

FEBRUARY 2011

"THE NAME OF THE VIRGIN WAS MARY " (Lk 1:27)

## William Joseph CHAMINADE : FROM THE MOTHER TO THE SON

A DATE...

February 2, 1801

FOUNDATION OF THE SODALITY...

BEGINNINGS OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY ...

"On February 2, 1801, after two months of reflection and preparation, the founding members of the Sodality [lay men], hand on the Gospel, made the following promise:

'I (first name only), servant of God and son of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church, give myself and dedicate myself to the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I promise to honor her and to make her honored, as much as it depends on me, as Mother of youth. So help me God and his holy Gospel" (AGMAR 47,2,11).

### THE TWELVE WHO COMMITTED THEMSELVES THAT DAY:

*Bernard Rotis* was a cleric.

*Darbignac* and *Louis-Arnaud Lafargue* had just finished their military service.

*Raymond Lafargue*, 27, cousin of Louis-Arnaud, teacher.

*Jean-Baptiste Estebenet*, 24, teacher, director of boarding school.

*Etienne Ducot*, 25, shoemaker.

*Tapy Francis*, 23, and *Jean-Baptiste Duchon*, 19, candidates for the seminary, as also

*Pierre Capdeville*, still a student but who died in February 1802.

*Pierre and Alexandre Dubosq*.

"The concern for quality characterized recruitment throughout the year 1801. It was a necessity. If we were to light a fire where the

indifferent would be set aflame, we had to be fervent elements ourselves. ... It is a fact that among the recruits of the first year, we considered many to be of the same quality as the founders" (J. Verrier, *Jalons II*, pp. 73-77).

AND THEN ...

March 25, 1801: start of the **female branch** of the Sodality. Among its nine members:

Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous...

Beginning of the **adult** section (men 1802, women 1804, priests 1804)

1804: **Adèle** de Trenquelléon founded the "Little Society" which drew closer to that of Bordeaux from 1808 onwards

From 1809 there were some attempts at **consecrated life in the world**.

1816: Adele and five other members of the "Little Society" founded the **Daughters of Mary Immaculate**.

1817: In May, five Sodalists offered themselves to Fr. Chaminade to found **the Society of Mary**



"She has  
crushed your  
head, she will  
always crush it  
again"

Stained Glass of  
Saint Philbert de  
Grand Lieu  
(1750)

**WILLIAM JOSEPH, WHAT DO YOU SAY TO US?**

"We still have all the weaknesses of childhood but our confidence in our august Mother is unwavering ... from our birth, she has made us win astonishing victories" (L II-343 - 19 May 1825 to Fr. Caillet).

"I have no other policy than to resort every day to the Blessed Virgin" (L II-575 - January 20, 1831 to Fr. Lalanne).

To Mary, "I constantly commend the fate and direction of the Society of Mary, being by myself incapable of governing it in such critical times and circumstances" (I.ii-640 - August 23, 1832 to Fr. Lalanne).

"By the great mercy of God upon me and others, for a long time now, I live and breathe only to spread the veneration of the august Virgin, and thus every day make her family grow and multiply" (L II-381 - 12/05/1825 - to the seminarians of Auch).

"In proportion as your devotion to Mary grows, you will become more skilled at inspiring others" (L III-661 - January 23, 1833 - to Fr. Lalanne).

"It is the Blessed Virgin, my dear children, who is the foundress of the Society of Mary. It is she who wanted it organized as it is; I count for nothing except as a poor proxy. It is she who chose the first members and who continues to do so every day " (From Fr. Leo Meyer - *Inquisitio*, p. 186). This thought can certainly apply to the entire Marianist Family.

"You will fight in the livery of the Immaculate Conception: what happiness for you! Hear the heavenly voice that cries out to you, as it once did to Constantine: In hoc signo vinces!" (L II-381 - 12/05/1825 - to the seminarians of Auch).

## STAGES OF A MARIAN JOURNEY



**PERIGUEUX**  
Cathedral of St Front at Périgueux. This altarpiece (17<sup>o</sup> century) evokes the Annunciation and the Assumption. The young William was introduced to Marian piety by his mother and imbued with the devotion of his time.

## OUR LADY OF VERDELAIS

At about 12, William Joseph traveled 80 km on foot from Mussidan to Notre Dame de Verdelais. He came with his elder brother Jean-Baptiste to give thanks for the healing of a foot injury that occurred during play. The situation had seemed hopeless, but the healing, obtained after the promise to make the pilgrimage, was always regarded as miraculous by Father Chaminade.



## OUR LADY OF THE ROCK AT MUSSIDAN



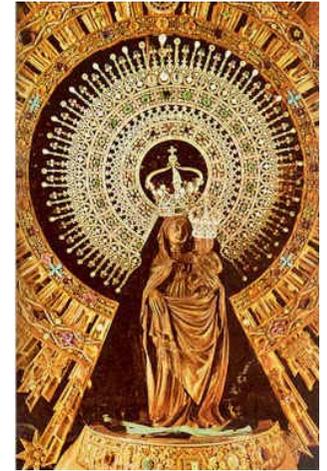
This town pilgrimage shrine of Mussidan being administered by the college-seminary of St. Charles, it was a place of pilgrimage and frequent prayer. In the catechetical handbook of the diocese, William Joseph, while still a child, was invited to "a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, passing no day without a prayer honoring her and especially by imitating one of her virtues." The college itself was animated by a profound Marian spirit, a chapel was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception and a Marian student congregation gathered there.

Having entered the Association of Priests of St. Charles in 1776 and having been ordained in 1785, William Joseph celebrated Mass regularly at Our Lady of the Rock on Saturday. With his brother Jean-Baptiste he was a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary which had its headquarters there. The members "were invited to gather for a moment at the beginning of every undertaking to think about how Jesus Christ or the Blessed Virgin would do what we are about to do, to grow in the knowledge, imitation and love of Mary, to imitate the humility of Jesus and Mary, their poverty, their holiness, obedience, their submission to the divine will, ... their zeal for the salvation of souls and the glory of God, to love Jesus Christ in the Blessed Virgin ..." (Verrier, *Jalons* I, 76/114). The statue, very original, combines two aspects of the Incarnation: the Child Jesus and the dead body of the Christ. Mary holds the one and the other, summarizing her path of obedience at the side of her Son. A beautiful image for us too to contemplate!

## OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR AT SARAGOSSA

After seven years of ministry in Bordeaux in often very dangerous and in any case never easy conditions, came a time of exile. We know how

he arrived October 11, 1797, in Saragossa on the eve of the city's patronal feast of Nuestra Señora del Pilar. The three years he spent there were to exert a decisive influence on his life, further strengthening his Marian devotion. It was a time of retreat, of detachment, of prayer, of sacrifice and of intense preparation, spiritual, ecclesial and missionary.



## IN THE SERVICE OF THE IMMACULATE

More than ever convinced that to Mary are reserved new victories, particularly against "the great heresy of religious indifference," Chaminade puts all his activity under the protection of the Immaculate. Just back in France, in Bordeaux on December 8, 1800, he started the Sodality of young men; on February 2, 1801 they already committed themselves; then March 25, 1801, the first young women: all dates of a Marian journey. It also appears that, by chance, the Founder's first oratory in Bordeaux, on Arnaud Miqueu Street, had been dedicated to the Immaculate (see EF I 157). So quite naturally December 8 became the patronal feast of the lay Sodality, always celebrated with great fervor to this day. William Joseph, faithful to the call received, committed the other emerging branches in the same missionary effort of the alliance with Mary. To his dying day he would tirelessly invite persons to put themselves at the side of the Immaculate Virgin.

**Date of the month to celebrate:** 2 Presentation of the Lord - Beginning of the Sodality (the lay branch of the Family) in Bordeaux with the consecration to Mary of the first 12 members.