

**REMARKS MADE BY FATHER DAVID FLEMING, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY, AT THE PRAYER SERVICE – COLLEGIO SANTA MARIA IN ROME** - September 2, 2000

What a great privilege it is to stand here this evening and look out at the greatest gathering of Marianists in our history! Marianists have been waiting for this moment – praying, researching, studying, reading, sacrificing, getting to know and love the Founder, imitating him, seeking to realize his great insights into the life and mission of the Church, and above all praying, praying – for at least ninety years, ever since the cause for his recognition as a saint officially began in 1909. Tonight we are all here together, and it is good for us to be here.

This beatification comes at a providential moment in the history of our Marianist family. If it had happened fifty or sixty years ago, as might reasonably have been expected, we would have known far less about our holy Founder, and we would have celebrated mainly as a group of teaching religious, brothers and sisters from Europe and North America and Japan, surrounded by some of our students. Tonight we are still that, but we have also become a far-flung family present on all the continents, and we can celebrate with the vibrancy of Africa the profound heritage of Asia, the ardor of Latin America, (the freedom of Australia) as well as with the deep faithful roots of Europe and the energy of North America. We have become a true family, embracing (as good families do) a great variety of persons, people from all walks and states of life, lay and religious, men and women, from all backgrounds and social classes, privileged elites as well as poor and marginalized people, with a wealth of interests and talents and different, complementary ways of living out our common charism.

We have lived through the creative and purifying years since Vatican II, losing some of the things treasured by those of us who remember the time before, but enriched much more by the new experiences and the great drafts of fresh air that the Council let into our lives. We stand at the beginning of a new millennium with a deep sense of our Marianist charism. This beatification in this Jubilee Year is a gift, from the Lord and Mary and from Blessed Father Chaminade and from the Church, to encourage us, revitalize us, refresh our hope and energy, give us new courage and boldness in living out the spirit and mission we have received.

As I just said, it is good for us to be here. St. Peter said the same thing at the thrilling moment of the Transfiguration. We are enlivened by this moment together, but we are above all sent out in mission. Our place is here only for a brief moment; our task and our challenge lies ahead of us in the places we came from and the places to which we will be called, as those who carry the gift of Blessed Father Chaminade and the mission of Mary on into the Church of the future.

The heads of the other branches have spoken about the meaning of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade's beatification. For us members of the Society of Mary, I think it is also an invitation to repeat Mary's yes to today's grace in our communities and ministries. We say yes, above all, by living in confident hope, by plumbing more deeply our Founder's spirituality and our Alliance with Mary, and by realizing our role as missionaries of Mary. Our Blessed Founder wanted us to be a group of people "who never die" in order to live the charism fully, to probe into its depths, and to share it in fellowship, collaboration, partnership with all the members of the Family. We know, better than ever before, that our role makes no sense without the rest of you. For the whole Family we want to be religious, with you all we are Marianists. Please pray for us, that together with you, we can say yes to this role to which the Lord and Mary and Blessed Chaminade are calling us.

**Part of the HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II at the Beatification of  
Blesseds Pius IX, John XXIII, Archbishop Tommaso Regio, Father William Joseph  
Chaminade, and Dom Columba Marmion**

St. Peter's Square, Vatican City - Sunday, September 3, 2000

In the context of the Jubilee Year, it is with deep joy that I have declared blessed two Popes, Pius IX and John XXIII, and three other servants of the Gospel in the ministry and the consecrated life: Archbishop Tommaso Regio of Genoa, the diocesan priest **William Joseph Chaminade** and the Benedictine monk Columba Marmion.

Five different personalities, each with his own features and his own mission, all linked by a longing for holiness. It is precisely their holiness that we recognize today: holiness that is a profound and transforming relationship with God, built up and lived in the daily effort to fulfill his will. Holiness lives in history and no saint has escaped the limits and conditioning which are part of our human nature. In beatifying one of her sons, the Church does not celebrate the specific historical decisions he may have made, but rather points to him as someone to be imitated and venerated because of his virtues, in praise of the divine grace which shines resplendently in him....

The beatification during the Jubilee Year of **William Joseph Chaminade**, founder of the Marianists, reminds the faithful that it is their task to find ever new ways of bearing witness to the faith, especially in order to reach those who are far from the Church and who do not have the usual means of knowing Christ. **William Joseph Chaminade** invites each Christian to be rooted in Baptism, which conforms him to the Lord Jesus and communicates the Holy Spirit to him.

**Fr. Chaminade's** love for Christ, in keeping with the French school of spirituality, spurred him to pursue his tireless work by founding spiritual families in a troubled period of France's religious history. His filial attachment to Mary maintained his inner peace on all occasions, helping him to do Christ's will. His concern for human, moral and religious education calls the entire Church to renew her attention to young people, who need both teachers and witnesses in order to turn to the Lord and take their place in the Church's mission....

Let us confidently ask the new blessed, Pius IX, John XXIII, Tommaso Reggio, **William Joseph Chaminade** and Columba Marmion, to help us live in ever greater conformity to the Spirit of Christ. May their love of God and neighbor illumine our steps at this dawn of the third millennium.

**HOMILY GIVEN BY FATHER DAVID FLEMING, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY, AT THE MASS OF THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSED WILLIAM JOSEPH CHAMINADE'S BEATIFICATION**

Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls, September 4, 2000

In the final liturgy of these three days of celebrating our Blessed and Founder, I think we can already begin to imagine the role he will be able to play in the Church of our time and of the new millennium. We are convinced that Blessed Father Chaminade was a man with an insight and a commitment that is seminal for us today and in the future. He knew that the world of the future would be a world characterized by industrialization, urbanization, by secularity and by political and economic freedom. I don't know if he could imagine the present-day globalization of all these trends, which were just beginning in his time, but he offers us a rich spirituality and a sense of family and community that sustains us as we deal with today's and tomorrow's opportunities and challenges. His sense of the creative role of everyone, very particularly of lay people, sustained by a powerful sense of community, is an idea and a spirit whose time is just beginning to dawn on the Church and the world. His emphasis on a deeply based, Christ-centered, apostolically motivating dedication to Mary places us in touch with that formative and life-giving spirit that is the only real way of attracting and convincing contemporary people to accept the gift of faith.

The gospel we have just read gives us the key theme for this final liturgy. We are standing this afternoon, in this historic basilica so closely associated with the beginnings of the Second Vatican Council and with the efforts for dialogue among all the people of faith in today's world. We are gathered around Mary like the waiters at Cana, and she is sending us on a mission, telling us to look to her Son and follow his guidance – "Whatever He tells you, do it."

The mission on which Mary sends us will be an adventure of faith and courage, and experience of suffering and sacrifice, of joys and anxieties, of successes and failures, moments of great creativity and hope, moments of disappointment and frustration. But Blessed Father Chaminade is there to show us the way, by his example and by his teaching, and to reassure us that we are all sent, as he said, "to relight the torch of faith" and to "find the fulcrum that will move our modern world." Let us go forth from this celebration and from this pilgrimage, ready to share the rich many-faceted charism we have received through Father Chaminade, in the world of our time and our many varied places. We place our efforts and our commitments to the Lord in the hands of Mary, the Woman of our times, and in the hands of servants, our Blessed Father Chaminade.