

JANUARY 2011
“THE NAME OF THE VIRGIN WAS MARY” (Lk 1:27)
William Joseph CHAMINADE
MISSIONARY IN A NEW WORLD



OPENING OF THE CHAMINADE YEAR



BUILDING JOYFUL COMMUNITIES OF HOPE! **Isabella R. Moyer, MLC President**

“Missionary in a new world”! Blessed William Joseph Chaminade was a new kind of missionary in the tumultuous world of post-revolutionary France. With Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous, he modeled a collaborative leadership and mutual responsibility for the Church. He believed that the gifts of all are needed – men and women, lay, vowed religious and ordained.

Today, we also face religious indifference in secular and individualistic societies. We, too, observe the horrors of violence that disregards the precious gift of life. We, too, have a great divide between the rich and the poor that denies the inherent dignity and rights of every woman and man. We, too, struggle with the sinfulness of our human institutions and leadership structures.

If Blessed Chaminade were born in our time, what would he do? He would propose the same great plan he proposed 200 years ago. This plan would revitalize our broken and hurting world by building communities of joy-filled Christians, a spectacle of saints who will bring hope to all. He would not spend his energies harbouring anger at the past, and hatred for those who tried to destroy him and the Church he loved. His focus would be on *rebuilding* the Church one soul at a time, within a diverse community of women and men from all walks of life. These communities would gather around Mary, be formed by her, and proudly bear her



name. They would provide formation, support and nourishment in the Christian life and work together for justice and peace throughout the world in a true spirit of family. Today, the message of Blessed Chaminade transcends historical times and is embraced by a diversity of cultures. The proof is visible in the continual growth and deepening collaboration of our global Marianist Family. We, too, are all called to be missionaries in a new world.



MISSIONARIES TODAY

**Christiane Barbaux,
International Responsible of the Alliance Mariale**

“Marianist,” “Missionary,” “World” are three words that resonate deep in our hearts. They are also, for us, three inseparable words because they express the essence of our vocation and of our commitment to Mary in the Marianist Family.

By our baptism we are born “missionaries,” sent into the world to speak out the Good News and TO BE the actors of the Kingdom already there and not yet there. Yes, we must BE. Every life, lived in a spirit of Praise and of Service, WITH HIM, BY HIM and IN HIM, is missionary, bearing fruit when the being is turned towards God in prayer, in the offering of its joys, its sufferings, its struggles and even its failures; and turned towards others through gestures, actions, listening and even through silences....



In this world that is always moving, growing, being transformed, let us be the Lightbearers, the bearers of the Word of Him who dwells within us. Through our presence at the heart of the world, within the structures of the world, in social and civic life, in cultural or political circles..., let us be beings of faith, convinced that the Presence of Christ touches our brothers and sisters and acts as a leaven, like a great Fire.

Let us be formed by our Mother, let us open our hearts to the Spirit so that there where the Lord has placed us, and like humble servants, we might live from the strength of the Beatitudes, hear calls and commit ourselves in solidarity with our brothers and sisters so that the world might grow in humaneness and that the Kingdom of God might be established among us.

Let us be new Chaminades in this world of today.



THANK YOU, FATHER CHAMINADE!

**Sister Marie-Joelle Bec, FMI
Superior General of the Daughters of Mary
Immaculate**

Dear Father Chaminade,

An entire year is offered to us to be thankful, on the occasion of your 250th birthday, for the life that the Lord gave you. A life at the service of others, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, very early on became your Mother, your Educator, the Star that guided you. A life that you did not seek to save at the peak of the French Revolution. You went on, as a hawker, a door-to-door salesman carrying the Lord to those who needed his support, his strength to face the uncertainties of the times. You knew exile, a time for deepening your love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our Lady of the Pillar gave you a sign, revealing to you the plan that her Son wanted to carry out with you upon your return to France. You loved young people; do you remember that 8th of December, 1800, when you asked two of them to come the next time with two friends? By the 2nd of February they were twelve, just like the apostles. With you, they became the apostles of Bordeaux. The young Adele made contact with you. Some years later, you were amazed at what the Lord was accomplishing in that young heart. You took her into your confidence. You who always took the time to weigh matters before the Lord, you invited her to pray to the Holy Spirit. In effect, she and her friends asked you to bring them together in community. Would they not lose all their missionary fervor? In listening to the Spirit, you finally wrote to her: *“You know that true Sodalists must be missionaries, and so much the more religious Sodalists.”* On May 25, 1816, the Daughters of Mary occupied the Refuge in Agen, and you quickly set the foundations for the new Institute. All the way to the end, in spite of trials, maintaining your confidence in the Blessed Virgin Mary “who has crushed and will crush the head of the serpent,” you would spend your long life in the service of the Family to which you had given birth, of the Church and of the mission. Thank you and Happy Birthday!



A YEAR TO DEEPEN KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FOUNDER



Father Manuel J. CORTÉS, SM Superior General of the Society of Mary

This year that is just beginning marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of our Founder, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade. The Marianist Family wishes to commemorate this day by calling upon all its members to celebrate it in a special way.

What can we hope for from this celebration? What fruits should this year leave with us? For me, my most fervent wish is that it helps us to know more and better Father Chaminade, our Founder, as the indispensable condition for living with renewed authenticity and greater coherence our Marianist vocation in today's world.

I say that it is the *indispensable condition* because, in calling us to be Marianists, the Lord asks us to continue living today what Father Chaminade lived out. His life is the outline which the Spirit has left us for our own vocation. If he had not existed, if he had not lived as he actually did live, the Marianist vocation would not exist, none of us would be where we are today. So he is not for us merely one more saint among all the saints, one example of Christian life among many others. His person and his life are an authentic divine mediation for our lives. It is important, therefore, that we never cease to deepen our knowledge of him. Knowledge of and esteem for our own vocation comes through our knowledge of and esteem for our Founder.

Now this knowledge must be of the interior, that is, not just limited to the external features or events that marked his life, but it must grasp what moved him from within, the intuitions of his mind, the impulses of his heart, his spiritual strength, in such a way that these same experiences seize upon our minds and our hearts. If we walk along this way, we shall surely respond as Marianists to the pitfalls that these latter times, in which it is our fate to live, set before us. We shall be, as he was and as the Lord wishes us to continue to be, "missionaries in a new world."



I hope, then, that the many initiatives arising in our different countries to celebrate this year might contribute, not only to maintain alive the memory of our Founder, but also and above all to make him better known.

Date of the month to celebrate: 22 Anniversary of the death of Father Chaminade – Opening of the Chaminade Year, 250 years after his birth.