3, section H 212, pp.231-40). The version reproduced below is the one from *The Spirit of Our Foundation*, volume 3, with minor additions of short passages that were omitted in the *Spirit*. [The rough draft (*The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 1, Document 153) includes the idea of the need for a new fulcrum to move the world, but it does not contain the characterization of the SM as the Sodality director who will never die.]

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**First Objection:** How is it possible to gather into one society persons of different rank and age? This might be suitable for a confraternity. But how can social relations be established without restraint and incongruity, when there is such an inequality between the individuals? Such a union would result in shocking confusion.

**Answer:** This association is no more a confused group than a well organized society is a mob. If anyone imagines that in our Sodality all ranks are blended, and all conditions are mixed pell-mell, he does not have the correct view of the matter. There are as many divisions and sections as are necessary, to group the same sort of people conveniently together without separating them from the whole body of members. Such as have even elementary notions only regarding organization and administration will easily perceive how a society may be established according to this plan and still realize the greatest advantages that can be obtained from it.

Of course, necessary and prudent precautions must be taken to secure the smooth functioning of these different groups in one body; but that is the business of the directors. And is there any organization whose management does not require prudence and flexibility?

**Second Objection:** Would there not be greater charm and pleasure, and consequently greater unity in the doing of good, if a society were composed of persons of about the same age, rank, and condition?

**Answer:** Each division or section of which the Sodality is composed offers to its members, by the fact of their equality in age and similarity of condition, all the advantages which, humanly speaking, make up the charm of societies.

There is no denying that fact that, in human nature there is an innate attraction for rank and distinction, and consequently, a latent fear on the part of certain ones to be counted less than they really are or imagine themselves to be; besides, there are others, conscious of their worth, who are very sensitive on this point and take alarm at the least slight to their dignity. But we must admit too, that this extreme sensitiveness, this inflexible attitude to maintain one's rank, is scarcely in conformity with the spirit of humility and charity of Christianity. The Church, in the dispensation of its sacraments, never countenances the like rigidity.

May Christians not be made to understand this? May it not even be mentioned to them? And are the ministers of religion doing the right thing in cultivating these prejudices among the people of the world? It seems to me, that the Sodality uniting special groups into one body, by drawing distinctions between conditions in life without separating them, is following a prudent middle course, and that it meets the requirements of the Church in this, without forfeiting its own nobility, or catering to the exactions of society, or to human weaknesses.

And furthermore, what benefits, both for religion and the state, do not result perforce, from the admission of young people into a society, in which they encounter those of a more elevated rank? What an example for them! What emulation and encouragement may not be expected! And what good may not persons of culture effect in such an environment, where they come into contact with this other, numerous, and interesting class of society! It is true, human motives may sometimes act as incentives for certain persons to enter the Sodality; but very soon, these unworthy motives will give place to reasons of faith, religion, and virtue. Good manners, a cultured demeanor, respect for things religious, and habits of piety, will quickly make themselves felt in the bosoms of families, where they will be cultivated and augmented; and thus, through the example of the great, or through those not considering themselves belonging to the common people, insensibly as it were, there will be formed certain points of contact to which the different ranks of society will attach themselves to effect a consolidation. They will mutually aid and assist each other, and realize what one of our poets so happily said, "Often we need someone smaller than ourselves." [Jean de La Fontaine, "The Lion and the Rat"]. Very well then, cannot enlightened directors, virtuous persons, and priests enjoying the confidence of the people, cannot they, I say, impress these praiseworthy and powerful reasons on the minds of those, who at first would have kept themselves aloof? It is taken for granted, and with reason too, that these persons are animated by the right spirit, that they have some religion and some zeal for the public welfare; for, no matter what kind of a Sodality is formed, to be successful, it must consist of such members only.

If, as a last resort, there are people who absolutely do not wish to accept these reasons, the ecclesiastical authorities could then acquiesce in the formation of societies independent of the Sodality; but this ought not to be done except after mature reflection. The reference to mature reflection deserves special emphasis: for, is it not to be feared that, by yielding to the inflexible dispositions of certain characters, a considerable amount of harm is done to the general welfare in sanctioning these pretexts, though defended by constitutional authority, and upon which the evil-minded and those lacking in zeal, will seize to their own advantage?



This reflection ought to have been made—and may I be permitted to say it here since the occasion is opportune?—this ought to have been attentively considered by certain priests who desired to establish select associations in places where sodalities already existed. Their zeal to do good was their only excuse; but they have only marred the general good, and their select associations have not prospered. God does not bless the undertakings that run counter to the principles of his own wisdom, and those of the Gospel.

**Third Objection:** How much good have not the older Sodalities accomplished during the three hundred years of their existence? Now, these Sodalities, established at first by the Jesuit Fathers in their collèges, from which they passed to the people, included in their membership only those of the same condition in life. Why not hold fast to the tradition and experience of the past, rather than found Sodalities modeled on a new plan, whose success, to say the least, is very doubtful?

**Answer:** At the risk of repetition—for it was already said—I maintain that this enterprise is not an attempt. A practice that has been tried out during the space of twenty-four years in Bordeaux and elsewhere, is no longer an experiment! Everyone is aware of the good spirit that reigns in Bordeaux, and how the people, in general, are loyal to religion and correct principles. We do not claim that these results are the outcome of the Sodality; but you will concede on this subject the testimony of enlightened persons, who say that a nucleus of good men, in a populous city, may powerfully uphold and maintain correct principles, like a pillar which supports an edifice though in itself, it is but a small part of it.

However, let us give a direct answer to the objection made: “What benefit is there in founding Sodalities on a new model?”

Why, may I ask, is not the general state of things at the present time, the same as it was heretofore? Why must everyday conditions be met with vaster and more improved modern methods than years ago? **Who does not see that since the Revolution, a new fulcrum must be found for the lever that moves the modern world?**<sup>1</sup> Posed in its simplest form, the objection reduces itself to the examination of whether the new Sodalities offer more abundant means and resources than the old. We believe firmly they do.

The new Sodalities, differ from the old principally in five points which in my opinion, leave the advantage with the former.

1. From the union of persons in various conditions of life, there will result, in the cities, one body, well enlightened in its faith and practicing it publicly, prompted by honesty and singleness of purpose, all of which represents faithfully the society of the early Christians in this wicked and degenerate age.

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<sup>1</sup>In this sentence the word *modern* has been retained as given in *The Spirit of Our Foundation*, since it is the version familiar to English-speaking Marianists. A more accurate translation would have been *moral*. The original French sentence is “Depuis les catastrophes de la Révolution, quel est l’homme sage qui ne voie pas que les leviers qui remuaient le monde *moral* ont en quelque manière besoin d’autres points d’appui?” The translator of *The Spirit of Our Foundation* substituted the word *modern*, which he had just used in the previous sentence to render “*nouveaux secours*” as *modern* methods.

2. The public meetings, too, are equally beneficial to those who deliver the addresses, and to those who listen to them, since they set forth religion in an agreeable and interesting manner. In our Sodalities are found ordinary workmen who, without departing from the lowliness of their condition, know their faith sufficiently to be able to instruct their children or their fellow workmen, and, in case of necessity, also know how to defend it. These assemblies have trained others who became priests and have rendered, or are still rendering, signal service to the Church.

Moreover, as these meetings are held in public, they may easily be supervised and inspected by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, should such an occasion arise. This alone will allay all fear of causing offence to one or the other

3. Let us now consider their zeal and their spirit of apostleship. In the old-time Sodalities, there was scarcely any other purpose in view than to sustain pious Christians in the way of salvation by mutual edification. But in this age, an age of revival, Holy Mother the Church demands something more from her children. She wishes the concerted action of all to second the zeal of her ministers and to labor at her restoration. This is the spirit which the new Sodalities inculcate. Each director is a permanent and active missionary, and each Sodality a perpetual mission.
4. The class of Postulants next deserves our attention. This class is composed of boys that have made their first Holy Communion, and who, on account of a lack of spiritual succor, are continually exposed to the allurements of the world. The care of these boys is entrusted to several Sodalists who engage in it purely from motives of zeal, but whose efforts are constantly guided by the advice and counsels of the Director. The good resulting from this work, both for the children and for those in charge of them, is scarcely believable. No similar undertaking is found in the older Sodalities.
5. Finally—and we ought to have begun with this point, for, of all our means, it is the most potent and the one most dear to us—the new Sodalities are not only associations *in honor of the Blessed Virgin*, but they are a holy militia that advances *in the Name of Mary*, that knows how to battle the infernal powers, under the guidance and obedience of her who is destined to crush the head of the serpent.

The consideration of these differences easily demonstrates the superiority of the new Sodalities over the older ones, especially when directed and maintained in the spirit of their foundation, and they afford greater assistance to religion. There is therefore, a sufficiently convincing reason for the foundation and spread of the new Sodalities.

**Fourth Objection:** The services of the Sodality will not fail to detract from the parish activity. From this it follows that in such places where Sodalities are established the parish church will soon be empty on Sundays, etc.

**Answer:** This is the very objection made by the pastors of certain parishes in which efforts were made to introduce the Sodality, and it is this fear which, though apparently lawful and well grounded, has often been the cause of their opposition to the project. However, experience soon taught them that the contrary was the case, and for the following reasons:

1. The services of the Sodality did not necessarily detract from those of the parish, since the directors were careful to hold their own at a different hour, and besides, they were very zealous to inculcate parish duties to the Sodalists in their instructions.
2. In proportion as the Sodality prospered, these pastors saw a substantial increase in the membership of their parish, piety revived in the families, and evidences of its reappearance in the churches.

3. During the troublous times, when the Sodalities were dissolved, the services in the churches were not better attended, and this nonattendance was the cause for serious alarm.

These considerations, obvious to all, had the effect of changing the opposition of several well-intentioned pastors, who were anxious for the welfare of religion, into an attitude of benevolence toward Sodalities.

**Fifth Objection:** Notwithstanding the assertion that the services of the Sodality are not held simultaneously with those of the parish churches it is true nevertheless that they will either cause complete desertion, or a slackening in attendance, because the Sodalist lacks the time or the fervor to hear a high mass, after having assisted at mass previously, said his Office, listened to the exposition of the gospel, and even attended a Sodality meeting. The inevitable result will be that the faithful will miss the parish mass, and everyone knows how precise the Council of Trent was on this point.

**Answer:** Such as are versed in the laws and traditions of the Church respecting the attendance at the parish mass on Sundays, can scarcely help being edified by the display of zeal on the part of the pastors and confessors, in recalling this obligation, so severe in its requirements, and so little understood.

Obligation under pain of mortal sin every time one fails without legitimate cause. For this is how this saying of the holy Council of Trent is to be explained: *where it may conveniently be done*. The holy Council makes this clear, for it gives bishops the power to oblige the faithful, by means of censures, to fulfill this obligation: *Let the bishops compel the faithful people [to attend the Sunday parish Mass] by ecclesiastical censures and other canonical penalties which they may judge it proper to impose*. A number of provincial councils, held both before the last ecumenical council and after it, threatened or even imposed excommunication on those who missed the parish Mass on three consecutive Sundays without a legitimate reason. The two Councils of Bordeaux (1583 and 1624) are noteworthy on this matter. Pope Gregory XIII approved the words of the Council of Bordeaux (1583) which express so clearly the seriousness of this sin: *Let confessors take care to ask their penitents whether they have satisfied this duty; and if they have failed to do so, let them point out to them the seriousness of the fault in order to help them avoid it in the future.*<sup>2</sup>

The reverend pastors are certainly in the right when they regard the parish mass and sermon as indivisible service. The decree of the Council of Trent covers the attendance at mass and the instruction. It makes no exception respecting persons, not even of such of the faithful as are well grounded in the doctrines of religion. *Unumquemque teneri parochiae suae interesse, ad audiendum verbum Dei*. (Session 24, chap. 4, “Decree on Reformation”) The Holy Council decides that “each one of the faithful be present at the parish mass in order to hear the word of God.”

I feel a kind of satisfaction at the opportunity I have, to make a public profession of faith in the article which Catholic France has always been taught as one of the constitutive principles of the Church. What a pleasure it is for me to apply the words of St. Cyprian to the concord existing between the parish and its pastor: “The Church is but the assemblage of people united to their pastors, it is the flock that remains with the shepherd. *Ecclesia est plebs sacerdoti adunata, et pastori sua grex adhaerens.*”<sup>3</sup> Let us take care, however; the more reverential a law is, the greater is the liability to misunderstand it.

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<sup>2</sup> This entire paragraph is missing in the Spirit, vol. 3, and was copied from *Chaminade Legacy*, vol.1, and inserted here.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Cyprian, letter no. 69, 8 in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 4, col. 406.

Among the persons who join a Sodality there are necessarily specimens of all kinds. Some are newcomers, whom the zeal of some Sodalist has gained to religion; some are just ordinary people, who until lately avoided the parish church, and perhaps would not dare to go there now, but attend the services of the Sodality with pleasure and regularity. . . . These are on their way to return to God. There are others, among whom there are many young men whose passions are very strong. The sight of the opposite sex, wherever that may be, is dangerous for them. Attending the Offices in certain parishes is almost as much as a stumbling block for them as certain public promenades.<sup>4</sup>

Still others are fervent Catholics, true and tried Sodalists, who take charge of the higher duties and fill the principal offices of the Sodality. It is to them we look for good example, to them for the guidance and maintenance of the meetings. . . . Yet it may sometimes happen, that even these faithful souls are prevented from attending either the parish mass or that of the Sodality.

And now I ask all well-intentioned persons, I ask the Church authorities, and even the pastors: “Is it prudent, is it conformable to that condescending maternal spirit, so well exemplified by the Church, to force the rigorous application of the decree of the Council of Trent on all these persons, and in every case?”

Is it of obligation for a young man of the world, scarcely penetrated by the spirit of Christianity, to leave the Sodality which has gathered him into its fold, to force him to go to his parish church, and thereby risk his entire withdrawal from it, and also his eternal salvation? . . .

Is it of obligation for fervent Sodalists to prefer the parish to the Sodality, at the risk of seeing the latter deprived of their support, to see its members dispersed, and finally be witness of their ruin?

And in what cases does the Council permit a prudent exception to be made? *Ubi commode fieri poterit*. [Where that may be conveniently done.] There is no doubt that it allows an exception in case of an important appointment previously agreed upon, a visit of necessity although purely temporal, and again, for a cook, who otherwise would not be able to prepare his master’s dinner. May we not make the application of the words of the Savior to all this when He said: “On the Sabbath it is permitted to draw an ox or an ass from a pit, and shall it not be permitted to heal a sick man!” [see Luke 13, 15.]

There are, therefore, certain cases in which for the sake of the Sodality exercises we could refrain from rigorously imposing the obligation of attending the parish Mass. What might these cases be? And who decides? There is another difficulty to which we allow ourselves to call the attention of church authorities: should the decision in such cases be left to just any confessor? This is what has been the practice until now. But their way of seeing things, will endlessly harass sodalists or aspirants to the Sodality. The result will be a number of unjustifiable and sometimes scandalous disadvantages to the Sodality.

1. The directors will be seen as not holding the same position as the pastors; the former will be seen as lax, and the latter as too extreme or too strict.
2. The faithful will become convinced that the Reverend Pastors insist on the canons of the Church concerning attendance at the parish Mass for disguised reasons of self-interest.
3. Those who seek advice of the Reverend Pastors and of their confessors about entering the Sodality will be dissuaded from doing so.
4. A director who is constantly at odds and at variance with people he respects and thinks highly of can only become discouraged. The zeal of the sodalists will diminish, and the Sodality will degenerate in all its aspects.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The last three sentences in this paragraph are missing in the Spirit, vol. 3, and have been copied from *Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 1, p. 691, and inserted here.

<sup>5</sup>This paragraph has been copied from *Chaminade Legacy*, Document 154, vol. 1, pp. 692-93.

Could not our Bishops and Archbishops, in the wisdom of their councils, find a remedy for so many difficulties? . . .

Would it not be normal, for instance, to delegate the decision in such cases to the director of the Sodalities? This would seem to flow from the very mission they received from the ordinaries to carry on this work. The same reason which would assure the directors of the confidence placed in them by the bishops for forming and directing Sodalities would also serve as guarantee that the directors would use this power wisely. They would have before their eyes not only the well-being of the Sodality, but, as prudent and disinterested servants of God, they would also think about the edification which each believer owes to his parish. They would take care to balance all the factors.<sup>6</sup>

Many annoyances will be encountered in the establishment of flourishing Sodalities, if the above conditions are not cleared from the uncertainty which now shrouds them. He who makes this reflection has had an experience of 24 years to fall back on, and besides, has borne many contradictions in times past, but he is buoyed up by the hope that God desires the Sodalities as a means to regenerate France, and that his views and labors will one day be approved by superior authority.

**Sixth Objection:** Is there not a way to reconcile the advantages accruing from a Sodality with the rights of a parish, and thus put a stop to all protestations of the reverend pastors? Chapels, forming a part of the church itself, or contiguous thereto, could serve as oratories for the Sodalists, and the pastor, or one of his curates, could be made its director.

**Answer:** The idea is an old one. Carrying it into effect has been tried time and time again, but I do not know of a single case where it has proved successful. The reason for these failures lies in the fact that the idea and its execution are incompatible. The term Sodality suggests a particular union; a parish church is something common to all, and its pastor owes service to all. These are obstacles which regard both persons and things.

1. If the chapel where the reunions are to take place is isolated, and so to say, a secret meeting place, the edification of the faithful will gain very little or nothing. If, on the contrary, it is open to the public, how will it be possible to induce the young men to assemble there, for instance, to say their Office, etc.? Such a suggestion shows a lamentable ignorance of human nature.
2. It is common knowledge, that the direction of a Sodality absorbs the entire time and energy of a single man. There are confessions, instructions, public meetings, spiritual directions, interviews with officers, private interviews with members, superintendence, correspondence, etc. . . . The Director must be at home, keep open house for all comers, act toward every one as if his were the only business to be transacted, etc. . . . If a pastor devoted himself entirely to the Sodality as he ought, what would become of his parish? If he does not dedicate himself to the work with all his energy, I dare say that he will never succeed, his Sodality will not hold together, but will languish on in a half-hearted manner. The same reasoning holds good for the curates, with this additional inconvenience: they are liable to be removed.

Experience has taught me that there is still something more imperatively necessary for the head of a Sodality, than all which has been said so far. **Its Director must be a man not subject to death, that is, the Director must be a *society* of men devoting itself to this work for God's sake, accomplishing it in the maturity of life, after having been trained thereto by holy obedience, and transmitting the same spirit and the same methods to their successors.**

**These considerations have given birth to the Institute of Mary. May the Spirit of God, according to His designs, guide all that has been undertaken, to His only honor and glory!**

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<sup>6</sup> This paragraph has been copied from *Chaminade Legacy*, Document 154, vol. 1, pp. 692-93.

## Introduction to Chaminade's Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839

By Lawrence Cada, SM

The Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839 is “regarded as the most important writing that comes down to us from Father Chaminade and his best explanation of the Marianist vision of Mary’s mission and the participation of Marianists in that mission. Father Klobb said that the text of the Letter should be engraved in letters of gold on the walls of the Society’s houses of formation. Father Neubert called it the most beautiful of the Founder’s writings” (Cada, *Short History*, pp. 105-106). According to Father Hiss, it is our *magna carta* and a powerful echo of the Founder’s clarion call, *Nova bella elegit Dominus* (Judges 5, 8) (Hiss, *Circ.* 34, p. 35-663). Father Joseph Verrier said it is the best document we have on Marianist stability (*Commentary on SM Rule*, p. 752). Father Armbruster’s exhaustive commentary, *L’état religieux marianiste*, provides more than 400 pages of critical analysis of the text of the Letter.

The Letter was addressed to Father Caillet, Father Fontaine, and Father Perrodin, the three priests who were preaching the first annual retreats after the Founder received the Decree of Praise from the Vatican. There were 10 retreats in all. Caillet preached 5 (one to the SM in Bordeaux and 4 to the FMI in Agen, Auch, Tonneins, and Condom). Fontaine preached 4 (2 to the SM in Saint Remy and Ebersmunster and 2 to the FMI in Arbois and Acey). Perrodin preached one (to the SM in Courtefontaine). (Armbruster. *L’état religieux marianiste*, p. 48.)

“In 1839, handwritten copies of the Letter were sent to the three retreat masters and to each community of the Society and the Daughters of Mary. Some of these copies were read by the religious. Father Fridblatt, for example, wrote an enthusiastic letter to the Founder after he had seen copies at Courtefontaine and Saint Remy. But after the end of that year, there is little evidence that the copies of the Letter were read, even after it was published in 1863 in Father Caillet’s *Recueil*, the collection of his own circulars up to that date and some of Father Chaminade’s. Father Caillet and Father Chevaux never cited the Letter in any of their circulars or official documents. Neither did Father Simler before 1891. That year he published the “Historical Notice of the Society of Mary,” in which he quoted at length from the Letter. Three years later, in his “Instruction on the Characteristic Features,” he quoted even longer passages. Thus, it was only after a silence of 52 years, from 1839 to 1891, that the Letter emerges from obscurity. From that time forward, however, there has been a complete turnaround, which was caused by the rediscovery of Father Chaminade at the turn of the century and the publication of Marianist documents since then” (Cada, *Short History*, p. 105).

The Letter was composed by Father Roussel, who was Father Chaminade’s secretary at the time. This fact has caused some to claim incorrectly that the ideas of the letter are not Chaminade’s, but Roussel’s. All commentaries make it clear that the content and doctrine of the Letter are authentically Chaminade’s, even though the style is Roussel’s. (*Marian Writings of WJC*, vol. 2, pp. 65-68; vol. 1, pp. 114-17 in the original French; Armbruster, *L’état rel. mar.*, pp. 48-49.)

## Chaminade's Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839

(Georges Caillet, Jean Baptiste Fontaine, and Jules Césaire Perrodin)

Bordeaux  
August 24, 1839

My dear sons,

In my circular of this past July 22, I said the following to all my children in both orders: "In the Pontifical Decree, you will see that the desire of His Holiness, his very will, in fact, is that you be instilled with the spirit of our works, all of which are works of charity, while you are assured that you perform useful services for the Church if you persevere."

A splendid opportunity is being given you, my dear son, to carry out to the best of your ability the directives of the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ. An ideal occasion has come for you to instill the spirit of our Constitutions and works, which have pleased his pontifical heart so highly. I am referring to the retreat you are going to preach. Imbued with Saint Paul's dictum, *The letter kills, but the spirit quickens* (2 Cor 3:6), you shall do everything in your power to cause the excellence and special character of our divine mission to be appreciated.

To this end, you shall first develop what we have in common with all other religious orders; then you shall explain what distinguishes us from them; and, finally, you shall strive to describe precisely the family character which marks us even in works we share with others.

### 1) What we have in common with other religious orders.

The three great vows which constitute the essence of religious life are professed in the Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary. In accordance with their objectives, both orders aim at raising their respective members to the summit of Christian perfection, which is the most perfect possible resemblance to Jesus Christ, the Divine Model. The orders invite their members to follow the Savior, who was poor, chaste, and obedient even unto his death on the cross, and to do so by obliging themselves with the exalted holiness of vows to poverty, virginal chastity, and evangelical obedience. As you know, my dear son, these three great vows place us among all the other orders in the great family of men and women religious which, from the very first centuries of the church, has peopled earth and heaven with its countless children.

By applying the great Apostle's dictum *The letter kills, but the spirit quickens*, to these constitutive obligations of the religious state it will be easy for you to show, in the vow of poverty, for example, the effects of the *letter* and those of the *spirit*.

Slaves of the *letter*, who stop with the externals of their vow and are careful not to plumb its deep spiritual meaning, begin by distinguishing material obligations, so to speak, from the perfection of duty. They then try to draw sharp lines of demarcation to separate what is strictly *necessary* from what is *fitting* and what is *permitted*.

In a short time, however, according to the Apostle's inspired word, "the letter kills them." They will, of course, want to keep wearing the habit, but a habit adjusted to the would-be requirements of their positions. Consequently – always within the so-called limits of their vow – whenever they find something of better quality, they get it. They will claim being indifferent to form, so long as it follows their liking. They will search for just the right color and fabric, and do so in the name of poverty and being economical. Besides, they will tell you that they are far above such petty things – before which they nevertheless grovel – and that they are not seeking anything but the honor of their state and the conversion of certain souls who would find a more neglected appearance repulsive. Their sole purpose is to observe the social conventions required by responsibilities they have been given, by the active and passive visiting they must do, and, finally, by their advanced age and their families. Who can even imagine all the illusions that they, in their vanity, regard as imperative reasons? And notice that they do not stop with the habit. With the *letter* as their guide, they tell us they have measured the full extent of their duty. They have acquainted themselves with just what is permitted without fear of transgressing the vow – gravely, at least – and they have figured out its precise limits in such a way that they apply their principles to everything in their use. In their admirable calculations, they find the secret of being rich in the midst of a life essentially poor or of possessing things and acting as owners after having given up the very right ever to own anything. And so it is that they commit robbery in a sacrifice offered to the Lord by taking back continually, with clever perfidy, the things they have renounced forever. Therefore, terrible harm hangs over their heads, and the censure of Saul awaits them if they continue in their blindness.

But those who strive with all their hearts to practice the spirit of their vow act in a way altogether different. For them, it is always the cheapest, always what others have thrown away. The strictly necessary is enough for them; they have a horror of all that smacks of vanity or studied refinement and superfluity, because they strive constantly to become more poor, more like true disciples of Jesus Christ, and more like Jesus Christ himself, who declared poverty blessed and who even made it divine in His adorable person. Oh, how happy they are, my dear son! "I tell you solemnly, everyone who has left all for the sake of the Lord will be repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life" (Mt 19:29).

Made divine in a certain manner here below by the livery of Jesus Christ's poverty with which they are clothed, they experience in the midst of privations an incredible peace and happiness. That is why they relish so much the inspired word of the Prophet, "The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good" (Ps 34:11). The poverty of Jesus Christ is indeed a treasure, and the richest, most precious of treasures. Thieves do not know how to lay their greedy hands on it, and rust does not corrode it.

You will find it easy, my dear son, to apply to the other two vows the dictum we have quoted several times; and, after that, there will be no lack of powerful motivations with which to instill their divine spirit.

## **2) What distinguishes the Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary from other religious orders?**

You know, my dear son, that in the great assembly of religious orders we bear a family character which distinguishes us essentially from all the others. Let us describe this characteristic feature and state precisely, to the best of our ability, what makes up its *letter* and what makes up its *spirit*.

All periods of the Church's history are marked with the struggles and glorious triumphs of the august Mary. Ever since the Lord put enmity between her and the serpent (Gn 3:15), she has constantly overcome the world and hell. All heresies, the Church tells us, have recoiled before the Blessed Virgin; and, bit by bit, she has reduced them to the silence of oblivion.



In our day the great prevailing heresy is religious indifference, which grows by numbing souls in the stupor of selfishness and the mire of passion. The depths of the infernal abyss belch forth huge clouds of black and pestilential smoke (Rv 9:2) that threaten to engulf the whole earth in a dark night, devoid of every good, fraught with every evil and impenetrable so to speak to the life-giving rays of the Sun of Justice. Consequently, the divine torch of faith is growing dim and flickering out in the very heartland of Christendom; virtue is steadily becoming more rare and disappearing, while vice is unleashed with frightful fury. We seem to be reaching that prophesied time of general defection and all but universal apostasy.

This picture of our times, so sadly accurate, is, nevertheless, far from discouraging to us. Mary's power stands undiminished. We firmly believe that she will overcome this heresy as she has overcome all others, because she is today, as she always has been, the incomparable Woman, the promised Woman who is to crush the serpent's head; and Jesus Christ, by never addressing her except with this great name, teaches us that she is the hope, joy, and life of the Church and the terror of hell. To her, therefore, is reserved a mighty victory in our day. Hers will be the glory of saving the faith from the shipwreck with which it is threatened among us.

Now, we have understood this design of Heaven, my dear son, and have been quick to offer Mary our feeble services in order to work under her direction and combat at her side. We have enlisted under her banner as her soldiers and ministers, and we have committed ourselves by a special vow, the *vow of stability*, to help her with all our strength up to the end of our lives in her noble struggle against hell. And in the same way that a justly renowned order has taken the name and standard of Jesus Christ, so we have taken the name and standard of Mary and are ready to go quickly wherever she calls us, in order to spread devotedness to her, and, thereby, extend the Kingdom of God in souls.

**From the 1839 Constitutions of the Society of Mary:**

**19. By the vow of stability the member intends constituting himself permanently and irrevocably in the state of servant of Mary. This vow is in reality a devotedness to the Blessed Virgin with the filial design of spreading her knowledge and perpetuating her love and her cult as much as possible, by one's self and by others, in whatever circumstances of life he may be.**

**20. Moreover, the vow of stability is made with the intention of never depriving the Society of one's cooperation in the work that has been undertaken. Dispensation from this vow can give rise to grave injustice to the Society. The Apostolic Letters require that those concerned in a vow take the steps necessary for a dispensation from it.**

**21. Whether it be expressed or not, the vow of stability is supposed in all orders. The Society of Mary deliberately makes it a special vow, which has the same consequences it includes everywhere else.**

This, my dear son, is certainly the distinguishing feature and family character of both our orders. We are, in a special manner, the auxiliaries and instruments of the Blessed Virgin in the great work of moral reform, of support and spread of the faith, and, by that fact, of the sanctification of our neighbor. She entrusts us with the ingenuity and inventiveness of her almost boundless charity, and we make a vow to serve her faithfully until the end of our days and to carry out promptly everything she tells us. We are glad we can thus spend a lifetime in her service and give her the powers we have pledged to her.

We are, moreover, so entirely convinced that this is the most perfect thing we can do, that we explicitly renounce by our vow the right ever to choose and embrace another Rule.

Furthermore, my dear son, by the vow of *stability* we intend to oblige ourselves in justice to cooperate as well as we can until the end of our lives in the work undertaken.

Our Constitutions, which the Holy See has so liberally praised and approved after careful study, establish this obligation in a way too precise to allow any doubt. I shall then merely recall in passing articles 19, 20, and 21 for the Society and articles 69 and 175 for the Institute; and I ask if the scandal of religious apostasy does not wound honor, delicacy, and justice as well as religion and the heart of Mary.

Here we meet a difficulty; and, although it is merely apparent, permit me to resolve it with you.

Every religious order, it might be objected, has honored Mary in a special manner and prided itself on belonging to her.

I shall reply by saying that we are far from claiming devotion to the Blessed Virgin as our exclusive possession. That, indeed, would be a most foolish pretension; for, who has ever been able to love the Son without loving His Mother, and who has ever dared to strive toward evangelical perfection while excluding special devotion to Mary from his or her consecration to Jesus? But what I consider as being the specifying characteristic of our orders and what appears to me as being without precedent among known foundations is, I repeat, that we embrace religious life in Mary's name and for her glory. We devote ourselves to her, in all that we are and have, to make her known, loved, and served, totally convinced that we shall not lead people back to Jesus except through His most Blessed Mother, because we believe with the holy Doctors that she is a complete reason for us to have hope, *Tota ratio spei nostrae*, our Mother, our refuge, our help, our strength, and our life.

I shall reply further, my dear son, that if other orders have this characteristic in common with us, we ought to congratulate them, bless them, and invite them to join us in a rivalry of zeal and love to proclaim everywhere Mary's august name and its indescribable blessings. This, then, my dear son, is our doctrine on the *vow of stability*. This is our rallying sign and our distinctive mark.

How easy it is to see that those who limit themselves to the *letter* are sadly out of place in the beautiful Family of Mary. Endlessly undecided, always unsettled, tedium eats away at their hearts which drift about on wings of doubt looking for a way to satisfy a secret urge to be unfaithful to the most Blessed Virgin under the pretext of searching for something more ideal. Their title, their condition of servant and minister of Mary is nothing in their eyes; their profession is not perfect enough; they need something more, as if there were something more noble and perfect than being devoted to the service of God's Mother and putting oneself in her maternal care, as Jesus Christ Himself did. Further, they wish no longer to belong to her in a special way because, they say, their sins need a more stringent reparation; and, as a result, they end by breaking with their own hands the sweet chains that bind them to the Queen of heaven and earth. You know the rest of the story; in their hearts, they are no longer children of Mary, and sooner or later they perish.

Woe, my dear son, to the child who unnaturally renounces Mary and deserts her family! Blessed, on the contrary, a thousand times blessed, is the one who is faithful! You will not neglect urging your Brothers and dear Sisters to feel these sentiments. The Holy Father himself will join his voice to yours to persuade them "that they have only to advance day by day with ardor in the life they have begun under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, with the full assurance that they are in this way giving the Church

**From the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary:**

**69. The vow of cloister imposes the obligation of not leaving the monastery on one's own.**

**175. The obligation of cloister extends to the desires of the heart, and a religious should resist any desire which would cause her to leave or have contacts with the outside. Happy to have left this land of perdition once and for all, she should turn her eyes heavenward and long only for eternity's delights.**

useful services.” And, to motivate them forcefully to perseverance, tell them the full extent to which they are Mary’s children.

All men and women are indeed the adopted children of the Mother of God, but the faithful members of the Society and the Institute are so in a manner still more perfect by reason of special claims very dear to her heart.

Like all religious, by the very fact of their vows which attach them to the cross of the Savior, they are but one with Him. Closely united to Him by the strongest love, they are in Him as He is in them; they are His disciples, images of Him, other Christs. And so, ever since the happy days of their professions, He, from the height of His cross, presents them to Mary as other Johns, saying, “Woman, behold your son” (Jn 19:24). He means: “They resemble Me and are one with Me. Adopt them, therefore, in Me; and be a mother to them as you are to Me.”

But I maintain that we are united to Mary by our vow of *stability* in a more special manner than other religious; we have an additional claim, and a remarkably strong one, to her preference. She adopts us, then, with more privileges; she delights in receiving our special promise to be forever faithful and devoted to her; then she enrolls us in her militia and consecrates us as her apostles. Oh, my dear son, how sacred this contract is! How rich it is with blessings for us! After all this, can you make an sense out of the cowardly desertions we suffer? . . . Can you understand how some have such apathetic indifference? . . . Finally, can you understand why some religious never make a sacrifice for Mary, who so much wants to give us such a high rank in her great human family?

### **3) What the two orders of Mary possess as special and uniquely their own in works they have in common with other religious orders.**

Let us admire, my dear son, the working of Divine Providence in the foundation of religious orders. Their spirit, while always adapted to the various needs of succeeding ages, can, however, be summarized in the inspired word of the Savior, *Mandavit unicuique de proximo suo*. “God gave us each one a commandment concerning our neighbor” (Si 17:12). The only mission of some was to give the world the ravishing example of total renouncement and Christian mortification. The first of these developed in the deserts of Thebaid; and from there, as from their cradle, they spread little by little through the whole world. You know all the heroes of poverty and penance that they have offered to the admiration of heaven and earth. Other orders came later on and multiplied workers of all kinds in the field of the Master of the House, workers destined to tear out the cockle sown by the enemy and at the same time to continue to a certain extent the work of self-denial and the cross. And among these numerous congregations established in every century and clime, some were called to this particular work and others to that.

Now we, the last of all, who believe that we have been called by Mary herself to help her with all our strength in her struggle against the great heresy of our times, have taken as our motto, as we affirm in our Constitutions, the words addressed by the Blessed Virgin to the servants at Cana, “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5). We are convinced that despite our weakness, our special mission is to perform all the works of zeal and mercy for our neighbor. Consequently, under the general title of teaching the Christian way of life, we accept all possible means of preserving or curing our neighbor from the infection of evil, and in this spirit, make it the object of *a special vow*.

Thus, even though the vow of teaching that we make is something we have in common with other orders, this vow is far more comprehensive in the Society and the Institute than anywhere else. Its object is to carry out Mary’s words, “Do whatever He tells you,” and, therefore, extends to all classes, both

sexes, and all ages, but to the young and poor especially, so that it really sets us apart from all other societies that make the same vow.

This, then, my dear son, is the spirit and scope of our vow of teaching. This is the distinctive characteristic that bestows upon the children of the Society and the Institute a family likeness uniquely theirs among religious orders.

Ours is a great work, a magnificent work. If it is universal, it is because we are missionaries of Mary, who has said to us, "Do whatever He tells you." Yes, all of us are missionaries; each one of us has received from the Blessed Virgin a commission to work at the salvation of our brothers and sisters in the world.

That is why the Holy Father "in his joy could not but thank the Lord for having inspired us with such a purpose," as His Eminence Cardinal Giustiniani tells us in the name of His Holiness. "The work pleased him greatly." He considered it worthy of all praise and commendation; and he desired that its spirit be instilled in all the members, "so as to stimulate them to constant progress." He even goes so far as to assure them that, far from being useless to the Church, "They will indeed be doing important services for her" if they persevere. As you see, I am merely citing for you the very words of His Holiness.

It is for you, then, my dear son, to carry out as well as you can the commission that I entrust to you in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff; it is for you "to instill in the hearts of my dear children" during the retreat which is about to open "the spirit of our works, all of which have been inspired by charity." It is for you to impress on the teachers what a great mistake they would be making if they were to limit their endeavors to instruction in human learning, if they were to put all their care and pride into making scholars and not into making Christians, or into gaining a worldly reputation. They would be forgetting that they are Mary's missionaries and would descend from the high estate of apostles in order to degrade themselves to the base level of workers in the educational factories of our times. It is for you, finally, to explain the spirit and secret of their divine mission to those employed with internal services in our houses or in the arts and crafts. We included in this in our holy Rule when we laid down the way they cooperate in the general work of education. We showed them how powerfully they aid by their labors, zeal, and prayers the spread of the reign of Jesus and Mary in souls. Their part is really so beautiful! New Josephs, they are charged with assisting and sustaining the children of the holy family in their arduous ministry.

I must stop now, my dear son. I wanted to explain to you fully my conception of our works, and I did so at too great a length, no doubt; but that will not surprise you, for you know very well that a subject so dear to our hearts cannot be exhausted. In the important mission that I give you, or rather, that Mary herself imposes on you. I rely confidently on your zeal. Penetrated as you are with the spirit of your state, you will find it easy to instill that spirit in my children in both orders.

You know that the pontifical decree grants us the privileges of a plenary indulgence at the renewal as well as the first profession of perpetual vows. Do not fail to draw attention to this good news.

May the august Mary, our Mother and Queen, bless your journey and your efforts, and may she bless you personally and all our dear children!

Accept this expression of the wishes of my heart, my dear son, and may my paternal blessings be the pledge of their fulfillment! This is what I confidently hope for.

W. Joseph Chaminade

## Notes on Narcisse Roussel

Developed by Lawrence Cada, SM, for the *Basic Handbook of Marianist Studies*  
(August 2011 Version)

Father Roussel is certainly the most notorious figure in the story of Father Chaminade's last years, if not in the whole of Marianist history. Here is Father Joseph Stefanelli's capsule summary of Roussel's sorry reputation.

For most Marianists the name of Father Narcisse Roussel conjures up an image of a deceitful, double-dealing, unscrupulous, and immoral person whose manipulations of the General Administration Council, of the hierarchy, and of the religious of the Society of Mary contributed so much to the agony of Father Chaminade's painful last years. He is the archvillain of the drama, the power-hungry author of an odious intrigue to remove the Founder from his office and to substitute himself in his place. He is the author of the devastating *Confidential Memorandum* which turned the bishops against the Founder and tricked the Sacred Congregation into declaring the generalate vacant.

Disowned by his "own creature," the General Chapter of 1845, he left the Society in disgrace, confessed his crimes, and fled to America to begin a new life. He is, as Father Hughes and Father Bach discovered some years ago, buried in the mission cemetery of San Luis Obispo, California. ("Marianist Cameos," No. 1, PAC, Feb. 1, 1990)

Here is a quick review of Father Roussel's life to assess how deserving he is of his notorious reputation.

Narcisse Roussel was born in 1813 to a family of seven children – four boys and three girls – in Orgelet (a town in the *département* of Jura in Franche-Comté), where the SM had conducted an elementary school since 1827. This school was later expanded to a boarding school and collège in 1844. Narcisse was the eldest of the four Roussel brothers. The other three were Philippe Roussel (born in 1816), Justin Roussel (born in 1820), and Apollinaire Roussel (1823-1891). The three oldest brothers joined the Society of Mary.

Philippe, the first to join the SM, made his first vows in 1833 at St. Remy. That same year the SM opened a new school in Salins in the *département* of Jura, not far from the hometown of the Roussel brothers in Orgelet. Two years later, Philippe was sent to this school in Salins; and two years after that, in 1837, he was assigned to St. Hippolyte in Alsace, where the SM had been conducting an important boarding school on the elementary and secondary level since 1826.

Narcisse, his older brother, had spent several years in the seminary of the St. Claude diocese in Lons-le-Saulnier (geographically, the St. Claude diocese coincided with the Jura *département*, the capital of which was Lons-le-Saulnier); but he decided to follow his brother Philippe into the SM. In October 1835, he was received into the ecclesiastical novitiate in Bordeaux by Father Caillet, who was not aware that Narcisse had been dismissed from the seminary because of sexual misconduct. Narcisse was recommended for admission into the SM by his brother Philippe and by Brother Pierre Olive, the director of the SM school in Orgelet. He made his first vows in Bordeaux on Oct. 22, 1836, and his perpetual vows on May 14, 1837.

In September 1838, Narcisse Roussel was named director of the SM collège in St. Hippolyte, the same school to which Philippe had been assigned a year earlier in 1837. In December 1838, Narcisse was ordained by Bishop de Jerphanion in nearby St. Dié (just across the Vosges Mountains from St.

Hippolyte), where the SM had just opened a community. Seven years later (Nov. 20, 1845) Bishop de Chamon (of St. Claude) incorrectly wrote to Archbishop Mathieu (of Besançon) that no dimissorial letters had been requested or sent for this seminarian, who had been dismissed after two or three years from the St. Claude diocesan seminary. In fact, the dimissorial letters had been sent to Father Chaminade on Feb. 4, 1838, and they made no mention of Narcisse's dismissal from the seminary.

Three months after his ordination, on March 2, 1839, Narcisse dismissed his brother Philippe from the staff of the collège at St. Hippolyte for molesting several students at the school. Narcisse sent Philippe to St. Remy where he could live under the direction and supervision of Father Chevaux. When Philippe went to St. Remy, he hand-carried a letter from Narcisse to Chevaux in which Narcisse spelled out explicitly Philippe's immoral sexual behavior with the students.

Meanwhile, back in Bordeaux, the SM Council still had two vacancies, which had been created in 1837, when Father Lalanne and Brother Mémain had resigned as Heads of Instruction and Temporalities respectively. On Feb. 19, 1839, Chaminade named Brother Clouzet as Head of Temporalities. Clouzet continued to reside at St. Remy, where he was director. On May 8, 1839, the SM Council named Narcisse Roussel as Head of Instruction to fill the vacancy left by Lalanne. Roussel was still living at St. Hippolyte, and for the time being the nomination was not made public. The nomination was made before the Council found out about Narcisse Roussel's pederasty, for at the end of the same month of May 1839, Father Prost, who was stationed at St. Hippolyte, reported to Father Chaminade that like his brother Philippe, Narcisse was also sexually seducing students at the school. Chaminade immediately recalled Roussel to Bordeaux and made him his private secretary. On June 12, 1839, Prost wrote to Chevaux about (Narcisse) Roussel's pederasty. On Oct. 15, 1839, Chaminade registered his official appointment of Roussel as Head of Instruction, but the appointment was not communicated to the rest of the SM until Jan. 7, 1841.

(One objection to the prudence of Father Chaminade that was raised by the Vatican in the course of his cause concerned this appointment of Roussel to the Council. With all that Chaminade knew about Roussel by this time and in subsequent years, why did he not appoint someone else at the start or else dismiss him and replace him with someone else later? According to the SM Constitutions, this position had to be filled by a priest. In October 1839, when Chaminade registered his appointment of Roussel to the Council, there were only 16 priests in the SM. One of the things Father Vincent Vasey did as postulator of Chaminade's cause was to argue that there was no other priest in the SM at the time whom Chaminade could have appointed who was not already holding a position from which he could be prudently freed and who would have been a more prudent appointment than Roussel.)

In early 1840, Jean-Baptiste Estebenet, the former head of Institution Sainte Marie in Bordeaux, who had joined the Jesuits in 1834, did not receive his annual payment of 1,000 francs from Father Lalanne, who now headed the school in its new location in Layrac. Lalanne tried to make Auguste Perrière, the former head of the school (who had left the SM by this time) pay the 1,000 francs to Estebenet because Auguste's signature was on the 1819 note establishing the annuity. Auguste claimed that Chaminade was liable to make the payment because of the 1833 contract Chaminade had made with Auguste to assume all debts the latter had incurred while he was in the SM. At the same time, Valentin Jamon, the school's music teacher, sued Brother Mémain, the school's business manager, for payment of 5,333 francs in unpaid salary. The two suits were joined, and it is this combined lawsuit which Chaminade and his Council tried to have settled by arbitration with an out-of-court settlement instead of a public court trial. Auguste's lawyer and the lawyers representing Chaminade and the SM (among whom was Ravez, the principal arbitrator) insisted that there be a full Council with no vacancies for the arbitration to proceed. On Dec. 22, 1840, Chaminade wrote to Clouzet and said that he had been forced to name Roussel to the Council and keep him on the Council to satisfy lawyers on both sides of the lawsuit who said that all positions on the Council had to be filled in order to avoid a court trial.

Throughout 1840 and into 1841, the new Council (Caillet, Roussel, and Clouzet) vigorously opposed the claims of Auguste, Mémain, and Lalanne. The lawyers convinced the Council that it would be easier to get the liability for the school's debts shifted from Chaminade back to the school and Lalanne if Chaminade no longer held the post of Superior General of the SM. The Council persuaded Chaminade to resign and to keep the resignation a secret until a settlement was reached.

Roussel advocated the resignation because he secretly saw it as playing into his schemes to push the Founder aside and put in motion a chain of events that would end in his own election as Superior General of the SM. One of the first steps was to get rid of the minutes of the Council meeting of January 7, 1841, at which Chaminade resigned but agreed to function as if he were still Superior General until the lawsuit was settled. The minutes, which Chaminade reviewed and signed a day later, mentioned his intention to postpone the naming of his successor (as was specified in the Constitutions) until after a settlement was reached. These minutes, which had been drawn up by Roussel, are the ones which disappeared from the register and were replaced by another set of minutes not signed by Chaminade and which make no mention of his intention to name his successor at a suitable time.

It is known that Roussel was already scheming to become Superior General at this early date because he wrote to Mère Saint Vincent a week after the Council meeting of January 7, 1841, to confidentially inform her that Chaminade had resigned and that she must keep this fact a secret. In this letter he insinuated that he might be the one who would be elected as the new Superior General. He implies that the new General will be elected and does not mention anything about Chaminade exercising his right to name his own successor apart from an election. As Vasey says, "one can imagine the effect of the letter on the Mother General" (*Another Portrait*, p. 237).

For the next three years (1841-1844) the arbitration proceeded. Roussel continued his membership on the General Council. He had served as Chaminade's secretary during the summer of 1838 and again from June 1839 until January 1844. He assisted Chaminade in the exchange of correspondence with the Vatican regarding the approval of the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary and the Society. Chaminade valued his abilities as a writer and confided to him the drafting of the Letter to the Retreat Masters of 1839. Roussel also helped Fontaine write the new addition to the *Manual of the Servant of Mary* which has come down to posterity under the title "Our Knowledge of Mary." Roussel's writing skills are also displayed in the *Confidential Memorandum*, which the Founder never saw but which convinced church officials that the office of Superior General was vacant and that a General Chapter had to be convoked to elect a new General.

During these years, Roussel found ways to indulge his weakness for sex with young men. In the spring of 1844, he organized a committee of zeal and perseverance in the young men's section of the Madeleine Sodality. However, he was soon obliged to withdraw from this work for the same reason he had been recalled from Alsace. In 1843, Father Jean-Baptiste Chauvin, the novice master at Sainte Anne's on the outskirts of Bordeaux, died. Despite Father Chaminade's objections, the Council agreed to have Roussel take over as novice master. By the spring of 1844, Roussel had made sexual advances on several novices and candidates at Sainte Anne's.

The lawsuit was settled in February 1844. In the midst of the disagreements between Chaminade and the Council on whether or not the Founder could now name his successor, Roussel left abruptly to take over the running of the postulate in Réalmont from Father Prost. He spent the summer maneuvering to prevent Chaminade naming his successor and getting church officials to require a General Chapter to elect a new General. Part of these maneuvers was writing the *Confidential Memorandum* and then having it co-signed by Caillet and Clouzet and sent to church officials.

Rome responded in July 1845. The first SM General Chapter met in St. Remy in October 1845 and elected Caillet as the new Superior General. Roussel's schemes came to naught. After the Chapter, Caillet sent Roussel back to Réalmont to take charge of the Novitiate and to act as supervisor of the SM communities in Cordes, Brusque, and the houses in the *département* of Tarn-et-Garonne. In Réalmont, Roussel resumed his sexual advances on novices, including young Hippolyte Hérail. In the course of 1846, he grew dispirited and drifted into irregularity and lassitude. In August 1846, Caillet assigned him to St. Remy. He never showed up there. Instead he went to Paris and lived at the seminary of the Holy Ghost Fathers for a period of time. He then returned to his home diocese of St. Claude to start the process of incardination. In January 1847, he made a general confession to Father Desgenettes, the pastor at Our Lady of Victories in Paris. He wrote a letter to Caillet and asked forgiveness for all his wrongs, the harm he caused, and the grave faults he had committed in the SM. He asked the Society to forgive his financial irregularities while he had been at Réalmont.

Roussel spent the first months of 1847 in the south of France, with a brief stop in Bordeaux and a longer stay in Castelsarrasin. He then returned to his home diocese where he served as vicar at the Cordeliers parish in Lons-le-Saulnier until 1853. After that he served as pastor in various parishes:

1853-1861: Nantey  
1861-1864: La Chassagne  
1864-1870: Rans  
1870-1883: Les Asures  
1883-1885: Savigna.

In all, he served at six parishes in the course of 38 years as a diocesan priest.

On May 1, 1885, Narcisse Roussel departed France and sailed for the United States. He traveled across the country to the mission church of San Luis Obispo in California, where his youngest brother, Apollinaire Roussel, was pastor. Apollinaire had been ordained as a diocesan priest in France in 1857 and then went to work as a missionary in the United States. Narcisse lived with Apollinaire in San Luis Obispo for four months until his death on Sept. 6, 1885. He was buried in the priests' section of the mission cemetery. Six years later, in 1891, Apollinaire died there as well and was buried next to Narcisse.

The final details of the story of the Roussel brothers concern what happened to Philippe and Justin. After Narcisse dismissed Philippe from St. Hippolyte in March 1839 and sent him to live under the care of Father Chevaux, Philippe remained at St. Remy for the rest of that school year. He was then assigned to Castelsarrasin for four years (1839-1843), to Brusque for five years (1843-1848), and to Gensac for five years after that (1848-1853). He was respected during these years and served as local director for four of the years in Brusque and two of the years in Gensac. He did not make his perpetual vows until 1846. Since he was a local director in Brusque, he attended the General Chapter of 1845. He witnessed the plans of Narcisse come to naught when Caillet was elected Superior General. Philippe left the Society in 1853.

Justin Roussel was the third Roussel brother to join the SM. He made his novitiate in Courtefontaine, where he professed first vows in December 1838. He was first sent to Salins in the *département* of Jura not far from his birthplace in Orgelet. In April 1839, he moved to southern France, where he was assigned to the new SM community of Castelsarrasin during its first year of operation (1839-1840) and to which his brother Philippe had also been assigned. Justin left the Society in 1840.