

Leadership Rooted in Faith and Courage: Lessons from Marie Thérèse de Lamourous and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon
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In an era when women's public leadership was limited by societal norms, Marie Thérèse de Lamourous and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon carved bold, faith-filled paths that reveal timeless principles of transformational leadership. Their lives offer a Marianist model of leadership rooted in courage, compassion, community, and mission.

Leadership as Courage in Crisis – Marie Thérèse de Lamourous

Leadership is often romanticized as commanding presence or charismatic authority, but the life of Marie Thérèse de Lamourous offers a quieter, more radical model: leadership as steadfast courage in times of crisis. During the violent upheaval of the French Revolution, when religious expression was criminalized and clergy were driven underground, Marie Thérèse chose not to retreat but to engage. She became a key figure in the clandestine Catholic network, offering spiritual support and organizing secret Masses—acts that could have cost her life. Her courage was not loud or defiant, but deliberate, disciplined, and deeply rooted in faith.

Marie Thérèse's leadership took another remarkable turn after the Revolution, when she responded to the needs of women rejected by society. In 1801, she became the director of the Miséricorde (House of Mercy) in Bordeaux, a house of refuge for women escaping prostitution and exploitation. In an age when such women were commonly abandoned or condemned, Marie Thérèse chose accompaniment over judgment. She offered them not only shelter but also dignity, purpose, and the possibility of transformation. Her leadership was compassionate yet firm—she set high expectations for moral and spiritual renewal, while maintaining an unshakable belief in each woman's worth.

What stands out most in Marie Thérèse's leadership is her moral clarity. She never sought recognition or authority for its own sake; instead, she led because others needed her to, often at personal cost. She had the humility to listen, the inner strength to endure, and the moral imagination to create alternatives when existing systems failed. In

times of crisis, she did not mirror the chaos around her; rather, she became a steady presence, a source of light.

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous teaches us that courage in leadership is not always about dramatic gestures. Sometimes, it looks like quiet resistance, persistent love, and the choice to stay present when others turn away. In her, we find a model of courageous, faith-driven leadership that calls us to lead not from ego, but from conviction and compassion.

Leadership as Vision and Founding Spirit – Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon

Where Marie Thérèse de Lamourous led through crisis, Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon led through vision. From a young age, Adèle felt a profound call to serve God and build community. Born into nobility but drawn to simplicity and mission, she began corresponding with other young women to deepen their spiritual lives. This network, known as the “Association,” grew into a dynamic circle of faith and mutual support—an early sign of Adèle’s gift for leadership rooted in relationship and shared purpose.

Adèle’s leadership flourished in collaboration with Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, with whom she cofounded the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Marianist Sisters) in 1816. Her vision was not simply to form a religious order, but to empower women to be active agents of renewal in the post-Revolution Church. At a time when women’s voices were often sidelined, Adèle offered an alternative: women religious who were deeply contemplative yet boldly apostolic—teachers, missionaries, and builders of community.

Her leadership was marked by intentionality and strategic thinking. She wrote constitutions, managed correspondence with Church authorities, and founded convents—always balancing spiritual depth with practical effectiveness. Adèle inspired others not through hierarchy but through shared commitment to the Marianist mission: to bring Christ to the world by living and serving in the spirit of Mary. Her capacity to envision what did not yet exist—and to mobilize others to bring it to life—reflects the best of visionary leadership.

In Adèle, we encounter a woman who led with joy, purpose, and unwavering hope. Her legacy challenges us to imagine leadership not as command-and-control, but as calling and co-creation. Her faith was expansive, her mission clear, and her leadership a quiet revolution of love.

Marianist Leadership as Relational and Mission-Driven

Both Marie Thérèse and Adèle reflect a Marianist approach to leadership that is relational, communal, and mission-focused. At the heart of Marianist spirituality is the belief that leadership is not about personal advancement, but about fostering a faith-filled community that reflects Christ through Mary. These women did not lead alone—they led in communion with others, empowering their companions, forming lay collaborators, and creating sustainable structures of care and service.

Relational leadership, as lived by Marie Thérèse and Adèle, centers on trust, humility, and mutual responsibility. They listened more than they commanded. They formed people more than they managed outcomes. Their leadership was rooted in accompaniment—walking with others rather than walking ahead of them. This deeply human approach to leadership remains profoundly relevant today, especially in a time when people long for connection, authenticity, and purpose.

Equally important, their leadership was mission-driven. Whether sheltering the vulnerable or forming a new religious community, both women responded to real human needs with courage and creativity. Their faith was not private; it was a force for healing, justice, and transformation. In them, we see how spiritual conviction and social responsibility are not at odds but intertwined.

This Marianist model of leadership reminds us that to lead is to serve, to form others, and to keep mission at the center of all we do. Through Marie Thérèse and Adèle, we are called to a leadership that is bold in vision, generous in relationship, and rooted in the enduring mission of Christ.

A Marianist Model for Today's Leaders

In Marie Thérèse de Lamourous and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, we encounter two women whose leadership defied the limitations of their time and whose lives still speak powerfully to ours. Marie Thérèse showed that courage in crisis begins with deep interior strength and unwavering commitment to the dignity of every person. Adèle demonstrated that leadership rooted in vision, faith, and collaboration can ignite movements that last for generations. Together, they offer a Marianist model of leadership that is deeply relational, mission-oriented, and spiritually grounded.

In a world that often equates leadership with authority or visibility, these Marianist women remind us that the most transformative leadership flows from humility, faith, and love in action. Their legacy invites today's leaders—especially women and

those in service-driven vocations—to lead not from ego or fear, but from a place of conviction, compassion, and community.

To follow in their footsteps is to lead with the heart of Mary: responsive to the world's needs, grounded in faith, and fully committed to the work of forming others in love. This is not just a historical lesson: It is a living call.