

2011 11 – A NATION OF SAINTS Meditation and Prayer

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| 1 November: All Saints | November 1804: Father Chaminade named titular of the Madeleine | Animator of a Nation of Saints “all ages, all sexes all conditions” Signs of holiness of Fr. Chaminade he lived holiness, he was animator of a people of saints; he calls us to holiness | The founders | FMI Denise Pollon (Brazil) |
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BE PERFECT AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT (Mt 5:48)

Let us begin with the experience of Christ who shares fully in the holiness of the Father. He it is who radiates, diffuses, this holiness; in him, all humanity is made holy.

The sacraments transmit the holiness of Christ to the Church, leading individuals into the life of God. It is baptism which renders us effectively children of God. By baptism we pledge ourselves to walk toward holiness while in this world.

What, in reality, does “holiness” mean? What does it mean to “be holy” in today’s world?

We might say that it means to “be like God.” Understanding what holiness is is essential for understanding the meaning of our life -- which should be based more on “being” than on “doing,” since we are called to participate in the very being of God (see Freeman).

At the 1818 retreat, Father Chaminade asked his disciples: In what does “being holy” consist? In having the required virtues. Yes, but also to do away with our imperfections, conquering them by the integrity of our life. God calls us; he has chosen us to be holy, to reach a high degree of holiness. But the holiness to which God calls us is not only for ourselves; it is also for the edification of the world. Our example must lead to a search for the good (see *The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 5, doc. 24, [8]. “We must give the testimony of a people of saints” (Chaminade letter no. 388).

After the Revolution, Father Chaminade sought to produce a nation of saints in Bordeaux. He attracted a number of sodalists who, increasing in number, gathered in the chapel of the Madeleine to receive nourishment from his words and to be united in prayer.

In his conferences to the sodalists, Father Chaminade called this laity to the highest degree of holiness, even to encouraging them to practice the evangelical counsels. For this purpose, he thought it especially important to develop the spirit of faith and of prayer, and to promote apostolic zeal and fraternal charity. He communicated to them an apostolic filial piety toward the Virgin Mary.

The sodalists were invited to share in an eight-day retreat before the feast of the Immaculate Conception. On the vigil of that day they solemnly renewed their baptismal promises as well as their alliance with Mary.

All these elements were a supporting force in those days. They can also be such for us in our own life in the midst of our world.

Along this road toward holiness we can find support, for example, in the holy persons we know. Let us recall how our martyrs manifested virtue: humility, generosity, a life given over to

the Kingdom for love of Jesus Christ and of Mary, the attention and service given to the most needy. They died because of the gospel and as Marianists. Reaching this holiness is a life-long daily affair. We have an illustration in Sabino Ayastuy. As a souvenir of his final profession he had printed images on which he put two phrases in Latin: "This is the will of God: your sanctification" (1Thess 4:3), and another, expressing his desire to live and to die at the feet of the most blessed Mother, Mary (see Salaverri, pp. 168 and 232).

Holiness engages both conscience and will. In order to move toward it, let us use mental prayer and the life of faith; let us be open to receiving the gifts and fruits of the Spirit (Ep 5:22-23{??}) through whom all holiness comes. This all takes place imperceptibly: we are not holy today, but, little by little, we can become holy.

Jesus gives us strength and motivation to march toward holiness. Let us love Christ, let us confide ourselves to him, let us remain faithful to him.

He has said to us: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The fruit spoken of in this parable is the holiness of a life rendered fruitful through union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are united with his mysteries; we keep his commandments. The Lord himself comes to us bringing the love of the Father, and, through us, diffuses this love to our sisters and brothers. His person, thanks to the Spirit, becomes for us the living norm of all our actions: "My commandment is this: Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2074).

Let us be careful not to think that holiness consists only in conforming to religious or moral norms. One way for us to grasp this would be to think of people whom we know who are holy, though, perhaps, not in the way we might imagine. They may be good or pleasant persons, but it is even more important that, when we are with them, we find ourselves placed before "a greater presence." That is, that we feel ourselves present to them and to God, that we seek less to see them than to look toward God together with them.

TIME FOR A REFLECTION:

Think of holy persons whom you know.
Think of what is holy in you, some sign of holiness.

ELEMENTS OF PRAYER -- PERSONAL TIME

METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER OF FAITH AND OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

(see *The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 6, doc. 80)

- 1 -- Seek absolute silence: body, words, imagination, passions, mind, signs.
- 2 -- Awareness of the presence of God.
Welcome the presence of God.
Let him gaze upon you.
Let yourself be enveloped, absorbed by the presence of God.
3. -- Remain in the presence of God; develop the habit of the presence of God.
Reserve some time during the day to reawaken the awareness of this presence.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A CELEBRATION

Beginning: invocation of the Spirit.

Reading of a text: "The Holy Spirit acting with Mary." (see Bichelberger, pp. 109-110).

In a prayerful atmosphere, share thoughts, insights, and the strength these writings inspire in us.

Pray Psalm 93 (92) and turn easily to prayers of petition.

Symbols and material means:

Light, candles, bible

Water -- reminder of the baptismal promises and the birth to the life of God.

Pictures of the founders -- inspirers of the charism, helping us to move forward toward holiness.

Our Marianist martyrs -- examples of committed lives, for the kingdom.

Various chants -- chosen for the celebration.

Personal objects -- chosen to express a communitarian commitment by means of an object.

Sources:

- Barbadillo, Manuel, *Ils persévéraient dans la prière: pensées du Bienheureux Guillaume- Joseph Chaminade*.
- Bichelberger, Roger, *Prier 15 jours avec Chaminade, fondateur de la Famille Marianiste*, Nouvelle Cité, 2000.
- *Catéchisme de l'Eglise Catholique*.
- *(The) Chaminade Legacy*, NACMS publications.
- Freeman, Laurence, "Eyes of the heart: meditation on Christian tradition" (in Portuguese).
- Salaverri, José Maria, *Eté 1936, Miguel Léibar et ses compagnons marianistes martyrs*.

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Under the influence of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit working with Mary.

Holiness, according to Chaminade, is both “the work of God and the work of humans.” As J. B. Armbruster puts it, it results from a divine-human cooperation. Chaminade makes clear Mary’s role: it is both on the side of the Holy Spirit with whom she cooperates, and on the side of Christians of which she is one.

Though the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, the body of Christ, and though he maintains its unity, he is also the sanctifier and the vivifier of each baptized person: “Each Christian,” Chaminade writes, “receives at baptism the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Christian is, so to say, conceived by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is this Spirit which will make Christians grow to the age of the perfect person, even to complete conformity with Jesus Christ” (see *The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 7, doc. 22, [35]). The Spirit, therefore, is actively present at the conception, the birth, and all the grow of Christians. It is up to us to know how to correspond, how best to cooperate with his work within each of us. And there is no better way than with the prayer: “Come, Holy Spirit, and enkindle in us the fire of your love.”

As for Mary, she can do nothing without the Spirit who has taken her under his shadow. But, with him, she can do all things. Chaminade writes: Like Jesus, we, born of Mary through the Holy Spirit, “have been conceived in Mary and we are to be born in Mary and be formed by Mary to the resemblance of Jesus Christ. Let us be, with Jesus, an other Jesus, son of Mary” (see *The Chaminade Legacy*, vol. 7, doc. 22, [35]). And so, Mary will, in a certain sense, provide for the religious education of each of her children. That is a subject of which Chaminade never tires. We might then say, with him, that Christian holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit in union with Mary; such holiness is equally the work of humans to the extent that each remains docile to the Spirit.

See: R. Bichelberger, *Prier 15 jours ...*, pp. 110-111.