

**Relations Between
the Institute of the Daughters of Mary
and
the Society of Mary**

Part III

**During the Generalate
of Father Caillet**

Relations Between the SM and the FMI
From the *Revue Marianiste Internationale*
Part I, #7: pp. 21-17, Apr. 1984—Father Chaminade
Part II, #8: pp. 6-13, Oct. 1987—Father Chaminade
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{notes from the translator
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Institutional Relations

Daughters of Mary—Society of Mary

Part III: 1845-1950

The evolution of relationships between the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary during the Generalate of Father Chaminade has been presented in nos. 7 and 8 of the *Revue Marianiste Internationale*. The present study focuses on the situation during the Generalate of Father Caillet. It shows how the Daughters of Mary, faithful to the Founder until his death, rallied to Father Caillet as Ecclesiastical Superior¹ when, in December 1845, Rome had recognized the validity of his election as Father General of the Society of Mary.

Mother Saint Vincent de Labastide's circular letter then invited the Sisters to recognize Father Caillet as their new Ecclesiastical Superior:

My dear daughters, you will hasten in all confidence to this good superior because in him will be the light, in him will be the grace, in him already for all of us is a tender affection directed by the burning charity of Jesus Christ and by his thirst for our perfection.

Father Caillet and His Functions as Ecclesiastical Superior

On the side of Mother Saint Vincent, the desire to see good relations established is evident, and one cannot doubt the desire of Father Caillet to fulfill his mission conscientiously.

The minutes of the council meetings and the annals of the Daughters of Mary witness to the relationships that existed between the two institutes and on the manner in which, at that époque, the mission of the Ecclesiastical Superior was carried out. Here are some examples gleaned from the archives.

The minutes from 1846 report that “as a result of the weakening health of Mother Saint Vincent and of the poorness of relationships between the houses and the Assistants General, the Ecclesiastical Superior reformed the council so as to give the Mother General² more efficient help.” Mother Marie Joseph de Casteras has been named Assistant for Zeal.”

The General Chapter of 1847, convoked to elect the Mother General and her council, was held under the presidency of Father Caillet. At the end of the closing session, September 20, “the Ecclesiastical Superior invited the capitulants to give him in writing the observations which they might want to make in general, touching on reforms to be introduced and particular regulations to be drawn up,” and he added, “care will be taken to examine them and to submit them, if suitable, to a particular assembly which will take place on a day and hour to be determined.”

¹ {The French uses *Supérieur Spiritual*.}

² {The distinction between female and male superiors is clear in the French. This translation uses “Mother General” and “Father General.”}}

In another meeting of the council, held on September 24 in the presence of Father Caillet, it was decided: “not to overburden the General Administration, the minutes to be given to the Ecclesiastical Superior shall be of every trimester, and no longer monthly,” as has been agreed to and written in an ordinance of April 22, 1840, published by Mother Saint Vincent and countersigned by Father Chaminade. Those minutes consisted of a detailed report on the status of the material and of the personnel of the various cloistered and non-cloistered (Third Order) houses.

The lessening of the burden that thereby took place did not modify the procedure prescribed in the Constitutions and according to which “all the deliberations of the Mother General and her council are inscribed as minutes on a paginated register signed at the beginning and at the end by the Ecclesiastical Superior. Extracts of the minutes are sent without delay to the Ecclesiastical Superior whenever they consult him or he asks for it.”³

In fact, the registers of the councils frequently bear the signature of Father Caillet and the dates and places of the transactions.

During the absence of Father Caillet, who was in Rome during the spring of 1865, the minutes bore the signature of Father Chevaux, First Assistant. For example, under the date of June 7, 1865, we read: “Having seen the minutes of June 3, in the absence of Father Caillet and with his authorization, I approve the admission to the postulate of the Mesdemoiselles X and Y.”

From July to October 1865 the minutes were signed eight times by Father Caillet. The last signature appears on November 9, 1865, but that does not mean that the sending of the minutes had been interrupted.

Requests for admission to vows were addressed to the Ecclesiastical Superior, who invited the members of the General Administration to send him their reasons for or against. The vows were professed into the hands of the Ecclesiastical Superior. It also was he who received the promises of the Assistants General.

The visitations of the Mother General to the communities were made only with the approbation of the Ecclesiastical Superior. Obediences to the Sisters, even for a temporary change (the vacations) were submitted to the Ecclesiastical Superior. In the archives there is a letter of the superior at Ajaccio asking the Mother General to send some Sisters to Vico or to Olmetto during the summer vacation period. That letter carries the agreement of Mother M. Joseph de Casteras, and the approbation of Father Caillet.

Financial matters were submitted to the Ecclesiastical Superior who gave authorizations for undertaking works and reparations. When the Sisters had to carry out some important immovable operations, they had recourse to their Brothers. That was the case for Acey when negotiations were undertaken with a view to selling the abbey to the Benedictines. Brother Clouzet, Steward General of the Society of Mary, was charged with the affair.⁴

³ {It should be remembered that the motherhouses were some 60 miles apart and that postal service and transport were difficult at best.}

⁴ The Sisters left Acey to go to Lons-le-Saunier in 1853, after 13 years of presence there.

The blessing of the chapel at Agen, March 15, 1860, was done by M. Bordes, vicar-general of Agen, in the presence of Father Caillet.

Shortly before the death of Mother Saint Vincent on September 5, 1856, Father Caillet changed the council again. The General Chapter was held under the presidency of the Ecclesiastical Superior. It was he who, in a circular, announced to the communities the results of the elections. Mother M. Joseph de Casteras, new Mother Superior, was invited to add some words at the end of that circular.

Revision of the Constitutions Request for Approbation by Rome

The Institute of Mary, Brothers and Sisters, had been honored by a decree of praise in 1839. But that did not constitute a canonical approbation. The superiors decided to undertake the steps needed to obtain that official recognition of the Holy See.

The annals of the Daughters of Mary relate the visit which Father Caillet made to Agen in 1862. He informed the Sisters of his intention to go to Rome to ask for the canonical approbation of the two Institutes, and he invited the members of the General Administration to examine the Constitutions to see whether some modification might be needed.

The proposal was welcomed with interest, for experience had shown that several points were the source of great difficulties in practice; moreover, in the opinion of some competent persons, there were articles that did not seem to be in accord with Roman legislation.

Father Caillet knew that modifications would be asked for by the Sisters because, already, on his invitation, some remarks had been addressed to him after the Chapter of 1847. Had not he himself, after the closing session of the Chapter of 1856, spoken "of claims concerning certain points of the rule that seemed to require some clarification." He had then announced his intention of examining those claims and giving some clarifications suitable for tranquillizing consciences and, if needed, presenting the requests to the Holy See. He awoke the hope of the capitulants who had stood up as a sign of agreement.

We find in the archives of the Daughters of Mary the statement of some "points that pose problems."

a) This included the exercise of certain offices. In the communities, the Office of Zeal places the direction of the religious under the authority of the First Assistant. That does not favor the unity of the community whose animation naturally belongs to the Superior.

The mistress of novices also depended on the First Assistant. It was found that this role was sufficiently important that it should be under the direct responsibility of the Superior. (At that time, there were several novitiates.)

b) The rules of enclosure, conceived of by the Founder to facilitate the apostolate while leaving to the Sisters the advantage of perpetual vows, became very hard to observe in practice. Such as they were applied, they were incompatible with the works.

c) The responsibility of the Father General as Ecclesiastical Superior also posed serious problems. That question, however, had not been raised in 1856. "A more favorable moment was awaited to do that; for example, the change of the Ecclesiastical Superior," as we read in the annals.

After the visit of Father Caillet in 1862, the General Council set to work. The superiors were summoned from Condom and Tonneins to obtain a broader opinion, and remarks were prepared to be sent to Father Caillet.

He had proposed a revision, but he distrusted any innovation and carried his fears so far as to refuse totally the modifications proposed, and he "showed a great unhappiness."

The Sisters were upset. But, as some points were for them a matter of conscience, they sought to enlighten themselves and sent their notes to Bishop de Vézins of Agen who found the remarks very justified.

The Daughters of Mary were presented with a difficult problem: the revision of their Constitutions and the encouragement of their bishop...or obedience to their Ecclesiastical Superior.

A General Chapter in 1864?

Appeal to the Bishop

Those difficulties did not appear in the correspondence of Mother M. Joseph de Casteras to her Sisters. However, we do find some useful information, including the decision of Father Caillet to convoke a General Chapter to see to the revision of the Constitutions. An example: A letter of May 16, 1864, communicates Father Caillet's intention to go to Rome in the next springtime "to ask for the approbation of our rules at the same time as those of the Society of Mary and of the Miséricorde of Mlle de Lamourous, asking the grace of God for that enterprise through our prayer." Mother M. Joseph continues: "I must add that our Ecclesiastical Superior intends to convoke a General Chapter to treat this grave matter. We will send you the obediences when the moment has arrived, or we will seek your vote in writing. We shall conform to the decision of the Ecclesiastical Superior."

Another letter of September 3: "We are arriving at a very important moment for the Institute.... It is that in which the General Chapter will be opened, to prepare our request of the Holy Father for the definitive approbation of our rule.... Next October 15 is the date foreseen for the opening of the Chapter. We come to encourage you again to unite yourselves in spirit and in heart to implore God's assistance so that his Spirit may guide and regulate everything."

The situation was delicate. The General Council had intended to present to the Chapter the comments made on the Constitutions; it recognized the opposition of Father Caillet and knew

that the greater part of the capitulants ignored the differences existing between the General Administration and the Ecclesiastical Superior. It wished to avoid having those differences explode in full light during the Chapter. It also feared the lack of freedom of the Sisters if Father Caillet was present.

Mother M. Joseph had the idea of communicating her difficulty to Mgr de Ladoue,⁵ former vicar-general of Auch; she was well aware of his goodwill toward the Daughters of Mary. It seems he responded to the Mother General: "The notion of a Chapter frightens me. But I see no other way of extracting yourself from your present situation than to ask the bishop to preside over the General Chapter." That was what was done, and the bishop accepted.

No trace of this procedure appears in the minutes of the Council, and we can understand why. That plan would not be accepted by the Ecclesiastical Superior.

Immediate Preparation for the Chapter

During a session of the Council held on September 9, 1864, the remarks to be made on the Constitutions were reviewed. In the minutes we read: "The moment of the General Chapter is close, and the Ecclesiastical Superior, having been invited to prepare the notes which are to be presented to Rome relative to our Constitutions, the Council was gathered to consider this work which is to be submitted to the consent of the General Chapter before being sent off to Rome."

Experience had led our Mother Superior, Mother Saint Vincent, to feel deeply that some of the articles, especially those on cloister, needed to be revised, and she expressed her desire to our Ecclesiastical Superior.

That same desire was expressed by all the capitulants of the Chapter of 1856. The Council, therefore, was only carrying out this twofold desire in pointing out the articles which seemed to it to require revision. (There follows a list of the articles in question.)

The minutes also report the hope expressed by the Council to see the principle of the establishment of Mothers Provincial entered into the Constitutions, especially for the isolated houses.⁶

Another session of the Council was held on October 8 with the participation of the superiors of Arbois, Ajaccio, Lons-le-Saunier, and the Third Order. The same questions were considered. Moreover, the Sisters declared their willingness to obey Rome. It was added that the collection of notes relative to the Constitutions were to be joined to the minutes, and in three copies: one for the Ecclesiastical Superior, one for the bishop, and the third for the archives. What was contained in these notes for the revision of the Constitutions?

⁵ Former vicar-general of Auch, future bishop at Nevers.

⁶ In fact, without being in the Constitutions, the establishment of the provincialate had been adopted in the session of the council held in the presence of Father Caillet on October 14, 1861. The measure had been rendered effective for Corsica from that moment.

After the review of the observations concerning the Office of Zeal, cloister, and various other less important matters which do not enter into the subject of this study, we read: "we ask that a distinction be made between:

1. the matters whose responsibility may be left to the General Administration and
2. those which have to be sanctioned by the Ecclesiastical Superior.

We send a copy of all the minutes to the Ecclesiastical Superior at the risk of burdening him and despite the delay which results for any action. An explanation of the limits and the extent which the General Administration must have would establish calm and would enlighten.... It would seem to us that whatever has to do with personnel should be left to the initiative of the General Administration, except for cases of excommunication of persons admitted to profession, even temporary.... It also seems to us that the moving of subjects between houses could, without inconvenience, be left to the initiative of the General Administration which knows the personnel of the Institute. Besides, this is not a request which we make; it is a mere idea which we express in order to receive enlightenment.

Signed by the members of the council and the superiors of Agen, Arbois, Ajaccio, Lons-le-Saunier, and by the Third Order.

Father Caillet's view—The Chapter of 1864 Annulled

On May 5, 1866, Father Caillet wrote to the Holy Father recalling these events. After having evoked the role that fell to him as Ecclesiastical Superior because of the Constitutions, and the manner in which he was able to fulfill his mission easily, Father Caillet explained:

It was only in October 1864 that a difficulty was raised by the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary, and this is how. The Ecclesiastical Superior proposed the preparation of the ways of seeking from the Holy See the canonical approbation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary at the same time as that of the Society of Mary. He asked the Mother Superior to make all preparations for the holding of a General Chapter where they would discuss and determine the modifications to the Constitutions which they would judge proper to submit to the sanction of the Holy See.

The Mother General drew up, almost alone, a long list of modifications to be introduced into the Constitutions. A good number of those modifications, rather unimportant, it is true, did not present any real advantages; but several others gravely changed the primitive spirit of the Institute. The point on which the most dangerous modifications were presented were those relative to the cloister.

The Ecclesiastical Superior made some observations on these modifications, quite numerous and quite important; he indicated in summary those which seemed proper and which altered nothing of the fundamental purpose and spirit of the primitive Constitutions.

Despite those observations, the Mother General passed them over. She took advantage of the fact that a certain number of local superiors had come to the motherhouse some days before the opening of the Chapter, and she had them accept and sign in a report all the modifications listed above, without taking any account of the observations made by the Ecclesiastical Superior. These minutes were in triplicate: one was sent to the bishop of Agen; the second, to the Ecclesiastical Superior; the third, consigned to the Secretariat of the motherhouse. In addition, under the fear that the freedom of the voters would be hampered if the Ecclesiastical Superior had the presidency of the General Chapter, the bishop was asked to preside it himself or through his delegate. The bishop accepted the invitation and designated his vicar-general as president.

The Ecclesiastical Superior thought he should make several observations on the unusual process that they wished to introduce, and on the abnormal and impossible position into which he was being placed. Nothing had been listened to from his side. The bishop based himself on common law to retain the presidency which he had been offered. The Ecclesiastical Superior then declared that he found himself in the necessity of withdrawing without assisting at a Chapter held in that way.

A fortuitous circumstance, though quite grave, led to postponing to another time the holding of this Chapter: the Mother General, either through ignorance or through design, had failed to convoke a certain number of religious who had the right to be present for the Chapter. The bishop realized that that could not be ignored.

That letter also presented another affair of which there will be question later.

What Is There in the Annals on This Matter?

In fact, we find there the report on the visit of Father Caillet to the bishop in October 1864, and that of the disagreement which developed between the two authorities relative to the presidency of the Chapter.

The recital then reports on the visit which the Ecclesiastical Superior made to the community, giving a somewhat different version of the reasons for the annulment of the Chapter:

On the evening (of the visit to the bishop), Father Caillet came to visit the community. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the appeal made to the bishop, called “innovations” the notes which had been submitted to him, and read to the Sisters a conference which he had prepared for the Chapter and in which he recommended that nothing be touched except very lightly in the rules to be modified....

On withdrawing, he said that all would be postponed until 1866, date of the expiration of the mandate of the Mother Superior and her council.

The next day, after Mass, he gathered the community and informed the Sisters of what had been known only to the council and a few superiors. He blamed the general council for its recourse to the bishop.... The poor religious were upset at seeing the discomfort of their Ecclesiastical Superior.... The members of the Council simply listened respectfully and in absolute silence to the blame that was heaped on them. When Father Caillet was finished, the entire community went to its knees to ask his blessing and then retired silently. There remained in the room with Father Caillet only the elderly Sister Dosithée, who had something to discuss with him.

We also read in the annals that the “Assistants General sought to calm the spirits and asked the observance of silence on all that had transpired.”

Perhaps Father Caillet was expecting some apology from the Sisters. In any case, “a few days after that, he took advantage of a minor circumstance to write to Mother Marie Joseph; she answered without making any reference to past events.”

The Mother General must have informed Mgr Ladoue of that event because, in a letter dated 28 October, he wrote to her:

I have learned with great surprise, but without great displeasure, what has happened.... Now you must prepare yourself to inform Rome. Rome has always been, and still is, the support of the weak. Draft a memoir where you expose as clearly as possible and as briefly as possible the relations of your society with the Father General of the Company of Mary, the origin of the present conflict, your hopes, and your desires for the future.... I will try to learn from the nunciature what is the best means of having it reach the Holy Father.

There is no documentation proving that that report was ever drafted or sent.

Visit of Father Caillet to Agen, March 1865

In the spring of 1865, Father Caillet was at Bordeaux. From there he wrote to the Mother General telling her of his surprise at not having received from her any apology. Even before Mother Marie Joseph could reply, another letter arrived announcing the visit of the Ecclesiastical Superior.

In the course of the meeting that he had with the Council, as we read in the annals, “Father Caillet expressed his pain and his surprise at the attitude of the Sisters who did not at all humiliate themselves.”

In a respectful but firm dialog:

they had wished to explain themselves.... Was not the bishop the person most qualified to bring them some light on the questions which were tormenting them?... and had not Father Caillet himself appealed to the bishop in a moment of difficulty with the Founder?... Faced with the firmness and confidence of the members of the council, Father Caillet soften his attitude very much. He took on a fully paternal tone and asked to review again the notes in question. The reading was made for the Council and the Father approved everything.

At the moment he was withdrawing, saying he was about to leave for Rome, the Mother General begged him not to be concerned with the Constitutions because everything had been postponed until October 1866. It was more suitable to wait so as to consider more carefully the improvements to be made.

The Constitutions Sent to Rome

Meanwhile, the Sisters had decided to send their Constitutions to Rome to get an official opinion.

Mgr Ledoue had already written to Mother Marie Joseph on May 6, 1863:

It would be better to send the statutes to Rome such as they are, given that it is under this primitive form that they received the decree of praise. The Congregation charged with the revision will not fail to make the changes it might judge useful.

Learning that Mgr Fillon, bishop of Saint Clause, was about to go to Rome (end of 1863, beginning of 1864?), Mother Marie Joseph sent him a copy of the Constitutions of 1839, praying for him to solicit an official opinion from several members of the Sacred Congregation. Mgr Chaillot, in Rome, accepted that task.

The response was long delayed. On March 27, 1865, Mgr Ladoue wrote to Mother Marie Joseph: "Do not complain about the slowness of Rome; it is a guarantee of serious and impartial examination.... It seems to me strange that you should undertake any work before knowing the thought of Rome."

There follows a word of advice to the Mother: that she become aware herself, in silence, of the needs and necessities created by the circumstances, so as to be aware of them when Rome will have spoken. He promised his collaboration to coordinate everything in concert with the new chaplain and to have it approved by the bishop and then sent on to Rome.

Notice that this letter was written a short time after the visit of Father Caillet referred to above.

Father Caillet at Rome

Father Caillet left for Rome on March 24, 1865; he returned toward the end of the month of June. Mother Marie Joseph recommended his trip to her Sisters in a letter of April 19: "The Father has arrived in Rome in good health...now, let us call down blessings from heaven on his travels." She gave an order to say the *Veni Creator* every day until his return.

The annals hint that Father Caillet must have learned in Rome that he could not be Ecclesiastical Superior as he understood it, but apparently he said nothing about that to the Sisters.

Then there is question of the visit which he made to Agen in the month of August 1865.

He paid a visit to the bishop and presented to him an indult which the latter signed. Then he came to visit the community and told the Sisters that the bishop had signed an indult which confirmed him in his functions as Ecclesiastical Superior.... The members of the council did not understand. They sought information from their bishop who sent a response that there was only question of a simple authorization to be confessor in the house. That response calmed the Sisters.

A few weeks later, alluding to some facts which must have arisen during Father Caillet's visit, Mgr Ladoue wrote to Mother Marie Joseph expressing his regret at the little attention given by the bishop to the community. He said:

It is clear that the trip to Rome has enlightened him (Father Caillet); he no longer presents himself as the habitual delegate of the bishops because even for confessions he is obliged to obtain an indult that must receive the agreement of the bishops.... It is abundantly clear that Father Caillet has no kind of jurisdiction over your communities except that which he receives from the bishop.

What Was that "Indult" Presented to the Bishop?

Article 407 of the Constitutions determined that the authority exercised by the Father General over the Daughters of Mary would be subject to the approbation by the Sovereign Pontiff.

An Ecclesiastical Superior is charged with maintaining among all the personnel the unity of spirit and of activity. Habitual delegate of the bishops who have asked for

communities in their respective dioceses, his delegation, as well as the Constitutions of the Institute, shall be submitted for approbation by the Sovereign Pontiff.

The Constitutions had not yet been approved. Father Caillet, sensing the surfacing of difficulties in the exercise of his mission, had solicited an indult on the occasion of his stay in Rome; he received the indult on July 7, 1865. Composed in Latin, it is found in the archives of the Society of Mary.

Through this indult, “there is accorded to the Father General of the Society of Mary to retain the directive superiority over the Institute of the Daughters of Mary of Agen and the Sisters of the Miséricorde of Bordeaux, with, in addition, the faculty of hearing the confessions of the nuns and other religious women.” All with the permission of the bishop.

The text is clear. Did the elderly and ill bishop sign it without reading it in its entirety as the annals seem to imply? Doubt on the meaning of this document will remain until 1866, both in the mind of Mother Marie Joseph and in that of Mgr de Ladoue who will write to her, on November 15, 1866:

I am certain, without having read it, that the indult obtained by Father Caillet does not confer on him the least authority over you; were it otherwise, you may be sure he would have already sent you a copy. But how come the bishop does not ask for a copy of this document?

General Chapter of 1866 Preparation and Presidency

The book of the Constitutions finally returned from Rome. It was annotated in the margin and all the articles which had to do with the Ecclesiastical Superior were underlined.

The Mother General, helped by some of the Sisters, set to work to undertake a new version, taking into account the notations made by the Roman consulter. Mgr de Laboue came, as he had promised, to spend several days at Agen to help complete the work.

Toward the end of Lent 1866, we read in the annals that Father Caillet came to visit the community. He went to visit the bishop, and, as the time for the Chapter was approaching, he raised the matter of the presidency. No more than in 1864 were they able to come to an agreement.

Then, Bishop de Vézins showed Father Caillet the annotated Constitutions where there was a special remark at the article concerning the presidency of the Chapter. Father Caillet was much surprised, but he did not give in, saying he would himself write to Rome.

We already have mentioned this letter dated May 5, 1866. Referring to the indult of July 7, 1865, and the articles of the Constitutions concerning the Ecclesiastical Superior, the Father General asked the Holy Father whether the bishop of Agen could, according to canon law, take

over the presidency of a General Chapter in which there were Sisters coming from several dioceses.

1. Is it becoming, is it legal, that he preside over the Chapter?
2. If affirmative, what position should the Ecclesiastical Superior take at the approaching Chapter?

Note that this response does not imply that the Ecclesiastical Superior may not be present at the Chapter.

A letter from Rome dated September 11, 1865, and signed by the official, Ferrucci, let it be understood that the bishop had written long before to the Roman authorities on that question. Here is the letter addressed to Mgr Bordes, vicar-general of Agen:

I have received the letter which you did me the honor of sending me on August 30 last. The affair of the presidency of the General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary is still in the hands of the consulter. Because the Congregation does not reveal the name of the consulter to whom the matter has been confided, the person charged with advancing the matter can have no access to him. While waiting, you may assure the bishop that I have made strong requests before the Sacred Congregation, letting them know that the affair in question has dragged on for a long time.

We do not know whether the bishop was in possession of the response at the time of his meeting with Father Caillet in the spring of 1866. In any case, he makes no mention of it, contenting himself with presenting the annotations made to the Constitutions.

General Chapter, September 17-21, 1866

Mother Marie Joseph convoked the Chapter by a letter of July 30, 1866.

Two days before the opening, we read in the annals, the bishop, despite his great age, had held a meeting of the capitulants to speak to them of the modifications to be made to the Constitutions. He shared with them the decision of Rome concerning the presidency of the Chapter. Then he freed that Sisters from their vow of enclosure, while telling them that they should observe enclosure as in the past, the rules of the cloister being included in the vow of obedience as it was said in the annotations of the Constitutions sent by Rome.

The Chapter opened on September 17 under the presidency of Mgr Bordes, delegated by the bishop; he was assisted by the chaplain. Father Caillet was not present.

Present were the delegates from the houses of Ajaccio, Vico, Ile Rousse, Cervione, Olmetto (the district of Corsica), Lons-le-Saunier, Arbois, Agen, Tonneins, Condom, Puymirol, Auch, and Astaffort.

On September 21, the capitulants, before dispersing, wrote to Father Caillet. After having expressed their gratitude “for the benevolent interest that he always has shown the congregation,” they informed him of the visit made by the bishop to the community two days before the Chapter. They also gave an account of the events of this assembly of which several sessions were devoted to the revision of the rules under the direction of Mgr Bordes. Then they gave notice of the results of the election. The letter ends: “All of us strongly ask that a bond of charity may always unite our small congregation to the Society of Mary. As for you, our Father, never will we forget your solicitude and your paternal goodness; be kind enough to receive our thanks a thousand times.”

Follow-Up to the Chapter

On September 26, Father Caillet wrote to Mother Marie Joseph asking her for a report on what had taken place during the Chapter and for a copy of the revised Constitutions. On the advice of the bishop, she did not respond. She had written a few days earlier with the capitulants. Father Caillet addressed the same request to Mgr Bordes. He answered on October 31, making clear the intention of the bishop relative to the Daughters of Mary:

We have not sought to become involved in the affairs of the Daughters of Mary. We have no intention of arrogating the least authority over the houses of the Institute located outside our diocese.... We do not wish to step upon the rights of anyone. I therefore ask you to send me a copy of the indult that you obtained from His Holiness Pius IX. We shall examine it carefully, and we shall conform to it with all the submission of which we should give the example.

If authority over the Institute is vested in you, well, we will withdraw willingly. For my part, I assure you that it would be without any regrets!

[A]s to the project of the Constitutions, I do not have them at my disposition. It is to be sent to Rome. Whatever might be decided by the Sacred Congregation will be accepted, and then they will be sent to you.

Besides, it would have been easy for you to learn about the project; you had only to come to the General Chapter. You absented yourself; that was your choice; you have no reason to complain now!... The Institute is in no danger.

Father Caillet wrote again to Mgr Bordes on October 26, protesting against the claim of the Daughters of Mary:

[T]o withdraw themselves from their obligations by basing themselves on notations made by a consulter of the Sacred Congregation, erasing by a stroke of the pen all that concerns the Ecclesiastical Superior whose authority they misinterpreted even before the Holy See had pronounced itself....

In truth, after the animadversions of 1865, I needed an indult to continue in my functions of Ecclesiastical Superior. But was not that indult, asked for and obtained without any difficulty, been presented to the agreement of the bishop of Agen, and even elsewhere if need be? Can I be accused of some irregularity?

[I] understand, by the above-mentioned letter of September 21 last, and the path taken by our poor Daughters of Mary, that they intend to fire me without any other formality, but with feigned expressions of gratitude.

Mother Marie Joseph must have had some fears about what had just taken place. She must have opened her heart to Mgr de Ladoue, for he wrote to her on October 31, 1866:

[I] hasten to reassure you and to dissipate your fear which, in truth, have no solid foundation....

I consider it incontestable that Father Caillet never received an indult giving him jurisdiction over your community. Rome would never have granted it without consulting you. Had you consented to, or even asked for it, living under the dependency of the Father General of the Brothers of Mary, would not have been permitted. Roman jurisdiction on that point is now decided.

The letter then recalls the Roman decisions taken in 1862 and published in the annals of July-August 1866. From that text it is clear:

- 1) A congregation of religious women of simple vows cannot be affiliated to a congregation of religious priests or have the same Father General.
- 2) The bishop of the diocese in which the motherhouse of the Sisters is located cannot consent to that affiliation nor sign such a contract.

Then the letter continues:

[S]upposing, though impossible, that Father Caillet had obtained such an indult through the approbation of the bishop, and that the bishop had approved that indult—what is to be done? Because the value of the indult is subordinate to the consent of the bishop, the only thing to be done for the moment is to ask Father Caillet (not you, but Mgr Bordes) to

send a copy of his indult so that, should there be cause, the bishop could withdraw his signature.

Mgr Bordes finally must have had in hand the famous indult that Father Caillet sent him; on November 8, 1866, the vicar-general could reply to Father Caillet:

It is true that a consulter of the Sacred Congregation examined the Constitutions and has made the annotations you know.... Now, in one of the observations it is said that Rome does not recognize the Father General, and that the Holy Father, in the indult of which you have sent me a copy, does not grant you the authority requested except with the agreement of the ordinary. This means that in definitive all is *returned to the authority of the ordinary*.

What Conclusions to Draw from This Lengthy Story?

Did the bishop of Agen sign the indult without having read the text in its entirety, pausing only at the ending relative to the power of confessor? Or did he seek, by signing this indult, to avoid the denouement of a crisis which, in fact, was postponed to a year later at the Chapter of September 1866?

We do not know. But it is clear that bishops helped the Daughters of Mary to distance themselves from the directive authority of Father Caillet.

Mgr de Ladoue played an especially important role. From the beginning of difficulties in 1864, he had advised the Mother General to prepare a memorandum to be sent to Rome. On many occasions after that, he recalled the importance of the diocesan authority in pointing out the lack of oversight of the bishop of Agen “which gives an advantage to those who wish to withdraw religious houses from the direction of the ordinaries of the place.” (September 1, 1865). And, again, “it is troublesome that Mgr Bordes is not more accustomed to dealing with such matters and that the bishop is in the impossibility of taking care of them.” (October 31, 1866)

He communicated the thought of Rome “which does not approve the governing of religious women by religious men, and which wishes at all costs to maintain the communities of women under the jurisdiction of bishops. Under the present conditions, that is the only refuge where they can hope for a bit of calm and repose.” (November 15, 1866). He is surprised and even indignant at the fact that the bishop of Agen does not have at hand a copy of the indult in question: “How is it that the bishop does not ask him (Father Caillet) for that document?”

On their side, the bishop of Agen and his vicar-general generally supported and encouraged the Sisters in their desire to revise their Constitutions, against the will of Father Caillet. They {bishop/vicar} appealed directly to Rome on the subject of the presidency of the Chapter of 1866. They involved themselves in the affairs of the Daughters of Mary during the

period of crisis; one set of minutes of the council was signed by Mgr Bordes on September 1866 (having to do with the purchase of a property in the cemetery of Agen).

We must point out that, if the bishop was opposed to the authority of the Father General over the Daughters of Mary, it was to the advantage of the diocesan authority in the person of the ordinary.

The condition of women was such that there was a great submission of the Sisters to the ecclesiastical authorities who considered themselves as the trusted protectors of feminine communities, “the only refuge where they can hope for a bit of calm and repose.”

However, the authority of the ordinary weighed less heavily than dependence on the Ecclesiastical Superior. The latter would not have resisted the test of time and the extension of works, independently of the personalities of the moment: Father Caillet and Mother Marie Joseph de Casteras.

Father Caillet, it would seem, no longer communicated with Mother Marie Joseph, but he did remain in contact with Mgr de Ladoue as is proved by several letters which the latter wrote to the Mother General. During the course of the year 1867, for example, responding to questions concerning the Constitutions, he wrote: “unfortunately the circumstances are not favorable for introducing the essential modifications in a congregation recognized by the government.... besides, we will speak of it with Father Caillet.”

Another letter from Mgr de Ladoue, of the same year, 1867, leads us to understand that no one envisaged a complete break with the Ecclesiastical Superior. Referring to an action in Rome by the bishop concerning the affairs of the Daughters of Mary, Mgr de Ladoue wrote to Mother Marie Joseph:

[I] am pleased with the decision of the bishop; it is your salvation. The response of Rome is not doubtful for me, but the rights of the ordinary will be recognized and very probably the attributions of the Ecclesiastical Superior will be decided in a precise way...it is only after that that you could submit your proposals for modification.

We do not know the response from Rome. With regard to the separation, Mother Stanislas Pernier, Mother General, wrote in 1897:

[I] do not think we asked for a separation, but rather for modifications to the Constitutions on certain points which were too difficult and disturbing even for consciences.... Our Mothers asked nothing of Rome except the revision of the old Constitutions.... The separation was produced by the force of events.”

The installation of the General Administration of the Society of Mary in Paris in 1861 also played a role in favor of the withdrawing of the Daughters of Mary from the authority of Father Caillet. For the first time, in 1862, the Sisters addressed themselves to Jesuits for the retreat at Agen; it was Father Ginhac who came. Mother Marie Joseph met this priest of a

widespread reputation; he became her advisor and preached the retreats for the Daughters of Mary for thirty years.

Restoration of Relations with the Society of Mary

The separation was short-lived, for with the Generalate of Father Simler, elected in 1876, relations were renewed between the two General Administrations. It is probable that ties of friendship had always existed between the Brothers and the Sisters at the community level. The annals note the visit made at Agen in 1873 by the superior of the *collège* at Besançon.

In 1886, Father Simler sent Mother M. Sophie Beaud, Mother Superior (1874-1888), his small book, *Guide for the Man of Goodwill in the Exercise of Mental Prayer*.

Mother Stanislas Pernier, elected Mother General in September 1888, hastened to send Father Simler the Constitutions which had been definitively approved on July 31 of that same year. In his response, Father Simler was able to write: "I read the small volume in its entirety...I found there the spirit of our primitive and common institution."

Mother Stanislas had expressed to Father Simler the desire for closer relations, like those which existed at the origins. After some research in the archives, Father Simler had arrived at the conclusion that the separation had been consecrated by the rescript of July 7, 1866, concerning the presidency of the Chapter. He thought that Rome would not reverse that decision which, at that time, moved in favor of the desires of the bishop and of the Daughters of Mary (letter of Father Simler to Mother Stanislas, January 9, 1897).

In 1904, Mother Mechtilde, superior of the house at Sucy, had consulted the bishop of Versailles on that question. In a letter which she wrote on December 18, 1904, to the Mother General, then in Spain, she gave an account of that visit. Apparently the bishop had said that "Rome would never allow the Sisters to be under the spiritual or temporal jurisdiction of the Father General of the Society of Mary.... Rome makes no exceptions on that point."

Matters rested there. But in the absence of official bonds between the two institutes, officious bonds did take place and developed all along the succeeding generations: retreats preached by Marianist priests, exchanges of circulars, services mutually rendered. The annals witness to the family spirit lived at various places and between members of the two families of Father Chaminade and of Mother de Trenquelléon.

Relations took on a particularly important move with Mother M. Adèle Guy and the Generalates of Father Juergens and Hoffer. It was in the years 1945 to 1950 that our Constitutions took on a renewed breath of Marianist spirituality especially with the vow of stability. It was then that the Daughters of Mary undertook (often at the call of their Brothers) foundations outside Europe.