

"A Major Stepping Stone in a 91-Year Journey"

by Tom Redmond, SM

Wednesday, October 18 of this year, 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of Father Chaminade being declared "Venerable," a significant and necessary step on the road to his beatification and sainthood. Our journey begins in the early 1870s when Father Joseph Simler, the Assistant General, began looking through the archives of the Society of Mary. Simler's archival discoveries led him, along with the expert research of Father Charles Klobb, to write the biography of the Founder (published in 1901), and the first volume of *The Spirit of Our Foundation* was published a year or two later. These two works led to a renewed relationship with Father Chaminade as the Founder of the Society of Mary.

The General Chapter of 1905 strongly encouraged the General Administration to open the Cause of Canonization for Father Chaminade. In 1909, the cause was officially begun in Bordeaux, France, and Vitoria, Spain, where some religious lived who personally knew the Founder. The Bishop of Bordeaux in 1916 wrote the decree formally recognizing Father Chaminade's orthodoxy and stated that his cause was worth pursuing. In May of 1918, the cause was formally introduced to the Vatican, and at the conclusion of its first session, the Congregation for the Cause of Saints approved continuing the examination. The second session of the Congregation for the Cause, held in November of 1936, raised specific questions about the Founder's last years.

In 1968, Father Vincent Vasey, the Postulator General, requested the Congregation complete its study of Chaminade's last years. Through detailed research, Father Vasey addressed the questions and concerns raised about Father Chaminade's final years, and Vasey published *The Last Years of Father Chaminade*. With its concerns answered, the Congregation completed its study, and on February 6, 1973, the consulting theologians stated their favor in declaring Father Chaminade's heroicity of virtues. The cardinals and bishops of the Congregation on June 5 agreed on the heroicity of the Founder's life. Then, on October 18, 1973, Pope Paul VI ratified the decision and made the official decree declaring Father William Joseph Chaminade "Venerable," meaning he lived the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, along with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Reading a biography of Father Chaminade, we see how Chaminade practiced these virtues during his long life. A miracle was now needed to proclaim Father Chaminade "Blessed." The beatification process not only involved waiting but also asking for and trusting in Chaminade's prayerful intercession in the concerns before us. If you care to read more, see ["The 91-Year Journey to the Beatification of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade" by Tom Redmond, SM](#), and ["Reflections on the Cause of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade" by Father Stephen Tutas, SM](#).