

William Joseph Chaminade
Spiritual Director of Adele de Trenquelléon
Foundress of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate

by

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Preface

We must return to the springs of the gospel and to the limpid waters of the beginnings of our institutes:¹ such is the urgent invitation of Vatican Council II and of those who hold responsibilities in the religious life. I welcomed enthusiastically the advice and, with great curiosity and interest, I have read the biography of Father William Joseph Chaminade, founder of the Society of Mary and of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. In so doing, I also met her who, with Chaminade, began the feminine religious branch of the Marianist Family.

My esteem for these pioneers along the paths of the Lord suggested the idea of examining more closely their reciprocal influence and, above all, the docility and promptness with which Adele de Trenquelléon submitted to the founder's spiritual direction. That seemed to me an interesting theme also because spiritual direction these days is in a state of crisis: that seems, to me, to be a universally admitted fact. However, it is not my intent, here, to research the causes of this phenomenon. Rather, I would, more simply, seek only to note the validity and necessity of a guide on an authentic path of the Christian life.

The purpose of spiritual direction is to help someone achieve Christian maturity, which consists, essentially, in conformity with Christ, in the fullness of a life of love for God and neighbor. Such a life of love should be lived in keeping with our personal talents and in keeping with the state of life which God wills for us. That is, it is the task of direction, and of spiritual direction in particular, to find and to activate whatever it is that God wishes of each of us; and this, not just once and for all, but moment by moment, in the concrete situations of life.

In this work I would like to consider the role of spiritual direction within a typical experience of the Christian life, the religious life, and, in our case, the Marianist religious life. I have tried, that is, to see in particular the relationship between Chaminade and Adele, foundress of the Daughters of Mary.

This work is divided into four chapters. The first two are introductory, treating of the historical, cultural, and religious ambiance, with some biographical data on the two persons involved. The third deals with the matter of spiritual direction of Adele by Chaminade. In treating of the direction of a foundress, I plan to present the destination, the end to be sought, and the means to be used to reach it as we find them in the typical documents of the institute, of the rule, and of the general and particular regulations for certain groups or certain offices. In this abundant documentation, Adele saw the providential signs from God through the mediation of Chaminade.

In the first place, we shall see how Chaminade guided Adele to walk in the ways of the spirit with docility and complete submission since it is the Holy Spirit who is the first, and even the only, director. Besides, since we are treating of the direction of the foundress of the Marianist Sisters, we shall see how he inculcated in her the Marianist charism; this can be verified in the examination of her life.

¹ {1} See Vatican II, *Perfectae caritatis*, 2. {footnotes in this translation are in single sequence; the original footnote numbers are in braces}

The fourth and final chapter consists of some reflections on the appropriateness of the message, or the charism which Chaminade has left to his spiritual descendants. In fact, it is only by consciously living the charism proper to the founder, and, therefore, the proper spirit of the institute, that a religious can achieve the maturity of his spiritual life which promotes the well-being of the Church, the only place where the religious life finds its reason for being.

CHAPTER ONE

[1] The historical Situation

[1.1] The ideas

[1.1.1] The European ambiance

From the final decades of the 1600s and throughout the 1700s there developed in Europe a cultural movement called the “Enlightenment.” The word refers to the “tendency to clarify everything by ‘the lights’ of reason and to struggle against every remaining ‘medieval obscurantism.’”² The Enlightenment represented the most mature fruit of the trend to criticize the past which had received its strongest impulse from the Renaissance. It embodied the strongest hope, at times ingenuous, an optimistic trust in the innovative power of reason. The development of the Enlightenment can be attributed to the spreading of rational procedures which had been successfully applied to the physical sciences; such procedures were, to some extent, also applied to other aspects of human life.

While Vico sought in history the “self-celebration” or progressive self-actualization of reason, the Enlightenment opposed reason to history, actually launching an attack on the latter. “All that history has produced and tradition has preserved with regard to social and political organizations or economic and juridical institutions or educational methods and systems or religious beliefs and practices: all is submitted to critical revision in the name of the rights of reason.”³ Already at that moment in history there were laid the first foundations of the movement of secularization which would have its practical consequences in the French Revolution and would reach its high point in the twentieth century.

[1.1.2] The national climate

The French Enlightenment had its own characteristics, The new ideas which the advocates of the French Enlightenment sought to present to the admiration and imitation of their fellow citizens (from the nobility to the common people) took on a more radical revolutionary tone. From an idealized cosmopolitanism it passed to an “anti-historical” posture (history being the domain of the irrational) and to the exaltation of the primitive. This was presented as the ideal of humanity which lives outside history, in a natural state. Progress, being always a further victory over obscurantism, was the fundamental article of faith of this new religion, a religion of the “goddess of reason.” As a consequence, there followed the exaltation of the value of earthly life as it was understood within the bourgeois mentality already dominant in France.

The optimism resulting from scientific progress was also reflected in the areas of morality and in the systems of philosophy. Typical expressions of this new stance were the so-called *philosophes*, that is, the writers of the *Encyclopedia or Dictionary of arts and crafts*. This was the “bible” of this new religion which began publication in 1751 under the direction of Denis Diderot. Another powerful organ for the dissemination of such ideas had appeared before the *Encyclope-*

² {1} E. P. Lamanna, *Nuovo Sommario di Filosofia*, vol. 2, Florence (Italy), 1959, p. 197.

³ {2} E. P. Lamanna, *Nuovo Sommario di Filosofia*, vol. 2, Florence (Italy), 1959, p. 197.

dia; it was the *Historical and critical dictionary* of Pierre Bayle (1647-1706). He had attempted to prove the anti-rationality of Revelation. From Bayle's thesis, which affirmed that even atheists can be honorable people, he further concluded that the atheists are the truly honorable people while those who follow some religion live in superstition:

Here we are presented with the clearest formulation of modern atheism as a party program. That is, we are faced with a group of intellectuals who work on the basis of common convictions in order to war against religion, and who oppose even the tendencies of advocates of natural law.⁴

War was launched against the Catholic Church,

considered to be the center of that old world which had to be destroyed. It was seen as the organization where all the remains of the past took refuge and sought protection: the traditions opposed to reason, the prejudices of a worn-out morality, the most obscurantist fanaticisms and superstitions, all the forces, doctrinal and practical, which supported political tyranny.⁵

For spreading their atheistic and libertine ideas, the *philosophes* even drew profit from the struggles between two great factions which divided the French Church: the Jesuits and the Jansenists. A fundamental role in the task of spreading the message of the Enlightenment, especially in the polemic against the Church and religious institutions, was played by François Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire. His position was one of Deism, which presented itself as auxiliary and support of moral behavior.

Belief in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul is necessary on moral reasons, since theoretical reasons are not sufficient [to sustain them fully]. Such reasons are based on an optimism which seeks to demonstrate them by a presumed perfect order and providential finality of the universe. In fact, the more profound seem to be the anomalies and the miseries which impart a sense of irony to the Leibnitz statement (that this is the best of all possible worlds), and the more urgent and bitter is the struggle against the ills and injustices of life, so much more is it necessary to place direction and energy in a more mysterious God who exists, perhaps, outside the world and does not act on it but is nevertheless watchful over all our desires, our feelings, our actions, and who will reward or punish in ways beyond our understanding. An atheistic state cannot sustain itself. If there were no God, one would have to be invented; but all nature shouts out to us that God does exist.⁶

Voltaire's intent was to demonstrate, in his *Essay on morals*, that Christianity was the principal cause of injustice in the world, and that, therefore, the Church had to be rejected fought against.

In the areas of legislation and politics, French Enlightenment looked for a new principle of legislative and constitutional sovereignty opposed to ecclesiastical divine right; it would be a more

⁴ {3} G. de Rosa, *Storia Moderna*, vol. 2, Rome, 1971, p. 252.

⁵ {4} E. P. Lamanna, *Nuovo Sommario di Filosofia*, vol. 2, Florence (Italy), 1959, pp. 205-206.

⁶ {5} E. P. Lamanna, *Nuovo Sommario di Filosofia*, vol. 2, Florence (Italy), 1959, p. 207.

effective principle for limiting the arbitrariness of princes and disorder among the people. It would therefore be required that the kings be *philosophes* who place their trust in reason. In that way the ideal of an Enlightened monarch would be attained, no longer “by the grace of God,” but only by the graces of human reason.

Against the danger of an absolute despotism, Montesquieu (1689-1755), in his *The spirit of law*, set up a remedy: separate clearly the three powers, the legislative, the executive, the judicial. He affirmed that this was the necessary condition for combating the illegitimate pretensions of authority and for assuring the liberty of the citizenry.

Because of his dissent from some of the fundamental theses of the Enlightenment, a special place must be given to Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), of Geneva, son of a Calvinist artisan.

His political notions differed both from those proper to the enlightened despot looking toward a participation of the governed in public life, and from those proper to the liberalism of the nobility and of the bourgeoisie. His notions were more attuned to the real conditions of inequity which private property especially creates in society.⁷

In contrast with other illuminists, Rousseau, in his *Discourse on the arts and sciences* (1750), affirmed that progress was not to be considered synonymous with happiness and well-being, for incivility quickly becomes a source of moral corruption. In order to overcome social inequity, according to Rousseau, the central issue is the return to the state of nature, understood as a condition to be created within society by means of radical reform. His ideas on the political organization of society are contained in his *Social contract*, 1762. In any case,

the central theme of Rousseau’s reflections, the object around which are developed all his thoughts with reference to anthropology, pedagogy, politics, is man. This, however, was not man in the abstract, considered in his metaphysical essence as he had been defined in the earlier philosophical tradition; but man in the concrete, in his historical situation, as “he made himself” thanks to the exercise of his freedom, in his actual relationship with his natural environment, and in the living context of social relationships.⁸

[1.2] From theory to practice

[1.2.1] The historical situation of French society

The 18th century has been called the philosophical century. Philosophy was in style and provided the salons with the preferred subjects of conversation. It dominated the courts and even touched the thrones. It inspired and expressed itself in literature and poetry. It extended its influence even into the minds of the ordinary people, placing before them shining dreams of revenge and social reconstruction; such dreams were being transformed into revolutionary sentiments.

⁷ {6} G. de Rosa, *Storia Moderna*, vol. 2, Rome, 1971, p. 257.

⁸ {7} V. Fagone, *Rousseau e la condizione umana*, in “La Civiltà Cattolica,” CXXX (1979), III, p. 242.

The illuminist movement, in fact, developed between two revolutions: it reached its full flowering in England after the revolution of 1688, and had its tragic and bloody epilogue in the French Revolution of 1789. The *Encyclopedia*, typical fruit of the Enlightenment, contributed greatly in preparing a movement which would overthrow every preceding movement: political, economic, ideological. Such a movement would culminate in the Revolution of 1789 and the proclamation of the “Rights of Man and of the Citizen.”

There was an absolutistic system in which the authorities were unable to fulfill the duties of their own responsibilities and no longer had in mind the common good; everything portended its collapse. With a diminution of power, the privileged classes, both the nobility and the wealthy, became more arrogant. The reforms which might have brought some remedy to the situation became impossible. France, as is the usual case for all weak regimes, became the theater of conflict of classes and interests. This failure to reform became much more serious as the illuminist ideas became more rapidly entrenched. “Therefore, the Revolution would not be an explosion of anger of a mistreated populace but the inevitable result of a succession of errors and miscalculations resulting from the indifference and avidity of enfeebled governments.”⁹

The view, therefore, of those who attributed the Revolution to a Masonic conspiracy, or who saw in it divine punishment for moral degradation, seems rather narrow from a historical perspective.

[1.2.2] The historical situation of the Church in France

What was the Church like?

Seen from the outside, the French Church, on the eve of the Revolution, seemed one of the most splendid and powerful in all the world. Perhaps in no other country, with the possible exception of Italy, were there so many splendid churches, filled with works of art and every kind of treasures. In all the provinces there were numerous monasteries, and the religious confraternities of the cities were in full vigor. The liturgy left nothing to be desired as to pomp and splendor, manifested especially in the processions among which that of Corpus Christi held first rank.¹⁰

The economic condition of the Church in France was undoubtedly better than that of the State. This was obvious to all and led to requests, in the “Notebooks of complaints” of 1788-89, for a re-distribution of the goods of the Church for the benefit of the public weal. Not only was the Catholic Church in a privileged position, having, so to say, in hand all the social and individual life of the French, but it was the only church officially recognized. In order to better understand the situation of the Church in France on the eve of the Revolution, it should be noted that the Revolution, at its beginnings, did not have an anti-religious bent, or, more correctly, hostility against Roman Catholicism. The position of persecuting the traditional Church and reforming it in a revolution of nationalistic tendencies must be considered a logical development and a consequence of the Revolution itself. Can such an assertion be justified?

⁹ {8} D. Rops, *Storia della Chiesa del Cristo*, vol. 5/2, Turin/Rome, 1962, p. 272.

¹⁰ {9} L. Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, vol. XVI/III, Rome, 1955, p. 439.

In the structure of the *Ancien régime*, the political and the ecclesiastical societies were based on two parallel plans and collaborated closely. In the mentality of that epoch they had the same divine origin and the same end: the well-being of the people. On the eve of the Revolution, the “Declaration of the Gallican Clergy” (passed by the assembly of clergy of 1681-82 and drafted by Bossuet) was still in force. It repeated, corrected, and perfected the theses of monarchical and ecclesiastical gallicanism which had dominated France since the 14th century. In substance, the theses affirmed:

- ❖ in temporal matters, the Pope had no power over the king (art. 1)
- ❖ in spiritual matters, the Pope, vicar of Christ, has all power (art. 2)
- ❖ the authority of the Pope is limited by the “rules, customs, and constitutions accepted in the kingdom and in the gallican [French] Church” (art. 3)

The Catholic religion was, of course, the official religion of the State; but it is also true that in the 18th century the use of religion for political purposes was an all-to-evident practice. Besides, it should not be forgotten that from 1715 onward parliamentary gallicanism had assumed pre-dominant importance. In particular, the parliament of Paris, bitterly opposed to Rome, had elaborated procedures which sought to reduce progressively the influence of the Pope.

The Church, rather than adapting itself in turn to the new situations which were coming into being with the birth of the nation-states which were jealous of their authority, stiffened itself in the defense of its privileges already outdated: privilege of the court, rights of asylum, of mortmain [perpetual legacies]. All of this led to a widening of the separation between Church and State, between Church and the modern world, between the hierarchy and the Christian people. To these evils which already of themselves poisoned the mission of the Church in all the countries of Europe, there was added, in France, Jansenism.

Jansenism, originally a reaction to the theological and practical laxity of many Christians and ecclesiastics, became engaged in polemics with the Jesuits. The increased emphasis (on both sides) on marginal matters led to a great waste of good moral and intellectual energy at a time when they could have been usefully employed in a work of reform which was all the more necessary as it was ignored.¹¹

In justice, though, it must be remembered that in the Jansenistic atmosphere some reforms were envisioned which the Church was later to favor and put into execution. Unfortunately, in that revolutionary moment, Jansenism, overshadowed by the Enlightenment and conditioned by gallicanism, degenerated into indifference and incredulity. With the growth of such movements as gallicanism and Jansenism, relations between the political society and the ecclesiastical changed. Structures came into being which differed from those of the Roman Church. The influence of the pontifical authority over the French Church was almost extinguished. However, even though the need of visible communion with Rome posed serious problems, there fortunately existed on diverse levels of the Christian people an invisible sense of loyalty, the kind commonly termed “*sensus ecclesiae*.”

[1.2.3] Condition of the French clergy

¹¹ {10} G. Martina, *La Chiesa nell'età dell'assolutismo, del liberalismo, del totalitarismo*, Brescia, 1974, p. 349.

The situation of the French clergy was certainly a very special one. The 18th century, with its expanding rationalism, witnessed a lessening of fervor in the spiritual life of both secular and religious clerics.¹² The major number of bishops enjoyed good incomes. “On the eve of the Revolution, almost all were of noble families; half of them, ignoring their obligation of residence, generally lived in the vicinity of Versailles and did little in the way of pastoral ministry.”¹³

With regard to the “lower clergy,” it should be clear that we are dealing with a very diversified category: priests of the countryside, priests of the cities, abbots of rich monasteries, members of cathedral chapters, etc. “These, too, were immersed in the same problems which preoccupied the higher clergy; but social activities and economic preoccupations, in general, did not lead them to neglect their pastoral duties.”¹⁴

Men of their own times, members of the lower clergy did not escape the spirit of the age but, differently from the higher clergy, they were close to the problems and the lives of the people. “The philosophy on which the priest and the monks, like the prelates, nourished themselves, took precedence over theology. Both religion and morality were being ‘naturalized’; faith, becoming progressively more timid, was growing weaker and disappearing.”¹⁵ A judgment on the pastors of the countryside is more positive. They deserve the highest praise, while we must not exaggerate the humiliations they had to endure under their superiors.

The saddest element was the “religious life” within the conventual and monastic communities with its accompanying influence on the Christian civil society. More than immorality, there was a dangerous relaxation of the severe religious discipline which was reflected even in negligence in carrying out celebrations and prayers. The situation, however, was better in the convents of the women religious, notwithstanding the plague of forced vocations.

Around 1780, the years just preceding the Revolution, there is a clear revival of the monastic life.

At that same period of time was formed the generation of religious who would assure the survival of Catholicism during the revolutionary crisis. They were to make possible the rebirth of the 19th century. Yet it is clear that the Revolution take place before the renewal had succeeded in bearing its fruit or in altering profoundly the problems which were awaiting the Church.¹⁶

The year 1790 was, certainly, for the French Catholic Church a year of difficult trials and it marks the beginning of the measures taken against religion. A clear example is the secularization

¹² {11} It was to this particular situation that the founders of works of Christian reconstruction had to address themselves. It was time to act! See P. Pourrat, *La spiritualité chrétienne*, IV, Paris, 1928, p. 582.

¹³ {12} L. J. Rogier, *Nuova storia della Chiesa*, vol. IV, Turin, 1971, p. 180.

¹⁴ {13} J. Leflon, *La crisi rivoluzionaria, (1789-1846)*, in Fliche-Martin, *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, vol. XX/1, Turin, 1971, p. 38.

¹⁵ {14} J. Leflon, *La crisi rivoluzionaria, (1789-1846)*, in Fliche-Martin, *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, vol. XX/1, Turin, 1971, p. 40.

¹⁶ {15} L. J. Rogier, *Nuova storia della Chiesa*, vol. IV, Turin, 1971, pp. 130-131.

of the religious orders and congregations, decided by the Constitutions of February, 1790. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, in fact, was the equivalent of a complete rupture with Rome. It was the extreme consequence of gallicanism, modified in keeping with the demands of a revolution which placed into the hands of the enfranchised populace competencies previously attributed to the King.

But, much more important that the rupture of diplomatic relations with Rome was, evidently, the rupture within the Church in France with its division into the Constitutional Church and the Roman Church. These were served, respectively, by the “jurors” and the “non-jurors,” labeled by the government: “refractors.”¹⁷

The Revolution made clear a sad reality: the faith was not alive in the places where the persecutors could abolish religious practice without any great difficulty. The larger cities, the “departments” around Paris, Burgundy, the valley of the Loire, the Central Plains, a vast zone of the south-west were very much de-Christianized. Yet, we must not overlook the influence of such great saints as Grignon de Montfort in the Vandée, of Francis Regis in Velay and in Vivarais, still alive at the end of the 1700s.

The great crisis which the Church was experiencing in the final decades of the 18th century had been in preparation in many stages for two centuries. It culminated with a frightful threat to all its structures and to the very soul of the Christian people. Yet, holiness in the Church had not diminished and it was precisely that kind of lived Christianity that would again re-vivify special values and an almost-extinguished morality. That holiness was to renew a languishing Christian society which the Revolution had tested as in a crucible.

[1.3] The influence of the spiritual currents of the 17th century on the 18th and 19th centuries

The authority and influence of St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) were exceptional in the 17th century. “Though we cannot, in a precise sense, speak of a spiritual system or of a spiritual ‘doctrine,’ his works bear an important very personal imprint.”¹⁸ This Salesian influence went far beyond the limits of the Visitation nuns. The works of the Bishop of Geneva, his *Introduction to the Devout Life* and his *Treatise on the Love of God* were, and are, read everywhere. All spiritual masters are, in one way or another, his disciples. His influence is all the greater in that it does not impose adherence to any particular system.

Another author who left his mark on all the spirituality of his age, and of succeeding ones, is Cardinal De Bérulle (1575-1629). His spirituality was the result of a radical change of perspective in his life: continual evolution after his retreat at Verdun (1601) which resulted in the conversion which took place in 1606-1608. In the eyes of Bourgoing,¹⁹ De Bérulle’s Christocentrism (devotion to the Incarnate Word) can be understood only from his fundamental theology: for him, theology and spirituality were inseparable.

¹⁷ {16} L. J. Rogier, *Nuova storia della Chiesa*, vol. IV, Turin, 1971, pp. 189-190.

¹⁸ {17} J. Le Brun, “France,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 5, col. 932.

¹⁹ [trans. note: Bourgoing (1585-1662) was a French theologian, associate of de Bérulle, and his collaborator in introducing the Oratory into France (1611).]

In a serious study of the mystery of the Trinity he emphasized, following the Greek Fathers and Saint Augustine, the hierarchy and appropriations of the divine persons, thus laying the foundation of his doctrine of the Incarnation: the union in Jesus Christ of the Human and the Divine is unbreakable, indissoluble. We cannot, therefore, go to God except through Jesus Christ.

We creatures, by nature and by sin, are nothing, unable to turn back to God. We have to be incorporated into Christ, “adhere” to him, conform ourselves to him in all his “states.” This presupposes a renunciation and a flowing into what Bérulle calls a slavery.²⁰

Berullism is not a way of praying; its influence will be felt in a diversity of souls and in a diversity of ways. Berullian’s “raising up” is a very flexible form of prayer, and all traditional forms can be vivified by it. The founding of the Oratory would also contribute to the restoration of holiness of the clergy.

Jansenism was seen by Sainte Beuve as one of the better expressions of the religious sentiment in France. Indeed, in its beginnings, it had seemed to be the continuation of the post-Tridentine reform under the impulse of Madame Angelique and Saint-Cyran. Unfortunately, after the events of Port-Royal, it lost sight of its original purpose and tendencies, and then degenerated.

Jacques Le Brun observes that:

Historical evolution would lead these insights, at first so promising, to extreme positions. The religious movement would become characterized as an obstinate attachment to the past and to the traditions of the group; it would be marked by extreme rigorism and an exacerbated solidarity: typical marks of a persecuted minority.²¹

Among the major devotions was that of the Eucharist for which Bérulle laid the foundations; Condren would develop it further through his greater influence on the Christian populace. The mystics found in the Eucharist the sacramental form of their experience. It was in Communion that the devotion of the faithful found its natural expression. But it was precisely on the question of frequent Communion that the most active controversies developed.

Another devotion was that to the Sacred Heart, propagated by Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), a nun of the convent of Paray-le-Monial.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary, in France of the 17th century, followed the parabolic pattern of a spirituality: a brilliant beginning, a period of development without any great creative thrust, a slow folding up. The brilliant beginning, during the first half of the century, coincided with the expansion of the Society of Jesus, and, in particular, with the Marian sodalities in the schools. These were suppressed in 1760 by the parliament of Paris.²²

²⁰ {18} J. Le Brun, “France,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 5, col. 933.

²¹ {19} J. Le Brun, “France,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 5, col. 937.

²² {20} Forty years later, Chaminade, in Bordeaux, founded his Marian Sodality, giving it new elements and new visions.

It was Bérulle, followed by his disciples, who would strongly foster devotion to Mary; his spirituality was supported by theological reflections. Popular devotion continued to flourish. Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716) was a good example of the vitality of devotion to Mary in the country sides and among the common people, as was the case in Italy with Alphonse de Liguori (1696-1787). Nor should we forget to mention, among original works, that of J. F. Bertrier (1704-1782), though it was permeated with a rather superficial spirituality. He was an apologist of St. John of the Cross and, with a truly mystical sensitivity, examined the question of mental prayer, pointing out that perfection consisted in conformity with the will of God.

In broad strokes, these were the ideas, the facts, the spiritualities -- in a word, the ambiance -- in which Chaminade lived, in which he was formed, and in which he works as a missionary and Catholic priest of France.

Most appropriately Father Raymond Halter has observed:

Father Chaminade was not a writer. He was above all a founder of works and a director of consciences. His writings do not seek to penetrate more deeply into doctrinal questions, nor to chose among the various currents of thought of his time. He gives advice to men and women who have taken seriously their Christian life.²³

²³ {21} Chaminade, *Ecrits d'Oraison*, Intro., Fribourg, 1969, p. 11.

CHAPTER TWO

[2] Biographical data

[2.1] William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850)

For the sake of clarity, we may divide a biography of Chaminade into five periods:

- ❖ from his birth to the Revolution (1761-1791)
- ❖ from underground to exile (1792-1800)
- ❖ from his return into France to the religious foundations (1800-1816)
- ❖ his foundations (1816-1841)
- ❖ his difficulties with the governing element of the Society of Mary (1841-1850)

[2.1.1] The first period: 1761-1791

William Chaminade was born April 8, 1761, in Périgueux, capital of Périgord, one of the old provinces of southern France. The fourteenth and last son of Blaise Chaminade and Catherine Béthon, he was baptized the same day at Saint-Silain, the most important of the six parishes in the city after that of the cathedral, Saint-Front. Four siblings became priests: John Baptist, Jesuit; Blaise, a Recollect; Louis and William, diocesan priests.

When he was ten years old he enrolled in the *Collège-Séminaire* of Mussidan, a small town some 35 km west of Périgueux. John Baptist was at the time a teacher at the *Collège*. He had made profession in the Society of Jesus, but had been secularized following the suppression of the Jesuits in France in 1763. Young William Joseph suffered a rather severe wound in his leg while on a walk with his fellow-students. He decided to ask for the grace of a cure from Our Lady at the shrine of Verdélais. In fact, the cure was so rapid that William, for the rest of his long life, continued to see in it a miraculous occurrence for which he continued to be grateful to the Virgin.

In the friendly and welcoming atmosphere of the institution and under the direction of his older brother, William Joseph²⁴ was introduced to the practice of mental prayer and later, in 1775 when he was only fourteen, he made a private profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Having terminated his studies at Mussidan, he pursued them at Bordeaux. His formation was continued under the direction of the priest, Jean Simon Langoiran, who was to be massacred May 15, 1792, in the early moments of the revolutionary turmoil in Bordeaux. While there William Joseph joined a group directed by the priest Noël Lacroix whom he chose as spiritual guide. In 1792 he was in Paris to complete his studies at a Sulpician seminary. At this time he received minor orders and within the year completed his priestly and theological formation. His studies were crowned with a doctorate in theology.²⁵

²⁴ [trans. note: Joseph was his confirmation name which he preferred to use thereafter, signing G. Joseph.]

²⁵ [trans. note: This paragraph may require some revision; see Verrier, *Jalons*.]

By 1784 he was back at Mussidan, as steward of the institution, professor of mathematics, of physics, and of chemistry, collaborator of his two brothers (John Baptism, now superior; and Louis, prefect of studies). In 1785 he was ordained to the priesthood.

On January 8, 1789, in the church of Our Lady of Rocce, 142 representatives of the third estate, eleven of the clergy, and seven of the nobility, met to discuss and to sign a declaration. Among the signatures of the representatives of the clergy, next to that of Father H. Moze, was that of William Joseph Chaminade, priest, doctor in theology, and professor at the seminary of Mussidan. He was there as a delegate of the assembly of the ecclesiastical electors of Périgueux.

Upset by external events and sorrowed by the death of his oldest brother, John Baptist (just at the moment of great difficulty), William Joseph, in anticipation of future disturbances, prepared a “safe house” in Bordeaux. A financial loan from the priest Langoiran (son of a wealthy arms maker) enabled him to purchase, Dec. 10, 1791, a house and property called Saint-Laurent, on the outskirts of the city. After taking possession, he had his parents move there. After having refused, in the present of the authorities of Mussidan, to take the schismatic oath required by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he took refuge there himself.

[2.1.2] Second period: 1792-1800

He had barely settled in when, on July 15, 1792, the first uprising to cause bloodshed in Bordeaux took place. Its first victim was, in fact, his protector, Father Langoiran. From 1793 onward, Chaminade was one of the forty priests who exercised their ministry in hiding. Like the others, he used various stratagems and disguises; several times he owed his safety to providential interventions. In February, 1795, during a period of calm, he was charged with the task of reconciling with the Church the schismatic priests who had taken the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. It was indeed a delicate function. Chaminade simply applied, with tact, the instructions and rules drawn up by the Holy See. The archives of the archdiocese of Bordeaux have preserved some hundred retractions received by Chaminade who, until the re-organization of the diocese, retained the title and function of penitentiary.

In October of the same year he had to return to a clandestine and itinerant ministry. It was at that time that he first met Charlotte Thérèse de Lamourous, future foundress of the Misericorde of Bordeaux. She placed herself under his spiritual guidance and, until the end of her life (1836), she associated him with all her projects. In relationship with Chaminade at that time were a number of future religious, future foundresses, all the militants of the new era after the Revolution had passed.

The law of August 24, 1797, restored to the non-jurors all their previous rights. But it was a short moment of serenity followed, two weeks later, by the re-imposition of all the previous coercive laws against all those who had emigrated. Chaminade was wrongfully listed among them. Despite all his efforts to have his name erased and too well-known now to be able to hide, he had to resign himself to go into exile. On September 16 he left Bordeaux. He arrived in Saragossa October 10 in time to celebrate the first vespers of the patroness of Aragon. He would remain in exile three years, close to the shrine of the Virgin of the Pillar. It was there, at her feet, that he saw, in a supernatural mode, his future mission.

[2.1.3] Third period: 1800-1816

In the fall of 1800 Chaminade returned to Bordeaux where political and social disorder was rampant. He realized immediately the need to reconstruct Christian life and to withdraw the souls of the young from the harmful influence of the prevalent *philosophism*; he proposed ideals quite different from those of Voltaire and Rousseau. On December 8, he laid the foundation for a sodality consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin; it was destined to become the source of innumerable works.

He wanted the sodality to be a permanent mission for the Christianization of the world by means of the multiplication of Christians. His mission was not limited to religious support for individual members. He had returned from exile with the title and responsibility of administrator of the diocese of Bazas, conferred on him by the archbishop of Auch. As vicar general, his task was not only to administer, but also to evangelize. This ministry lasted two years (1800-1802). As reward for a work well done, the archbishop obtained for him the title of “missionary apostolic.” This was conferred on him by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, March 28, 1801.

Attentive to the needs of his times, Chaminade worked with persons of various social conditions. The sodality brought together, in a single body, distinct sections of young men and young women, of fathers and mothers of families, of priests, with the motto: union without confusion. In the face of hostile propaganda, the sodalists were to give evidence, together, that the gospel message was still relevant. The idea which Chaminade wished to convey was this: “every sodalist is a permanent missionary and every sodality is a permanent mission at the service of the Church in the name of Mary Immaculate.”

The apostolate of each sodalist was to be carried out in the context of daily life, especially by example and professional awareness. The sodality never limited itself to an exclusive care for personal sanctification, but priority was given to religious instruction since the sodalists had to protect themselves from the dangers of the deism so prevalent after the Revolution.

In the context of the sodality, innumerable initiatives were undertaken: catechetical instruction, preparation for first communion, establishment of recreational centers, activities in favor of the chimney sweeps, a lending library for good books, visits to hospitals and prisons, forerunners of social works, such as the union of bakers. The sodality became a “nursery” of priestly and religious vocations. Two sodalists, Louis Lafargue and William Darbignac, became the first two Brothers of the Christian Schools of Bordeaux. In 1802, they opened a school and began, under the direction of Chaminade, their religious life according to the spirit and rule of St. John Baptist de la Salle. In 1806, the archbishop of Bordeaux named Chaminade the ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers.

When, in 1804, the seminary in Bordeaux was reconstituted, all the students and teachers were sodalists. Chaminade’s activity was exercised especially in depth, in the innermost soul of the young people who, in great numbers, entrusted to him the direction of their conscience. His ambition was to provide for the Virgin children truly worthy of her, Christians firmly rooted in

faith. It was a matter of helping these young people reach their goal, their complete spiritual and apostolic fulfillment.

The importance attributed to apostolic activity was not in opposition to the profound spiritual life toward which it was essential to tend. Chaminade, at the beginning of the 19th century, seems to have been a typical modern priest with his characteristic traits:

A man overwhelmed with work even to excess, but completely penetrated with a supernatural spirit; often in debt, though considered a businessman and as rich as could be desired; opposed and criticized by the very ones who should have supported him; a man, above all, who trusted in God alone and reached his goals despite all obstacles, sustained by his zeal and the firmness of his faith.²⁶

There followed a variety of events in the public life, such as the occupation of Rome by the French troops in February, 1808; the kidnapping of Pius VII in June, 1809; the excommunication issued against the Emperor; the distribution of the Bull by sodalists of Paris and Bordeaux and the consequent distrust of Napoleon toward the sodalities. Chaminade's home was searched and the sodality suppressed in November, 1809. In 1812, there was another search following the arrest of Lafon, a deacon [and a sodalist], who was implicated in the attempted coup d'état of General Malet. Chaminade was arrested and imprisoned, but released for lack of evidence. Finally, in 1814, Bordeaux welcomed the Bourbons, a month before Napoleon's first abdication; for the sodalists, he had been the "tyrant." On April 30, 1814, the sodality was reconstituted publicly.

[2.1.4] Fourth period: 1816-1841

The key to the activities of the servant of God is found in the apostolate undertaken under the auspices of Mary. Consecration to Mary, according to Chaminade's own presentation, took diverse gradations in keeping with personal generosity and with correspondence with divine grace: "The sodalists, both men and women, can be led to the highest perfection thanks to the practice of the evangelical counsels."²⁷

The feminine branch of the religious communities was begun before the masculine one. In 1812, a document points out that many of the young women sodalists had pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, for a three year period. Later, many asked to commit themselves for life and also to live in community. Among these young women, in addition to those of the sodality of Bordeaux, there were some in the affiliated sodalities. Two religious foundresses deserve special mention: Mlle Charlotte Thérèse de Lamourous, foundress of the Misericorde of Bordeaux whom Napoleon termed "the marvel of Bordeaux;" and Mlle Adele de Trenquelléon, foundress of the Daughters of Mary [Immaculate] in Agen.

With this latter one, in June [May] of 1816, Chaminade founded the Daughters of Mary, the first step in the realization of an "inspiration" which anticipated also a religious congregation of men. Within the sodality, the highest degree of consecration to Mary was that of the members belong-

²⁶ {1} L. Gadiou and J. C. Delas, *Marianistes en mission permanente*, Bar-Le-Duc, 1972, pp. 45-46.

²⁷ {2} Chaminade, *Ecrits marials*, vol. 2, Fribourg, 1966, no. 359.

ing to the “State.” This group sought to have young men live the religious life while living in the world.²⁸

The religious state formed within the sodality is only a more perfect way of realizing the full portent of one’s consecration to Our Lady. Devotion to Mary leads to the practice of the counsels. Every sodalist tends toward Jesus Christ by means of the Blessed Virgin, by the practice of the commandments; if the counsels are observed, it is without the obligation of vows.²⁹

Unfailingly, a spiritual life of such intensity had to move both directors and sodalists toward the foundation of a religious institute. It was on October 2, 1817, that seven members of the State joined Chaminade in founding the Society of Mary. Born out of the sodality, it would have the same characteristic: to form a single family of apostles, priests and laity, all religious in the same sense. After the first moments of common life, Chaminade, having already drafted some elements of a Constitution, made an adaptation of the Rule of the Daughters of Mary and named it the “Institute of Mary.”

He was anxious to inform the Holy See without delay of the work which he had undertaken and to seek from it a first blessing. In a request of January, 1819, in which he presented the two institutes born out of the sodality, he cited the favorable support of the archbishop of the city. He asked for a plenary indulgence for the profession, for the renewal of vows, and some other favors. Pope Pius VII responded with a most gracious Brief, granting the requested favors.

The Revolution had greatly harmed and weakened the Church. It had raised doubts about the religious life itself, and, as a matter of fact, in France religious orders were practically nonexistent. Chaminade’s intention was to create a religious order in the fullest sense of the word. But how? It was a matter of living the gospel to its full extent, but in the midst of the world itself. The experience of a close collaboration between priests and laity, which had taken place within the sodality, had proved very successful; it was to be even more effective in the constitution of the new orders.

The first draft of the Constitutions appeared in 1829. Prior to that, the Society of Mary had expanded in the Bordeaux area with new foundations; in 1822, a novitiate was opened at Saint-Laurent; and on April 29, 1825, it founded the boarding school of Sainte Marie (later named the *Institute Sainte-Marie*), the first boys’ school of that name in all France.

Within the Institute of Mary divergences of temperament and views had their effect; in a work still in its beginning such developments were inevitable. Some members give greater importance to the need to give themselves to the work more than to living their consecration to the full. Besides, economic questions soon raised their heads. None of this would have been of major concern had it not been for the July revolution of 1830. That event opened up for the Society of Mary a long period, known as the crises of expansion; disturbing crises, but crises that served to purify the work and to demonstrate its divine origin.

²⁸ {3} True precursors, they anticipated the role of Secular Institutes within the Church.

²⁹ {4} V. Vasey, “Chaminade,” in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, vol. 2, col. 859-860.

We know well how dominant still were the ideas of the preceding century, in particular the antipathy (not to say “hatred”) against religious orders. But even more evident was the anti-clerical violence, and especially the anti-sodality movements of that revolution. Chaminade, speaking to his religious in 1829, said: We are walking on volcanoes, and we may experience, perhaps even very soon, frightening disturbances. There were no serious incidents before February, 1831, but the liberalist partisans in Bordeaux did not look favorably on the sodality nor on Chaminade. The situation became critical and Chaminade thought it prudent to leave the city; he took the road to Agen, thinking to be absent for only a few weeks. But he stayed away five years.

One day Father Lalanne expressed the anxiety of some religious worried about their future should the Society of Mary be dissolved. The founder wrote:

text³⁰

Within the community of the Daughters of Mary other troubles arose. The founder, in 1831, was forbidden, in the name of the bishop, entry into their mother-house in Agen. In these painful circumstances, Chaminade was admirable in his patience and faith. After this sad period, during which he saw the departure of two of his assistants (Perrière and Collineau) Chaminade faithfully announced to his sons all that had taken place. He had the happiness of seeing, in the testimonials which come to him from all the communities, that the withdrawal of the two assistants had not shaken the loyalty of the religious.

Another trip took him to Alsace and Franche-Conté, from September of 1834 to May of 1836. Working tirelessly, he established novitiates for each of those provinces, in the former abbey of Ebersmunster and in the former priory of Courtefontaine. In October, 1836, he returned to the south of France, passing through Auch, where he instituted the Third Order Regular of the Daughters of Mary. He arrived in Bordeaux barely in time to be present for the death of his spiritual daughter, Mlle de Lamourous.

During the following years the foundations multiplied in the south, in Alsace, in Franche-Conté, and into Switzerland. Increasing his activities in proportion as he felt age weakening his walk, Chaminade worked to complete the definitive draft of the Constitutions. On September 16, 1838, he sent them to Rome with a request addressed to Pope Gregory XVI, a document admirable for the skill with which he presented his work. On April 27, 1839, he received from Gregory XVI a Brief of praise, accompanied by a letter of Cardinal Giustiniani which assured him that “your work gave great pleasure to the Holy Father.” It was for the founder one of the greatest joys of his life. The following year, 1840, he addressed to the members of the Society of Mary three great instructions on the vows. These, together with the famous letter to the retreat preachers of 1839, constitute the spiritual testament of the Good Father.

[2.1.5] Fifth period: 1841-1850

The final years of the founder of the Marianist religious institutes constitute the great cross of his life. In 1840 Chaminade was beginning his eightieth year. Despite his age, he was still in good health, though age had weakened both his hearing and his eyesight. He had already given con-

³⁰ {5} L. Gadiou and J. C. Delas, *Marianistes en mission permanente*, Bar-Le-Duc, 1972, pp. 90-91.

sideration to the choice of a successor, thinking he might retire from his governance of the Society. If he did, he would, of course, continue to exercise a paternal vigilance over it. His plan was to relinquish the office and responsibility of superior general, as was provided for in the Constitutions; he would fulfill his duty as founder to choose and advise his successor. He would also, through the superior general, work to repress any abuses which, with time, might become habitual. Should he resign, Chaminade would have no intention to continue commanding; but he did plan to continue exercising what, from his point of view, were duties rather than rights, obligations and not privileges.

Unexpected circumstances disturbed this intent of the founder, and had unfortunate consequences. Toward the end of 1840, Chaminade's assistants thought they should defend the Society against certain claims of a financial nature. The defense required the annulment of a contract signed by the founder eight years earlier. Chaminade refused to do this, holding that the contract signed by him was valid. The assistants, since the founder had already indicated his willingness to resign, held that the moment had arrived to do so. In that way, they could then defend the case in the name of the Society. They promised that there would be no change in the interior government and that no important decision would be made without his consent. Though with a sad heart, yet not wishing to enter into any discussion, the founder did what was asked of him and signed the resignation. However, by common consent, no news of this was given to the Society. Of common accord, and to avoid a public trial, the two parties involved chose an arbiter who was to study the matter and render a decision. In February, 1844, the attorney Ravez, the designated arbiter, declared that the contract signed by Chaminade was valid and just, and had been made with all prudence. Therefore, the Society, he said, should carry out its provisions.

The founder then thought to regulate the government of the Society by naming his successor. But the assistants, and especially Father Roussel, did not agree with that and opposed with all their strength such a decision. Chaminade began to be seriously concerned since, despite the unworthy way in which Roussel was acting, the other two assistants supported Roussel.

The harmful influence of Roussel went so far as to send a confidential memorandum to the bishops who were friendly to the Society of Mary, a memorandum which Chaminade was never able to see. In the document, which did not hesitate to engage in calumny, the founder was presented as suffering from a decrepit old age and the Society in a condition of anarchy. The other two assistants were weak enough to sign the document. A bishop relayed the matter to Rome and the Holy See, judging only on the basis of the memorandum of the assistants and of the bishops, decided that, the position of superior general being vacant, a General Chapter should be confined to elect a successor to the founder.

On October 8, 1845, the Chapter met at Saint Remy. Despite some manipulation on the part of Roussel (which did not achieve the results he had hoped for), the Chapter elected Father Caillet as Superior General, and as assistants, Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine and Brother Clouzet. (Roussel left the Society shortly thereafter, confessing that he had indeed wronged it and the founder.)

When, in January of 1846, Chaminade received news of the elections he wanted to celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving; he hastened to write a letter to Caillet, expressing his submission to him.

He also asked him to allow him to exercise his mission as founder with regard to his sons, and, in accord with him, to work at reforming some abuses. Caillet was unmoved, and did not accept this suggestion, fearing a lessening of his own authority. The founder, seeing that he was misunderstood and being set aside, became convinced that the Society, in the person of the new superior, was rejecting him. Faced with the possibility of a Society which no longer resembled the one he had founded, and finding his proposal for reform of abuses³¹ and for a return to the primitive spirit being constantly rejected, on August 8, 1848, he signed his testament, leaving his goods to the poor of the Charitable Works of Bordeaux.

Notwithstanding all this, he continued to hope for a rapprochement. His last letter, November 29, 1849, addressed to Caillet and full of faith and resignation, was a final call for fidelity and union. Less than two months later, January 5, 1850, a stroke deprived him of his speech but left his other faculties intact. Caillet and Chevaux hastened to his bedside; peace was re-established by signs between the Father and his sons.

Some days later he blessed his successor and his religious. He brought to his lips the crucifix he had grasped in his hands; but when he tried to repeat that gesture of faith and devotion, his tired hand fell to his chest. It was January 22, 1850, feast of the martyr St. Vincent, one of the patrons of Saragossa, in Spain.

His cause for beatification was introduced in Rome May 9, 1916. The heroicity of his virtues, having passed through all the steps of the process, was proclaimed October 18, 1973.³²

[2.2] Adele de Trenquelléon (1789-1828)

For this biographical presentation of the foundress of the Daughters of Mary, we shall follow the same procedure as we did for Chaminade, and divide her life into periods:

- ❖ infancy and early formation (1789-1801)
- ❖ countryside apostolate (1801-1808)
- ❖ foundation (1808-1816)
- ❖ expansion of the work (1816-1828)

[2.2.1] First period: 1789-1801

Adelaide Marie Charlotte Jeanne Josephine was the daughter of the Baron de Trenquelléon, Charles François Joseph Marie Marthe of Batz and his wife, Marie Ursule Claudie Josephine de Peyronnencq de Saint Charamand. She was born on June 10, 1789, in the chateaux of Trenquelléon in the commune of Feugarolles (Lot-et-Garonne). At that time Feugarolles was in the diocese of Condom; it is now in that of Agen.

³¹ {6} Abuses of the General Administration, of Caillet in particular; abuses touching on religious discipline and the spirit of the Society of Mary.

³² [trans. note: It would be good to add a footnote here on the beatification.]

The year of her birth was a notable one for France, the beginning of the French Revolution. It was also for the Trenquelléon family the beginning of a period filled with difficulties. In the fall of 1791, the baron had to join the royal troops on the banks of the Rhine. Three months later, the baroness, alone at the chateaux with her mother and the little Adele, gave birth to a son who was given the name of Charles Policarp. Meanwhile the Revolution was taking measures against the Trenquelléon family and the families of emigrants in general. Such measures became more and more harsh and oppressive. All the baron's goods were sequestered and a portion was sold. The family endured humiliations, privations, and incursions by brigands. For months it lived under the threat of the revolutionary tribunals and of the guillotine.

Adele's mother, like her sisters-in-law, strong in their Christian faith, watched over the young girl with greater efforts to keep alive faith and charity, adapting to the circumstances as they occurred. The father's absence was felt more every day. After some months of relative calm there followed the coup d'état of September 4, 1797. Taken by surprise, the baroness was forced to leave France. Her name had been inscribed, wrongly and without her knowledge, on the list of proscribed emigrants in her place of birth. With the eight-year-old girl and the five-year-old son she managed to find refuge in Spain. They passed the winter in Tolosa. In the spring (1798), under threat of deportation by the government of Spain to the island of Majorca, they sought refuge at Braganza in Portugal. A few months later, the baron was able to rejoin the family. On June 5 of the following year the family added a daughter who was baptized Désirée.

The stay in Portugal lasted until the end of September, 1800. In order to locate closer to the French frontier, the family moved to San Sebastian, in Spain. There, on January 6, 1800, an important event in the life of Adele took place: her first Communion. She was only eleven years old and, in France in those days, the Eucharist was not received before the age of fourteen or fifteen. Here, in Spain, her confessor, impressed by the positive dispositions she manifested, urged her, despite her youth, to make her Communion.

On November 14 the whole family was able to return to the chateaux of Trenquelléon which the relatives had been able to retain. With this return from exile we end this first part of the formation of the servant of God on whom important and tragic external events had certainly impressed an indelible mark of seriousness and gravity.

[2.2.2] Second period: 1801-1808

During her stay in Spain she was so drawn, very early and very strongly, to the Carmelite ideal that she asked her mother for permission to remain in Spain to follow what she thought to be her vocation. Not long after her return to the chateaux, in 1802, she sought advice of her brother's tutor. He was a former religious obliged, by external circumstances, to interrupt his studies for the priesthood. (He would be ordained, at Agen, in 1813.) From him she obtained a rule of life.

Early in 1803 she shared a life of prayer for six weeks with a group of former Carmelites nuns who were seeking to take up again their religious life in Agen. This was in preparation for her Confirmation, which she received on February 6, 1803, at the hands of the new bishop of Agen, Jacoupy. During that period of preparation she met a young woman of Agen, Jeanne Diché; the baron later invited her to spend some days at the chateaux. The following year the young women

began an association of prayer. It was in directing this association that Adele found the road to being a foundress.

Between 1804 and 1808, without leaving the solitude of her rural residence, she dedicated herself with impressive activity to a most demanding apostolate: developing and intensifying at the same time her interior life and giving it an ever more accentuated Marian character. Using all her various contacts, she busied herself enrolling many young women into the little society. They were special and generous and she herself promoted their zeal by means of intensive correspondence. She appealed warmly to them to love God, urged them to receive the sacraments, to give themselves to charity and penance and vigilance, encouraged them to cultivate devotion to the Virgin Mary and to seek unceasingly to give glory to God.

Her work included preparing the program of liturgical feasts, suggesting intentions for prayers, recommending to their prayers the dying, the sick, possible conversions, and preparing meetings among the members of the little society. She helped her mother in caring for the house, in giving religious instruction to the servants, in visiting and helping the sick and the poor, and in giving catechism lessons to children. All these apostolic activities and all her initiatives were submitted to the pastor of the little parish of Lompian, Father Larribeau. Every year, on the anniversary of her baptism, she went to him for a brief period of spiritual exercises.

[2.2.3] Third period: 1808-1816

In 1808, as a consequence of a truly providential meeting, the servant of God began a correspondence with Chaminade, who was working in the diocese of Bordeaux. Adele desired the members of her little society to share in the indulgences according to the Marian sodality of which Chaminade was the founder and director. The request was not fully granted, but Chaminade, who already knew Larribeau and other priests associated with the little society, willingly agreed on a union of prayers and merits between the sodality in Bordeaux and the association directed by Adele. The hope was that later a more intense cooperation might take place.

At about this same time, Adele received a flattering proposal for marriage. After reflection and seeking advice, she refused it. In so doing, she made a definitive option in favor of consecrated virginity. By this time, she was no longer thinking of Carmel, but rather of joining contemplation with an active life. This position was a result of seeing so much physical and moral misery in the countryside; it seemed that God wanted her there. Many of her friends began to share her ideal and her vows; they even took religious names. However, when time came to think seriously of coming together in community (in 1813), the baron experienced the first symptoms of an incurable ailment which two years later would take him to the grave.

During that time, Adele dedicated herself with loving care to helping her father, postponing her plans but not forgetting them. With the death of her father, June 8, 1815, we complete the second step of her spiritual journey. Now all was providentially ready for her to become a foundress, but in conditions which, until then, she would never have imagined.

Larribeau, asked to draw up a rule, hesitated to do so. His friend, Father Laumont, outlined a few articles of a brief regulation, but then turned to Chaminade for constitutions properly so-called.

The providential moment had arrived. A favorable cooperation developed between the young Adele, desirous of consecrating herself to God, and Chaminade, the man of God, the priest who awaited only a sign to contribute to the restoration of the religious life in France. Such cooperation flowed from the ardent but docile spirit of the young girl, and the prudence, tenacity, and supernatural spirit of the older man.

The historic-political conditions of the time was certainly not favorable to their project. The imperial authority keep in effect the decree suppressing religious orders. Therefore, at first they thought of a non-public religious life, lives in secret and without religious garb. But a short time later the empire collapsed. The baron was already dead and the new regime seemed more favorable to liberty. Chaminade had a rule drawn up in keeping with traditional principles as desired by the Roman curia regarding institutes of women with solemn vows. At the same time (1815) he invited Adele to begin a community life with her companions in order to constitute, in the city of Agen, a center of Christian renewal by directing the Marian sodalities and organizing all works compatible with a cloistered life.

On May 25, 1816, the foundress (now Mère Marie de la Conception), with five companions, occupied the first convent of the Daughters of Mary.

[2.2.4] Fourth period: 1816-1828

Bishop Jacoupy of Agen had shown himself until then very favorable and encouraging of the new work. But he then became more restrained and, in particular, was concerned with the thought of perpetual enclosure; he delayed the taking of the habit and profession of vows. Chaminade accepted this position of the bishop and substituted for strict enclosure one based on the decisions of the major superiors. On July 25, 1817, Mère Marie and eight other candidates made the profession that bound them and consecrated them for life.

The expansion begun the previous year continued. The following works should be noted: the sodality, the free school, the teaching of the poor, and the workshops. All these works were very successful. Fervor was great! Adele, who, from the first days, had been chosen unanimously as superior, carried on a life that was both contemplative and active. She prayed and practices mortification, gave commentaries on the rule, urged it's observance, and encouraged her religious in seeking perfection. For all the works which were incompatible with the vow of enclosure, she formed the Third Order Secular.

Expansion kept pace with development. In 1820, three years after the first profession of final vows, the community was able to move to a larger site. A second foundation was made in Tonneins. In 1824, the convent in Condom was founded and the novitiate was moved from Agen to Bordeaux. In 1826 the Daughters set off for Franche-Conté, where five houses were opened within ten years. There were requests for other houses, and plans were made for the organization of a Third Order Regular.

Adele was only thirty-seven, but ever since 1824 she had known that her life would be a short one. Nevertheless, she never drew back; even less did she complain. She took medical treatment only by obedience. Her correspondence, her principal and last means of action, never showed

any sign of a lessening of her ideal, or of any diminishment in her love for God or in her zeal for the salvation of others.

She offered God her life, joyful and grateful for all the graces she had received and which she had never wasted. As she was dying, she gave a cry of joy, exclaiming “Hosanna to the Son of David,” the one she had always looked forward to meeting. It was January 10, 1828. She died with a reputation of holiness and was deeply missed by all who had known her.

CHAPTER THREE

[3] Chaminade's spiritual direction of Adele

The following elements are to be considered in spiritual direction: the type of direction, the advice given, the contents of direction, its purpose, and the ascetical modality which characterized the initial relations from 1808 and which continued, with some interruptions due to external circumstances (illness, persecution, etc.), until March 11, 1824, between Chaminade and Adele de Trenquelléon. However, before considering them it is useful to see and to know the kind of spiritual path followed by the future foundress and the sequence of spiritual directors under whose guidance this privileged soul traveled.

[3.1] Adele's spiritual directors

[3.1.1] Their influence

From the early years of her infancy to February 6, 1803, the day of her Confirmation, and given the importance of the foundation, she laid for a deep friendship with Jeanne Diché,³³ we might say that the Holy Spirit was Adele's only guide. For quite some time she did not find in her confessor³⁴ the lights and encouragement she needed for her soul and for the association she was directing. The presence in the chateaux of Ducourneau,³⁵ tutor of her brother Charles, was of benefit also to Adele. He exercised, in the spiritual order, a decisive influence on her future.

In 1802 Adele was thirteen and thinking only of Carmel; she wanted to prepare herself in the best possible way for entering the convent. On the advice of her mother, she asked the tutor of her brother for a rule adapted to her situation. At first, Ducourneau refused. But, after more insistence, he drew up for her a Rule of Life for her direction and to help her fulfill her daily duties.

The interest I take in you, charity, and, in fact, your repeated requests lead me, my dear young lady, to lay down a few lines for your progress in piety and for your instruction. I desire very ardently that they be of some use to you and help you in the acquisition of the perfection which the Lord seems to be asking of you.³⁶

³³ {1} Marie Thérèse Foy Diché was born Nov. 18, 1794. At Confirmation she chose the name Jeanne in honor of St. Jeanne de Valois, much honored in the district of Agen. She became a close collaborator with Adele and with her and Ducourneau began the "little society," an association of prayer, on Aug. 5, 1804. See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, p. 223. [Add *Adele* by Stef in all such future references to Rousseau??]

³⁴ {2} Pierre Dousset, pastor of Feugarolles from 1803 to March 20, 1829, the date of his death. A member of the Congregation of the Doctrinaires, he refused to take the oath for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. After the Revolution he was incardinated into the diocese of Auch to which Feugarolles belonged. "An ordinary priest, holding strongly rigorist tendencies rare in those days of French Jansenism." Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921 [English text....]

³⁵ {3} Jean Baptiste Ducourneau was born in Villeneuve-de-Marsan (Landes) Dec. 28, 1764. He was probably a member of the Congregation of the Barnabites. His name is found on the list of religious clerics dispersed in 1792, but he was ordained priest only in 1813. On his return from exile, in 1803, he joined the family of Trenquelléon as tutor of the baron's son. Later he was in Paris with his student. In 1812, he entered the seminary of Agen to prepare for priestly ordination. He was assistant in the parish of Notre-Dame in Agen, becoming pastor in 1820. He died there Feb. 27, 1845. See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, pp. 721-722.

³⁶ {4} Original in the AGFMI, Rome.

In the rule everything was foreseen: rising, prayer, meditation, manual work, daily, but moderate, mortifications, obedience in every circumstance, renunciation of self-will, humility, great zeal for the sacraments, weekly confession. This rule Adele received with gratitude; it was for her the first rule of holiness. Among the directives which Ducourneau advised as the basis of all her spiritual work were: remembrance of eternity, recourse to God, docility toward her parents. He also took care to warn her about possible reactions in her character. Number 6 of the rule reads: “Make efforts to control your natural vivacity. This can be the source of many defects if not moderated early in youth.”

Adele was so thrilled with the rule that, shortly after receiving it, she took the resolution to recite every day a *Sub tuum praesidium*³⁷ and to receive communion once a month for the one who had written it for her. She devoted herself to the practice of humility, kindness, obedience, renunciation of her self-will, and to a preference among other virtues for those which especially would be in keeping with her condition as aspirant for the Carmelite vocation.

Ducourneau continued to be her advisor and discreet guide during the early years of the existence of the group of young women who had formed the association with Adele. He withdrew soon after, having obtained the agreement and collaboration of the pastor of Lompian, Father Larribeau.³⁸ Adele met Larribeau in 1806. Her first letter referring to him was addressed to a member of the association, April 1, 1806.³⁹ From that time on, it was he who guided her and, after repeated requests from her, accepted, though with great hesitancy, to become officially the director of the association of which Adele continued to be the inspiration.

With well-directed guidance, he kept her on the path she had already taken. At the same time, by his advice and his own example, he awakened in her an insatiable thirst for perfection. Through Adele’s letters to her friends, and especially to Agathe Diché,⁴⁰ we know the subjects of Larribeau’s instructions: love of God, humility, faith, the Church, dedication to God’s service.

For example, in her letter of April 1, 1806, addressed to Agathe, Adele recommended her never to omit daily meditation and examen, two practices on which Larribeau insisted much. She added: “When we are short of time, it would be better to set aside our other prayers rather than to omit these two exercises so essential to anyone who wishes to make progress in virtue.”⁴¹

³⁷ [“We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God.”]

³⁸ {5} Jean Larribeau was born Jan. 9, 1762, at Condom. Before the Revolution he had been assistant priest at the parish of Damazan. In 1792 he refused the oath and left into exile. A man of great virtue, educated but of feeble health, he oversaw for some time the small chapel of Lompian confided to his care by Bishop Jacoupy. In 1833 he accepted the parish of Tonneins until his death in 1836. See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, pp. 121-122.

³⁹ {6} Adele letter no. 36. {give date and recipient for all references letters??}

⁴⁰ {7} Marie Agathe Diché, second Diché child, and sister of Jeanne, was born at Agen Nov. 11, 1789. She received Confirmation together with her sister and Adele, but was somewhat overshadowed by her sister. It was only after her sister’s marriage that Agathe entered into a direct relationship with the leader of the little society. From that time, they initiated a correspondence that became almost weekly: at least 234 letters before the religious foundation. Agathe became a Daughter of Mary with the name Marie du Sacré-Coeur. She died at Tonneins, Aug. 5, 1848. See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, p. 724.

⁴¹ {8} See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, pp. 124-125 [replace with letter no. ?]

In a letter to Agathe, dated July 18, 1811, in which she summarized the topics treated by Larribeau during a day at Feugarolles, we find the fundamental traits of the spirituality Adele strove to live at that period.

[almost complete text, no. 158]

42

43

44

Larribeau invited each member of the association to choose a confidential associate to support one another along the path to perfection. He was not an innovator and contented himself with keeping alive in Adele the fervor which she constantly sought to increase.

The little society, thanks to the zeal of its directress, continued to grow and was affiliated to the sodality of Bordeaux.⁴⁵ In view of the progressively ailing health of Larribeau, Chaminade thought it good to associate Father Laumont⁴⁶ in the direction of the various sections of the sodality⁴⁷ in the diocese of Agen. He had named those sections “the third division” of the Bordeaux sodality.⁴⁸

Laumont, as Chaminade’s delegate for the association, from 1813 onward, actively helped Larribeau in preparing meditations and conferences during the retreats and at the meetings of the associates. In a letter of Adele to Agathe, September 16, 1813, we can see the points that Laumont developed at that time for a greater commitment to an asceticism leading toward perfection.

[partial text of letter no. 196]⁴⁹

It is helpful to note which books ordinarily nurtured Adele’s letters and prayers and certainly had great influence on her. In her personal rule of 1802 we find: the gospels, the *Imitation of Christ*, the lives of saints, *La consolation des saints*, Soisson’s *Foy en Dieu*, the works of Ambrose de

⁴² {9} “Since Friday is the day of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, on that day we shall spend some moments to develop in ourselves the desire to die and to rise again with Christ, examining whether we desire that God call us at that moment. Then, calling to mind the seven wounds of Jesus Christ, we recite seven Hail Marys. The seven wounds are: the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the five wounds inflicted on his body.” Rule of the Little Society, drawn up by Adele. Original of 1809, no. 4, AGFMI, Rome

⁴³ {10} A Marian devotion still practiced in the Marianist Family.

⁴⁴ {11} Adele letter no. 158.

⁴⁵ {12} Affiliation with the sodality took place as a result of a meeting of Adele’s mother with Jean Baptiste Lafon in the summer of 1806 at Figeac. He was a sodalist from Bordeaux and teacher in Figeac. Thanks to this meeting, contact was established between Chaminade and Adele. See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, p. 155.

⁴⁶ {13} Pierre Etienne Laumont was born June 9, 1758 in Aiguillon (Lot-et-Garonne). At the time of the Revolution he had been chaplain of Montpezat. He refused to take the oath and went into exile in Saragossa where he probably met Chaminade sometime after 1797. Having returned to France, he was, in 1803, named chaplain of St. Redegonda. In 1825, he became rector of the seminary of Agen. A few years later he retired to a home near the convent of the Daughters of Mary, and died there Sept. 5, 1827. See A. Durangues, *Le diocese de Lot-et-Garonne*, Agen, 1903, p. 280.

⁴⁷ {14} For the details which Chaminade himself gives on the Bordeaux sodality, see his letter no. 31.

⁴⁸ {15} See Chaminade letter no. 33.

⁴⁹ {16} Adele letter no. 196.

Lombes (*La pax de l'ame*, and his letters), the meditations of Dupont, SJ. To these must be added the books familiar to the baroness:⁵⁰ *L'année Chrétienne* (in 18 volumes); the works of St. Teresa of Avila; the Life of Madame de Chantal; *L'ame élevée à Dieu* of Baudrand; *Les pensées et la vérité della religion* of Humbert; the *Sermons* of Bourdaloue.

In broad lines this is the path taken by Adele until the moment, in 1814, when Chaminade entered directly and actively into her life.

[3.1.2] Corresponding with grace

Adele was graced by favorable circumstances, by the influence of persons whose support we have noted, and by the roles exercised by her parents, especially her mother. The latter, always close to her daughter, knew how to inspire trust and, in the most important moments, to help her make decisions while still allowing her maximum freedom. Thanks to all these factors, we are presented with a young Christian woman, most dedicated and generous, who sees in a "holy death" a great favor prepared by one's entire life. She is now certain that her vocation is not that of living in the world.

Her letters show a constant and deep preoccupation with her perfection: thinking of the good things received, she is moved to become better. Writing to her friend Agathe, March 31, 1810, she says:

[text letter]⁵¹

In order to respond to the divine call, she imposed on herself renunciations which tried her dearly, one in particular.⁵² She insists on mortifications, on prayer, on frequentation of the sacraments. This was all the more noteworthy is a period when frequent Communion was an exception. It should be pointed out that until 1816 (from the age of twelve to twenty-seven) her adolescent years knew only the rural countryside with its isolation and its monotony, and the inconveniences associated with them. This was quite different from the experience of her parents in their younger years, when they were often living in the ambience of the court and in the Parisian life of the 18th century.

But it was precisely by living in a rural area, in the midst of her family and carrying out all her duties with filial love⁵³ that she joyfully consecrated the time at her disposal to correspondence inspired by zeal and friendship, to instructing the poor, to advancing the kingdom of God in her sphere of influence, to cultivating great esteem for the interior life and contact with God. In fact, most of her time was spent in prayer, spiritual reading, and meditation. Her attention in her meditations is centered on the end to be reached, heaven, and the practical means for attaining it.

⁵⁰ {17} These are noted both in the testament of items to be left to her children and relatives, and in the "memorandum" written by Mother Marie Joseph de Casteras, third superior general of the FMI.

⁵¹ {18} See Rousseau, *Adèle de Trenquelléon*, Paris, 1921, pp. 248-249. [or reference letter of that date?]

⁵² {19} A renunciation which cost her much and left her for some days in a state of anxiety was the response she had to make to a marriage proposal. The help of a priest (whose identity is unknown, though some have hypothesized it was Chaminade) advised her to answer in the negative. See Adele letter no. 284.

⁵³ {20} So true was this that she did not hesitate to postpone her *chère projet* to help care for her father in his final illness.

These latter were detachment from created things, struggle against personal defects, purity of intention, habitual thought of the presence of God, the Eucharist, and the Virgin Mary.⁵⁴

Often, in her letters, which are like a reflection on her spiritual concerns, Adele returned to these topics. Faced with time which is passing and with her limited progress, she made acts of humility; she became always more aware of her nothingness and of the great and infinite mercy of God. Full of confidence in the value of the spiritual and supernatural means placed at the disposal of souls of good will, she repeated her resolutions and began anew with renewed courage and ardor. She insisted much on humility⁵⁵ and saw in self-love and pride the source of discouragement.

The Eucharist was very important in her life. It is the love of God who gives himself to the creature, and this calls for gratitude. This should not be reduced to a simple act of thanksgiving, but should be prolonged throughout the life of each day. She tried, therefore, to live in the presence of God, to purify often her intentions through the use of ejaculatory prayers. In Adele's daily asceticism, the Virgin, seen as Mother of God and of humans, is both model and helper.

To help others to share in the joy of faith, in gratitude for the Incarnation, for the Resurrection, for the sacraments, for Mary's protection: such are the topics at the heart of her apostolate of correspondence, example, catechism, and, above all, of the development of the association which she animates.

[3.2] Chaminade's role

[3.2.1] First contact of Adele with Chaminade

Without her relationship with Chaminade, Adele's life would certainly have been different from what in fact it was. Zealous animator of the little society, having decided to give herself entirely to God and to her neighbor, she occupied herself with helping her associates practice the spirit of openness and experience the enrichment of faith. The rule of the little society was enriched with new articles for the purpose of coming closer to the spirit of the sodality of Bordeaux. The Little Office of the Immaculate Heart of Mary became a daily practice, as also the daily recitation of the *De profundis*⁵⁶ for departed members. Little by little, the association, while maintaining its works and its specific end (preparation for death), drew closer, in both practice and spirit, to the sodality of Bordeaux which was taken as a model.

In a letter of December 23, 1808, Chaminade, with regard to Adele's association, says:

By its constitution, your society very much resembles the Young Ladies' sodality, and by its practices, the association of the Ladies of the Retreat⁵⁷ whose aim is continual preparation for death. That is why they daily recite the act of resignation to death which you will find in the *Manual of the Servant of Mary*,⁵⁸ and why they have a day of

⁵⁴ {21} These topics appear often in her letters. They are realities which return frequently because they are part of her daily work toward perfection. We do not, therefore, reference all the letters treating of them.

⁵⁵ {22} See Adele letters nos. 101 and 103.

⁵⁶ [Ps. 130]

⁵⁷ {23} See Chaminade letter no. 31.

will find in the *Manual of the Servant of Mary*,⁵⁸ and why they have a day of retreat each month, the first Wednesday. The act of resignation is recited publicly on this day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On the first Wednesday of January they try to receive Holy Communion with the dispositions they would like to have when receiving Holy Viaticum.⁵⁹

Though approving of the association and noting the good it was doing,⁶⁰ Chaminade was not satisfied with it; his vision looked further ahead. Pleased with Adele, he therefore asks her to give him further information and to be faithful.⁶¹

From 1813 on, in her correspondence, Adele returned often, sometimes clearly, sometimes less so, to a “project” which she has thought about for some time. She hoped to carry it out with the collaboration of the two priests, assistants to the association: Larribeau and Laumont. However, her expectations turned illusory.

Larribeau, for his part, had answered hesitantly to her request: he had always had great interest in the project, and he continued to do so; but he did not find within himself the qualities required for the foundation of a religious order and he did not think God was asking this of him.⁶² And Laumont, while he agreed to draft an outline of the organization for the future foundation, did not want to assume the responsibility of such a project.

Thus it was that the two priests, of a common accord, suggested to Adele that she turn to Chaminade. It was in her letter of August 13, 1814, that Adele set forth her plan, hoping for a positive response.⁶³

[3.2.2] Chaminade, slowly

Chaminade’s response was not immediate. Finally, on August 30, he send her a letter in which he said, among other things:

My dear child, you desire to become a religious. I will reveal several things to you in strict confidence: Last year, when I expressed a strong desire to see you, it was especially for the purpose of acquainting you with a project which, although not altogether the

⁵⁸ {24} Since 1801 Chaminade’s sodalists had a Manual entitled *Recueil de prières et de pratiques pour servir au culte de la très pure Marie*. This does not seem to be a personal production by Chaminade, but rather a new edition of a Manual predating the Revolution. It may have been the Manual of the sodality of Saint Colomba some of whose members formed the nucleus of Chaminade’s sodality. See J. Verrier, “Le manuel du serviteur de Marie,” in the *Apôtre de Marie*, vol. 34, Paris, 1952, pp. 194-197.

⁵⁹ {25} Chaminade letter no. 32.

⁶⁰ {26} See Chaminade letter no. 34.

⁶¹ {27} See Chaminade letter no. 33.

⁶² {28} *Sacra congregatio pro causis sanctorum: Adelaidis de Batz de Trenquelléon, Positio super introductione*, Rome, 1974, pp. 537-538.

⁶³ {29} We do not possess this document, since all the letters of Adele to Chaminade between autumn of 1808 and Dec. 28, 1816 [? copy not clear] have been lost. However, we know of the existence of this letter from Chaminade’s answer.

same, greatly resembles it nevertheless. Some years ago already we started to carry it out.⁶⁴

Chaminade had been counting on her. In fact, five months earlier, he had written: “I think that the religious bond which unites us is forever indissoluble. I will explain myself at greater length at the proper time and place.”⁶⁵ His views on the future religious institute did not quite agree with those of Adele; they looked much further ahead. In fact, he was thinking of a foundation in view of the specific end which already characterized the Marian sodalities which he had founded December 8, 1880: “to multiply Christians.”⁶⁶

It was certainly not the intention, nor the purpose, of Chaminade to organize a religious community for some privileged souls for the purpose of allowing them to divide their existence between the exercises of the contemplative life and the practice of material or spiritual good works. It was rather a matter of founding a religious institute whose purpose would be a renewed pastoral action adapted to the times.

In Chaminade’s thought the religious situation in France after the Revolution (which had multiplied the number of pagans) required a new pastoral approach based on an evangelization that was methodic and practical for the new generations, and based on the spread of a Marian Christianity. In his eyes the parochial ministry had to rest on another prior ministry. The first, which sustains Christianity, presupposes the existence of Christians. However, within the population of the parish, Christians had become the minority. Those who did not go to church, and they were the majority, were not parishioners; and they were not parishioners because they were not Christians. In order to increase the number of parishioners, there had to be, first, an increase in the number of Christians. This task, though, the parish clergy could not add to those already required of them, and for which they had not been prepared.

This dilemma could be resolved only by forming associations that were extra- or para-parochial. These would have the role of a catechumenate. In them, fervent young Catholics, convinced and dedicated, would work under the guidance of a specialized priest. They would attract non-Christian friends who would be gradually Christianized through their contact with them.

The Marian sodalities, renewed and adapted to new needs, are the associations which divine providence chooses to serve for the multiplication of Christians in order to multiply ever more parishioners. Why? Because, to the aid given by every association based on reciprocal help and influence on the environment, the sodalities have, in addition, an Marian concept of Christianity. It is this, according to Chaminade’s thought, that should produce an unprecedented fecundity for the Church with Christ came among humans by means of Mary; they, in turn, should go to him through Mary.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ {30} Chaminade letter no. 51.

⁶⁵ {31} Chaminade letter no. 47.

⁶⁶ {32} See J. Verrier, *La congregation mariale de M. Chaminade*, vol. II, Fribourg, 1965, p. 13. For a knowledge of the history, the spirit, and the originality of the sodality of Bordeaux, this work by Verrier, in 8 vols., is fundamental.

⁶⁷ {33} See *Sacra congregatio pro causis sanctorum: Adelaidis de Batz de Trenquelléon, Positio super introductione*, Rome, 1974, pp. 100-101.

This was, briefly, the originality of the new pastoral action that Chaminade wanted to realize by means of the Marian sodality. However, in order to perpetuate it, to render it durable and efficacious, he repeated again and again: “there must be a man who does not die,”⁶⁸ that is, a religious institute, or, rather, two of them, one for each sex. It was precisely for that second one that he counted on Adele. After Adele’s letters of April and of August 30, 1815, and in response to hers of September 25, 1815, Chaminade (October 8, 1815), without any further hesitation, outlined his plan. He now saw in her and her associates the foundation stones for a new spiritual edifice which he wished to build.

For the past fourteen years, since his return to France with the title of Missionary Apostolic,⁶⁹ he had exercised his mission in directing the Marian sodalities. Within them, with the approval of the director, some members had taken vows with the intention of practicing individually the religious life in keeping with their individual conditions. In this same letter, he said:

But here we have something quite different: these are sodalist religious, or, rather, sodalists who, while remaining active sodalists, wish to live the regular life of religious. This is why I told Father Laumont that your constitutions was to be carefully drawn up and that I should be very glad to see it.

And, in conclusion, he said:

Write to me soon, my dear child, if your desire to be a religious includes the views and sentiments of a little missionary. Open you heart completely and with great candor at all times. Who are the ones among you that might have a vocation to be religious?⁷⁰

[3.3] Direction

What is important for us to consider more closely is the period in Adele’s life which goes from 1816 to January 10, 1828. This is the period of the foundation of the Daughters of Mary. During these twelve years, she dedicated herself to living profoundly her religious ideal, and to working at the same time to the development of the institute. What pre-occupied the foundress most of all was a life lived according to the rule, a deepening of the specific spirit of her institute, and a work of sanctification and apostolic charity and generosity in the multiple works by means of which her institute labored to multiply Christians.

Though Adele was the foundress of the Daughters of Mary, she was not the author of its constitutions, nor was she the one to have the inspiration. We must now ask ourselves: In what way and to what extent did she know how to instill and transmit to her religious a characteristic spirit, an typical apostolic mission, a specific style of life, and a certain ascetic methodology? That is precisely what we wish to see by developing a subject which we believe to be objectively valid for the task of the consecrated life in general. We shall also point out, for our case, the

⁶⁸ {34} That is the expression used by Chaminade in a note defending the sodality. See *Esprit de notre fondation*, vol. 3, p. 242 {French}.

⁶⁹ {35} He solicited this title from Rome; it was granted in a Decree of March 28, 1801. {requested through/by bishop of Auch??} This title gave him his proper place within the Church, a position that favored the exercise of his own personal vocation. See R. Cote, *La spiritualité apostolique du Père Chaminade*, Fribourg, 1969, p. 19.

⁷⁰ {36} Chaminade letter no. 52.

for the task of the consecrated life in general. We shall also point out, for our case, the characteristics of a Marian consecration as it was proposed to Adele by Chaminade.

First, we will examine some of Chaminade's writings concerning the foundation: letters addressed to Adele between August of 1808 and March 11, 1824 and the *Institut des Filles de Marie*, of the *Petit Institut*; then, the extent letters of Adele to Chaminade from 1816 to February 15, 1820; finally, her letters of 1815 and 1816 to the associates and her letters to the religious from 1816 until the last months of 1827.

In this way we believe we can speak of "spiritual direction" on the part of Chaminade relative to Adele, foundress of the FMI.

[3.3.1] Fundamental option for Jesus Christ

The purpose of religious life, and the ultimate end of every order or congregation,

the heart of the identity of consecrated persons, does not consist only in the profession of a state of perfection, superior to the common salvation open to all Christians. Nor does it lie in the taking on of a better form of life in order to realize the perfection asked of all; nor in preserving the fervor of the primitive Church. It is not to be found in being a sign of the Church or of a life of renunciation. Neither does it consist in a plan of apostolic specialization. It consists in the proposal of a group of Christians, called to it by the Spirit, to concentrate its whole life, in Christ and in his Spirit, on God.⁷¹

When Chaminade, on a number of occasions, proposed to Adele his project of a foundation and spoke of a "man who will not die," it was precisely about the value of the consecrated life, which has its basis in Baptism and finds its reason for being in the Church. Through a life which was to be lived in a characteristic manner, a Marianist one, he wished to lead her, and through her, to lead her associates to the highest perfection. He would lead her to a constant referral to God through Jesus Christ in his Spirit; to a diaconate, a service, an apostolic mission typically characterized: the multiplication of Christians.

What Chaminade wanted of Adele and of her companions at that moment, and later, of all Marianists, was that they be above all "true religious," that is, women and men completely of God through conformity with Jesus Christ.

[3.3.2] Characteristic spirit of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary

Providence had arranged for these two persons to meet. Though coming from two very different environments and with diverse horizons, they achieved a common plan. It must be pointed out that it was Adele who allowed herself to be guided and to enter fully into the actualization of Chaminade's plan. This is clear from their correspondence where she appears always in relation to him, open, receptive, trusting, and scrupulously obedient. In August of 1814 there began an extremely important period of correspondence which would lead, two years later, to the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary: "Be faithful, my dear child, to your calling. Work

⁷¹ {37} G. Gozzelino, *Una vita che si raccoglie su Dio*, Turin, 1978, p. 11.

at increasing the family of Mary, but take care, while swelling its number, not to neglect nourishing the piety of the older members and having them grow in virtue and in fervor.”⁷²

It is clear that when Chaminade here speaks of the “family of Mary” he is referring to the sodality. But in the same letter, there is already an indication of the constitutions; he takes into consideration the undertaking of all works in the name of Mary and under her protection. It is in her name that he proposes to Adele that she embrace the religious life. In the first of his letters to her, in the autumn of 1808, we read: “Oh, if only I could let you taste the happiness of belonging in a special manner to the Mother of God!”⁷³

In May, 1809, he wrote: “In all this, my dear daughter, you have a very special part, for you represent the third section and give so many evidences of zeal for the glory of the Mother of God.”⁷⁴ It is true that whatever was said to Adele at this time was directed to her as responsible for the animation of the sodality in Agen, but it shows how Chaminade, step by step, laid the foundation for a direction which gives Mary, in Adele’s life, an important value for her and for her daughters.

Continuing along this line of presenting Mary’s role, in a letter of August 1810, he writes:

How happy are the true children of Mary! The Mother of Jesus really becomes their Mother. Perhaps, you will say, but Mary cannot be my mother as she was the Mother of Jesus. Without a doubt this is so, if we fail to consider things from the spiritual point of view. But we should look upon her divine Maternity much more from the spiritual than from the natural viewpoint. According to the words of Jesus himself, Mary was more blessed for conceiving him spiritually than for doing so according to the order of nature. If you do not quite understand this truth which I have scarcely touched upon, I shall gladly come back to it in another letter.⁷⁵

The specific request Adele had made was that she wanted to form a religious community with her companions. In order to lead her and her companions to living their consecration as Daughters of Mary, Chaminade proposed that they embrace the religious life through love of Mary, in her name, with the purpose of making Jesus Christ known, loved and served in a dynamic organization animated by the three Offices (of which we shall speak later).

[3.3.3] Adele’s religious consecration

Since it was a matter, as we have several times pointed out, of the direction of a religious foundress, we must look directly at the means proposed by Chaminade for Adele to actualize her call to perfection through consecration to God in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary. These means were concrete and, in a sense, very original with Chaminade.

[3.3.3.1] A consecrated life embraced in the name of Mary

⁷² {38} Chaminade letter no. 51.

⁷³ {39} Chaminade letter no. 31.

⁷⁴ {40} Chaminade letter no. 35.

⁷⁵ {41} Chaminade letter no. 40.

The place of the Virgin Mary in Chaminade's life, and the predominant role played by the Virgin in the apostolate of the sodality of Bordeaux, is well-known. Consequently, it could only have an important function in the religious life. In fact, it was the conviction of Mary's fundamental maternal role in the history of the redemption that motivated Chaminade. In his letter of April 1814, given the workings of divine providence and the favorable turn of historical events,⁷⁶ Chaminade asked himself how was it that Bordeaux itself was among the first cities to receive its blessings:

Is it because devotion to the Blessed Virgin is highly esteemed in Bordeaux? because she is constantly honored and invoked here by a great number of the faithful of every age, sex, and condition in life? I should make bold to believe it, if we children of Mary were also more fervent in the service of God. ... Let us, my dear child, cling more closely than ever to the cult of our heavenly Mother. Yes, Mary is truly and lastingly our Mother!⁷⁷

We can see in Chaminade's expression a criterion of true devotion to Mary: our fervor in the service of God. We truly love Mary if we love God deeply. His Mariology is eminently Christocentric: "through the Mother to the Son." He presented Mary to Adele as the dynamic motive which should enliven her consecration and her apostolate. Mary is not the end, but only the motivation of the Marianist religious life. In a letter of October 3, 1815, besides making more precise the structure and the spirit of the new institute, he wrote: "Mary, the august Mother of Jesus, must be your model as she is your patroness."⁷⁸

[3.3.3.2] End of the religious life: basing one's whole life on God

What constitutes the object, the end, of the religious life is complete belonging to God in Jesus Christ. Men and women animated by the desire of a continual conversion seek this end by using the means typical of their state of life, the vows. In the *Petit institut*, article 1 states: "The Daughters of Mary come together in association and consecrate themselves to God with the object: 1) of advancing together toward evangelical perfection according to the breadth of the counsels given by Jesus Christ. ..."⁷⁹ Tending unceasingly to one's own perfection, that is, union with God, is the chief object contemplated as essential in the plan to imitate Mary and to be conformed to Jesus Christ.

Chaminade insisted constantly that Adele and her companions should tend to perfection by living the vows and the virtues which derived from them. In his letter of October 3, 1815, responding to a letter in which Adele asked for information on the future state of life, he wrote:

You will really be religious, since you will make the vows that are called vows of religion, and you will have to practice the virtues which inspired you to make them and which

⁷⁶ {42} Chaminade refers to the events of March 12, 1814, when Bordeaux opened its gates to the Duke of Angoulême; a few days later, the government of Louis XVIII was proclaimed in Paris.

⁷⁷ {43} Chaminade letter no. 47.

⁷⁸ {44} Chaminade letter no. 57.

⁷⁹ {45} *Petit institut*, 1816, 48 arts., AGMAR 38.7.1, ms. p. 19. [For complete text of *Petit institut*, see *Ecrits e Roles*, vol. 5, doc. 4.]

ought to be their mainstay. . . . From this follow the most essential exercises and practices of the religious life.⁸⁰

To their vows, which we may call traditional, Chaminade added two that were special to the Daughters of Mary, referring specifically to the apostolic mission. In article 30 of the *Petit institut*, we read:

The vows of persons accepted into the institute, whether they be temporary or definitive are the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, enclosure, and teaching. But, the vows of enclosure and teaching are governed by obedience. That is, the Mother Superiors may govern their exercise, modify it, or suspend it for the other ends of the institute, for the needs of the community, or for important reasons relative to the subject commanded.⁸¹

We will speak again of the vows of enclosure and of teaching with regard to the special mission of the Daughters of Mary. For the moment, let us see how Chaminade presented the vows to Adele. He insisted, in particular, on the need to live the virtues flowing from the vows and on the importance for a religious, and for her in particular, to be holy. Let us look successively at the vow of poverty, of chastity, and of obedience first in the letters, then in the general regulations. In answering Adele's questions, Chaminade often returned to the poverty style which should animate the community, but the aspect on which he insists above all is interior renunciation:

Don't let your poverty worry you. Providence will take things in hand. What would really cause sorrow and afflictions would be the presence of sentiments which divide hearts that should be united and that ought really to be but one heart. Preach to your children, preach to them without ceasing, this intimate union which ought to reign among them, that should never be, I do not say broken, but even altered, no matter what the price. May each one be disposed to make, at every instant, the sacrifice of all her ideas, of all her personal views, just as she has made the sacrifice of all her goods and of all her hopes in the world, etc.

However poor you may be, see to it that the steward never fails to provide what is necessary, whether in food or in clothing. See to it that the food is always wholesome . . . Although I often make these remarks either to you or to the steward, let everyone know, nevertheless, that it is out of place for any one in particular, even interiorly, to disapprove, to remark that there is a deficiency, too much or too little. Each one is to take what is given her, while rendering thanks to God, always believing that she does not deserve it, etc. What a pity, if one ever saw the Daughters of Mary occupying themselves solely about what they have to eat or to put on!⁸²

In other letters, such as those of March 15, 1816 and June 19, 1818, he returned to the matter of poverty and of the very simple and modest furnishings becoming to virgins who have left all and have voluntarily made themselves poor. He remarked that every religious should feel poverty and it should be most dear to her, though not in matters of health. Why this preoccupation with a

⁸⁰ {46} Chaminade letter no. 57.

⁸¹ {47} *Petit institut*, 1816, 48 arts., AGMAR 38.7.1.

⁸² {48} Chaminade letter no. 108.

life of poverty, but not at the expense of physical health? The fervor of the early community was great. In addition, especially at the beginnings, financial difficulties led the religious to impose privations on themselves. Chaminade, a man of prudence and full of a practical sense, insisted, notwithstanding the religious poverty of the community, that the food be healthful and sufficient for young religious women who had to teach, to give catechism lessons, to animate the sodality.

The general regulations⁸³ speak of the vow of poverty in articles 66 to 74. Here are some citations:

66. Poverty, and the vow she has taken of it, also have their influence on the habits to be acquired.

67. Once poverty has been voluntarily accepted, a Daughter of Mary changes all her behavior concerning whatever she uses. She must no longer have, whether in reserve or on herself or in the hands of others, anything of the world in money or objects.

68. Without the permission of the Mother Superior, she may not even have [10] a piece of furniture, a door with a lock, as insignificant as may such a sign be for a place where there is nothing.

74. Abnegation of all property is enough to make each Sister aware not to put any mark, or writing, or sign of possession on items or books confided to her.

Such expressions may cause us to smile, but we must place them into the context of their time and, above all, realize their usefulness for making progress toward living the interior spirit of the vow.

With regard to the vow of chastity, there is no particular reflection or insistence. This reminds us that Chaminade's direction of Adele is given to a religious preoccupied with her own holiness, but also with how to direction her companions. If Adele's questions on this subject were not as numerous as for the other vows, this does not mean that this vow was undervalued, but only that it posed fewer practical problems. The only time that Adele, by now superior at Agen, touched on the problem, though only indirectly, was in her letter of January 26, 1820, with regard to Sister Saint Sacrement and of Sister Assomption, who were giving her some concern.

In his answer of February 18, Chaminade recommended to Adele that she keep him informed on the behavior of Saint Sacrement and invited her to join him in prayer, promising to become more directly involved on his approaching visit to Agen. But he gave more attention to the case of Assomption who, as Adele had reported in her letter, was undergoing a painful period with all sorts of temptations, against charity, faith, chastity, and vocation.

The point to which Chaminade drew her attention was not so much the temptation, but rather the causes and, in particular, the sensitivity of the mistress of novices.

⁸³ {49} "General Regulation," 1815, 269 arts., complement to *Grand institute*. Ms, 35 pp., AGMAR, 38.5.3.

This young person must not be forgotten. It seems there was a kind of complication of maladies with her -- temptation, exaltation, imagination --but it would be well to study which one of these was dominant. Her greatest trouble, it seems to me, was being dominated by her imagination. This kind of imagination gives rise to inexpressible spells of fervor or to frightful temptations. I am afraid that our good Sister Sacré Coeur⁸⁴ -- the mistress of novices -- did not know her well enough, for she might have prepared her for the temptations that were almost certain to arise.⁸⁵

In the general regulations, articles 54-59 refer to the vow of chastity:

54. The virtue of chastity brings about the renunciation of the empty joys of the world. Consequently, the style of a new life must set aside the superficiality which the world loves so much because it covers a great number of its vices.

55. As a consequence, one must set aside that petulance to which the world invited us, encouraged us, so that we might fall into the precipice before having seen it.

56. For such perverse or dangerous habits we must substitute the balance of a better construed sentiment, the habit of seeing clearly and of judging rightly. With time, that leads to a wisely tempered seriousness, laughing with reason and never out of artificiality.

57. Speech, walking, manners, eyes lowered, hands restrained: all should be signs of innocence and should characterize the Daughters of Mary, the spouses of Jesus Christ.

58. The same vow recommends to the Daughters of Mary an extreme decency in every place, in every hour of their life, regardless of whatever they may be occupied with.

59. Not to be in her room without having the windows closed or sufficiently curtained; even though hidden from the stars of heaven, to be decently clothed; never to step outside her door unless fully clothed, as a spouse who goes out to meet her chaste bridegroom. By propriety on her person and on the few things she controls, by the appropriateness and proper arrangement of everything, to be a symbol of interior order and purity. A number of other things, of course, will adorn the virgin with her simplicity, like the lily⁸⁶ which glorifies God in a land where no one draws close.

The practice of the vow of obedience, in answer to Adele's questions, gave Chaminade more numerous occasions for commentary. On May 6, 1817, answering one of her letters in which she asked for help in her practice of obedience, he wrote:

Providence is coming to your aid in the opportunity provided by the private and confidential interviews with outsiders. My dear child, the consolation which you and your dear

⁸⁴ {50} Sacré Coeur Diché was mistress of novices until 1823, the year in which she left for Tonneins where she succeeded deceased Thérèse de Jésus Jannasch as superior of the community there.

⁸⁵ {51} Chaminade letter no. 134.

⁸⁶ {52} An allusion to the Song of Songs, 2:2. This text was later applied to the Virgin Mary; Chaminade presents it as a model for every child of Mary.

daughters ... found in this kind of occupation led to become attached to in, and now it is necessary for you to withdraw from it first, and for your daughters to do so afterwards. It must be done with prudence, while safeguarding the ways of salvation upon which some outsiders have entered, and without in any way damaging the edification that works of this kind have procured.⁸⁷

On April 19, 1817, he praised Adele's prudence and condemned the behavior of Sister Anne. He pointed out that when a religious lives in a community, it is according to the spirit of the rule and of obedience. Any promise to follow the advice and views of someone else, even be it those of an extra-ordinary confessor who is considered a prudent person even by superiors, constitutes a failure against the rule and against obedience. Often such failures against obedience are a dangerous occasion of divisions in the community.⁸⁸

As of November 19, 1822, Adele was already suffering pulmonary illness. Chaminade urged her to take suitable cures and, especially, to follow the wishes of Mother Saint Vincent who was charged with her care. The same recommendation is found in his letter of February 29, 1824, in which he refers to the authority of the rule and to the vow of obedience in order to command her to follow only what may be manifested by God's designs.⁸⁹

In his letter of March 14, 1824, Chaminade, fearing perhaps that he might have exaggerated in the renunciations he asked of Adele, wrote:

There would never be any mistake in your obeying. But be careful, for one must obey with joy and in the spirit of those who command. You no longer belong to yourself but to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to religion. ... We wish neither glory nor pleasure, but only what God wants and as he wants it. ... May the will of God be done in all things!⁹⁰

Rather than cite the articles of the general regulations on the vow of obedience (as we have done with the other two vows), we present the contents of the letter Chaminade wrote on August 17, 1821, to Adele and to all the Daughters of Mary after his visitation of the community. In fact, it seems to contain and express better what is in the general regulations:

[text: nos. 28-46]⁹¹

It must be pointed out how Chaminade, with regard to the vow, insisted with Adele and her religious on the sacrifice of their own judgment made in a profound spirit of faith.

While stressing the importance of the vows, Chaminade, as always, held to the essentials. He insisted on the need for personal holiness and progress in virtue: "Be faithful, my dear child, to your calling. Work at increasing the family of Mary, but take care, while swelling its number, not

⁸⁷ {53} Chaminade letter no. 88.

⁸⁸ {53bis} See Chaminade letter no. 90.

⁸⁹ {53ter e quarter} See Chaminade letters nos. 217 and 272.

⁹⁰ {54} Chaminade letter no. 273.

⁹¹ {54bis} Chaminade letter no. 170bis.

to neglect nourishing the piety of the older members and having them grow in virtue and in fervor.”⁹²

Before Adele had committed herself definitively to a consecrated life, Chaminade wanted to put her abreast of the future institute of the Daughters of Mary. After having explained to her the essentials of the structure, he continued:

A constant effort to advance in the practice of the Christian and religious virtues and to win souls for God: these are the two principles whose consequences must form the basis of your modest constitutions and of all the regulations based on them.⁹³

Your order will have not sort of strictness in the practice of penance, but a large amount of it in that of the religious virtues and in the care to be taken that the works of zeal are not harmful to the interior spirit.⁹⁴

When Chaminade could not offer direct help to his daughters, he prayed for them: “There are few days on which I am not doing something for your support and your betterment. However, it is really essential that you all work steadily to become saints.”⁹⁵

The structure and organization of the external organization of the institute and of the community are matters which preoccupied Chaminade, as are also the works of the apostolate in which Adele and her religious were engaged: organizing and animating retreats, the sodality, the catechism, etc. But the central preoccupation is one: “I am continually coming back to the first principle: let the community get along well, let the subjects be well-trained, let them mature and sanctify themselves. With saints we shall succeed in everything, but with ordinary or imperfect religious we shall do almost nothing.”⁹⁶

[3.3.3.3] A special ascetical methodology

The vows are the instrumental ends, that is, the means for achieving the primary end of the religious life. They constitute the condition which makes possible the actualization of what is specific to such a choice of life. It is also true that there is required simultaneously on the part of the religious of a work of liberation, a work of asceticism. We call this a “spirituality,” the life of a person who already possesses the Spirit and is guided by the very Spirit of God, which is love. Such a person moves toward an always more complete resemblance to Christ, concentrating on certain aspects specific to a given institute.

Which were the aspects which Chaminade proposed to Adele in order to lead her, in keeping with the movements of the Spirit, along the road to perfection? An authentic life of faith and of mental prayer and a profound love for Mary: to become more like Christ we must allow our-

⁹² {55} Chaminade letter no. 51.

⁹³ {56} Chaminade is here referring to the general regulations of 1816, and to the various particular regulations of 1816-1817.

⁹⁴ {57} Chaminade letter no. 61.

⁹⁵ {58} Chaminade letter no. 96.

⁹⁶ {59} Chaminade letter no. 98

selves to be formed by her. For, what is meant by “becoming like Christ”? It means to be saints. But there is only one who can be the author of our sanctification, the Spirit of Jesus Christ who alone can form us in the womb of Mary as he did the Savior. Therefore, it is necessary to allow ourselves to be formed in Mary’s womb to a resemblance with Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit.

We have already spoken of Mary’s important role in Adele’s life and in that of her companions. This was the reason for their decision to consecrate themselves. Let us now consider the spirit of faith, the spirit of mental prayer, and the other virtues on which Chaminade insisted, preoccupied as he was with communicating a specific spirit in order to lay the foundation for serious spiritual work.

Chaminade was aware that through faith and baptism we enter concretely into God’s plan. A man of deep faith who impressed whoever came to know him, he often took faith as a subject of his conferences, retreats, and meditations, so clearly did he see its importance of the spiritual life. If faith is the support of a Christian life, he would say, with all the more reason should it be the soul of the religious life. He often emphasized that the religious state is especially a state of faith, and of practical faith.⁹⁷

Faith is characteristic of all Chaminade’s foundations. It may seem strange that, in his letters to Adele, he referred specifically to the word “faith” only rarely, despite the importance he gave it, though in most of his letters we see a man preoccupied with the desire to do only the will of God. In his letter of February 18, 1820, he reminded Adele of her duties as superior and of the supernatural prudence she should exercise in judging. He told her never to lose sight of the scriptural word: “The just one lives by faith.” On March 22, 1822, he invited her to get to know her daughters better. Speaking of subjects who are reticent, he wrote:

I shall say only one word about reticent characters. They are such, ordinarily, only because they do not find in themselves the energy which activates, urges on, or excites them, etc. If, little by little, you could lead them on to act only by faith, to live but by faith! Faith is in us a powerful source of energy.⁹⁸

Toward the end of August, 1820, Chaminade had gone to Agen to preach the annual retreat. On that occasion he gave a series of three conferences, one on mental prayer and two on faith. Thanks to Adele’s care, we have in our possession all three.⁹⁹ We know that these conferences made a great impression on Adele. Writing to the superior at Tonneins (August 1821), to tell her of Chaminade’s arrival, she said: “Ask the Good Father to speak to you of faith and mental prayer; these were his most beautiful conferences.”¹⁰⁰

The two conferences on faith, which we reproduce in full, develop above all the importance of faith as the means and foundation of the spiritual life.

⁹⁷ {60} See retreat of 1817, in *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 248-249 [French].

⁹⁸ {61} Chaminade letter no. 192 [check against French original: reticent? restless?].

⁹⁹ {62} AGFMI, box. 39, conferences to the Daughters of Mary.

¹⁰⁰ {63} Adele letter no. 395.

[lengthy text]¹⁰¹

We are here dealing with notes taken by Adele, and not with a written text of Chaminade's. We may certainly presume some differences from the original, but we can see the importance which the founder attributed to faith and how Adele made it also her message.

Together with the spirit of faith, foundation of a true spiritual life, is the spirit of mental prayer, prayer made in the light of faith. It is nourished by recollection, silence, and renunciation of the world which allows us to live in the presence of God and of Mary. In the first of the three conferences on faith, Chaminade says this with regard to mental prayer:

[text]¹⁰²

In addition to the excerpt, what is important for Chaminade is to teach how to make mental prayer. We are here at only one moment in his constant referring to the necessity of mental prayer in the life of a religious. Already on November 7, 1809, barely a year since his first providential contact with Adele, he was busy encouraging her to pray: "If I noticed that you and your devout companions had anything else to do but pray, I should take care to give you a lesson."¹⁰³

Later, some two months after the foundation, on July 20, 1816, he wrote:

I am almost always talking to you about the others, my dear child, and but little about yourself. And yet, it is that which interests me most. How I desire to see you reach a high degree of perfection. Penetrate yourself, more and more, with the spirit of your institute, whether by studying it, by explaining it to others, by meditating upon it, or by having other do so. I really intend coming to see you rather soon and having with you the number of interviews necessary for you to know perfectly the course you have to take and have others take. Meanwhile, pray, meditate, advance in the contempt and renouncement of self. It will, nevertheless, be a pleasure for me to see you often allowing your heart the happiness of loving God and of making him known and loved.¹⁰⁴

On September, 1816, he recommended to Adele to be concerned that all the religious make progress in interior recollection and the spirit of mental prayer. Three months later, November 10, he wrote:

Without too intense an application of mind, your meditation ought to be all but continual. From time to time, when you feel yourself interiorly invited to meditation, devote yourself to it and persevere in it, provided your principal duties do not suffer in consequence.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ {64} *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 309-310.

¹⁰² {65} *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 308-309.

¹⁰³ {66} Chaminade letter no. 37. [check the French original; "more occupied with other things"??]

¹⁰⁴ {67} Chaminade letter no. 70.

¹⁰⁵ {68} Chaminade letter no. 76.

The year 1820 marked the beginning of the illness which would take Adele to the grave eight year later. Her health became preoccupying and on May 29, 1820, Chaminade intervened to moderate, under obedience, her zeal. He wrote:

The temporary suspension of your occupations, my dear child, will do more good to your soul than to your body. This is a special disposition of Providence, which you must profit from. You do not have the habit of the interior exercise of the love of God, of mental prayer, of spiritual reading, etc. Well, now you have a precious opportunity to train yourself little by little in these matters, taking care, however, not to tire yourself. Feed your heart continually, but prudently.¹⁰⁶

Always concerned for the perfection of his daughters, Chaminade wrote to Adele, December 4, 1821:

Tell all our beloved daughters -- and you may well assure them of it -- that I bear them all in my heart, that I offer them to the Lord. I have a great desire that they all make great and rapid progress in the virtues of their holy state and especially in the spirit of mental prayer.¹⁰⁷

[3.3.3.4] Silence and recollection

But how is one to arrive at making life a continual prayer, at remaining in the presence of God and of Mary? Chaminade insisted on interior and exterior silence, on recollection, and on renunciation of the world. After his visitation of the convent of Agen, he says he is satisfied, and wrote:

I am greatly pleased with everything about the little convent.... I was so satisfied that I began work on the "consummation virtues."¹⁰⁸ Work, all of you, with renewed fervor ... One means of advancing in the virtue of silence and of recollection is to maintain yourselves humbly in the presence of God, and to ask him interiorly to rid the powers of our soul of all sentiments foreign to his glory and to the love which we have vowed to him.¹⁰⁹

On October 15, 1817, referring to Sister Emanuel's work with the young women sodalists, he said:

Regarding greater separation from the world, it is not so much the body as the mind that is to be separated, although the Institute has provided for both. We must crucify ourselves in the eyes of the world, in order to edify the world and particularly in order by this crucifixion to become more closely united to Jesus Christ. The fear of being too long in contact with the world is good, as long as it leads us to ask for more powerful graces and

¹⁰⁶ {69} Chaminade letter no.139.

¹⁰⁷ {70} Chaminade letter no. 180.

¹⁰⁸ {71} These virtues will be considered later, when we refer directly to Chaminade's "system of virtues."

¹⁰⁹ {72} Chaminade letter no. 92.

tends to show us our own weakness. It must not in any way make us neglect the holy education that we have undertaken to give to the world.¹¹⁰

On January 30, 1818, he wrote to Adele, with regard to Sister Trinité, asking how could it be that the latter had not yet understood that the first step in the religious life is complete renunciation of the world. Referring to two other sisters, Louis de Gonzage and Vincent, he invites Adele to recommend to them that they try to carry on their work in great recollection. And, on March 19, 1819, with regard to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during the Easter triduum, and, in particular, with regard to the presence of outsiders, he wrote:

The custom of communities, even of cloistered communities, was to open their chapels on Holy Thursday so that the public might come to visit the Blessed Sacrament, etc. . . . You may follow this general practice, taking precaution not to disturb recollection but rather favoring it, whether by the interruption of all exterior functions for instructions of any kind, or closing the parlor (with only yourself going there in case of pressing need), or by supplementary exercises of piety, etc.¹¹¹

[3.3.3.5] Special apostolic mission

Chaminade had always wanted to be a “man of the Church” in the most deep meaning of the world: to participate in the mission of the Church which is to bring Christ to the world, to have him known and loved. He highlighted his insertion into the Church with his title of Missionary Apostolic,¹¹² which guided his entire apostolate. On October 8, 1814, in a letter to Adele he had further clarified his thought concerning the projected foundation:

Fourteen years ago I returned to France as Missionary Apostolic . . . There seemed to me no better way of exercising these functions than by establishing a sodality like the one now existing. Each sodalist, of whatever sex, age, or condition in life, is required to become an active member of the mission.¹¹³

He intended to make every sodalist an authentic Christian, a Christian in the fullness of the baptismal grace, that is, even to a missionary task lived within the Church and for the Church. In the proposal he would later offer Adele the basic idea of a mission remains; it would be enriched with aspects which would make the mission of Adele and her Daughters of Mary very special within the Church.

At this point, it would be well to give some attention to the vow of enclosure which is, in fact, closely allied to the mission. Adele was much enthralled with the missionary aspect of her life. When, in 1816, Chaminade encountered some difficulties in obtaining from Bishop Jacoupy permission for perpetual vows, Adele resigned herself to the thought of emitting annual vows in order not to forgo her vocation as missionary. Why?

¹¹⁰ {73} Chaminade letter no. 93.

¹¹¹ {74} Chaminade letter no. 118.

¹¹² {75} See footnote 69 {35}.

¹¹³ {76} Chaminade letter no. 52.

At that moment in history, professing perpetual vows was dependent on taking that of enclosure. But that enclosure was presumed to be an obstacle to an apostolic mission. Chaminade was not of that opinion, and on June 1, 1816, he wrote to Adele:

I bless the Lord for the great zeal with which he inspires you to consecrate yourself in a special manner to his service. You are impatient to be united to Jesus Christ as his spouse. Your heart is upright and that is essential ... but your mind is not yet free from error. You speak to me about annual vows in place of perpetual vows. ... It never occurred to me that you and your dear companions desired to be but half religious. In fact, the dispositions which the Holy Spirit has placed in your hearts are quite different. With God's holy grace I will soon explain to you all these beautiful things. ... What is to distinguish you is the love of Jesus Christ ... Enclosure is a consequence of the perpetual nature of the vows, but do not weary your heads about the matter. Let your hearts act. All will turn out for the best and Jesus Christ, who wishes to possess you completely, will not permit his ministers to be mistaken.¹¹⁴

Chaminade wanted the vows to be perpetual to underline the radical nature of the consecration.¹¹⁵ At the same time, he wanted religious communities that were apostolic and missionary and, therefore, in contact with the world to be evangelized. How to resolve the problem of enclosure? Chaminade kept the enclosure, but made of it a special vow subject to exception whenever the mission and external works required it.

In his letter of September 6, 1816, he again underlined his ardent desire for Adele and her companions to consecrate themselves definitively in order to dedicate themselves to the works with which charity inspired them. In a postscript to the same letter, he wrote:

The more I think of the stand we have taken with regard to enclosure, the more I am satisfied with it. If you were to imitate the Carmelites and include the obligation of enclosure with the three principal vows of religion, you would not easily, perhaps not at all, attain your proposed objective. We must always keep in view the ends of the institute and the times during which we are coming into existence. We will always respect the Carmelites and all the older orders. We will help them all we can, but we will have no regret that we do not resemble them in every respect.¹¹⁶

His letter of October 3, 1815, is fundamental with regard to the ends of the foundation. Chaminade explains and makes precise his ideas regarding the ends of the future institute and the characteristics of those who are its members. He presents the ideas and directive principles which will guide Adele on the road to perfection and in the formation of her companions:

¹¹⁴ {77} Chaminade letter no. 68.

¹¹⁵ {78} In a letter to Archbishop D'Aviau of Bordeaux, June 3, 1816, Chaminade asked for his support with regard to his idea on perpetual vows. He said he was convinced that perpetual vows were the essence of the religious profession and that enclosure for religious women was their consequence; that merely annual vows were not appropriate for the Daughters of Mary.

¹¹⁶ {79} Chaminade letter no. 73.

You would like to have a general notion of what your little Order ought to be. Quite right! To get a correct idea of it, you must consider, in the first place, what you ought to have in common with the religious of all the Orders, for you are to be religious in the full sense of the word; in the second place, what you are to have in particular that will distinguish you from all the Orders ... it is zeal for the salvation of souls. The principles of religion and of virtue must be made known, Christians must be multiplied. ... Your community will be composed entirely of *missionary* religious. ... Consider now already what kind of preparation you are to bring to so holy a state, which is to give you a share in the apostolic spirit.¹¹⁷

The mission is an ecclesial dynamism of charity embodied in works. Chaminade did not found the Daughters of Mary for a work of a specific apostolate, such as schools; he brought together Adele and her companions to participate in the mission of the Church.

In the letter cited above, Chaminade specified:

You will definitely not have to teach children nor visit and care for the sick or conduct a boarding establishment. Leave such works, however excellent they may be, to other groups older than you -- but, what are we to do, then? You will have to instruct in religion and train in the practice of virtue young ladies of every state and condition in life; to make of them true sodalists; to hold meetings, either general or by sections or groups, etc.; to make the young ladies make little spiritual retreats; to guide them in the choice of a state of life, etc.¹¹⁸

Adele and her “missionary” religious were to undertake all these works, choosing the best means for making the principles of religion known, for forming others to virtue, for multiplying Christians, inspired and animated by the vow of teaching faith and Christian practice.

[3.4] Community structures

The religious life as Chaminade proposed it to Adele and her companions could only be lived in community; indeed, the value of community, of unity, had impressed him very much. He wanted to base the institutes he founded on the monastic legacy of Saint Benedict; that is, on a tradition of fraternity. He wanted to bring together “sisters” and, later, “brothers,” under a “mother” or “father.” What was to be the role of the mother superior and within which structures she was to operate is what we must now consider.

[3.4.1] The role of the mother superior and of the three offices

Article 3 of the *Petit institut* says: “The Daughters of Mary are subject to the direction of a Mother Superior principally responsible for activating the three offices designated below.”

Further on, the *Petit institut* speaks of the superior as follows: “The direct government of the community, both for behavior inside and for affairs outside, is committed to the Mother Superior

¹¹⁷ {80} Chaminade letter no. 57.

¹¹⁸ {81} Chaminade letter no. 57.

who, in all cases, holds her title either by the quality of foundress or by her election by an absolute majority of votes.”¹¹⁹

The articles concerning the mother superior, and in particular her function of governing, continue to number 43, but we shall seek to get the image of the superior as presented by Chaminade: her essential traits, her function of animator and formator.

The first trait presented is that of mother. On November 29, 1816, he wrote:

Make steady progress in self-mastery, my dear child. In fact, be all to all, a real mother. May all find in you enlightenment and consolation. Even though some should come to you weak-willed and wavering, always receive them with kindness. By motives of faith you will get them to forgo an all too natural consolation which might retard them on the road to perfection. But they should be quite sure of always finding you ready to receive them.¹²⁰

On May 6, 1816, he recommends that she nurse Sister Elisabeth’s health with the care of a tender mother. The same preoccupation should be hers relative to Sister Emanuel burdened with solving a complicated affair resulting from the imprudence of a student: “You should always be attentive to these apostolic efforts, so as to aid whatever is good and see to it that these contacts do not lessen the love of God in the heart of your daughter ...”¹²¹

In a family, the role of the mother is certainly important. But when it is a matter of members living together in order to tend to perfection, it is also clear that the mother must give the example of holiness of life, of prudence, of docility, of availability, and of faithfulness to grace. On February 6, 1819, Chaminade wrote:

I very often think of the entire community and of each one of our daughters in particular; but mainly of you, my dear daughter, whom the good God wishes to make a saint. However, you have to make yourself docile to the action of grace, which must abound in you and which seeks so many ways of purifying and sanctifying you. An institute taking rise amidst an overflow of iniquity and meant to present itself before a world corrupted and perverted, should it not have a saint as leader? Well, courage, my dear child. Respond to the view of God, be faithful to your grace, to your particular grace! Remember that a superior is to be all to all so as to gain all to Jesus Christ.¹²²

With faith and prudence, the mother superior was to be attentive that the ends of the institute not be neglected; she must, therefore, remind her daughters of the rule and be herself a “living rule.” On October 15, 1817, writing about the needs of the small convent, he reflects on the works undertaken by Sister Françoise:

¹¹⁹ {82} Art. 32.

¹²⁰ {83} Chaminade letter no. 78.

¹²¹ {84} Chaminade letter no. 93.

¹²² {85} Chaminade letter no. 117.

The work was good in itself. I had the opportunity to say so in some letters of direction. But it is not one that fits in well with the spirit of the institute. . . . A spectacular work, my dear child, is not so valuable as works unobtrusively performed. In the institute there is no question of reforming one or several public sinners, but of attracting and reforming the world which is going almost completely astray. . . . we must remember that there are no virtues which, for lack of prudence, could not have dangerous effects.¹²³

On December 30, 1816, he wrote to Adele:

Once we have decided to form other communities, and I hope God grants us the grace to do so, you and a number of others must be like living copies of the Rule. Since the ends of this institute are all of the supernatural order, I would not want you to possess a purely natural wisdom, but that wisdom which comes from above. You must, therefore, ceaselessly beseech the Father of lights for it, and you will obtain it by great fidelity to the movements of grace and great purity of heart.¹²⁴

Her preoccupation therefore would be to be a “living rule” and, at the same time, to make the Rule known, loved, and lived. It would be her responsibility to form the members and to give them direction so as to guarantee them the necessary means for an authentic choice of life and perfection. In the delicate task of the formation of the members (young postulants, novices, religious), the superior is not alone. She has at hand the collaboration of the mothers of zeal, of instruction, and of work (those responsible for the three Offices).

Bypassing the history of the three Offices,¹²⁵ we shall see the purpose Chaminade assigned to each of them.

In article 5 of the *Petit institut*, we read:

Entrance into a religious house presumes in the postulants the ordinary and sufficient notions of Christian doctrine. It is after these notions that, in the institute, the activity of the three offices, established with a view to the proposed perfection, begins.

Article 6 says:

The Mother of zeal is charged by her office with teaching and having the virtues of preparation and of consummation practiced, as also with directing the purification of consciences and the various means which lead the soul to the highest virtues.

Article 12 continues:

¹²³ {86} Chaminade letter no. 93.

¹²⁴ {87} Chaminade letter no. 81.

¹²⁵ {88} For a historical overview of the three Offices, see *Sacra congregatio pro causis sanctorum: Adelaidis de Batz de Trenquelléon, Positio super introductione*, Rome, 1974, pp. 156-159; J. B. Armbruster, *Conferences données au Chapitre général des F.M.I.*, July 22, 1977, pp. 2-3, Rome.

The Mother of instruction has as her responsibility the explaining of the maxims and practices of religion, the formation to Christian morals and behavior, and the development of the signs of vocation of her pupils. She always has in view the formation of new teachers among the subjects of the monastery in various kinds of teaching. She strives to develop in the externs an intimate love of God, acting in such a way, in her twofold function, that all her pupils become seeds of virtue, both for the convent and for the world.

And article 15:

The Mother of work is charged with setting up within the house all kinds of work and enterprises in which human industry can be carried out without offending God or placing obstacles along the path of salvation.

The Offices can be seen as means of animating the various aspects of the religious life, and of the persons who constitute the community. The guarantee of their validity and effective animation resides in the unity of action and in the close relationship with the superior. In that regard, article 22 of the *Petit institut* declares:

The three offices, presenting in some way three distinct institutions, find their common bond in the authority of the Mother Superior (article 3) who should be, by herself, zeal, instruction, and work. She is the authority which commands, the spirit which directs, the love which loves everything; she is the living Rule.

In his letter of January 14, 1817, concerning the governance of the community, Chaminade invites Adele to encourage every religious to work and to persevere in submission to the will of God without becoming discouraged. He goes on to say:

The evil which doubtlessly would still more oppose the ends proposed in the institute would be frequent changing of those in office, and the diversity of administration which it might produce would doubtlessly be an evil still more opposed to the objectives of the institute. You, my dear child, who ought to be ever alert to everything, assure yourself of an upright intention as of the first requisite for every responsible position. Support the Mother supervisor of zeal in her good purpose of wisely developing the spirit of prayer, of learning more and more to discern spirits, of reconciling mildness with firmness in all her actions. . . . A well-formed Mother supervisor of zeal is a powerful means of getting the entire body of the community to throb with life.¹²⁶

Summarizing for the moment certain traits drawn from the letter and from the *Petit institut*, we might emphasize that Chaminade saw in Adele, the founding superior, a mother. He therefore sees for her a necessity to be holy, to incarnate the rule, as being the primary one responsible for the formation of the members of the community. His reference to the rule is insistent. It is the means on which all the members must agree. On it is based the social contract on the possibility for a community not to be merely nominal. The rule helps positively in indicating the road for growth in holiness.

¹²⁶ {89} Chaminade letter no. 83.

Responding to Adele, on January 14, 1817, on the matter of remorse of conscience for time lost or poorly used during prayer and the examination of conscience, he tells her to observe closely the rules governing these two exercises. The rules, and all the rules; that is work enough. The rules are the spirit of the institute. Indeed, the means for the superior to animate the community and the criteria to be observed are: a great regularity; the conferences to be given to the community, especially on prayer; verification that her daughters are making daily mental prayer.

[3.4.2] Mother Marie de la Conception: 1816-1827

What we have so far considered had as purpose to show how Chaminade guided Adele up to the moment of her religious consecration: what were the criteria which he proposed for her growth in holiness, and for forming her as foundress and superior and helping her to animate and form the Daughters of Mary. What now remains to be seen is what we might term her road as Mother Marie de la Conception. Becoming superior of the convent of Agen in 1816, she saw ever more clearly in Chaminade the priest who had had the task of directing her in her role as foundress.

In her letter of August 16, 1817, to Chaminade, she wrote:

[text no. 367]¹²⁷

Equally notable is her letter of May 22, 1820, where she says that a desire of Chaminade's is of greater value to her than a command. But let us take a look at her behavior. Adele is one of those people who have made of correspondence a true means of the apostolate. We have some 740 of her letters. Among these are those she wrote to the associates between 1808 and 1816. We have only two written to members of her family. Of those written to Chaminade, we have only those dated between 1816 and 1820 (those between 1808 and December 20, 1816, have been lost). We have those written between 1816 and November 28, 1827, six weeks before her death.

We have limited ourselves to a few of the letters sent to her religious, most to superiors of the communities, only to verify whether the principles of the religious life and the criteria of Marianist spirituality suggested by Chaminade show up in her correspondence. Adele was superior at Agen, but other communities were soon founded. Her role as foundress and superior general was consequently extended. There is question, therefore, of enlivening those responsible for the other communities so that their direction, and, especially, their own example, might animate their religious on the road to holiness and to the achievement of the ends of the institute.

What were the concrete counsels, the aspects on which Adele insisted, for the mission of the superior to be effective? Writing, on March 2 of 1825, to Mother du Sacré Coeur, the superior at Tonneins, Adele told her:

[text]¹²⁸

On the 21st of the same month she again wrote to her:

¹²⁷ {90} Adele letter no. 367.

¹²⁸ {91} Adele letter no. 449.

[text]¹²⁹

It is clear that the superior was to be the formator of her religious: prudent, zealous, and wise; a woman of prayer, dedicated to prayer; lover of recollection so as to be united to God and to live in his presence; humble and obedient in order to form the religious to the spirit of humility and obedience which are the foundations of the religious life.

Writing to Mother Saint Joseph, superior at Arbois, on November 16, 1823, she said:

[text]¹³⁰

On the occasion of the death of Mother Thérèse de Saint Augustin, January 22, 1823, she wrote to Mother du Sacré Coeur:

[text]¹³¹

The notion of the passage of time should motivate one's daily labors and spiritual work; all should be done with a view to eternity. Only then will our efforts find their recompense. The superior must be a woman of faith. Writing to Mother de l'Incarnation, the superior at Condom, on June 21, 1825, Adele said: [text]¹³²

And, to Sister Dosithée, who was in charge of the Third Order Secular at Tonneins, Adele wrote, March 28, 1825: "Let us view all things through the eyes of faith, and let us stand with Mary at the foot of the cross."¹³³ The superior must be holy, must renounce herself and be obedient; that is the greatest sacrifice which a religious soul must make: [text]¹³⁴

On June 29, [year?] she wrote to Sister Emilie Rodat: [text]¹³⁵ In another letter to Emilie (July 31, 1821), she reminded her that it was four years ago that she first took vows: [text]¹³⁶

To Mother Gonzage, mistress of novices, she wrote, on October 14, 1824: [text]¹³⁷ And writing to Mother du Sacré Coeur in March of 1825, she recommended that prudence be the "condiment" of all other virtues. The superior is to oversee prudently the spiritual and physical health of her religious. On February 3, 1824, she wrote to her: [text]¹³⁸

The rule should be lived in all its rigor. On February 27, 1826, she wrote to Mother de l'Incarnation: [text]¹³⁹

¹²⁹ {92} Adele letter no. 450.

¹³⁰ {93} Adele letter no. 674.

¹³¹ {94} Adele letter no. 445.

¹³² {95} Adele letter no. 550.

¹³³ {96} Adele letter no. 646.

¹³⁴ {97} Adele letter no. 350.

¹³⁵ {98} Adele letter no. 347.

¹³⁶ {99} Adele letter no. 358.

¹³⁷ {100} Adele letter no. 578.

¹³⁸ {101} Adele letter no. 416.

¹³⁹ {102} Adele letter no. 539.

Such a statement may seem excessive. We must remember that Chaminade spoke of five silences and Adele was well aware of his teaching on the virtues of purification. We can therefore understand such importance given to silence. She also insisted much on devotion to Mary, lived with the Church, in a liturgical and feast-day rhythm. Advent, for example, should be passed in union with Mary, our Mother; we should imitate her recollection in order to be closer to her Son. In this way we place our souls in Mary's womb to be more conformed to the image of Christ.

Together with the rule, there must be observance of the vows! Poverty is of great importance:

[text]¹⁴⁰

Writing again to Mother du Sacré Coeur, November 28, 1827, Adele said: [text]¹⁴¹

In another letter to her, October 28, 1824, she wrote about the vows of obedience, chastity, and teaching:

[text]¹⁴²

She insisted likewise on profound humility, the basis of every other virtue. Writing to Mother Dositée on March 9, 1825, she urged her: [text]¹⁴³

As being responsible for all levels of formation, when turning to the novices who, with the postulants, she considers the hope of the institute, she invited them (August 16, 1825) to generosity in their consecration and to preparing themselves for their oblation: [text]¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ {103} Adele letter no. 439.

¹⁴¹ {104} Adele letter no. 518.

¹⁴² {105} Adele letter no. 439.

¹⁴³ {106} Adele letter no. 645.

¹⁴⁴ {107} Adele letter no. 688.

CHAPTER FOUR

Modern relevancy of the message

Chaminade's direction of Adele may be summarized in four central ideas: the spirit of faith and of prayer; the role of Mary; community structures; ascetical methodology.

[4.1] Spirit of faith and of prayer

For Chaminade, the purpose of spiritual direction was to form persons of faith who not only live it deeply, but also seek to promote it. The specific contribution that his disciples were to give to the universal and evangelical mission of the Church consisted in education in faith with the purpose of multiplying Christians. As a faithful disciple of the Church and of the magisterium, Chaminade understood faith as free and trusting adherence of the whole person, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the word of God; this would not be because faith was rationally demonstrated, but because the authority of God guarantees its veracity.¹⁴⁵

He insisted on the involvement of the entire person, since it is a matter of living the faith, of forming a mentality of faith, of acting with faith. Setting his children firmly on a foundation of faith, Chaminade was careful to give them the only solid basis for the entire Christian life apart from which the religious life is reduced to a disquieting and sterile sentimentality. For this reason, he tried to "...[text]"¹⁴⁶

Why so much insistence on faith, on the spirit of faith? Chaminade was witness to a progressive weakening of adherence to revealed truth in the midst of the society surrounding him; he had seen the dangerous consequences. He was living at the moments immediately after the Revolution and "...[text]"¹⁴⁷

Faced with such a serious anemia for the Christian life, Chaminade proposed to have recourse to a radical remedy, proportionate to the evil to be overcome: to change a mentality impregnated with rationalism into an authentic mentality of faith. To work at the salvation of individuals is certainly the general end of the apostolate of all religious institutions, and, obviously, also in Chaminade's foundations. However, he was not satisfied with that. He wished to make of his socialists and, later, of his religious, missionaries who would struggle against the heresy of the time, *philosophism*, by means of religious instruction. Writing to Mgr. Frayssinous on April 7, 1825, he said: [vol. 3, letter 329]¹⁴⁸

Philosophism was, indeed, nothing other than a precursor of a general crisis of faith, a characteristic of our modern age. Therefore, the purpose of the mission of Chaminade's disciples was to introduce everywhere the spirit of faith, of religion, and of the multiplication of Christians. Faith was then the object to be deepened and diffused. With that in mind, Chaminade thought is good

¹⁴⁵ {1} See *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 243-244. [French]

¹⁴⁶ {2} *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 253-254. [French]

¹⁴⁷ {3} P. J. Hoffer, *La Vie Spirituelle d'après les écrits du Père Chaminade*, Rome, 1969, p. 45.

¹⁴⁸ {4} Chaminade letter no. 329.

to have the religious of the two institutes take a specific vow of teaching faith and Christian practice.

With the founding of the two religious institutes Chaminade proposed to present to the Church authentic apostles, ready to confront a de-Christianized society without being contaminated by it. Piety does not constitute an impassible barrier; often, in fact, it is superficial and lacking in true motives of faith. On the other hand, a faith that is purely speculative is not enough to direct a person toward Christ and to lead to a transformation into him. What is needed is what Chaminade called a “faith of the heart,” which has nothing in common with a sensate fervor whose effects are sometimes experienced by the soul. It is something supernatural: “...”¹⁴⁹ This is a faith of the heart, a faith engulfed and animated by charity which leads us to discover the nothingness of created things and urges us to love God above all else. It involves the entire person, and promotes an adherence of the entire being; it produces an orientation totally toward God, an existence inspired by the principles of faith.

Chaminade insisted that theory and practice be always closely united, and cited the example of the Virgin at the Annunciation: “Let it be done to me as you have said;” and at Cana: “Do whatever he shall tell you.” There, the effect of the word of God on the action remains the fundamental road of faith. Mary, indeed, “kept all these things in her heart and reflected on them.”¹⁵⁰

That is the whole problem of faith: to put together, to confront human reality and the divine, as is manifested in Jesus Christ, and as Mary was the first to experience it. We find ourselves here on a most important path: the meaning of our mission which takes its origin in faith and which transmits faith.¹⁵¹

In order to teach the faith it is first of all necessary to have a personal experience. We must enter into contact with God, within the depths of our own heart; it is only there that we can listen to the Word and achieve the mystical but authentic encounter with the Lord. For us to guard the Word within ourselves we must create a unity within our heart, our life, and so free it, as far as possible, from any conditioning. Otherwise, we could not become persons of prayer, missionaries of Christ like Chaminade and Adele. We must therefore rest in the Word, make an assiduous “reading” of it; it is through reflective meditation that we arrive at a life of faith. That is what led Chaminade to insist on “meditation” in general, and, in particular, on meditation on the Creed.

Mental prayer has as first purpose to speak with God, to praise him; there we discover the importance of preliminary acts of faith, of hope, of charity, of repentance, and of gratitude.

Another purpose of mental prayer is to enter more deeply into the truths of faith so that they become convincing, transforming life. And mental prayer is indispensable for apostolic activity. The more we devote ourselves to the apostolate the more indispensable it is that we devote time to mental prayer, so that the message transmitted be that of Christ: “we are ambassadors sent by Christ.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ {5} P. J. Hoffer, *La Vie Spirituelle d'après les écrits du Père Chaminade*, Rome, 1969, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ {6} See Lk 2:51.

¹⁵¹ {7} J. B. Armbruster, *Conferences données au Chapitre general des F.M.I.*, July 22, 1977, p. 13, Rome.

¹⁵² {8} See 2Cor 5:20.

So that his spiritual disciples might do just that, Chaminade proposed to them the mental prayer of faith as the most effective means for deepening their faith. “Any mental prayer that does not have faith as object, means, and principle, is a false prayer.”¹⁵³

But, precisely what is this mental prayer of faith?

[text]¹⁵⁴

The reality most suited for nourishing our faith is the sacred scriptures, and every topic should be considered in the light of faith. The prayer of faith attributes great importance to the action of God. The purpose of such prayer is not to form a theology, but to encourage an ever greater union with God. In order to complete Chaminade’s view of the mental prayer of faith, two aspects, intimately joined and equally important in his spirituality, should be emphasized: its Christocentrism and its Marian spirit.

All must pass through Christ and Mary: truth, mysteries, virtues. Their thoughts and their example must always be present. Christ, obviously, should have the central part in every instant. The subject, considerations, applications, and resolutions: all should be centered on Christ. Chaminade then invites us to make the mental prayer of faith with the very dispositions of Mary:

[text]¹⁵⁵

Mental prayer allows us to remain in contact with the source of all redemption, to be united not only with the will but also with the thought of the One who gives the grace which redeems and sanctifies.

If Chaminade were to find himself face to face with the present situation of faith in our society, would he use the same means and give the same advice for an effective apostolate?

Even with an admittedly superficial analysis of the present situation of the Christian life, we immediately perceive the drama of secularization and de-Christianization. What we see is a egotistical society, based on individualism and on a negation of the spiritual dimensions of human existence; it is dedicated to the search for well-being and physical pleasure as the principle of social behavior. We see, on the part of political and secular institutions, a rejection of Christian principles as norms. Perhaps the present condition of Christianity is worse than it was at the time of Chaminade after the French Revolution. Yet we still believe in the need for a lived faith, re-discovered, kept alive, and purified in daily mental prayer. It is all the more relevant for Christians, for apostles called to live their witness in a largely pagan world.

[4.2] Role of Mary in Chaminade’s thought

¹⁵³ {9} *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, p. 373. [French]

¹⁵⁴ {10} P. J. Hoffer, *La Vie Spirituelle d’après les écrits du Père Chaminade*, Rome, 1969, p. 144.

¹⁵⁵ {11} P. J. Hoffer, *La Vie Spirituelle d’après les écrits du Père Chaminade*, Rome, 1969, p. 145-146.

In order to justify theologically the place Mary should have in the spiritual life of his disciples, Chaminade never ceased penetrating into the Marian mystery and developing a greater understanding of her privileges and of her role in the work of redemption. With the intent of demonstrating that Mary is at the source of our divine life, that she is truly our Mother, he described her cooperation in the redemptive work, emphasizing the three successive phases: the Annunciation, Calvary, and heaven where she continues her maternal work.

Though not considering in detail Chaminade's Mariology, we may glance at its essential points to note how Mary was and remains in Chaminade's and Adele's thought, and in the life of each of their disciples, the fundamental motivation of their consecration to God. Mary consented in faith to the Incarnation of the Word; she thereby became Mother of God and contributes effectively to the work of our redemption. It was with the same act of consent that Mary offered herself so profoundly to our salvation that we may say that she carried all of us within her womb like a true mother. By conceiving Jesus, Mary knew she was conceiving him totally, the historical Christ and the mystical one. Mary is, therefore, the Mother of all human beings, the Mother of the Church. Conceiving us at the Annunciation, she brought us to birth in grace on Calvary where all of us, represented by John, were proclaimed Son of Mary by the dying Christ.

Mary is, therefore, Mother of Christ (divine maternity), Mother of the whole Christ (historical and mystical) and, consequently, Mother of all human beings (spiritual maternity), having engendered us into the faith. The Virgin is therefore concerned with the salvation of us all and continues to watch over the Church. The study of the maternity and of Marian mediation led Chaminade to attribute to Mary a direct role in the apostolate of modern times. Mary's apostolic role, for him, is a logical consequence of her spiritual maternity.¹⁵⁶

The founder was so convinced of this that he wrote:

Her ambition -- if it is permitted to make use of this term with regard to the most holy among all creatures -- is that all the children which her charity has engendered after him be so united to him that with him they all form but one son, one same Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁷

When founding the sodality of Bordeaux, he was convinced that Mary stands in need of apostles beside her in the battle against evil. Having understood that Mary is our Mother, we wish to offer her our filial service. This is the point of departure, the motivation which Chaminade wished to inculcate in all his disciples, and in Adele first of all: Mary is the motive, the dynamism, which animates each religious for the gift of life and of apostolate. For this reason all Marianist religious have become such for love of Mary. They have taken the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in order to be totally free and available to her orders, to collaborate with her plan which is none other than the plan of God. Mary's mission is only about the coming of the kingdom, and the vows insert us into that same mission. Mary continues to carry out her maternity and her activity of mediation in heaven, as a logical consequence of her collaboration in the redemption. She continues to bear her Son in us, communicating to us the graces which he merited for us by his death, by the example of his life, especially by the faith by which he has given us life, and by his love for the salvation of others.

¹⁵⁶ {12} See *Ecrits marials*, Fribourg, 1969, vol. 2, no. 486 (p. 176).

¹⁵⁷ {13} Chaminade letter no. 728.

It is therefore in the name of Mary, through love of her, that we dedicate ourselves in our institute which, through the will of the founders, is the institute of the daughters and sons of Mary, to continue in history and in the Church the very role of the Virgin Mary. For this task, the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary form us into the resemblance of Jesus Christ. Basically we take vows because we wish to be, like her, completely for the kingdom.

[4.3] Community structures

When we speak of “structures” we should not think of something static (which the word might suggest). In our case, we are speaking of something dynamic, based on the spirit which animates a family. The founder wanted to situate our religious life in the monastic tradition, on the tradition of being totally and entirely consecrated to God. The tradition of the two institutes founded by Chaminade is located within that of Saint Benedict. This is a fraternal tradition different from the hierarchical manner of living the religious life, such as that of the Jesuits.

Chaminade had no intention of founding a community of soldiers with a general at its head. Guided by the Benedictine ideal, he wished to bring together sisters and brothers around a mother and a father. These terms have their own special meaning, indicating a spirit which is that of a family.

The expression “family spirit” places the emphasis on the intensity of love which should exist among the religious. Of course, we cannot, as Marianists, claim a monopoly on family spirit; every religious congregation is a family within which common life or apostolic activity requires an intense union. Yet, our founder, in order to underline even more that necessity, made of it a characteristic virtue for his religious. He wished, indeed, that a fraternal union founded on the doctrine of the Mystical Body should reign in the Marianist communities.¹⁵⁸

He often insisted on the “*cor unum et anima una*” of the Acts of the Apostles. He greatly desired that the communities reproduce the image of the family of Nazareth. In order to realize a profound union of hearts and minds it is not enough that people be joined in a superficial camaraderie. Reciprocal relationships should take place with spontaneity; each should share in the joys and sorrows of all, collaborate in a spirit of love, and renounce every individualistic position. It is clear that such a union and communion is not the spontaneous fruit of nature, but finds its foundation in the spirit of faith and abnegation.

Religious life is characterized by its demands for holiness, fervor, and continuing progress. For that reason, Chaminade had recourse to the “three offices”; these refer both to the areas and to the persons responsible for them. It is, therefore, the duty of the superior of every community to encourage and to lead the religious by personal relationships based on charity to becoming a “people of saints.”

As Benedict placed the dynamism of the community and of formation of the monks on the “*ora et labora*,” so Chaminade thought of the three offices. A certain parallel can be established between the *ora et labora* and the three offices. The office of zeal can be related to the *ora*, and the

¹⁵⁸ {14} See *Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 117-118 [French].

manual and intellectual work to the *labora*. Indeed, Benedictine work, like that foreseen by the founder, was always double: intellectual and manual. For Chaminade, intellectual preparation is essential to the apostolate and pertains to the office of instruction; and manual work pertains to the office of work and the animation of practical activities. This office is concerned with the economic aspects of whatever refers to the material administration of the Society and of its works. It has, in addition, the responsibility of influencing the individuals employed in the world of labor so that they use the goods of this world in keeping with the Christian spirit of justice and charity.

We see that the three offices are, even today, the means of animating all the various sectors of the religious life and of the persons who compose it; the dynamic means for an ongoing formation of all the members of each community in the three essential aspects of the religious life: in its relationship with God; in its apostolic and formational aspects; in its insertion into the human dimension through work. In other words, we can see how relevant is the figure of an apostle such as Chaminade saw it: a contemplative in action.

[4.4] Ascetical methodology for the active life:
the role of the silences especially in the active life

In this day, asceticism is going through a critical period not only in social and Christian life in general, but also in the religious life. For many people and in many places the very word “asceticism” is taboo. Sometimes even spiritual directors fear to upset their directees by requiring of them some prolonged effort. Yet it is a reality that there is no progress without asceticism. It is not possible to belong to God and to resemble always more closely Jesus Christ without a total conversion of thoughts, sentiments, behavior. We cannot deny that every act of asceticism, of purification, bears a negative aspect; but that is only a first movement which prepares for something positive. If we die, it is in order to live; if we renounce ourselves, our own egoism, it is in order to love more and in a freer way God and neighbor.

By presenting Chaminade spirituality in a schematic way, we may say that it is traditional in its foundation but original in its actualization. It has a positive and a negative aspect. It is a matter of taking on the Lord Jesus, the new man, so as to be able to say with Saint Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” To arrive at that goal we must put to death the old man who is in us. Nothing is more in conformity with the ascetical writings of all the ages of the Christian tradition, no matter who the authors. Where Chaminade proceeded in a more personal way was in the realization or actualization: in the means he proposes for attaining the end.

1) The first indispensable means, of general importance, for putting to death the old man and for taking on Christ is: faith. It is faith and the spirit of faith which justifies the efforts which a person undertakes to resist the impulses of nature inclined to evil, to discipline such forces, and to put them to the service of good and of virtue. It is only faith and the spirit of faith which leads to Christ, to the sacraments, to acceptance of the gospel. Yet, in order to be another Christ, it is not enough to believe; we must also live by faith and, in a continual manner, to always act under the impulse of the spirit of faith; this presumes an assiduous practice of mental prayer.

2) The second means suited to the struggle against the old man consists in the practice of the virtues which Chaminade names “of preparation, purification, and consummation.” In his system, the struggle against the old man is carried on in three phases.

In the first phase, we seek to create conditions favorable to acting in a profitable manner, thanks to what Chaminade calls the virtues “of preparation:” silencing the tongue, the entire body, the mind, the passions, the imagination. It means learning to recollect oneself, to be obedient, and to put up with difficulties.

In a second step, now knowing ourselves, we move to the practice of the virtues called those “of purification.” This means to free ourselves, to the extent possible, from whatever could draw us to evil, from weaknesses, from natural tendencies, from contrarities, from temptation.

In a third phase, through the virtues “of consummation,” we work at the complete sacrifice of the old man thanks to humility, modesty, abnegation of self, and enunciation of the world, training ourselves to live always more fully a life of faith, of hope, and of charity while tending toward eternal life.

3) The third means for taking on Christ is union with Mary. Union with Christ under the impulse of the Holy Spirit is made possible thanks to the practice of the above-mentioned virtues. In order to make it even more efficacious, easier, more rapid, more perfect, and more secure, we must have recourse to Mary, his and our Mother. We must confide ourselves to her as children, allowing ourselves to be formed by her charity into the likeness of her first-born, as he let himself be formed into our likeness in her virginal womb. The more a Christian practices devotion to Mary, the more that person approaches the end of identifying with Christ, head and model of the elect.

Chaminade’s ascetical methodology may at times seem negative and centered on fleeing sin and correcting defects. But these are typical signs of the period in which he lived. The anthropology of the nineteenth century is very much conditioned by the view of the sinful state of humans; the first sign of value was mortification. However, the founder was convinced that it was more psychologically correct to present a positive ideal rather than struggle against obstacles; he stressed, therefore, the victory of virtue rather than separation from egoism.

In order to situate Chaminade in the history of spirituality, it would be inexact to put him with those who seek to attain holiness by means of a struggle against self and by the renunciation of all that is not God. It would be equally inexact to place him among those who place their hopes, above all, in the irresistible dynamism of love to purify the soul, to correct its imperfections, and to move it toward the acquisition of virtues. He occupies the balanced middle between those two positions. Long experience in spiritual direction, together with the study of the best teachers, had put him on his guard against the twofold excesses of a meticulous morality without interior energy, and that of a dangerous illuminism which enchants with beautiful mystical formulas and from which asceticism is excluded.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ {15} P. J. Hoffer, *La Vie Spirituelle d’après les écrits du Père Chaminade*, Rome, 1969, pp. 117-118.

We have limited ourselves to presenting this system in a general way. Now we would like to consider more closely one aspect of the virtues of preparation. This is the five silences which certainly present the original element of the entire system as well as, undoubtedly, the ascetical value most readily acceptable. We do this especially to indicate its particular quality for an active apostolate. Chaminade had developed a very wide notion of silence. It was certainly inspired by the Benedictine rule and by the mystical authors of the Middle Ages.

For a person to be guided toward mental prayer and recollection, there is needed a purification through the silence of the faculties; this is achieved progressively from the exterior to the interior. Silence of words is only one aspect and one preparatory step to a more profound silence. Considered in its full extent, silence, as understood by Chaminade, has as purpose to silence in us all unbecoming voices. This allows us to possess ourselves and to listen to God; it is an essential condition for an interior spirit. But silence is not an end in itself, but, rather, a means for becoming persons of prayer.

[text]¹⁶⁰

The founder gave a definition of silence of words based not only on a call to a life of mental prayer, but also on the needs of a communitarian life and of the apostolate: “[text]”¹⁶¹

By “silence of signs” he meant all the exterior movements by which we express our thoughts, sentiments, and actions. Every interior stance is translated into a corresponding exterior sign or behavior. The task, then, is that of controlling such behavior; to be concerned that our behavior be in keeping with our interior, and not in contradiction to it.

From exterior silence we move step by step to interior silence. Silence of the mind consists of: “eliminating any thought that does not serve to center the mind on whatever should be occupying it.”¹⁶² Silence of the mind is essentially a means for being more attentive to God present in us and in what is around us so as to make us able to concentrate all our attention on its proper object.

Our passions reveal the deep aspirations of the human being, inscribed by God in our nature. They are, therefore, powers to be channeled and oriented in their dynamism. Silence of the passions consists of directing our inclinations, sentiments, tenderness, in keeping with the light of reason and of the Word of God. We are to substitute for the passion which dominates in us that which should dominate, that is, love for God.

Silence of the imagination: “[text]”¹⁶³

A methodical work of asceticism is needed, therefore, consisting of bringing the imagination into control to reason and orienting it to the service of God and the apostolate.

¹⁶⁰ {16} Chaminade letter no. 352.

¹⁶¹ {17} Chaminade, *Ecrits de direction*, vol. 1, Fribourg, 1956, no. 682.

¹⁶² {18} Chaminade, *Ecrits de direction*, vol. 1, Fribourg, 1956, nos. 713; 893; 1070.

¹⁶³ {19} Chaminade, *Ecrits de direction*, vol. 1, Fribourg, 1956, nos. 760.

How does one achieve the practice of this kind of silence? One fundamental means is the examination of conscience or particular examen. Its purpose is to discover the sources of our imaginings, their repercussions and the impressions they make on us. For whoever is dedicated to the active apostolate, contemplation, the vertical dimension, can easily be neglected. Chaminade wanted true religious, men and women, who, having a specific mission to teach the faith, to multiply Christians, and to enter into contact with people in an active life, would be contemplatives in action. He was not especially interested in the clothing, the dwelling, or the type of apostolate of his religious. What counted was that they were true religious, that they had made God the central axis of their lives, the basis of their fundamental option. For that reason he placed great emphasis on silence in all aspects of life, interior and exterior. Without silence, the life of a religious risks being fragmented, dispersed, disunited. With methodical practice of the silences, one can arrive, rather, to a recollected life based on and undergirded by vocal and mental prayer.

The road, then, is from the exterior to the interior, from the senses to the mind, from the spirit to God, the ultimate end of every human activity.

CONCLUSION

Having reached the end of our work, we will trace briefly the points which seem most characteristic in the Chaminade's spirituality and direction. First of all, Chaminade starts from the conviction that baptism is the radical sacrament which founds and justifies the principles which animate the Christian life, and even more the religious life. By it we become children of God and brothers of all other persons, and, therefore, responsible for one another, "missionaries" in the genuine meaning of the term. He often repeated to his children "we are all missionaries." On the occasion of the annual spiritual retreats he wanted a renewal of the baptismal commitment for it was in that that the ultimate motivation of the religious vows was rooted.

This baptismal spirituality requires, as consequence, a certain type of life and a structure of the spiritual organization of the upward road to God: that is, an "incarnational" spirituality (not a dichotomous one), which takes into account the whole person -- body and soul -- and is clearly devoted to an apostolate "in" the world and "for" the world, rising it up through Christ; a spirituality solidly anchored in the Church and its directives.

He was certainly ingenious in his intuitions and a precursor of those times which would seek out the essential of the religious life of his sons, setting aside all secondary forms. In that regard, we must emphasize his insistence on a deep faith nurtured daily by an hour of meditation and the Eucharist. The importance given to religious study, recommended above all to the lay religious, together with an repeated and almost obsessive insistence with making "as third object of its Constitutions the rules of precaution and of reserve that tend continually to fortify the religious against relaxation" (Const. 1839, art. 3).

Therefore, not the exterior habit but the interior shield of faith, a faith lived in fraternal community, would be the point by which all efforts would be directed. A mentality of faith will support attitudes of faith and these, in the long run, will be expressed in behavior consistent with faith and will serve as witness to faith. "The essential is the interior" was another common expression of Chaminade's, expressed in many ways. In this context of dynamic apostolate and Christian

and evangelical vigilance we can deduce the importance of “recollection” in the Marianist ascetical journey. According to Chaminade, recollection does not come spontaneously nor is it created artificially; it is a mature fruit of an attentive life polarized on God and centered on the work of the moment. It is the product of a “quiet” life where the interior dominates over the exterior, where the spirit has priority over the senses, and where God becomes the constant intermediary and the ultimate parameter of human activity. We see as very original and relevant Chaminade’s insistence on recollection for persons involved, as a duty of state, in the active apostolate. He understood how orthopraxis, if based on orthodoxy, is such that it must be constantly verified by the contemplation of truth and by interior discernment.

A mind that is “divided,” lacerated, not recollected, might have a presupposition that it acts apostolically, but its superficial activity would be, in the final analysis, anything but an acting “as ambassador of Christ.”

Then, there is the privileged attention Chaminade gave to Mary as irreplaceable means for coming close to Christ and for bringing him to others. Firmly based in Pauline Christocentrism, he saw in Mary the Mother of Christ and the Co-redemptrice, the Mother of all human beings and the co-operator in the work of salvation.

He held as a special vocational grace for Marianists the essential re-discovery of the spiritual maternity with the special consequence of sons dedicated to an “alliance” with their Mother in carrying out her plan. This plan is none other than God’s plan: to work at the salvation of the whole human race.

These seem, to us, to be the major intuitions of Chaminade. Others could have been mentioned, drawn from other aspects of his activity, but they would no longer be in direct relationship with the purpose of our work.

EPILOGUE

From the Constitutions of 1839:

Direction is the greatest aid that souls desirous of saving themselves find in the religious profession; and it is likewise the most potent advantage that the Society can promise to those who devote themselves to God under its tutelage. Direction is, in fact, nothing else than the education of the religious; that is to say, the care that the Society takes of those who offer themselves to it in order to lead them from the first step to the final stage of the perfection toward which they tend. (art. 97)

The Society does not have the erroneous pretension of substituting work and human industry for the operations of grace; but it does desire to obviate the obstacles that man’s negligence, his prejudices, his illusions and false steps place too often in the way of these operations. (art. 98)

The private interview is not an accusation of sins as in confession ... It is a frank and complete disclosure on all questions that pertain to one's vocation, to fidelity, to the practice of virtues, to the religious state and to the condition of one's soul whether in calm or in trouble. (art. 100)

THE END

[trans. Sept. 24, 2006]

Notes to NACMS:

- 1) The style is very prolific, more “spoken” than “written.” It leaves (I think!) much to be desired. A straight translation is awkward. There is also considerable repetition, as though various sections were composed independently of each other.
- 2) Much information is provided to the professors, which may not be of any use to a reader. If this work is published for English-speaking readers I suggest a “re-write,” published as “an adaptation from the Italian by ...”
- 3) In some cases, the footnote references have to be Anglicized. In the case of Marianist works in Italian, if there is no English equivalent it would be good to give the French titles, as being more easily accessible to the reader than the Italian version.
- 4) The spelling of French names needs to be carefully checked!
- 5) The Table of Contents has been simplified, but the subheadings are retained in the text.

[“Slightly revised version” – Received from Fr. Joe Stefanelli, SM– October 7, 2006]