

MARCH 2011

"LET IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD" (Lk 1,38)

"JOSEPH DID AS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD HAD COMMANDED HIM" (Mt 1,24)

**With William-Joseph CHAMINADE,
LIKE JOSEPH AND MARY,
say yes to the call of God in our time**



The annunciation – Chapel of the Madeleine

Inspired by the example of Joseph and Mary, William Joseph CHAMINADE SAID YES TO THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS TIME. Let us follow him through a few episodes

1) The need to revitalize the Church:

The Church lived for a long time with the reforms called for by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). William Joseph entered the community of priests of St. Charles, a group which fit precisely into the missionary renewal movement marked by St. Charles Borromeo and, especially in France, by St. Vincent de Paul. St. Charles was a place for the renewal of society through education. The rule of the congregation said: "1. Consider the education of youth as one of the first and principal means of procuring the salvation of souls; 5. Neglect nothing [for that]; 10. Combine teaching with a hidden inner life" (Verrier, *Jalons* I, 71/102).

2) Revolution, abolition of religious orders, and the Terror (persecution).

He then went gradually underground and served the Church by strengthening the laity in their faith. Unable to form the masses, he formed some apostles.

3) Exile in Zaragoza

Deprived of all apostolic activity and responsibility, he devoted himself to prayer and reflection with French priests and bishops among the Christians of Spain. Several books published by priests or bishops reflect the intensity of this reflection. It was a time of spiritual and interior preparation for a new and still unknown mission. It was also a moment of intense Marian experience and of the decisive inspiration of the Foundation. Mlle de Lamourous continued to benefit from his guidance even from Spain.

4) Return to a dechristianized France

Foundation of the *Sodality of the Immaculate* to gather Christians together and to struggle against religious indifference: evangelization through education, the fervor of the group and works of charity. A group that could demonstrate that, today as yesterday, the Gospel can be lived to the fullest extent of the spirit and the letter.

A congregation of young men, young women, adults (men and women); preparatory groups of children: "approbanistes" and postulants. One principle was dear to the missionary vision of Father Chaminade: approach all ages, all genders, all levels of society ...

The sodalists were active in a variety of social and missionary tasks in the diocese. From the beginning, some of them were engaged in schoolwork. It was an alternative to parochial structures that no longer met the new needs of evangelization.

Mary was the inspiration and the patroness of all this missionary effort: she who "fights against all heresies," especially that of indifference, and forms persons into the image of her Son.

5) 1808: abolition of the Sodality.

This was the result of a careless slip by one of the officers. This gave an opportunity to establish secret pious groups: the religious State in the world. Various efforts allowed young people to commit themselves by private vows and to strengthen their Christian identity. Thus developed the breeding ground for future leaders of the Sodality and members of the two religious institutes that were to be born.

6) 1815: restoration of the Sodality.

Reorganization and continuation of the project according to the various individual sectors: (categories of gender, age, social class and secular life or profession of private vows). Great expansion of the Sodality.

7) First candidates for religious life.

Foundation of FMI (1816); of the SM (1817) as "a man who never dies" to support the mission of the Sodality and broaden its activities. The birth was easy, without any break in collaboration, and involved commitment to missionary activities already explored by the lay Sodalists. Education, especially in schools, quickly became one of the primary activities, especially for the Brothers; the goal was "prevention rather than cure." Teaching would be mainly at the primary and secondary levels, later in technical and vocational education. Taking on the management of the first normal school in Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône) opened the prospect of evangelization of all of France by the formation of the teachers through a network of normal schools. This project would be stopped at its first stage.

8) Constant adaptation for the sake of evangelization.

Throughout his life and mission as founder he would remain attentive to the calls of God. Every obstacle was an opportunity for further adaptation and creativity.

WORDS OF FATHER CHAMINADE

Father Chaminade always acted in response to the calls of God, he never wanted to establish his own plans. This is very clear in this presentation he made to the Pope about the entire foundation. This description supports another letter to the Pope (L 1074) in which he requests the approval of the Constitutions of the SM drafted in 1839.

**Bordeaux, September 16, 1838.
To Pope Gregory XVI in Rome.**
(Lettres IV – n. 1076)

SHORT SKETCH OF THE PLAN WHICH THE AUTHOR OF THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND OF THOSE OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY HAD IN FOUNDING THE TWO ORDERS.

Most Holy Father,

(...) how great has been my sorrow for such a long time at the sight of the incredible efforts of impiety, and of modern rationalism and Protestantism, sworn to the ruin of the beautiful edifice of revelation. To erect a powerful dam to withhold the torrent of evil, Heaven has inspired me to solicit from the Holy See at the beginning of this century the letters patent, giving me the title of Missionary Apostolic so as to revive or to re-ignite everywhere the divine torch of faith, while presenting to the astonished world on all sides, imposing masses of Catholic Christians of every age, sex, and condition, who, reunited in special associations, practice our holy religion with neither vanity nor human respect, in all the purity of its dogmas and morals. (...) Furthermore, (...) fervent Sodalties—some of men and others of women—were organized in several cities in France. (...) in a relatively short time, and much good was accomplished.

But (...) this means, however excellent it may be (...) it is not sufficient. Philosophy and Protestantism, favored in France by the ruling power, have taken hold of public opinion and of the schools, attempting to spread in all minds, especially during childhood and youth, this libertinism of thought, still more baneful than that

of the heart from which it is inseparable. Moreover, who could even conceive of all the resulting evils?

I have believed before God (...) that it was necessary to found two new orders, the one of virgins and the other of young men, who would prove to the world by the fact of their good example that Christianity is not an outmoded institution. They would show that the Gospel is as practicable today as it was 1800 years ago; they would challenge the propaganda hidden under a thousand and one disguises; and, they would take over the battleground of the schools by opening classes of all levels and subjects, especially for those classes of people most numerous and most abandoned.

Here you have, Most Holy Father, the design with which Divine Providence has inspired me in the foundation of the Society of Mary and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary more than twenty years ago.

The Society of Mary (...) includes three classes: 1. that of the educated laymen whose principal mission is the spread of the knowledge, love, and practice of our holy religion by means of teaching; 2. that of the members devoted to manual labor, which has for its object the opening of schools of the arts and crafts for young men of the ordinary classes, to defend or dissuade them from the contagion of the world, and to teach them to sanctify their labors by the practice of the Christian virtues; and, finally, 3. that of the priests, which is the soul and the salt of the two others. When this last class will be sufficiently numerous, it will devote itself in the world to the exercise of all the functions of the holy ministry. It is charged with the direction of the Society of Mary and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary. The Order of Virgins, Most Holy Father, which has taken the name of Institute of the Daughters of Mary, was founded in 1816 in the city of Agen, (...). With the means at its command, it works toward the same ends as the Society of Mary. Consequently, it occupies itself with the work of teaching, with works proper to

persons of their sex, with Sodalties, and with works of charity. (...)

The Constitutions of the (...) two orders [are] adapted, as much as possible, to the immense needs of the present century.

These two orders have taken as their distinctive name that of the august Mary. May they make it known, loved, and cherished in all the earth! For I am intimately convinced that Our Lord has reserved to His holy Mother the glory of being the particular support of the Church in these latter days.

Do not consider, Most Holy Father, [my] personal unworthiness (...); but consider the holy Name of Mary under the auspices of which [I] presents [myself] before your throne and which constitutes all [my] glory and all [my] strength!

William Joseph Chaminade
Superior General of the Society of Mary

SAINT JOSEPH, PROTECTOR AND MODEL

"The Archbishop gave me the feast of St. Joseph as secondary patron of the Sodality," March 7, 1805. (EP1 - 59-172)

"I have just said Mass. I have put all into the hands of St. Joseph, of him who is gifted with such a high degree of supernatural prudence. I have placed into his hands persons as well as things—you especially, so that by his mediation you may no longer act by yourself nor for yourself and that you may seek the very works of God, but only for God and in the manner he asks them to be done. We are doubtless the children of Mary, and this is our glory and our consolation; but we are also the adopted sons of St. Joseph, and this is no small reason for the great confidence we have in him. (L-674 III - March 19, 1833 - Fr. Lalanne)

Dates of the month to celebrate: 9 : Start of Lent : to convert ourselves so as to better respond to the mission – **19** :the Yes of Saint Joseph – **25** the Yes of Mary (Annunciation)