



S.M. 3 OFFICES

MARIANISTI – AMMINISTRAZIONE GENERAL – Via Latina, 22 – 00179 Roma – Italia

#151

September 2019

*To All members of the Society of Mary and
To Those in Leadership of all Works of the Society of Mary*



**200 YEARS OF COMMITMENT
TO EDUCATION FOR THE SOCIETY OF MARY**

SUMMARY

1. Introduction
2. A brief historical synopsis of the foundation of the first school of the Society of Mary
3. The vision that Chaminade and the first Marianists had concerning schools, teachers and students
4. Marianist education two hundred years later
5. Suggestions for celebrating the bicentennial
6. A prayer to be said together

1. INTRODUCTION

The earliest religious to join the Society of Mary, pronounced their vows on September 5, 1818. This pioneer Marianist community then began a long discernment process to decide on the apostolic orientation for their new group.

Toward the middle of the 1819, Chaminade's disciples took on their first school, on **Rue des Menuts** in Bordeaux. This move came about despite the initial reluctance of the Founder who feared that the young congregation might specialize too quickly. Nevertheless, Blessed Chaminade guided this birth, convinced that such an apostolate would allow the Society of Mary



to reach its goals. He, therefore, urged them not only to *instruct*, but, more importantly, provide a *Christian education* within a faith context.

Thus, this year, 2019, marks the 200th anniversary since the Society of Mary became engaged in education. We cannot let such an event go by unnoticed. That is why I choose to remind everyone of that event in this current publication of **SM 3 Offices**.

First of all, I shall give a brief historical synopsis regarding the beginnings of that first foundation. Then, I will recall the vision that the Founder and the first

Marianist educators had concerning schools, teachers and education. I will end with several suggestions designed to help us commemorate this event in each of our establishments.

2. A BRIEF HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS CONCERNING THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST SCHOOL OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

Regarding the first schools of the Society of Mary, Fr. Antonio Gascon, SM¹ and Fr. Joseph Lackner, SM² have already completed a very detailed and up-to-date historical synopsis. These are worthwhile to read or to review. Volume 4 of the collection *Marianist Education Heritage and Future* also discusses this history. In the following lines, I will discuss only those aspects which will assist us in the celebration of this anniversary.

The experience of the Founder, for whom the world of academic education was quite familiar, is evident in this brief overview. In fact, during a good part of his life, Blessed Chaminade worked as a teacher. He taught mathematics³, physics⁴ and philosophy. He was also a very wise treasurer⁵ at the school of St. Charles in Mussidan, as well as a chaplain. Many people consulted him and followed his advice at different periods of his life. All of those experiences contributed to the sharpening of his educational vision, which he then transmitted to his first educators. They, in turn, also contributed to the establishment of the educational tradition that is ours today.

a. Elements of the original discernment

Following the profession of vows of the first religious, the Marianist community gradually settled into a house on the small alley of Ségur, in Bordeaux. The community consisted of seven brothers (Auguste Brougnon-Perrière, Jean-Baptiste Bidon, Antoine Canteau, Dominique Clouzet, Jean-Baptiste Collineau, Jean-Baptiste

¹ Antonio Gascon, *General History of the Society of Mary*, Volume 1

² Joseph Lackner: *Marianist Charism and Educational Mission*. Collection "Marianist Education, History and Future", 2012. Vol 1.

³ From the Museum of Paris, cited by Eduardo Benlloch in *Origins of the Marianist Family*, p.14.

⁴ According to the explanation that Chaminade gave to Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, when the latter asked him to buy some Physics instruments in Paris to finish his laboratory at Saint-Remy. Blessed Chaminade recognized that the equipment was necessary but expensive and gave him his expert opinion (*Letters* n. 495, to Lalanne)

⁵ *Letters of Fr. Chaminade*, n. 387, a Bro. Clouzet, April 26, 1836, vol. 3, p. 615.

Lalanne and Bruno Daguzan) and two pre-novices (Pierre Bousquet and Bernard Laugeay). The average age of this community was 26.

During the community meetings in their first year, they began to see the usefulness of beginning an educational work that would be their own. In the city of Bordeaux, no establishment of this kind existed except for the College Royal, the small seminary run by the Jesuits, and the boarding school of Mr. Estebenet. A primary and secondary school, with a boarding school, run by Marianist religious, would therefore be welcome for Bordeaux families seeking to provide a Christian education for their children. With regard to this project, the initial house that the community occupied, on the small alley of Ségur, proved to be too small. The need for a larger dwelling that would accommodate the residential school at the same time as it would accommodate potential candidates for religious life became evident.

b. The purchase of the house located on the “Rue des Menuts”

Providentially, two sodalists gave a considerable sum of money to Blessed Chaminade. This money allowed him to acquire a building for academic use. On October 29, 1818, the Society of Mary first signed a lease agreement to occupy the house located at “**46 Rue des Menuts**”⁶. Then on the following November 14, they signed the contract to purchase this house.



Photo taken in 1909. The house in the foreground is the first house of the Society of Mary in 1819 : Boarding school “Auguste Brougnon-Perrière,” 46 rue des Menuts The house with the small cart in front of it is the former Pension Estebenet. 47 rue des Menuts. (AGMAR 118.2.31)

⁶ Today, Rue des Menuts, 51

This house is located next to the boarding school of **Mr. Estebenet**⁷. At his suggestion, the brothers bought this house at 46 Rue des Menuts. The purchase allowed the brothers to begin classes while Mr. Estebenet allowed the brothers to use the playing fields of his boarding school. Mr. Jean-Baptiste Estebenet was a former sodalist and was a good friend of Fr. Chaminade.

c. The beginning of classes on the “Rue des Menuts.”

On November 4, 1818, Bro. Auguste Brougnon-Perrière wrote a letter, on behalf of Fr. Chaminade, and asked the Administration for Public Instruction in Bordeaux for legal authorization to open a boarding school. The Administration for Public Instruction gave this permission on May 11, 1819. Although the school year was almost finished, the brothers decided to enroll several students immediately. This would ensure that the school would have its first students ready at the beginning of the next school year. On June 15, Fr. Pierre Goudelin, a Jesuit and former sodalist of Fr. Chaminade, presided over the Mass of the Holy Spirit. The school year ended with 15 students already enrolled.

Meanwhile, a second group of five religious (Jean Amenaud, Jean-Marie Mémain, David Monier, Jean Neuville and Louis Rothéa) had come to reinforce the original core group of seven. During the summer, on August 20, 1819, Bro. Antoine Cantau died. He was the first Brother in the Society of Mary to die.

The Council of the Society of Mary on September 2, 1819, issued the following statement: *We put forth as a principle that [the Institute] would have for its principal works the education of youth from the middle class, missions, retreats and the establishment and direction of sodalities.*⁸

It happened that Mr. Estebenet, who nourished the hope of buying a large house on the Rue de Mirail in order to transfer his boarding school there, was not able to obtain the house. Thus, since the two establishments (that of the Society of Mary and his own) were next to each other, both groups came to a mutual agreement to unite under the direction of the Society of Mary. In exchange, the Society of Mary would pay Mr. Estebenet the appropriate sum of money. Fr. Chaminade consented and the agreement was signed on October 27, 1819. Thus, the Society of Mary

⁷ The boarding school of Mr. Estebenet was located at 47 Rue des Menuts; today number 53.

⁸ According to Lalanne, in *The Spirit of our Foundation*, III, 6

became the owner of the oldest and most prestigious private academic school in the city of Bordeaux. Mr. Estebenet continued to teach in the school, which, from that point on, was under the direction of Bro. Auguste Brougnon-Perrière.

With this merger, the new address of the school became *46-47 Rue des Menuts*. The school then received the name *Pension Auguste*, the name of the Brother who was principal. He was the person who signed the purchase agreement. The reason he had to sign for the contract was that the Society of Mary at that time did not have official recognition from the State. The new school year began on *November 3, 1819*, under the leadership of Bro. Auguste Brougnon-Perrière, assisted by Bro. Louis Rothéa and Bro. Jean-Baptiste Lalanne. Bro. Louis had just pronounced his vows on August 15, 1819. All of the other religious worked there as teachers and supervisors.

d) From the Pension Auguste (Rue des Menuts) to the Institution Sainte Marie (Rue de Mirail)

After his priestly ordination on December 22, 1821, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Lalanne was able to devote himself completely to the school. He had two major duties: Head of Zeal and Head of Instruction. In this way he became the soul of the institution while Brougnon-Perrière took charge of the administration and finances of the school. With these two men, the Pension Auguste quickly acquired immense prestige in the area of education in Bordeaux. Bishop d'Aviau, ordinary at that time, came every year for the distribution of awards. The literary meetings and the general meetings of the Congregation that took place there were true literary feasts. The whole city as well as the various newspapers talked and wrote about them at length.

In 1824, the location proved to be too small to accommodate all of the enrolled students and those students who wished to enroll in the school. All the room available was needed for the 120 students they already had. Fr. Chaminade felt the need to acquire the hotel Razac, a mansion located on the *rue de Mirail*. The move took place at Easter, 1825, and the school took the name *Institution Sainte Marie*. From that time on, the distribution of awards took place in the interior courtyard. In this new location, Brougnon-Perrière and Lalanne were able to fully employ the educational methods of the Society of Mary.

Thus, the Society of Mary had now set up its first secondary school and solidified its educational prestige. The Institution Sainte-Marie Grand-Lebrun, located today in

the section of the city called Bourdeaux-Caudéran, is the historical successor of this first Marianist school.



Sainte Marie Grand Lebrun as it appears today, in Bordeaux

e) Concerning the official date of the Society of Mary's commitment to education

As we saw earlier, the foundation of the first academic establishment of the Society of Mary took place in several steps. Each of these steps was important. They each affected the process that led to the birth of our educational tradition. Additionally, people such as Auguste Brougnon-Perrière, Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, Jean-Baptiste Collineau, who were working in the Pension Estebenet when the school passed into the hands of the Society of Mary, had entered into the area of education at different times. When we want to talk about the commitment of the Society of Mary to education, each of those dates could be important. Each date would tell us something about our history in education.

Among the different possible dates for celebrating this bicentenary, the General Council has chosen **November 3**. On this date in 1819, the beginning of a new institution coincided with the beginning of a new academic school year. But, since the date of November 3 falls on a Sunday in 2019, each Unit can choose the date nearest that one to celebrate this bicentenary. This choice of date can be made according to local needs and situations.

3. THE VISION OF BLESSED CHAMINADE AND OF THE FIRST MARIANIST EDUCATORS CONCERNING SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Given the enormous needs of France at the time, in terms of school education, the material contribution of the Society of Mary and other religious institutes was rather limited. However, Chaminade offered the vision of an educational culture that was different from that which prevailed in France at the time. In connection with the concerns of the last General Chapter of the Society of Mary, in 2018, we can highlight some aspects of it that our educational tradition has carefully preserved.

a. A vision for our schools: “teach to educate”

Chaminade was profoundly convinced of the following fact: The Society of Mary only opens schools in order to assure “Christian education.” That means, “...to instill religion into the minds and hearts of others and thus, from tender infancy even to the most advanced age, uplift them to a fervent and faithful profession of true Christianity...” (Art. 251 of the Constitutions of 1839).

Since children today rarely visit the priest in their parish and owing to the fact that religious formation may not play much of a role in their home lives, there is a need for another social or institutional environment in which formation in faith can take place, in the context of lively and adult models of apostolic faith. Students trained in this way, having completed their schooling, would gradually, year after year, be able to re-christianize and transform first their families and, consequently, the society. This alternative environment is the school.

The fact that we see Christian education as the principal objective of our schools’ mission does not mean that we, in any way, neglect instruction. Rather, it is a major reason to take even greater care in our instruction because:

The chief purpose for which parents sent their children to schools was to have them instructed in knowledge and skills that would prepare them to make a living. Without

*such instruction, children would not attend schools and without the presence of children in schools the opportunity for their Christian formation would be lost.*⁹

Because of this, the Society of Mary put maximum effort into the good running of its schools and in the perfection of its teaching methods. This is true because we are convinced that “[Christian] education can be given only at the time of instruction” (*Constitutions* of 1839, Article 266). Thus, it is very important to broaden the benefits of a Christian education to many other people. We must always be careful never to stray from this, because “*The Society only teaches to impart a Christian upbringing; this is why we have placed all the works of teaching under the title of Christian Education.*” (Article 256)

This fact highlights for us a major set of instructions to be given to all of the educators working in our establishments. Blessed Chaminade states this clearly in his letter of August 24, 1839:

Yours is to impress upon the teachers what a great mistake they would make if they were to limit their endeavors to instruction in human learning, if they were to put all their care and glory into the making of scholars and not of Christians, or into the gaining of a worldly reputation. Then they would be forgetting that they are missionaries of Mary and would descend from the high estate of apostles, in order to degrade themselves to the base level of those who work in the educational factories of our century.

b. A vision concerning the students: reaching ALL OF THEM and being attentive to EACH ONE

Concerning the students confided to the care of the Society of Mary, Chaminade wanted the teachers to share certain convictions:

- *It is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish.* (*Constitutions* of 1839, Article 259)
- It suffices for everyone “*to be as God wants him to be*”. (Article 262);
- *We do not all receive the same measure of graces and the same destination.* (Article 262).

⁹ Joseph Lackner: *Marianist Charism and Educational Mission*. Collection “Marianist Educational History and Future”, 2012. Vol. 1. P. 54.

From these convictions, certain behaviors will follow:

- First, and most fundamentally, the teacher must be touched by “*all the dispositions of the Savior and all the tenderness of Mary*” toward the students (Article 259).
- No matter what the number before him, the teachers must “*expand his heart in order to have them enter and to carry them there unceasingly.*” (Article 259).

These directions have a concrete impact on the life of Marianist teachers. The following passage from “*The New Method*” (1831) makes the essence of these ideas explicit:

The Society believes that it would fail in its duty if it closed its doors to children from the rural districts, whose homes are so distant that they could not attend regularly every morning and afternoon, and still less to those who could not attend every day. It does not refuse admission to the children of working men living in the city, if family needs oblige them sometimes to remain at home. It does not wish to forsake such as have been endowed with less intelligence, or have not been able to keep the pace with their more fortunate companions, and whose advancement might be arrested or at least retarded, by their presence in the same class with other more talented. It does not even abandon intractable characters before it has exhausted all means of reformation.

In summary, the spirit of Marianist education is to reach as many students as possible, while at the same time adapting to their differences, as God does with us.

c. Vision concerning educators: they must be MULTIPLIED through specific training

Blessed Chaminade never described the attitudes that his teachers should possess. Nor did he describe in detail how they were to behave. He only put forth a few general descriptive terms like “virtuous,” “Christian,” and “dedicated.” He did specify that they should be “animated” by the spirit of the Society of Mary.

- Before all else they should possess the conviction that the goal for which they are striving as teachers was that of Christian Education. That is to say, the cultivation of a Christian character in the students (*Constitutions* of 1839, Articles 251 and 256).
- No matter what subject they were teaching, they must not forget that they have “*children to instruct, in order to inspire in them the fear and the love of God in*

order to preserve them and turn them from vice, to attract them to virtue, to make of them good and faithful Christians” (Article 257).

This conviction provides the fundamental template, an “inalterable intention” (Article 258) that structures the entire endeavor. For that reason, then, it was not necessary that the “greatest part of the time be devoted to the teaching or practices of religion”, because into whatever they taught or did was already integrated with the Christian spirit. They impart “*a Christian lesson by every word, gesture and look*” (Article 258).

All of this explains why Chaminade gave particular importance to *Normal Schools*. He considered them to be a work especially inspired by God. Having realized that the regeneration of France through the school, which was his objective, could never be achieved by the members of the Society of Mary alone, he concentrated much of his energy on the formation of lay teachers. The following letter addressed to Mons. Ferdinand Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, illustrates this preoccupation quite clearly. He wrote this letter in 1843.

Since the foundation of the Society of Mary, it was arranged that, if for the perseverance of the subjects it was not possible to isolate the Brothers and to send them in groups of less than three, help would nevertheless come to the Communes, either too poor or too small, by the organization of normal schools alongside our novitiates, where we would train for the work of teaching, the subjects who, not having religious vocation but wanting to live a Christian manner and to devote themselves to the education of youth, would be sent to us by Providence.

We also can see that, even if the formation of good teachers was an urgent necessity, Fr. Chaminade was opposed to sending one or two religious who would be isolated in a small village. The Marianist vocation is a vocation to community. But, since the rural French population, which was quite numerous at that time in history, needed teachers, a plan was set up to establish a Normal School at Saint-Remy. He would occasionally refer to these places as being the “seminary for schoolteachers.”

It proved impossible to implement this idea as planned. However, the last administrative act of Fr. Chaminade as Superior General of the Society of Mary was to accept the administration of a normal school in Sion, Switzerland, in 1845. He strongly believed that in order to create the educational culture that he envisioned, it

was crucial to offer to both Religious and Lay teachers specific and careful formations.

The most recent General Chapter of the Society of Mary, in 2018, returned to this thought and insisted on continued attention to this concern. The Chapter asked that each Unit have a well-defined Formation Plan for teachers. This plan would assure that all the teachers, in particular the lay teachers involved in our works, would receive a formation in the Marianist method of education. This formation in the Marianist Charism would begin as “initial” formation, and then continue as “ongoing” formation.

4. MARIANIST EDUCATION TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER

Marianist education began modestly on the Rue des Menuts in Bordeaux, in 1819. There were 15 students and a core group of teachers composed almost exclusively of Marianist religious. By 1824, Marianist education reached 120 students at the *Pension Auguste*, which later became the *Institution Sainte-Marie* and moved to the Rue de Mirail.

Today, as the Assistant General for Education noted in the statistics published in May 2019,¹⁰ formal Marianist education reaches 5 continents and 24 countries. There are 97 educational institutions, including three universities. Today Marianist education serves more than 112,155 young people across the world. In addition, there are 7,833 educators, religious and lay, who guide these young people.

After 200 years of educational experience, the Society of Mary today enjoys a rich educational tradition; something for which we are very thankful.

¹⁰ *Via Latina* 22, #280, May, 2019.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING THE BICENTENARY

Here are some suggestions for celebrating the commemoration of this bicentennial. We have set the date of *November 3, 2019* for this celebration. We do not necessarily want to make this celebration a large, grand affair. However, all of the Units are invited to participate in this common venture. By hosting several symbolic events, we will reaffirm our common missionary identity. The celebration, as simple as it might be, could include at least two approaches.

a. A Pedagogical Approach

- As an educational community, you could review and work with *Volume 1* and/or *Volume 4* from the collection: *Marianist Education: Heritage and Future*. In them, you will find a discussion of *the Marianist Charism and our educational mission*. These two volumes discuss the beginnings of the involvement of the Society of Mary in education. They present this history in a simple, yet updated manner. In *Volume 1* you can read and study with interest, the first part titled: *The Apostolic Intention of Chaminade in the Foundation of Schools* (pp. 17-70 in the English edition). If you prefer *Volume 4*, you will find the same theme treated, but in different words. This section is entitled: *The Roots of An Identity* (pp. 18-113). You can find the digital version of these texts at: www.marianist.org tab – Education.
- The General Chapter of 2018 asked us to assure that every person who collaborates in our works would receive *initial* and *ongoing formation* (cf. CG 2019, #59b). We can therefore seize the opportunity offered by this bicentenary to reflect and work together on all the themes that a person who enters in our works needs to address, at least once, so that his contribution to our mission is optimal and his personal development and experience of the charism are effective.

b. A Pastoral and liturgical approach

One or several of the following actions could be undertaken:

- On November 3, 2019, the date of the bicentennial celebration, or another date that is more convenient, but close to November 3, prepare a time for prayer

and/or a Eucharistic celebration. This celebration would bring together the entire educational community of that establishment in order to give thanks.

- The religious communities that do not participate directly in the life of an educational community should find another appropriate way to join in the celebration.
- Prepare a festive moment, which offers everybody the opportunity to gather while celebrating the very identity of Marianist educational works.
- Organize several leisure or recreational activities. These could also offer the possibility of including charitable actions toward or gestures in solidarity with a school that is different from yours.
- Symbolically highlight all of the special features of the school (e.g. courses, important aspects of our heritage, the name of the school, the particular location of the school...).
- Include in the celebration itself, or at some other time of that day, the common recitation of the enclosed prayer.

A poster specifically created for this occasion will be available on the General Administration website (www.marianist.org). You can download these images and use them during the festivities of that day.

6. A PRAYER TO SAY TOGETHER

On the day of the Bicentennial Commemoration, it would be good if the educational community could find a moment to pray together, using the following prayer.

We will only say the first part when all, educators and educated, are present. The second part is intended to be said when the educators are gathered alone, among themselves, as during a teachers' meeting.

- 1 -

In the wake of two centuries of Marianist Education...

Mary,

your son, Jesus, received from you the life of a child in our world,
a life like ours.

Like every mother,

you nurtured him that he might develop this life to the fullest:
from you and Joseph, he learned to feel human love,
protection, esteem, encouragement.

From both, he learned the language of his people,
the joy of the encounter,

the look of admiration in the face of beauty and kindness.

He learned to work humbly with his hands,
to recognize the work of others.

With you and with Joseph, your husband,

he grew up and became a competent and
responsible person among his people and in his country.

From you he learned the history of the people to which he belonged;

From him, you received the grace to read this history

with an ever-increasing love and with more attention
to the presence of God, his Father, within people and events.

Mary, Joseph, educators

who awakened in your son
the discovery of all the riches of a human life,
you have received from him every day an increasingly awakened heart,
sensitive to the wonders of ordinary life.

Help us, in our task as educators,

to give generously to these young people what is best
and most necessary for their lives;
and to receive humbly and gratefully from them
the joy of a personal life filled with happiness and hope.

And to those of us, who are the ones who receive these gifts,

give us a heart that hears the calls of those in need in our world
so that the gifts we have received may be used to make the world better.

- 2 -

Educators' prayer

Mary, formed by the Holy Spirit,
you gave human life to the Son of God.
With Joseph, your husband, you taught him
to see creation with admiration and respect,
to see others with love and tenderness;
to see injustices with sadness and indignation.

While you taught him the history of your people, the People of God,
he made a new understanding emerge in your hearts
leading you ever deeper and deeper into this Holy History.

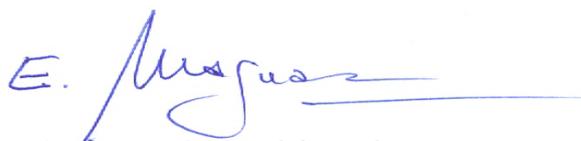
Mary, be with us in the education of these young people
entrusted to us;
Inspire in us words, gestures and looks
that help them flourish in the best and most beautiful ways;
Open our hearts and our minds to gratefully discover
the wealth of renewal and hope
that every young person brings to us in return.

This prayer has been composed by Fr. Bernard Vial, SM, one of the spiritual guides one may encounter when visiting the *Madeleine*, our foundational house in Bordeaux.

The theme which inspires this prayer is: *education is reciprocal*. The educator gives, but also at the same time receives. This “give and take” is necessary in order for true education to exist. Thus, as this prayer is formulated, it may continue to be used beyond the Bicentennial that we presently commemorate.

May we all have a wonderful celebration! Please let us know about how your celebrations went in the various places.

Essodomna Maximin Magnan, SM



Assistant General for Education

Rome, September 12, 2019

On the Solemnity of the Holy Name of Mary