

Ten Things You May Not Know About Blessed Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon



April, 2019



Many people know that Blessed Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon is the founder of the Marianist Sisters. She is also known by the following quote:

“O my God, my heart is too small to love you, but it will see to it that you are loved by so many hearts that their love will compensate for the weakness of mine.”

Adèle died on January 10, 1828, at the young age of 38. The Marianist Family celebrated her beatification 190 years later—June 10, 2018.

OPENING PRAYER

Adèle Guided Imagery Meditation *By Mike Lisbeth, SM*

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God with all your HEART, and with all your SOUL, and with all your MIND. Deut 6:4-5

Adèle's Garden [to be read meditatively, with lots of pauses]

You have been looking forward to visiting Adèle. With great anticipation and joy, you make your way toward her residence. It is a splendid spring day, sunny, warm, and breezy. As you approach, you see that Adèle is seated comfortably in her garden. As she sees you approach, she stands to greet you with open arms. She embraces you warmly, calls you by name, and blesses you.

Adèle offers you a comfortable seat close to her. She says that she has looked forward to your visit today. She wants you to learn the lessons that the garden has to teach. She invites you to open all your senses, to take in the vitality of this garden. Smell the aroma of the fresh earth and the budding flowers and trees. See the splendid variety of colors. Hear the birds singing and the bees buzzing. All of this is a manifestation of God's creative power.

Adèle calls your attention to the order of the plants that have been planted in neat rows. And see the random arrangement of plants that nature has scattered. Notice the grapes, carefully pruned to produce their sweet harvest. And notice the less cultivated corners where weeds still intermingle. Appreciate the labor that already has been expended for this garden. Imagine the labor that is still needed to further enhance the beauty and productivity of this garden.

Adèle asks if this garden bears any resemblance to your own life story: Does this garden remind you of yourself as you stand before God at the beginning of this retreat? Adèle invites you to choose a symbol for yourself as you enter in to this retreat. It may come to you right now, or it may invite your pondering. It may come through your imagination or memory. It may come through watchfulness and observation of nature, of the created world. It may be comforting, or it may be disturbing. But it surely will come to you as a revelation from our loving God. It is a unique symbol of your very own heart to carry into this retreat as you begin, with God's grace and Mary's blessing.

Food for Thought

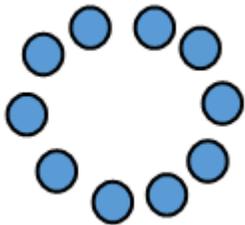
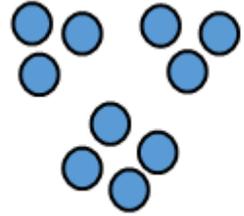
Ten Things You May Not Know About Blessed Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon



1. Adèle’s story is different from those of Blessed Chaminade and Marie Thérèse de Lamourous. Due to her early death, we will never know her full potential. But we do know she was determined, she was hopeful, and she was confident in her faith; qualities she shared with Blessed Chaminade and Marie Thérèse. It is the French Revolution that turns the tide in each Founder’s life. Adèle was born June 10, 1789, a month before the storming of the Bastille. Her entire childhood was affected by the French Revolution. The Church was dismantled, along with the monarchy, creating chaos throughout France.
 2. She was born into a family of nobility. Her father had to be exiled when she was two and a half, and she did not see him for ten years. At the age of nine, Adèle, along with her mother and brother, was forced into exile in Spain and Portugal. While in exile Adèle met the Carmelite sisters and it was here her serious desire to become a vowed religious began.
 3. When she was about 12 years-old Adèle asked her brother’s tutor, Jean Baptiste Ducourneau, who was studying to become a priest, to write her a Rule of Life so she could prepare to become a sister. After her Confirmation at age 13, she spent six weeks at a Carmelite convent (in secret, because the revolution had banned religious orders) with her dear friend Jeanne Diché. Jeanne Diché and Adèle remained friends until Adèle’s death. After the retreat she started the Association with Jeanne and Jean Baptiste to help each other live in faith.
 4. The Association was called the “little society” and began to grow quickly. Jeanne Diché was the first director; after she married, Adèle took over. Each week she wrote letters to the Association commenting on the week’s gospel. (Imagine Adèle with social media!) Each letter began with an *acte* such as “My God, divine Spirit, enlighten us with your divine light” that each recipient was to pray with each week. (All 140 characters or less, sounds like a tweet to me!)
 5. Adèle, who had been taught by her mother as a young girl, began a school for less fortunate girls and boys in the family’s château. Whenever a pupil arrived, she would stop whatever she was going to share a lesson. Many of these children had to work to help support their families, so Adèle worked with their schedules.
 6. In 1808 Adèle’s mother met a young priest and member of Father Chaminade’s Bordeaux Sodality, Jean-Baptiste Hyacinthe Lafon. As they shared stories, Lafon felt Adèle should meet Father Chaminade because their associations appeared to share many similarities.
 7. Adèle received a proposal from a distinguished young man and marriage would have guaranteed her a comfortable life. After taking time for prayer, she turned down the proposal and continued on the path she felt called by God. Shortly thereafter, Father Chaminade contacted her, and they corresponded about what their individual groups were doing.
 8. Adèle created a *cher projet* or “dear project” for which Blessed Chaminade wrote the Rule of Life. This group eventually became the Institute of the Daughters of Mary (Marianist Sisters) on May 25, 1816.
 9. Blessed Chaminade sent Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, his friend and collaborator, to see if she felt Adèle was ready to be the superior of the Daughters of Mary. At first, Marie Thérèse felt Adèle was too young and her personality too vivacious. But after more time watching her interact with the Sisters she told Father Chaminade she believed Adèle should be the superior.
 10. Adèle was a good leader, and the Daughters of Mary attracted all kind of women. Blessed Chaminade remained the Spiritual Director of the Daughter’s of Mary throughout Adèle’s lifetime.
-

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ The first fact reminds us that Adèle, born in 1789, was a child of the French Revolution. How do you think that affected her life and her faith?
- ◆ After learning these facts, how do you see the relationship between Blessed Adèle, Marie Thérèse, and Blessed Chaminade? What can we learn from their collaboration?
- ◆ Which of the facts discussed do you find most surprising about Blessed Adèle? Why?
- ◆ What can you learn from Blessed Adèle for your own personal faith life?
- ◆ “O my God, my heart is too small to love you, but it will see to it that you are loved by so many hearts that their love will compensate for the weakness of mine.” This quote seems to touch all those who read it. In the Marianist Musical “Spectacle” there is even a song based on this quote. How does this quote speak to you?

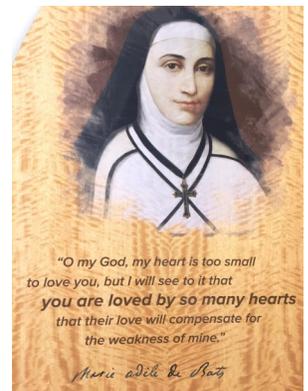


LARGE GROUP GATHERING

Review the discussion questions and share the thoughts that emerged in the small group discussions.

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, Source of life and holiness, we thank you for giving Blessed Adèle to the Church. You filled her with a profound love that compelled her to serve youth and those in need. You gave her an ardent missionary spirit and a deep love for the Virgin Mary, our Mother. May her example help us grow in faith, fill us with hope, and inspire us to announce the joy of the Gospel boldly and lovingly. We ask you, through the intercession of Adèle, to grant us the favor we ask of you for the prayers we hold in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Related resources available at nacms.org include:

Adèle: Aristocrat for the Poor, Joseph Stefanelli, SM

Walking with Adèle, Marie-Jöelle Bec, FMI

God Alone: Thoughts from Adèle, compiled by Patti Gehred

Letters of Adèle, vols. 1 and 2

Adèle; A Biography of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, Joseph Stefanelli, SM

Marianist Community Meeting Kits are provided for the Marianist Family by the North American Center for Marianist Studies, NACMS. Additional Community Meeting Kits, as well as other Marianist Studies resources, are available at nacms.org.



North American Center
for Marianist Studies
