

Principles of Direction of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade by Paul Landolfi, SM

[*Editor's Note:* This paper is largely my prayerful interpretation of *Marianist Direction volume 3* (English) *Document K*, pp. 145-55. It was begun at a Marianist Studies Summer Program in the early 1970s. Father Mike Lisbeth, SM, added some reflections from the Scriptures to my brief descriptions to serve as points for meditation on the principles. Our Siena Marianists have taken this as the subject of their meetings this past year. — Paul J. Landolfi, SM]

Blessed Father Chaminade was evidently searching for something. Why would he make 23 attempts to formulate a Manual of Direction to give to his leaders? What drove him with such persistence? To understand, we must first consider the background of Chaminade's work of predilection, the Sodality of Bordeaux.

Part 1 Background The Sodality of Bordeaux

In reading *Jalons* by Father Joseph Verrier, SM, one gets the definite impression that Father Chaminade had a very broad view of his mission. When Blessed Chaminade returned to France from Saragossa, he immediately began recruiting. He asked two young men who were coming to Mass to see him and to bring two others; then the four recruited four more. In a year the number had increased from a few to one hundred. Recruitment in other words was constant and universal.

But his recruitment was more than gathering numbers. He looked for persons who had a basic desire to live the Christian life, who wanted to join the Sodality he was forming, and who wanted to live by the promises they would make as members. There had to exist a basic belief system in the candidates. The geometric progression of sodalists happened by a process of one on one. His premise, simply stated, was that people desirous of living good Christian lives will find support for these values within a community of faith.

What is more, Blessed Father Chaminade did not just gather people; he wished to form them. His was a work of education. Later when he opened schools, his cry was the following: *We teach only in order to educate*. Education, for Blessed Chaminade, included using all the means that would help others be transformed into Christ. Such was the thrust of the Sodality of Bordeaux.

The Sodality had structures, rules, traditions. Because the members were being formed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, there was need for much religious formation. A new twist in Father Chaminade's process, however, was that those who received formation were then enlisted to help in the formation of new candidates. Chaminade remained at the center of things, but he involved many members in various positions to help, and they took direct responsibility for their office. For example, in addition to the director of the Sodality—Father Chaminade—there was a prefect and a vice prefect. Each of these had two officers of honor. Sometimes, if important persons were visiting or had business with the Sodality, they would be named honorary prefects and would have two officers of honor. Jobs and roles were created in order to involve as many people as possible.

In the Sodality there were varying degrees of entrance and mobility. A person who wanted to join the Sodality or who was recruited for it by another member was considered a postulant. An older sodalist was placed in charge of a group of postulants. The leader kept watch over the group, helped them in their hesitations, and supported them if they met with external obstacles. They stood ready to help, advise, support in any way they could. From postulant one moved to become a probationer. Here there were more officers to show them what it

meant to be a probationer and eventually to be a sodalist. These officers offered a progressive training in the Christian life. Because religious instruction had been denied to a whole generation, catechetical instruction accompanied all of these steps. In all the steps, the candidates made promises to live the Christian life. Finally, the probationer graduated into the Sodality to make his consecration to Mary.

Sodalists were pointed continuously toward mission. In Bordeaux the bishop claimed that whenever he looked into a good work in his diocese there was the name of Father Chaminade and the Sodality behind it. Sodalists assumed leadership roles in the groups of postulants and probationers and had real responsibility. Chaminade would meet with these officers and learn of developments. In this way he managed to keep the Sodality cohesive and growing.

Movement for the Multiplication of Christians

Universal recruitment, proper screening, ongoing formation, the deepening of one's sense of consecration to Mary's mission, and continual accountability were all important facets of the Founder's approach. Blessed Father Chaminade not only did this for the Sodality of Bordeaux, but also hoped to start branches in other dioceses as well. He hoped his efforts would lead to a *movement* for the rechristianization of France. *It was a movement to multiply Christians.* Blessed John Paul II recognized officially the Marianist Family as a present-day *movement* within the Church.

Manual of Direction

In this context one can understand Blessed Chaminade's many attempts to formulate a Manual of Direction. This Manual was to be a key factor in the formation of all those who wished to consecrate themselves to Mary and to help her fulfill her mission. He realized that this was a chief responsibility for those in any kind of leadership position. It is as much needed today as it was in his day. The objectives of the Marianist Family were clear to him. Sodalists were called to be holy, to share their faith with their neighbors, and to avoid anything that would prevent them from these tasks.

*Holiness meant being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.
Sharing meant evangelization, proclaiming to the world the
person and teaching of Jesus Christ.*

*Avoiding anything that would prevent holiness and
evangelization was the ongoing process of sanctification.*

*Mary played a key role in all of this. She would be
the easiest way to attain these goals.*

*Leaders must have basic guidelines to help them
in their efforts to fulfill their mission.*

This was the Manual of Direction.

This may have been a wise strategy in Blessed Father Chaminade's time, but is it important or even needed today? Yes, I believe it is, because the goals have not changed. The Church is always calling the faithful to holiness and evangelization. The world needs saints very much today. It is the saints, that is, those who are transformed into the likeness of Jesus, who by their love for God and for their neighbor, become the key players in any century. Father Chaminade understood that not only were the leaders to be holy themselves, but also they were to help those whom they led to become holy. This was a great work of love. Besides, are we not all called to be saints by our very baptismal commitment? Eternal Life itself depends on our transformation into Jesus. To become a saint, therefore, was of the highest priority and worth all the effort.

Principles of Life

The Manual of Direction was also called *Principles of Direction*. We have heard of principles of life before. These are statements we consider so important that they become a guide for our life's journey. Every country has its own principles of life, as does every person. Here are a few examples.

- Every action demands an adequate and an appropriate response.
- The best things in life are free.
- Love alone forms.
- Reciprocal fidelity is the heart of any community.
- Give up the throne of power and take on the seat of wisdom.
- Motion is lotion.
- *Qui va piano va sano y lontano*: Who goes slowly, goes sanely and far.

These principles of life help one make decisions that resonate with one's hierarchy of values. Jesus had his principles; these are preserved for us in the Gospels. Consider his basic principle: "I do only what the Father wants me to do, say only what the Father wants me to say; go wherever the Father wants me to go" (Jn 5:19). This was number one in his hierarchy of values. He was faithful to his principles even to the Cross. For this he was glorified. Reading the Gospels with this in mind gives us new insights into the person of Jesus. He is the Word of God and his Word is always true. He himself claims: I am the Truth. To receive his Word is to receive him. It is a humble act of faith and love.

Principles, then, are not just eloquent sayings, catchy slogans, or beautiful phrases. They are guiding attitudes or dispositions we choose for the truth we see in them. They attract us by their simplicity and wisdom. We know they are good for us. We are willing to live by their rules for our own good.

The person in the Gospels who best portrays a disciple living by Christ's principles is his mother, Mary. She is constantly portrayed as the one who heard the Word of God and acted upon it. In this she is the Woman of Principle. From the moment of the Annunciation to her presence on Calvary, Mary is faithful to her hierarchy of values. Jesus, her son, is the center and meaning of her entire life. In all things she seeks the face of Jesus.

Our principles form our hierarchy of values. These must govern all our choices. We are true to ourselves and all we stand for when we live by this hierarchy. A principle may be 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 in their order of importance. If a situation calls for us to live by number 2 and we choose number 3, 4, or 5, we know we are not being true to ourselves. To be truly the person God wants us to be, we must be true to our principles according to their priority.

Part II: Blessed Chaminade's Principles of Direction

Chaminade's principles were those of a person conscious of a goal. He called them principles of *Direction*. He meant them for those who were called to lead others to the goal. They had to be clear on the destination and the way to get there. Nor was this meant to be only for the top leaders. Recall, in the structure of the Sodality, there were varying levels of commitment: postulant, probationer, sodalist. As a person trained for a level, e.g., sodalist, he/ she was engaged to guide someone on a postulant or probationer level. That is why these principles would help leaders to become spiritual companions of those they led.

The destination or goal and the journey or process of arriving there requires both understanding and discipline. If the goal is transformation into Christ, then it is imperative that we grow in learning the life and the virtues of Jesus. The Gospel teaching must become normative for us. Blessed Father Chaminade saw Mary as indispensable if we wish to learn about Jesus. He would say the best way to become like Jesus was to have Mary, the very mother of Jesus, as our own mother. As we contemplate the mysteries and states of Jesus through Mary's eyes, we come to discover new aspects of the face of Jesus.

Knowing, however, is not enough. We become more and more like Jesus as we try to live out what we learn about him. The most important process is to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and try to follow them. The Holy Spirit alone transforms us into Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us the light and the strength to say "yes" to those virtues of Jesus the Spirit wishes us to live. Mary helps us. In union with her we are disposed to listen and to act by the word of the Spirit. Jesus gave us his own Spirit to teach us that all he said and did was for our salvation. Even the fact that we are led to Mary is the work of the Holy Spirit. The process always involves a dying and a rising. We die to the old or inauthentic person in us and rise to the new person, Jesus. This is the goal.

Summary of the Principles of Direction

One of the attempts that Blessed Father Chaminade made to write the Principles of Direction was entitled a Summary. This clearly shows us the goal Father Chaminade envisaged.

*Jesus is truly the Son of Mary: ex qua natus est Jesus (Mt 1:16).
No one will be saved insofar as he has a great conformity with Jesus Christ;
God predestines no one except to be conformable to Jesus Christ.*

This sums up the entire set of his Principles of Direction. It is the foundation. If we decide to spell this out the way Blessed Chaminade did, it will develop into nine basic principles of action that show us how to live the Christian life. Another way of saying it is that living by these principles will help us in our journey to transformation into Christ. Here are Father Chaminade's basic principles. It should be noted they follow the main outlines of the life of Jesus and Mary.

Blessed Father Chaminade's Principles of Direction

To become like Jesus we need to do the following:

1. Respond fully—Preliminary disposition
2. Choose To Be Born of Mary—Incarnation
3. Grow in Faith—Believe in Jesus
4. Discern and Follow the Action of the Holy Spirit
5. Keep Jesus Ever in Mind—Jesus is Eternal Life
6. Become Humble—Jesus, Meek and Humble of Heart
7. Choose the Way of the Cross—Jesus' Passion/ Death
8. Triumph Over Selfishness—Burial of Jesus
9. Embrace Purity—Resurrection of Jesus.

First Principle: Responding Fully

Sanctification Is the Work of God and Ourselves.

Sanctification or holiness is above all the work of God. God the Father, who is rich in mercy, gives us his Spirit, who, in turn, conceives the Christ-Life within us at Baptism. Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, cooperates fully with the Holy Spirit in generating and developing this life within us. She is truly our Mother. The mission of the Spirit is to guide us continuously to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, the perfect human. The Spirit desires nothing more than our “entire conformity with Christ.” We are meant to be transformed into Jesus. This is the plan of God’s loving mercy.

But we also have a part to play in this drama. Sanctification is also simultaneously *our* work. God created us without us, but he will not save us without us (St. Augustine). We must *want* to receive God’s gracious love and allow ourselves to be transformed by his Spirit. We must be ready to receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. This is what *responding fully* entails. Sanctification implies a desire to correspond completely to the Divine Action in our lives. We welcome God and cooperate with God’s grace immediately, entirely, and joyfully.

Dietrich Von Hildebrand speaks of the Christian life as rooted in *authentic contrition*. This means that we realize our metaphysical situation. We were enemies of God. There is just no way we could have saved ourselves. Jesus the Son of God became the Son of Mary for our salvation. Our heart is filled with gratitude to God for taking the first step in sending his son. Simultaneously, in us there is the readiness to change, the desire to respond fully.

Readiness to change is marked by a disposition of fluidity and continuity. By this Von Hildebrand means that we are never ossified in a position but continually allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit. However, this does not signify that we go wherever the current wind blows. What gives us the spirit of continuity is the goal: to be transformed into Christ. We are always ready to change, but only to become more and more like Jesus. God’s ways will always involve the cross. Readiness to change will require a spirit of mortification, inspired by the Spirit of Jesus. We are called to live the Paschal Mystery—to die with Jesus to all that is selfish and inauthentic about us in order to live fully the life of the Risen Lord. We do not have to be perfect in response before we can enter into the ways of being transformed. But without a real desire to respond fully, despite our weakness, we will never be serious about becoming like Jesus. Those who guide others must lead them gradually to such an understanding and correspondence with grace.

Reflections

- Lk 1:26-38—Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me, just as you have said. (Example of Mary)
- 1 Cor 1:49—In union with Christ, you have become rich in all things. He will also keep you firm until the end.
- 1 Cor 9:24-27—You must run the race in the same way, intending to win.
- 2 Cor 13:5-9—Surely you know that Jesus Christ is in you . . . we pray that you will become perfect.
- Heb 12:1-4—Throw off everything that hinders.
- Lk 9:51—As the time drew near when Jesus would be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem. (He set his jaw for Jerusalem. He was determined to fulfill his Father's will.)
- Lk 11:27-28—Happy are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.

Second Principle: Choosing to Be Born of Mary

Dedicating Oneself to Mary, Mother of Jesus, Mystery of the Incarnation

Blessed Father Chaminade claimed it was a truth revealed by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary (Mt 1:16). Therefore, it had to be very significant and was to be believed with all one's heart and soul. It became the linchpin of his entire spirituality.

Jesus might have entered this world to save it in many ways. We hear this theme preached in many retreats. The marvelous point is that he chose the way of Mary. For us to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, we also must choose to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Mary, indeed, is God's special gift to us.

In our Baptism Mary collaborated with the Holy Spirit to form Jesus within us. Mary is truly our spiritual Mother. When she said "yes" to the angel and allowed the Holy Spirit to conceive Jesus in her virginal womb, she also allowed him to give life to us all. It was for our salvation that Jesus became the Son of Mary. He is the Head and we are his members. In Baptism we are intimately united with Jesus Christ. We, too, are conceived by the Holy Spirit, but we must now choose to be born of Mary . . . as Jesus did.

Chaminade's ideal was to consecrate oneself totally to Mary; to consider her as our Mother and ourselves as her sons and daughters; to live the life of Jesus under her guidance and protection. Daily we work to help her with full trust in the power of her name. Mary has chosen us. She binds herself to us and promises to love us, help us in our need, and defend us. We, in turn, choose her to be our Mother, form a bond with Mary to love her, honor her, obey and assist her. We can truly say by our dedication to her: "O Mary, I am your son, your daughter, and you are my Mother."

As Jesus chose to be raised by Mary and Joseph, so we also desire to be formed by them to resemble Jesus. We enter the school of Mary and are educated by her. We wish to live only the life of Jesus, i.e., to be other Christs, other sons and daughters of Mary. *With Christ, One Christ*. This is the way Blessed Father Chaminade defined spiritual growth. For him, only what pertained to Jesus could live in heaven. Jesus Christ was the first of the predestined. There could be none predestined except those who are conformable to Jesus. All the predestined would be conceived and formed in Mary.

Isn't this really what God's plan is? Jesus came into this world to restore respect and love for his Father, i.e., to reestablish his Father's Kingdom. During the 33 years that Jesus lived on earth, this is all he did. He established in his disciples his

own love for the Father. He wanted to teach us to honor his Father just as he did. Mary became his first disciple. She was the first one to be conceived by the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ.

Jesus was conceived physically in Mary according to nature. Mary was conceived spiritually in Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Mary was formed interiorly to resemble Jesus, her son. She was associated in all his mysteries, both interiorly and exteriorly, so that her conformity with her son might be the most perfect possible, or rather, that there might be as much *uniformity* as possible. This is Blessed Chaminade's insight.

By this second principle we go to Mary. We are to be formed, as Blessed Chaminade put it, "in the womb of her maternal charity." We entrust ourselves to Mary so that, with her help, we will become conformable to Jesus in the characteristics the Spirit of Jesus will effect in us. For whatever reasons, not everyone is immediately attracted to Mary. Those who guide others must help them come to experience the Mother of Jesus, her powerful intercession, and her maternal charity in a progressive manner.

As Father George Montague, SM, writes in his excellent guidebook, *The Woman and the Way*, "Father Chaminade used the renewal of baptismal promises as the first stage of admission to the Marian Sodality, the final stage being an act of consecration to Mary." Growth in the likeness of Jesus is a lifetime project. With Mary we join with others in this communal project. We are communities of faith, i.e., persons bound together by our belief in Jesus, who entrust themselves to Mary, both to become ourselves more like Jesus and to help her in her mission of bringing Jesus to the whole world.

We are not in this alone. Like the Apostles at Pentecost we are united with Mary in prayer and in readiness to do whatever Jesus will tell us through his Spirit. Gradually, day by day, we progress with Mary, but the goal is always the same. This is Mary's role—to help bring forth Jesus spiritually in us just as she brought him forth physically in Bethlehem and educated him in Nazareth. Consecration to Mary implies that we wish to help her fulfill her mission in ourselves, and in all those the Spirit sends into our lives.

Reflections

- Jn 15:1-8—I am the true vine. Make your home in me as I make mine in you.
- Jn 17:1-11—I pray for them, that they may be one like us.
- Jn 17:21-26—May they be one in us, so that I may be in them.
- Jn 19:25-26—Woman, behold your son.
- Rom 8:14-17—We are children of God, heirs with Christ.

- Gal 3:26-28—Through Baptism, we are clothed with Christ.
- Gal 4:1-7—God sent his son, born of a woman, and God sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts.

Third Principle: Growth in Faith

Believe in Jesus Christ

The Spirit of Jesus brings about conformity to Jesus in us only in proportion to our faith. This is behind Blessed Chaminade's insistence on growing in faith and in multiplying faith communities. "Faith is the beginning of the salvation of men [and women], the foundation and root of all justification" (Council of Trent, Denz., 801).

Once again, Chaminade's emphasis is on mission. It is the salvation of humankind that moves Jesus, and it is why Jesus, the Son of God, became the Son of Mary. The divine plan of the Father that Jesus came to fulfill was to gather the human family into the Family of God. The Family of Mary's mission is to further the Family of God.

Chaminade is convinced we will not be successful in becoming like Jesus in order to accomplish this mission, unless we *increase our faith, purify our faith, and act in the spirit of faith*. He names this kind of faith "the faith of the heart."

Increase Our Faith

First, we must grow in the spirit of faith. We increase our faith by making many acts of faith. From the very beginning of one's entrance into Mary's Family, there is encouragement to grow in faith. Meditation on the Apostle's Creed was usually the first practice Blessed Chaminade encouraged. Faith was prescribed to meet the problems and doubts of life. To one who was having difficulty believing in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Father Chaminade advised multiplying acts of faith in the reality of this truth. To make 100 or more acts of faith each day would help one to embrace the truth of Jesus' real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Visits or prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, made with reverence, were acts of faith.

Purify Our Faith

We received the faith in Baptism as a gift. Our personal role is to preserve it, nurture it, and allow it to bear fruit. To accomplish this we must be clear as to what faith really is. There is need to distinguish continuously in our prayer what is of faith and what is not. This is how we purify our faith.

Chaminade noticed that many profess faith in God, Jesus, and Mary, but by their actions or prejudices, it is evident that the object of their faith is *not* the true God, the infinitely perfect Creator, nor Jesus, the Only-Begotten Son of the living God, nor Mary, the true Mother of God. He noticed people who said they believed, but

they were not humble or loving. They were vain and proud. Authentic faith leads to a life of faith, hope, and charity. This is why we need to continually purify our faith. True faith means we believe for the right reasons. It does not depend on how we feel, on how popular a truth is, or whether it fits into our agenda, or because we understand it. These are not reasons why we believe it. The real reason we believe a truth of faith is that it is God who has revealed it, and God does not lie. While reciting the articles of the Creed may seem very monotonous, the reality is that they open for us doorways to God's divine plan. God's plan is true and loving whether we feel thrilled by it or whether we pass over it in ignorance. To purify our faith is to divest ourselves of our "baggage" so that we allow the truths of faith to speak to us. The more open, humble, and loving we are, the more God can penetrate our hearts.

Act by Faith

Faith is a gift of God and is not acquired by study. However, studying can help us grow in our faith. It is not often that we experience believing persons who live a practical faith. These are the saints. How differently we would act if we lived what we believe. What a horror for sin, if we truly believed in the Redemption! What a sense of our dignity, if we took the Incarnation seriously! How we would grow in charity, if we took to heart Jesus' words that this was his one commandment! Chaminade put it this way: To act by faith, to practice faith, and to live by faith means to regard all objects, natural or supernatural, which present themselves to us, with the knowledge that God possesses concerning them, and which he gives to us by faith; after that, to examine and judge them according to this light, so that we might conform our lives to them.

One of the best ways to increase our faith, to purify it, and to live by it daily is to cultivate the *prayer of faith*. Meditation on the truths of faith, the mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary, or the inspired words of the Scriptures helps us to reach our goal of always acting by faith. If we come to the point of always acting by faith we have come to the consummation of this virtue. Our goal is not only to believe but also to love what we believe and to act according to our belief. This is called the faith of the heart, a faith that works through love. This is the sure way to conformity with Jesus.

Reflections

- Eph 3:17-20—Let Christ make a home in your heart through faith.
- Eph 4:13-16—We shall grow up in every way to Christ who is the Head.
- 2 Pt 1:3-11—Add goodness to the faith that you have, understanding to your goodness.

Fourth Principle: Discerning and Following the Action of the Holy Spirit

Jesus Is Led by the Spirit.

Jesus came among us to share with us his own Spirit. The most necessary activity of the Christian life, therefore, is to discern the inspirations of the Spirit and to follow them. Jesus was always led by the Spirit. The Scriptures show us the Virgin Mary as a person aware of God's presence and one who discerns God's action in her life. Like Jesus, she also is led by the Spirit. Such is what each of us must do likewise, if we are to become like Jesus.

Daily, we are called to distinguish those movements that come from the Holy Spirit, those that come from the evil one, or from our own self-willed agenda. All three are sources for these movements. In a phrase coined by Father George Aschenbrenner, SJ, we note the "spontaneous movements of affectivity" in our heart and soul. We seek those affective movements inspired by the Holy Spirit, and we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to discover those things that are motivating us. From faith we begin to grow in self-knowledge.

As we grow in recognizing the operations of the Spirit in our lives we grow more docile to the Holy Spirit. We are encouraged and trust more in God's power. The Spirit of Truth begins to help us see the falsity and deception of every creature and all that is not of God. The Spirit shows us the contrast between created things and God who is everything. We begin to have a taste for God and the Divine. God is great, magnificent, and wonderful. At the same time we develop distaste for what is not God, and we detach ourselves from those things that take us away from God. Discernment of what is moving our hearts, therefore, is very important if we are to grow more and more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit, as we try to follow his inspirations, will transform us into a greater resemblance with Jesus Christ. In helping others, leaders must be alert to point out how the Holy Spirit is acting in their lives and so to encourage them.

Father Aschenbrenner gives us an idea of what is discernment. It is the search to discover God's will for me here and now in order to accomplish it. We take God seriously. We know God has a plan for us and that this plan is for our peace and happiness. We believe there is an intimate connection between our affective movements and the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is our faith conviction. God works with us all the time, moment by moment. We learn discernment in prayer. We look for God's action in all the aspects of our lives. Discernment becomes our way of life.

The process is simple and clear. Firstly *we discover the movements within our hearts.* Prayerfully, we are in touch with our affectivity. *In God's Light we see Light.*

Secondly, *we name these movements and own them*, i.e., take responsibility for them. We do not lie to ourselves. I am angry, jealous, I really enjoy that TV show. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, kept shifting responsibility.

Thirdly, *we see these movements in a faith dimension*. We interpret them with the mind of Jesus. One suggestion is to look squarely into the eyes of Jesus, and we will sense whether this is from the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, *we decide which movements to follow*. Discernment is fruitless unless we make a decision and act on it. Such an action based on faith helps us to live out the goal of the Christian life: faith working through love.

Finally, *we seek from God confirmation on our decision*. A simple rule of thumb: *If a movement is from God it will be marked by peace. If a movement comes from Satan or from selfish interest it will be marked by turmoil and restlessness.*

Daily examination of conscience is one of the most efficacious means of acquiring purity of heart, an essential condition for encounter with God and for response to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. By means of this we are enabled to work at removing all obstacles which prevent or delay us from arriving at conformity with Christ. We learn to examine our thoughts, words and actions, purify our motivation, and are to be imbued with the Spirit of the Gospels. In this manner we arrive at a habitual discernment of God's intentions for us. Like Mary, Handmaid of the Lord, we learn to become more responsive to the will of God.

Reflections

- Rom 12:2—Let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind.
- Col 3:2-4—Keep your mind fixed on things above. You have died and your life is hidden now with Christ in God.
- Eph 4:22-24 —Old self/ new self, created in God's likeness
- Col 3:8-10—Old self/ new self; constantly renewed in God's image
- Lk 1: 26-38—Annunciation
- Rom 8—This is a good description of the way of the Spirit.
- Gal 4:1-7—Maturity in the Christian life

Fifth Principle: Keeping the Goal Always in Mind

Jesus is Eternal Life

We come to the midpoint of the Principles of Direction. Note how they follow the Life of Jesus. So far we have been trying to participate fully in our transformation into Jesus. We have chosen Mary as our Mother, just as he did, and we have asked her to help us become like Jesus. We have realized that this will happen only in proportion to our faith. We have tried to increase our faith, purify it, and live continuously in a spirit of practical faith that works through love. As we grow in faith we become more attuned to the Holy Spirit living within us. Fidelity to the Spirit's guidance is the key to growth in the likeness of Jesus.

We return again to our goal. Blessed Father Chaminade quotes St. Paul: "God has predestined us to be conformable to the image of his son" (Rom 8:29). It is this basic truth that we are to keep before our eyes. We remember that our destiny is to be conformed to Jesus. We fix our sights on Jesus. Jesus is Eternal Life.

But what does conformity look like? We can resemble Jesus in his external appearance or interiorly take on the dispositions of his heart. Both have a place. However, the essential is the interior. It is not at all important that we dress the way he dressed or walk the same roads he walked. Such actions lead to external imitation, but by themselves they will not lead to transformation. The external actions of Jesus are meant to lead us to his heart's dispositions. His exterior manifestations are like sacraments of his interior attitudes. At Jesus' Baptism, the Father asked everyone to listen to his beloved son and to conform their lives to his. *This is My Beloved Son, listen to him.* For example, Jesus was crucified exteriorly, so we should be crucified interiorly taking on his purposes. We are thus called to total conformity with Jesus in his external demeanor and interior dispositions.

We call every one of Jesus' thoughts, words, actions, or conscious omissions a mystery. Each one was a human act united with the divine and done for love of us. Because these actions were united with the divine they merited a special grace. Because they were done for love of us, we can share in the special grace because Jesus merited this grace for all of us. In Baptism we received the Spirit of these holy mysteries. The Holy Spirit now works daily in us through the graces of these mysteries. *It is our part only to let him act upon us in harmony with the holy mysteries.* For example, we have within us the Spirit of Jesus crucified, giving us the light and the grace to crucify ourselves interiorly, to mortify ourselves when we are drawn selfishly to pleasure and self-gratification. In such ways the Spirit inspires us and, as we cooperate, interiorly conforms us to Jesus crucified . . . and so with all his mysteries.

Let us reflect on how Chaminade develops his thoughts on the mystery of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit gives us grace to participate in the risen life of Jesus and to grow like him. By his resurrection, Jesus died in his human body and was totally united to his Father, praying and living in him. Because we are united with the risen Jesus, we also can become more and more united with the Father. Our Lord was hidden in God by his holy resurrection so that his human life was lost in God. Jesus was consummated in God, as is wood in a fire. He was buried and entirely engulfed in God. The interior life of a Christian develops in this same manner. “Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life” (Rom 6:4).

Jesus Christ in his resurrection entered into the life of God so that he no longer lived the life of the flesh. He truly died. His soul no longer animated his body to serve his human needs as before. His divinized soul was completely swallowed up, lost, and absorbed in God. His body was completely perfected by his glory. In the same manner the Christian strives to be completely delighted in God, so that one thinks only of loving God, of seeing him, of recalling him, of serving him with all one’s strength, giving over to God and to God’s service the total use of one’s life and goodness. To surrender ourselves to God in this manner is to be truly conformed to Jesus exteriorly.

Chaminade is very clear. “The Christian life consists properly in this, that the Christian lives interiorly by the operation of the Spirit, as Jesus Christ lived. Without this there is no unity nor perfect conformity. Our Lord Jesus calls us to this, wishing us to live together with him, through the operation of the Spirit, by a life truly one as that which the Father and the son share. The Father and the son have only one life, one attitude, one desire, one love, one light, because they are only one same God living in two Persons.”

Jesus not only fills us with the general dispositions of his heart—such as selflessness, profound adoration, reverence for his Father, perfect love of neighbor, and horror for sin—but also with particular dispositions that he had in his mysteries. For since all these holy dispositions in the soul of Jesus Christ were the object of pleasure and joy for God his Father, it follows that the Holy Spirit, who seeks only the pleasure of the Father in everything, is pleased to diffuse this holy operation into souls that are open to this action.

Chaminade counsels his leaders that such a subtle work as transformation into Jesus is only brought about gradually, like all works of nature. He cautions that those who guide others must proceed little by little and follow the order of the mysteries. The principles do follow this order. Christian life has two parts: death and life. Jesus communicates his divine life to us in proportion as we die to all that is not Jesus.

These thoughts of Blessed Chaminade need to be pondered and internalized. In one sense this principle ties all the principles together. It looks to the first principle to remind us that our salvation is the work of God and ourselves collaborating together. It looks to the final principle to remind us that we are called to the risen life of Jesus. Everything is centered in the risen Jesus, the Son of God, Who became the Son of Mary, for our salvation. While these are exalted thoughts—that we are enabled to share the divine life with Jesus—Blessed Chaminade reminds us that this is a gradual transformation, that we must be patient with ourselves, that we must grow daily in our docility to the Holy Spirit. This is why we must keep the goal always before our inner eyes.

Reflections

- Mt 10:24—The disciple is not superior to his teacher. It should be enough for the disciple to grow to become like his teacher.
- Rom 8:28-30—God set them apart to be like his son, so the son would be the firstborn of many brothers.
- Col 2:6-7—Live in union with Jesus. Keep your roots deep in him.
- Gal 2:20—I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me.
- John 4—Samaritan woman at the well.

Sixth Principle: Necessity of Humility

Jesus, Meek and Humble of Heart

What a great gift we have received in Baptism! How much God has loved us in allowing us to share his divine life! Lest we forget the God who gives us these gifts, this sixth principle reminds us that humility is the foundation for all the virtues. We are receivers of God's love and action. Our holiness cannot be acquired without grace and divine help, which God gives only to the humble of heart (Jas 4:6).

Humility is a virtue we will appreciate only if we view it through the eyes of faith. St. Paul tells us the universe is groaning, waiting for someone to redeem it. Unless we arrive interiorly to appreciate our metaphysical need for redemption, thoughts of humility will appear negative and demeaning. We know whatever God creates is good. We also know that Jesus told those who accused the blind man or his parents of having sinned, thus causing the blindness, that this was not the reason. We know likewise that humanity did turn away from God. Sin opposed God's plan that was for our happiness and peace. Humility then requires that we look at life and the world honestly. If Mary keeps telling us in her apparitions to decide for God, she is simply reiterating the message of the Gospel: repent and accept the Good News. Return to God with all your heart. To do this we must be humble.

Humility has many facets. Some have named thirty-three degrees of humility. Chaminade speaks of three levels. The first level is authentic self-knowledge leading to the acceptance of ourselves as we are. Humility is truth. The truth is that God is all. True self-knowledge recognizes that, of ourselves, we are really nothing. All we have, we have received. This is to see ourselves as we truly are.

We are creatures of God and therefore good. What we can attribute to ourselves is our lack, our emptiness, our dysfunction, our own sinfulness. At the beginning, humanity turned away from God and decided to go its own way. We usually paint ourselves and our accomplishments in the most positive manner we can, but actually all we boast of is a gift from other sources. Parents and family, teachers, spiritual guides, friends, all have supported us on the way. Even when we think we have done it all ourselves, we come to realize that if others had not contributed resources, books, machines, money, etc., we would not have been able to accomplish these things. In reality, there is no such thing as the self-made person. Humility, however, is not just in knowing these things, but in growing to love ourselves even though lowly, weak, sinful, and limited. We realize we are loved by God and therefore good. We are not the center of the universe, but we are very grateful people.

The second level Chaminade considers is quite startling when we view it in terms of our relationship with God. As the saints have often said, God is all and we are nothing. Chaminade suggests that we do more than accept this truth. He wants us to be so convinced of this that we do not lose our peace when others point out our lack, our failure. We do not fear to have this nothingness, this lack, this lowliness and insignificance known by others as well as by ourselves. When we are recognized in the world as we truly are, we accept it and do not lose our hope.

The third level Chaminade points out is that we be joyful when others treat us as we know we truly are in God's presence—lacking many virtues. We appreciate this truth about ourselves when we pray the prayer of faith. God is all. Who are we to come before the living God! We cannot come to prayer thinking that God owes us something. We are those who humbly beg. We are very grateful that God allows us to be in his presence.

This calls for a sea change in our thinking. It requires acts of faith. Humility is based on two foundational pillars: truth and justice. In truth, we are not the center of the universe. In justice, God and sometimes others owe us nothing. Therefore, all the good that happens to us we accept in gratitude. When evil happens to us we try to make it redemptive, i.e., we accept it to make up for our faults and sins. Job, who knew he was innocent, still said: "the Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Jb 1:21). He would not curse God for what evil befell him.

Humility is truth. There are many caricatures of humility. This requires constant discernment for us to remain authentic to ourselves. God is all and we are nothing. In our age these are points people find hard to accept. Only humble people will embrace these truths. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, and Mary, who thanks God for his great gifts to her, are sublime examples of true humility. To be transformed into Jesus means becoming humble.

Reflections

- Jn 13:34-35—You should wash one another's feet. I have given you the example.
- Jn 13:34-35—As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
- Phil 2:1-11—Have within yourself the attitude of Christ. He emptied himself.
- Heb 5:5-10—He learned obedience through suffering.

Seventh Principle: Choosing the Way of the Cross

Passion and Death of Jesus

We are following Jesus throughout his life: He who is the Son of God becomes the Son of Mary. We believe in him and desire to be led by the Spirit as he was. We come to accept our true condition humbly as we contemplate Jesus the Perfect Man, model for all humanity. We follow him now on the way of the Cross in order to die to ourselves and live for God completely. Blessed Father Chaminade names this principle, *choosing mortification in the power of the Holy Spirit*. St. Paul tells the Romans: “If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom 8:13).

This principle is not based on some type of physical improvement or self-help program—to tone up the body, to increase our memory, or to lose weight. It relies on God’s grace and strength to help us resist the spontaneous desires of the flesh. By flesh St. Paul means human life without any thought of God. It is a self-centered life. God’s presence in our life is life-giving. The absence of God in our lives leads to a culture of death. Mortification of our selfishness (self-emptying) leads to receiving God’s presence within us. Jesus wishes to unite himself intimately to us. If we are careful to mortify and renounce ourselves, to put aside even the slightest manifestations of our selfishness, to that degree will Jesus be careful to vivify us and actuate us.

Since the Original Sin, Adam and all his posterity have been cursed. Whatever is of Adam in us is flawed, and holiness cannot tolerate it. God condemns this disobedient Adam in all that he is and does. “What is born of flesh is flesh” (Jn 3:6). St. Paul calls it *death* because it leads to evil desires and inclines to sin. “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless. . . . The words I spoke to you are spirit and life” (Jn 6:63). “The tendency of the flesh is toward death, but that of the Spirit toward life and peace. The flesh in its tendencies is at enmity with God . . . those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:6-8). The flesh is never submissive to the law of God. It is selfishness that we are called to mortify.

Jesus, though he was sinless, took on our sinful humanity when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He accepted the appearance of sin and of one cursed. He prayed and fasted and denied himself to make reparation to his Father for our sins. “God sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, thereby condemning sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). Jesus gave us his own Holy Spirit to give us true life and to sanctify all our works. It is the Spirit who makes us act in everything as true children of God. “All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Rom 8:14).

Chaminade encourages us in this principle to enter the struggle we all face by offering several motives for doing penance. First, *Baptism obliges us to curb and mortify the flesh* whenever it wants to act contrary to God, so the Holy Spirit can do what it wants in us and lead us to what it desires. The Christian should not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit, who was given in Baptism to be the principle of all activity and to remove those tendencies that take away from God.

How can we tell the difference between works that are propelled by the flesh and those inspired by the Spirit? Chaminade offers a clear signpost. We tend to those done by the principle of the flesh with haste and vehemence, for our own pleasure, and without having in our own minds any view of God drawing us on. But when the Spirit prompts us, the Spirit shows us interiorly some divine motive. We do it for God—to please and make ourselves able to serve God. We regard God more than the work we do and more than the creature we need. The Spirit elevates us toward God’s gentleness and peace. When the Holy Spirit is the principle of everything in us and possesses, holds, and leads us, then the Spirit takes possession of our wills and leads us. This is what it means to be spiritual and to live in the Spirit in everything.

A second motive for mortifying ourselves is *the need we have to do penance*. We have sinned in the past. It is only right that we should in justice repent. “Just as formerly you enslaved your bodies to impurity and licentiousness for their degradation, make them now the servants of justice for their sanctification” (Rom 6:19).

The *virtue of religion* offers a third motive for mortification. We willingly deny ourselves *in order to please God*. We ourselves become the sacrifice we offer.

The fourth motive for mortification is *holiness*. Self-denial keeps us united with God. Holiness makes God totally Self-aware and totally Other, separated from every creature. We who are consecrated to God through Baptism are called to be like our God. St. Paul calls Christians “saints” for this reason. The holy person remains purely united to God by faith. Saints seek only God and separate themselves even from attachment to God’s gifts. We are not wrong in using these gifts to remind us of God, but they should only be the means, not the end. It is God alone that we should possess. Let God be our world, our pleasure, our glory, our treasure, our all. Our self-denial helps us enter into communion with Jesus. This union of love places us in God and God in us. Choosing the way of the cross is the road to transformation in Christ.

Reflections

- Mt 10:37-39—Take up your cross. Follow in my steps.
- Mt 11:29-30—Take my yoke and put it on your shoulders.
- Mt 20:20-23—Can you drink the cup that I must drink?
- Jn 15:18-20—If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you, also. If they have obeyed me, they will obey you also.
- Rom 5:1-6—We can boast about our sufferings.
- Gal 6:14—I boast only in the cross of Christ through which I am crucified to the world.
- 1 Pet 4:1-19—Since Christ suffered physically, you must have a disciplined life. . . . Be glad that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ.

Eighth Principle: Triumph Over Selfishness Penance Inspired by the Holy Spirit

Burial of Jesus

Blessed Father Chaminade once claimed we must not want to do more good than the Spirit permits. This means that the penances we do undertake should be only those inspired by the Spirit. We are constantly warring against our self-centered tendencies in order to allow the life of Jesus to be manifested in us. It is as though we are buried, but Jesus is alive and active. This is what penance inspired by the Holy Spirit aims to accomplish. By penance we are united with our suffering and crucified Lord. Developing a spirit of penance that is *inspired by the Holy Spirit* leads to one being buried with Jesus.

Penance or self-denial can be both exterior and interior. We ought to give alms, but we should not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. Key dispositions accompany interior penance—humility, sorrow for sin, and accepting whatever God may permit to happen to us.

The spirit of penance is the very Spirit of God, first permeating Jesus, and then, through Jesus, radiating throughout his Church. The Spirit poured out these same dispositions of penance on King David. As we pray the psalms we honor David, but we also come to reverence the interior dispositions of Jesus. We pray that these same interior dispositions may be communicated to us, helping us to grow in humility of heart, fervor, and perseverance. Above all, we beg the Holy Spirit to be poured out on us. Nor should we worry if we do not feel these dispositions. Inspired by this Spirit we do not lament that we do not sense these dispositions when we pray. God refuses nothing to the Spirit who prays in us. God always hears, just as God always hears Jesus “because of the reverence He gives him” (Heb 5:7).

Every penance that is not inspired by the Spirit of Jesus Christ is really not a genuine penance. We can be very severe with ourselves, even violent, but if our penance does not emanate from Jesus Christ, it cannot be Christian penance. We are to do penance only through him, who began it here below on earth in his own person, and continues it in us, expanding for his members what he practiced himself. “Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17). The person who is united to Jesus necessarily enters into his qualities, his way of life, his dispositions, and consequently into his zeal for justice, which works continually against the flesh. The person, having entered into the zeal and holiness of God, convicts, condemns, and destroys in himself all those wrong desires which present themselves incessantly in his flesh, for the contentment of all his senses. The more one succeeds in performing this kind of penance the more

he or she grows in transformation into Jesus. It is as though she or he is buried and only Jesus lives within.

Reflections

- Rom 6:6-12—You are to think of yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
- Col 2:11-14—Circumcised with Jesus, we are freed from the power of the sinful self.

Ninth Principle: Purity of Heart—Chastity

Participation in the Risen Life of Jesus

We now come to the ninth and last principle of direction: chastity or purity of heart. Blessed Father Chaminade describes chastity in this manner: “Chastity is a participation in the substance of God, which is spiritual and simple but shining in beauty. A chaste soul is an angel” (Mt 22:30). A chaste soul is a soul risen in spirit, of the very nature of the risen Jesus Christ. It no longer has anything of the sluggishness and coarseness of the flesh and is spiritual like an angel, divine like God its Father. “They become like angels and are no longer liable to death. Sons and daughters of the Resurrection, they are sons and daughters of God” (Lk 20: 36). To become like the Risen Lord Jesus is the goal toward which all the principles flow.

One will object: how can we be like the risen Lord ever? It does appear to be an impossibility. But while we are called to cooperate, that is to receive God’s love into our hearts, it is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, who is God’s Love to transform us. Our task in life is to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and, like Mary, to act upon them. She will continually tell us: “Do whatever he tells you.” Although the Lord can, in an instant, transform us, he calls for our willingness and collaboration. Even when we miss the mark, he calls us on to repent and follow him. Gradually as we become more adept at listening and following, we become more like Jesus. This is what the ninth principle invites us to become—one with the risen Lord Jesus. Such a person enters with Jesus into his perfect holiness and into all his divine qualities. These qualities change the person radically and give him the same inclinations and attitudes as those with which the Son of God was filled in his state of resurrection. If we can possess such a grace, even in this life, it is only after having fought bravely and faithfully for a long time in the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you understand why Blessed Father Chaminade wanted his leaders to understand these principles of direction? He wanted the entire Marianist Family to be a nation of saints. This was his insight on changing the world for the better and bringing it under the rule of the risen Lord. Members of the Marianist Family were meant to be spiritual companions to those who came into their world just as others had been mentors to them.

Chastity then, or purity of heart, is really the code word for transformation into the Risen Lord. It means total purity of body, mind, heart, and will. We become truly what our Baptism called us to be—a new creation, one with the risen Lord Jesus. We become his presence in the world. At the beginning we started with the desire to be transformed into Jesus. We end, after a life of listening and following God’s Word, with the goal in mind—to be the presence of the risen Lord in our

world. This is the whole meaning of our baptismal consecration—to be the members of Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Risen Savior.

Reflections

- 1 Cor 15:20-22—All will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.
- 2 Cor 4:18-5:8—All I want is to know Christ Jesus, to share in his sufferings, and to share in his resurrection.
- 1 Pet 1:14-16—Be holy.
- 1 Jn 3:2-3—We shall become like Christ.

Conclusion

Blessed Father Chaminade's Portrait of the Person Consecrated to Mary

Blessed Father Chaminade considered that these principles lived out with the grace of the Holy Spirit would lead to true transformation into Jesus. It would help the Marianist Family to become a nation of saints. The baptized person who joins the Marianist Family would become a person who really desires to be united with the Risen Lord. He or she would be convinced and take personal responsibility for striving for this goal. Mary, after all, wants only one thing . . . that a person strives to become more and more like Jesus. The consecrated person would believe in Jesus and want to cooperate fully in this work. It is the Holy Spirit who calls and inspires. The person's task is to *respond fully*.

The path to consecration begins by doing what Jesus did. We choose to be born of Mary. We wish to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary. This is Mary's mission—to lead all to Jesus. As she gave birth to the Head, she now cooperates with the Holy Spirit in giving birth to the members. By Baptism we become one with Jesus, the Son of God who became the Son of Mary for the salvation of the world. We strive to be Christ's presence in the world, a new creation.

Such a path requires *growth in faith*. Therefore the believer, desirous of consecration to Mary, will be one who increases in faith by multiplying acts of purified and authentic faith that lead to a life of charity or practical faith of the heart.

Like Mary, this will come about as we listen more attentively to the Holy Spirit and follow his inspirations. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit throughout his entire life. Mary followed Jesus in this and invites all who give themselves over to her care to "Do whatever he tells you." We try to be *led by the Spirit* in our daily lives.

This is why consecrated persons *keep the goal always before their minds and hearts*. One thing is crucially important: to do the will of the Father. The efforts we make to accomplish this bring peace, but they also lead us to be identified with Jesus in his suffering, death, and ultimately his resurrection.

The consecrated person approaches these efforts very humbly, just as Jesus who said of himself, I am meek and humble of heart. *Humility is the foundation of every virtue*. It is most necessary as we try to become like Jesus. This requires our dependence on God who is all.

Jesus denied himself, *willingly taking up the cross* to please his Father and to help others. The efforts made to deny oneself unite us with the cross, passion, and

death of Jesus. To combat our own selfishness helps us to grow in our will to be one with Jesus.

There are sufferings and penances which we do not choose but which we are asked to accept. These are penances inspired by the Holy Spirit. The human condition, external obstacles or opposition, when accepted as a gift of the Spirit, permit us to die to ourselves and to be buried with Christ.

One day consecrated persons will experience the goal of their consecration to Mary and their efforts to become like Jesus. We will share in the risen glory of Jesus forever. What is this risen life? It is to be totally united with God. Then we are truly and fully ourselves.

*May the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit
be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.*