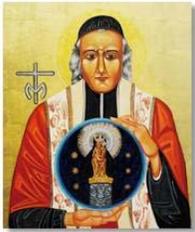


JUNE 2011

## With William Joseph CHAMINADE, A MARIAN AND MISSIONARY CHURCH



Father Chaminade was not a theologian by profession. He was a man of action, a pastor of souls. Even if he did not specifically articulate a Mariology or an ecclesiology, he certainly had definite ideas about church, intimately linked

to his ideas about Mary. These were the fruit of his Marian and ecclesial experience of more than forty years. Through that experience, Chaminade saw the Church in the light of Mary, but Mary herself seemed to him also linked to the mystery of Christ and the Church.

1) The veneration of and devotion to Mary, or better, **the presence of Mary in the worship of the Church** actively involved people in church life. Above all, it oriented them towards Christ and towards working in the service of the Kingdom. Devotion to Mary is, therefore, a sign of the times through which the Holy Spirit speaks to the Church.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is everywhere awakening sentiments of the most tender devotion to his Immaculate Spouse; the faithful show themselves eager to render her the special and distinguished worship called for by her supreme dignity as Mother of God. Her Immaculate Conception above all is the object of a very particular veneration.... But what has never before been seen, at least in a manner so striking, is the fervor, the noble emulation now manifested by youth, as it consecrates itself to the service of the most pure Mary. This is a very moving sight indeed for all sensitive Christian souls!"* (Marian Writings 2, 388).

2) **The presence of Mary in the Church has always been maternal:** She is the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, insofar as we are one with Jesus. That is the ecclesial reality of the Body of Christ. Mary and the Spirit form the believer into the likeness of Jesus. In the maternal action of Mary in the history of the Church, believers experience in a concrete way what salvation signifies, in contrast to the forces of evil.

*"All that Mary bears in her womb can only be Jesus Christ himself, or can live only with the life of Jesus Christ. Mary, with love beyond imagining, bears us always in her chaste womb as her little children, until the time when she, having formed in us the first traits of her Son, brings us forth as she also did him. Mary keeps saying these beautiful words of St. Paul: ' My children, I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, till Christ is formed in you' (Gal 4: 19).*

*"Let the religious who professes to be the Son of Mary never cease to contemplate the life of Jesus Christ; let him compare it with his own. He will see whether he really enters into the views and sentiments of his Mother and Queen. Consider in what place and at what time Mary gave birth to her adorable Son!"* (MW 2, 659-660).



*"Mary... has always been for the militant Church a most tender Mother. The bosom of her mercy was always accessible to it, so that all might be able to share abundantly in the fullness of her graces. In her the captive found freedom; the sick, health; the afflicted, consolation; the sinner, pardon; the just, grace; the angels, joy; and even the adorable Trinity itself, glory" (MW 2, 389).*

3) *In that struggle, which has taken place all throughout the history of salvation, and*

*throughout the history of the Church, Mary needs our help. It is right there that Father Chaminade saw the place of the mission of the Marianist Family. We collaborate with the Church, with Mary and with Christ in the building up of the Kingdom. We are all missionaries in a missionary Church*

*"All ages of the Church are marked by the battles and glorious triumphs of the august Mary. Ever since the Lord declared enmity between her and the serpent (Gen 3:15), she has constantly overcome the world and hell. All heresies, the Church tells us, have bowed their heads before the most holy Virgin, and little by little she has reduced them to the silence of nothingness.*

*Today the dominant great heresy is religious indifference, which is fattening souls into the dullness of egotism and the slump of the passions....*

*That picture, only too true of our times, is far from discouraging us. Mary's power has not been diminished. We firmly believe that she will overcome this heresy like all the others, because she is, today as in the past, the Woman par excellence, that Woman promised for crushing the head of the serpent; and Jesus Christ, in never addressing her except by this great name [of Woman], teaches us that she the hope, the joy, the life of the Church and the terror of hell. To her, therefore, in our days is reserved a great victory; to her belongs the glory of saving the faith from the shipwreck by which it is menaced among us.*

*We have understood this purpose of Heaven, my respected Son, and we have hastened to offer to Mary our feeble services, in order to work under her orders and to fight at her side. We have enrolled under her banner, as her soldiers and ministers, and we have committed ourselves by a special vow, that of Stability, to assist her with all our strength, even to the end of our lives, in her noble struggle against hell. And just as a justly celebrated Order has taken*

the name and standard of Jesus Christ, we have taken the Name and the standard of Mary, ready to fly wherever she calls us, **to spread devotion to her, and thereby the Kingdom of God in souls**" (L V-1163 – August 24, 1839).



Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Convinced that our proper mission, in spite of our weakness, is to practice towards our neighbor all the works of zeal and of mercy, we embrace, therefore, all the means of preserving and healing him from the contagion of evil, under the general rubric of teaching Christian morals, and in that spirit we make it the object of a specific vow" (L V-1163 – August 24, 1839).

"Our work is great, it is magnificent. If it is universal, it is because we are the **missionaries of Mary** who has told us: "Do whatever he tells you!" Yes, we are all missionaries. To each one of us the most Blessed Virgin has confided a mandate to work at the salvation of our brothers in the world..." (L V-1163 – August 24, 1839).

#### 4) The attitude with which the believer must live after the example of Mary is faith.

We must accept the Word, meditate upon it, announce it and incarnate it into our world.

"Do whatever he tells you, that is, whatever he asks you to do; don't reason it out, do I, even if it appears unreasonable. It is as if she had said: put your faith in him. So! The very same words are addressed to us who are her children. Do, whatever my Son tells you, she says. But how can Jesus Christ speak to you? Through

faith. Listen to faith, call on faith for help and put its teachings into practice. We will then be doing what Jesus tells us. The spirit of the Institute of Mary is a spirit of faith. We must go to God by faith" (MW 2, 833-834).

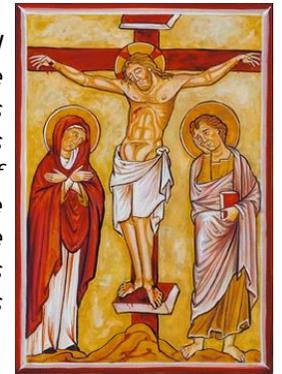
"Your love for Mary, the Mother of God, seems to me to be ever growing, and I bless the Lord for it. It is Jesus Christ who inspires this love in you, or rather who, little by little, and in accordance with the degree of your fidelity, inspires in you the love which he himself has for his holy Mother. His love for her is eternal, resulting from his eternal plan for the Incarnation.

"The accomplishment of this great mystery filled his sacred Humanity with that eternal love he always had for her. What I have been admiring for some time now, and for too short a time, is the fact that Mary became associated at the moment of the Incarnation to the eternal fecundity of the Father, by her vivid faith animated by an inconceivably great love, and she gave birth to that humanity in which her adorable Son clothed himself. In like manner, my dear Son, it is faith that causes us to conceive Jesus Christ within ourselves: So that Christ may live in your hearts through faith (Ep 3:17).... He gave power to become children of God (Jn 1:12). All the treasures of divinity in Mary are traceable to the faith which animated her Son [sic]; she became a fullness of graces, a source of life. Just as Mary by her faith conceived Jesus Christ in the natural order, so in a very real sense we have the power to conceive him in the supernatural order by faith. I only say this, my dear Son, to stir up your trust in Mary, and the love which is the soul of that trust" (L V-1271 = MW 2, 115-116).

#### 5) Mary is the model of the disciple who follows Christ all the way to Calvary.

"I will go to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense' (Sg 4:6). Let others hasten to climb Mt. Thabor, let them repeat after St.

Peter: 'it is wonderful for us to be here' (Mt 17:4). I choose the mountain of myrrh, Calvary (Jn 19:25-27), and I am impelled to do so by the example of Mary. It is she, that true spouse of Jesus Christ, who said: I shall go, etc. I wish to follow her example. I will climb that mountain that is more terrible than Mount Sinai and I will give myself up to sorrow and disgrace. Who would hesitate to do this after seeing the choice made by Mary, who will henceforth be known as the Mother of Sorrows, the Queen of Martyrs? In a word, Mary seeks out the sword of sorrow that will pierce her beautiful soul on Calvary. She does so as coredemprix. Jesus Christ suffers for all men; but they must receive the application of his merits.... Mary represents the Church. As Mother of the Christians to whom she gives birth at the foot of the cross, and whom Jesus Christ in fact constituted as such by his testament" (MW 1, 214).



This theme is one of great currency in Marianist reflections. **To deepen it:** Manuel Cortés, SM: <http://marianist.org/PDFs/spa/circulars/MCCircular1-Sp.pdf> <http://marianist.org/PDFs/spa/circulars/MCCircular2-Sp.pdf> Annick Robez-Masson, FMI: <http://www.mundomarianista.org/vivre-en-eglise-a-la-maniere-de-marie/>

#### For your reflection:

1. Recall a little story about the presence of Mary in your life.
2. How does the figure of Mary help you to feel an active member of the Church?
3. What aspects of the person of Mary do you find most attractive?
4. How do you see the mission with Mary?

**Dates of the month to celebrate: 2-12:** Preparation for Pentecost in the Marianist Family: in expectation of the Holy Spirit like Mary and the Apostles

Lorenzo Amigo, sm