

Sharing Our Marianist Stories Ep. 39 Transcript

The Vow of Stability (with Sr. Laura Leming, FMI, Al Prendergast, and interviewed by Mike Bennett)

00:01 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

When we think of Mary, the word “stability” comes from the same root as *Stabat Mater*, the woman who stands by the cross, who stands by her son, who was executed by the state. A lot of people often emphasize Mary’s humility, her gentleness, and the image that we have of her is much more adoration at the crib than it is the woman, the mother, who stands at the execution of her son. So, the strength that she has is something that we want to be part of, and that's what she taught Jesus.

00: 45 - Mike Bennett

Welcome to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*, a podcast produced by the North American Center for Marianist Studies in Dayton, Ohio. I'm Mike Bennett, Media Administrator for NACMS. Al Prendergast and Sr. Laura Leming participated in NACMS’ Marianist Studies Program, also called “MSP 2.0.” MSP. 2.0 is a yearlong program of assisted inquiry into a topic in Marianist Studies. Through reading and discussion, monthly virtual meetings, and a week at NACMS, participants engage with colleagues, experts, and the NACMS staff with the goal of producing a publishable product. The 2019 to 2020 program, which Al and Sr. Laura participated in, focused on the topic of Marianist stability, “rooted presence.” In this episode, Al and Sr. Laura share their historical and sociological research on the Vow of Stability and reflect on what this vow has meant in their lives. It's worth noting that Sr. Laura's sociological research focused primarily on commitment statements written by students at the University of Dayton when they were committing themselves as Lay Marianists at the conclusion of a semester long formation program.

02:06 - Mike Bennett

And before we launch into their interview, at a later point, Al references Father Chaminade’s quote where he compares himself to a brook. Since it can be helpful to keep in mind as we talk about the Vow of Stability, I'd like to recall that quote and then turn the floor over to Al. Father Chaminade says, “I am like a brook that makes no effort to overcome obstacles in its way. All the obstacles can do is hold me up for a while as a brook is held up. But during that time, it grows broader and deeper, and after a while, it overflows the obstruction and flows along again. That is how I am going to work.” And with that, let's turn the floor over to Al.

03:00 - Al Prendergast

My name is Al Prendergast. I graduated from the University of Dayton in 1970. I'm a member of the Visitation Marianist State Community, so I do take the Vow of Stability. And that's why I was interested in doing this paper, to find out some of the history and also to see how it ties us all

together - the religious and the laypeople - who take a Vow of Stability or make a commitment, some of them a lifetime commitment, and how that brings us together and gets us to work together as a true collaborative. I took the vow originally, I believe, in 1970, and I've renewed it annually ever since. Along the way, in my mind, it became permanent.

03:55 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

I'm Sr. Laura Leming, Marianist Sister. I teach Sociology at the University of Dayton. I've been professed as a Marianist Sister for 45 years. It was sometime a little later after my first profession that the Sisters were able to profess the Vow of Stability at First Vows, which was a big deal for us because we see it as such a core part of being Marianist. I also, as a Marianist Sister, am a Director of Formation and currently the Novice Director for the Sisters. So, I've spent many years thinking about stability and figuring out how to teach about stability to our younger Marianists and sharing that with Lay Marianists as well.

04:52 - Mike Bennett

Both of you participated in NACMS' Marianist Studies Program 2.0, MSP 2.0, which was focused on the Vow of Stability. Can you tell me about what drew you to that program, that topic, and then what came of it for you?

05:09 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

I have always felt that for Marianists, we could take the Vow of Stability just as the only vow that we take, that it's the seal of our vows of religion, poverty, chastity, and obedience. So, when I saw that MSP 2.0 was going to focus on stability, I also was in the process already of doing a study as a sociologist of the statements that some of our students take when they make a Lay Marianist Consecration, when they become Lay Marianist as student communities. And I thought, "Yay, this will give me the opportunity to actually work on that paper."

06:04 - Al Prendergast

My interest in the Vow of Stability was really looking to the future, but also exploring the history so that I knew where it came from and why it was instituted and what Father Chaminade intended with the Vow of Stability, which he sometimes called the "Vow of Zeal." And that's why I started the paper. And I was pleasantly surprised that the Vow of Stability has a long history, starting with the Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages. And then, the history jumps to Bordeaux, where there's a group that took a Vow of Stability but lived in the world rather than in monasteries or convents. And Father Chaminade built on that concept and then created the State, where members took a private Vow of Stability or "zeal," as he called it originally. And it started with a three-month commitment that was renewable every three months, and then he extended it to six months and then a year. And then, when the Society of Mary was created and the FMI was created, they both took the Vow of Stability but more on a permanent basis.

07:38 - Al Prendergast

And so, I wanted to build on that to see how that affected lay people who take the Vow of Stability or make a lifetime commitment to build the Marianist Family, which was Father Chaminade's original intent. "You took this vow to build the Marianist Family," he would say, "to build the Sodality," while he was in Bordeaux.

08:03 - Mike Bennett

If someone were to ask you, "What's the Vow of Stability?" How would you define that?

08:09 - Al Prendergast

We basically commit ourselves to God. And Chaminade was really clear: your Vow of Stability is to God and in the spirit of Mary, and you make a commitment. And I say, "I commit myself in the spirit of Mary by taking the Vow of Stability," and I show my actions through my work with the Marianist business network and with the Marianist Lay Community of North America because that's how I reach out. People in my community say many different things. Jim Vogt for years was the Head of MSJC [Marianist Social Justice Collaborative]. Obviously, that was part of his Vow of Stability, looking at it as a commitment. And Father Chaminade was really clear: don't let your conscience make it too difficult to live the Vow of Stability. You're an enabler. That's what you're trying to do.

09:25 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

I would say that I'd go back to Father Chaminade's phrase that the stability is our distinguishing feature and character of our Family. It is the way that all of us - and some of us take a vow to do this - make Mary known and loved and served in the sense that we are the people who really feel ourselves encouraged to extend her mission of bringing Jesus into our own day and time. And we do that together in community, and we give ourselves wholeheartedly to any activity that helps us do that.

10:21 - Mike Bennett

Now I think you're getting into some of the research, some of your findings. I don't know if there were other poignant things that came out in that research for you, Al or Sr. Laura, as you looked at the commitment statements and other dynamic[s].

10:36 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Obviously, in writing a paper about this, I had to delve into a little bit of the history. Not to the extent that Al did, but I always go back - and I think all Marianists go back when we talk about stability - to the *Letter to the Retreat Directors* that Father Chaminade wrote in 1839. And in that letter, he was sending retreat directors to both the Brothers and the Sisters to preach the annual retreats, and he said, "You are charged with really helping people understand what the distinguishing feature and Family character of the [Marianist Family]" - He would not use the

word *Marianists*; that came later - but of the Marianist Family. And he says, “You know, we're in a special manner the auxiliaries and instruments of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her great work. And she entrusts us with ingenuity and inventiveness, and we make a vow to serve her faithfully.” And the enthusiasm with which he wrote that letter - and I think you all have a NACMS podcast that's focused on that letter [Episode 20] - is always inspirational to me.

11:58 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Another thing: When I was looking at the writings, in like 1970, Fr Vince [Vincent] Vasey wrote about stability. And I was fascinated by the fact that he was sort of debating, discussing how people were concerned after Vatican II that we were watering down the vow, and he was arguing for how you make stability more accessible and intriguing, maybe, to young people. And one of the words that he used was a Greek word *Doula*, and he used that for both how Mary and Jesus positioned themselves as servants or slaves, which in other forms of Marianist consecration is the focus. But what he talks about is how they make themselves available, and the word *doula* now is much more popular in our own language because it's a person who assists at birth. And I think that's something for us to really consider as we look at the riches of stability and how we help people choose to take it on. How do we assist Mary in continuing to give birth to Christ in our own day, which is something that students talked about when they did their consecration?

13:32 - Al Prendergast

I want to build on your comment about the *Letter of 1839*. I think in a sense, as I'm 76 years old and aging, I can understand why he was so poignant in that letter because he was aging as well and wanted to get his ideas across. The intent of the Vow of Stability, as it's taken by everyone, the Brothers, the Sisters, and the Laypeople, is to build the Marianist Family or to build the Sodality. And Bro. [Robert] Moriarty says that in his paper as well. That's really the intent, and that's what binds us all together with a common mission, and I think Sr. Laura described it very well. It has many facets. In his earlier letters, he would encourage people who had the Vow of Stability to, in fact, act like animators, but to do it by example. You shouldn't look different than the other Sodalists. You should blend in with them and animate the Sodality. That's our role. That's our mission, and to do it, as Sr. Laura says, with a true Marian philosophy and overview, including justice and the common good.

15:14 - Mike Bennett

Something that struck me about that was thinking about that dynamic of the consecration to the charism. How is that also a form of birth in the individual's life, and how does stability play a role in that? That was at least a thought that came to mind for me.

15:37 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Yeah. I was just blown away. I was able to assemble 158 of the statements that students made because when they make this sort of public declaration that, “I'm part of the Marianist Family,”

they make a commitment as a community. But they also have individual statements that they have prepared, and those are available to the folks who are there to read at a later date. And so, we have 158 of them, and it was striking to me how students - they all talked about Mary as a model or a mentor or as someone that they want to emulate. They all talked about some sort of sense of calling or vocation, of really being drawn to this Marianist Family.

16:45 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Most of them talked about the mission, her mission, or their mission, and often it was framed in what I just said about bringing Christ into the world. And then, what was really also striking for many of them, the implication of all this is to work for justice or for the common good in the world. And then, within that, they all talked about community. I mean, people are drawn to Marianist communities because we have an attractive way of being Church in the world that people feel, and they may not always be able to articulate it, but they're like "I want to be around these people." At least, that's what I hear from people in the different programs that I work in.

17:36 - Mike Bennett

Yeah. There's a lot of that historical dynamic to this Vow of Stability that you all have touched on. I'm curious as well about the lived experience. What [does] this vow means concretely? Speaking from my own context, I'm a graduate of UD who made a commitment through this Lay Formation program that Sr. Laura researched, and I remember very briefly the Vow of Stability being referenced. I remember it being referenced in a way that was, "When you get to this point in your life, then you can think about the Vow of Stability," and it's always kind of felt like a second tier to me, at least as a Lay person of that commitment. And so, I guess I don't know if that's the way that it should really be thought about, at least from reading your papers.

18:34 - Al Prendergast

Historically, it was with the Brothers held off until they took permanent vows and probably even later than that. I took it. You know, I was 22 on an annual renewal as a student, and I said, "I can do this for a year." So, I agreed. I took the Vow with the community. It was very small then. I think there [were] like eight people. And it truly has affected my life. I told Fr. Jim Fitz about two years ago when we had the 50th anniversary or the reunion here, I said, "It's a wonderful life. We have to share this." It is saying "Yes," as Mary said, "Yes" over and over and over and over again. I use the example in the paper of during the Assembly that you [Mike Bennett] and I worked on, and there was a significant amount of consternation, as you recall, because we're trying to integrate the desires of people my age and the desires of people your age, and my daughter representing your group and I got into many conflicts over this. At one point, she said, "I quit." I said, "You can't quit. You have the Vow of Stability." I won't mention what she said next, but she didn't quit. And in my estimation, and from what people told me, it turned out very good.

20:21 - Al Prendergast

So, I think that's a quick example of what it really means on a day-to-day basis. And there are many people in our Visitation Marianist State Community that I'm sure worked diligently to build the Family of Mary, whether on the UD [University of Dayton] board or running MSJC or running other groups, and got up in the morning and said, "I really don't want to do this." But they did. And you know, I changed schedules to do things. I worked on the sweatshop labor issue for years because the idea of justice pulled at the strings of my heart, and I said, "I have to go on this trip to Nicaragua," which turned out to be incredibly exciting.

21:16 - Al Prendergast

I took the Vow of Stability to pursue Mary's mission. And it's invaded my entire family sometimes, for better or worse. I interviewed a number of people in the Visitation Marianist State Community, and I asked them about permanence because we take the Vow annually. And just listening when people say that, you could get the impression that this is a temporary vow. But when I asked them, and I did one-on-one interviews privately, the majority of the people - I want to say, almost all of them - said, "My intent is permanent." And there were some young [people]. Most of us are older, but there were some young, and I think I said in this paper as well, there's about 50 people in the United States - and I'll limit it to the United States - Lay people who take the Vow of Stability. And I'm not counting the Brothers and Sisters because that would be much, much higher. My vision is that it should be [a] much larger number. So, it's not something that we want to keep people from taking it. It's something we want to encourage people to embrace for all of the reasons Sr. Laura said, because it ties us all together and it gives us a broader sense of community, I think.

23:05 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Some years ago, I was part of a group that NACMS had that was called the Conversation Group. And we had a conversation about stability - might have been in the mid-80s. And at that time, I was trying to think about stability and what is the deeper meaning of it. And the image that I use when I try to communicate stability to people is a three-legged stool, and I actually got this from an art show that Bro. Gary Marcinkowski did. And I think stability stands on three things. I think it stands on Mary, it stands on our alliance, our covenant with her to be part of her mission, and it also stands on having a sense of passion. So, I think of it as sort of the math of Marianist stability: Mary, alliance, and passion.

24:07 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

And when we think of Mary, the word stability comes from the same root as *Stabat Mater*: the woman who stands by the cross, who stands by her son who was executed by the state. A lot of people often emphasize Mary's humility and her gentleness, and the image that we have of her is much more adoration at the crib than it is the woman, the mother, who stands at the execution of her son. So, the strength that she has is something that we want to be part of, and that's what

she taught Jesus. We enter into aligning ourselves with her to form an alliance. We echo the Magnificat, which is a song about justice. And then we do that with this sense of passion, and this gets into the Benedictine roots of stability [which] emphasize permanence.

25:18 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

And sometimes, I think that has gotten too emphasized for people in the Marianist world because Chaminade changed that notion. He said, "It's permanence in the sense of we are continuously giving ourselves to this mission." And as Al said, he thought you could do that for a shorter period of time, or you could do it for a year, or you could do it for a lifetime. And so, the Brothers emphasized the permanence of it and put it always at final profession. The Marianist Sisters argued when we were refreshing our Rule [of Life] that, in fact, this is a characteristic of the Marianist Family and that it can be professed on a temporary basis. And so, we have chosen that, and for that reason, I think even though students might not use the word *stability*, I think they are professing this character of the Marianist Family in wanting to enter into this. So, when they make a consecration, I think it has the intent of stability, and I wish we talked about it more and that we talked about it not as a permanent commitment.

26:49 - Al Prendergast

I went through Catholic grade school and Catholic High School and Catholic College. And when [in] Catholic grade school, the picture that Sr. [Laura] painted of Mary was very clear in all the halls. That is *not* the Mary of the Marianist Family. The Mary of the Marianist Family is exactly what Sr. Laura described. She's the Mary of the Upper Room who is telling these Apostles and giving them direction. They're fishermen. I fished in Cape May [New Jersey]. Sr. Laura is familiar with that. You're familiar with the fisherman in Cape May. She knows what they're like. Mary is giving a lecture to fishermen, and they're accepting it. That's the Mary of the Marianist Family. That's the vision that I have: motherhood, not in the protective, embracing but the motherhood of going out. That's what I see. That's the Mary that I see, and I think that's the Mary that forms what we call our Marianist charism.

28:10 - Mike Bennett

The way I hear what you're saying is that the Mary that we engage in relationship with isn't a passive person.

28:19 - Al Prendergast

Correct.

28:20 - Mike Bennett

The Mary at the Annunciation isn't just a passive woman who's accepting what this angel is coming and telling her. There's a lot of action that comes with that and with the life that Mary lived and the witness that she provided.

28:36 - Al Prendergast

Yeah. Mary says, “Yes,” and she's not married at a time when that's a risk of [her] personal existence. I mean, people today don't realize that. That was a huge leap for her to say, “Yes,” at that point.

29:02 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

I want to tell you about a dream that I had on the weekend that we were having this NACMS conversation about stability. I dreamed that I was in a classroom at the University of Dayton, and there were students gathered around my desk, and they were maybe picking up tests or passing in papers or something. But out of the corner of my eye, I saw two students who were surreptitiously reaching into a container of Marianist crosses that I had on my desk, and they were stealing them. And when I woke up, I immediately realized that maybe we're making our students and our colleagues steal the Marianist charism from us rather than being like the parable of the Sower and throwing it out there. And, you know there's going to be rocky ground. You know, it's not all going to be peaches and cream of a hundredfold. But that dream really spoke to me about we need to be sharing what we have. We believe that we have a great gift in the Church that's given to us, but it's given for the Church. And I think we need to be more out there and sharing our connection to this Mary, who is the *Stabat Mater* and the woman of Pentecost who is there. Mary's always there when the Spirit is there. She's overshadowed by the Spirit. She's there at the Cross. She's there at Pentecost. She's always there.

30:59 - Mike Bennett

I love that imagery. I think it's leading me to that question of how people really come to feel like they have ownership of that Marianist charism. Because that imagery of stealing it, that has a little bit of ownership. And I'm thinking of my own experiences with the charism and having people who are exuding this but also having that feeling of, “Well, I see them doing it, and I'm not on their level. Therefore, I don't really know if I should call myself a Marianist. How do I identify with that?”

31:45 – Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Well, I think that's why we have to be so much more inviting people and to recognize that you don't have to be in the beginning, a “Marianist powerhouse.” I think people gradually live into it. What we all (who are already part of the Marianist Family) need to get better at is being encouraging to people to live into it using their own gifts and talents and their own call. Not everybody is going to be a Bro. Ray Fitz or a Fr. Jim Heft or...

32:28 - Mike Bennett

Or a Sr. Laura.

32:29 Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Or Sr. Leanne [Jablonski], who is a nationally recognized plan-to-colleges educator. But people are going to make their choices and live the Marianist charism through their music ministry, through their hospital chaplaincy, however.

32:51 - Mike Bennett

Yeah. And what you just said there, you mentioned the invitation. I think also what I hear you highlighting is that it's a persistent invitation that's also patient but is also acknowledging how that charism shows up. So, for me as a Marianist, I need to continually invite people in and engage in relationship but be patient for that person to accept it and embrace it and exude it and then highlight where I do see them exuding it. I do feel like this ties back to the Vow of Stability because I do - from what you've shared - I hear that that's really what this Vow of Stability calls us to do.

33:38 - Al Prendergast

I'm trying to think of when I was interested enough to talk to people about the State, and it was probably midway through my college career. I wasn't a great student, so it took me five years to get through. If you change majors often enough, you have to build credits over and over again. So about halfway through, I found a group of people who were talking about the spirituality and living a really important life in helping the world be better, and I found that attractive. And there were Marianist Brothers who were influential in that as well, and some Marianist Sisters.

34:46 – Al Prendergast

As I graduated and we decided to move to San Antonio, Texas, at the invitation of the Brothers to form a Lay Community in San Antonio near St. Mary's University, our lives became intertwined with the professed Marianists, both Sisters and Brothers. And I was in the cemetery - which is right down the road from NACMS - yesterday, walking around, and I was so touched by how many of those gravestones have touched my life. Fr. [Joseph] Lackner baptized my son, Ted, in Cincinnati. Fr. [Francis Michael] Maloney, he would frequently say, "They're keeping it from you, and you pay all this money, and they're keeping this information from you." There are so many people who have drawn me in and enriched not only my life but also my understanding of what the Vow of Stability really is and how to live it and how to live it by going out to people. I use the phrase frequently, "Being there." You know, physically being there, I think that's important, and it's another "Yes."

36:27 – Mike Bennett

Yeah.

36:28 - Al Prendergast

You never give up saying “Yes.” I use it as the example in my paper about permanence. Fr. [Joseph] Stefanelli - my daughter and I went to visit him in Cupertino [California]. This has got to be five, maybe seven years ago. And he's in the health center, and the people take us to his room, and he's sitting up in bed, and he has his computer, just like Sr. Laura has on his lap, and he's typing away, and he has some books over here, and he greeted us like old friends. Marianist friends always do. He couldn't get out of bed, and we asked him what he was doing, and he's translating from French to English so that the Lay people can understand what Father Chaminade really meant because 18th-century French is very difficult to translate. He [Fr. Stefanelli] died two months later. I mean, that's a permanent commitment, and I think that's so touching. It's so touching. So, you never give up, and the [“I am like a’] brook analogy that Chaminade uses is so appropriate. And that's another example of you never give up.

37:54 - Mike Bennett

There are Lay Marianists out there who are maybe curious about this Vow of Stability, maybe interested in taking the Vow of Stability. How does one prepare for that?

38:09 - Al Prendergast

My suggestion is not getting involved in the bureaucracy. The Visitation Marianist State Community has one person who's supposed to help people discern their position in the Vow of Stability. I find that a little bureaucratic. I mean, Father Chaminade created the [Three] Offices for a reason. If you go back in history, there wasn't a lot of organization in France back then, and he needed organization in the [Bordeaux] Sodality. I think we focus too much on the Offices and not enough on the influence that we all individually have.

38:51 - Al Prendergast

I would suggest a person find someone who has taken the Vow of Stability. [It] could be in the Visitation Marianist State Community. There are people who take the Vow of Stability who are not in the Visitation Marianist State Community. The *State* is a broad concept. You can form a State community with... I would say, three people and form your own State community. I think it needs to be very close to a Marianist Center for the support of the vowed religious to support you, because we support each other, as I've said before.

39:37 – Al Prendergast

But I would find someone that you feel comfortable talking to and say... As we're doing today, “Tell me, why you took the Vow of Stability? Tell me why you keep taking it. Tell me why you do what you do. Tell me why you gave up weekends, took long trips, went out of your way to do things for the Marianist Family?” I think that's the best approach. It's the personal connection that draws people into the Marianist Family, whether it's the Marianist State or the Sisters or the

Brothers. When I talk to some of the Religious, I know they there was always someone who helped draw them into their vocation.

40:30 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Yeah, I would definitely agree. The first thing that came to my mind was to find a Marianist mentor who has thought about stability. And it may be in the Visitation State Community, but there's a lot of people out there, and I think the Sisters and Brothers can be mentors for stability as well. I also think that you have to really consciously be connected with Mary. You need to have an understanding of how we focus on Mary in our prayer. And it's not that we always pray to Mary, but Father Chaminade always talked about having Mary at your side when you're praying to God. And so, I think developing a Marian spirituality is really key in the Marianist way, because there's other Marian spiritualities, and there's other Marian consecrations out there that aren't exactly the way we think about her or come to know her... The title of my paper is "Leaning into Stability," right? It's leaning in, and I think the more that we can encourage people to lean into the desire of their hearts - I mean, Jesuits always talked about "What is your desire?" You know, "What is your desire to be a deeper or a more connected part of this Marianist Family?" Go for it.

42:08 - Al Prendergast

I'm trying to create an elevator speech for the Marianist charisms, and I read through it several times, and I added at the bottom, "We pray a lot." And if someone's contemplating joining the Brothers or joining the Sisters or joining the State, they need to know, we pray a lot, and that should be part of their lives. I also say, and I think I said it in my paper, "This is not easy." I'll comment about Confucius, "You are walking down the middle of the road." And you have to be really skillful to survive that because you've got demands from your family, demands from your career. You have to be able to balance all of these tensions in your life and be a Religious at the same time. I'll use that word loosely.

43:20 - Mike Bennett

If you are interested in learning more about the Vow of Stability in the Marianist State, Al's paper is available under the E-Publication section of our website and linked in the show notes for this podcast. You can also learn more about Father Chaminade's *Letter of 1839 to the Retreat Masters* by listening to Episode 20 of *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. Lastly, and before we hear their responses to our concluding question, I'd like to offer a word of thanks to Al and Sr. Laura for sharing their Marianist stories and their research on the Vow of Stability. I'd also like to offer a word of thanks to you, our listeners, for listening to this episode and for your engagement with the North American Center for Marianist Studies. Make sure to subscribe to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories* wherever you listen to podcasts and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube @thisisNACMS. Now to wrap up this episode, we return with our final question. We know that Marianist Founders corresponded via letter writing, and so if you were

going to write someone a letter, dead or alive, and be guaranteed to response, who would you write to and what would be the topic?

44:40 - Al Prendergast

I'd write Chaminade, and I would ask him to take a look at the Marianist Family, probably worldwide, but my focus would be North America. "Tell me what you're pleased with, and tell me what you're disappointed with [in] what you see?" I would like to hear his response. I think we'd get another *Retreat Letter from 1839*.

45:13 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Or maybe he just expand that again, maybe with updated language.

45:21 - Al Prendergast

Since we both quoted it in our paper, you're probably right.

45:27 - Sr. Laura Leming, FMI

Yeah. This is really hard. There's many people that I might write to. As Chaminade came out of his mouth, I was saying probably to Adèle. And mostly, I guess, I would ask her for advice on how to have a portion of her secret sauce for her enthusiasm. You know, like Al described Fr. Stefanelli at the end of his life, still translating. And, you know, Adèle was still writing letters until a couple of months before she died, and she worked through a lot of illness. She worked through a lot of adverse circumstances that happened. Like one of the Sisters that she was closest to in the congregation, who was the first director of the first community at Tonneins, died tragically and just all the things that she worked through. And one of the things that I like doing when I'm preaching or giving retreats about Adèle is I collect scraps of her letters where she encourages people or she asks for specific gifts for individuals... I would like to thank her for all the wisdom that she's already shared, and then to say, "What wisdom do you have for us in our time?" I do think that she would be a good patron saint for the Internet because of her letter-writing and her networking. She was outstanding.