

**THE SODALITY OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR**

**INFORMATION BOOKLET**

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Mary**

**Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**

**8 December 2003  
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*“Jesus said to His Mother:  
‘Behold Thy son.’*

*“Then to the disciple He said,  
‘Behold thy Mother.’”*

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Mary

## **THE SODALITY OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR**

The Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar is a community of Catholic men and women under the patronage of Our Lady of the Pillar and committed to the service of the Church in the world. By an act of consecration to Jesus through His Mother Mary, its members freely and publicly give themselves to Christ to carry on His work on earth. The Sodality exists to strengthen its members in their spiritual and apostolic formation and in their union with Christ through apostolic action. Though it meets in various locations, the sodality is constituted at St. John's Home, Rockaway Park, New York, and places itself within the Family of Mary and under the direction of the Society of Mary (Marianists).

### **History**

At Chaminade High School, a Marianist boys' school in Mineola, New York, sodalists were formed in the spiritual and apostolic life according to the precepts of Father William Joseph Chaminade. A member of the faculty, Father Anthony Jansen, S.M., organized a sodality of alumni to continue the formation begun in the high school. The Alumni Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar held its first meeting on December 28, 1958, and met several times yearly when students were home from college. Father Jansen's letters of spiritual direction and organized retreats kept the community alive. In time, members living year-round on Long Island formed a cell which met monthly for prayer, reflection, instruction, and planning. This nucleus of the full community organized programs for and maintained contact with the entire membership.

The central task of Father Jansen's sodality was to strengthen the young men's commitment to the Marianist way of life, filial piety, or becoming other sons of Mary, who formed Jesus in his earthly life. The message succeeded, and Father Jansen's instruction led to the formation of cells of sodalists in Boston, Worcester, Providence, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. By 1963, these small groups met periodically for prayer and discussion and recruited others to the sodality.

The most effective channel for formation, apostolic involvement, and recruitment from 1961 to 1966 was the sodality's summer program, a series of weekly lectures Sunday evenings at Chaminade High School. The program brought speakers, including Daniel Callahan, Ralph Caso, and Philip Berrigan, to the members and the community at large, and issues involving the future of the Church and the state of the modern world received provocative analysis and enthusiastic discussion. The point was to strengthen commitment to the process of bringing Christ to a world stirred by the emergence of nations from colonialism, struggles with materialism and the Communist challenge, and Vatican Council II reforms. During these years, women were welcomed into the community, and many quickly assumed leadership positions.

By 1966, the Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar evolved into a family of college and graduate students, young working singles, and newly-married couples. Serious, often painful debate ensued on the nature of the community, how serious a commitment its consecration to Mary should be, how often it should meet, and what its meetings should contain. The debate led to a sodality of a dozen members, retitled the Christian Life Community of Long Island: the Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar, who met weekly in members' homes and remained under the direction of the Marianists at Chaminade. These members accepted the serious commitment of

consecration of their lives to Jesus through Mary. In 1969, they offered associate membership to those willing to live the sodality life in union with CLCLI but unable to participate regularly at meetings because of geographic distance. The CLCLI revised its constitution to identify the nature and purpose of the sodality.

The 1970s brought the challenge of devising meetings and programs to keep pace with the maturing spiritual and apostolic needs of a membership growing in family, parish, and social responsibilities and diverging in interests. When the Marianists at Chaminade redirected their priorities and withdrew from direction of CLCLI, the sodality found guidance and help from the Marianists at St. John's Home in Rockaway Park, who in October 1972 assumed active direction of CLCLI, planned meetings, and celebrated the Eucharist with the members, who now met at the Home.

The task of keeping in touch with one another between meetings and knitting ever-diversifying lives together was a critical problem of CLCLI, whose members now spread from Brooklyn to Suffolk and whose associates and friends were scattered across the country and around the world. Through the early 1970s, quarterly newsletters sufficed to inform all about members' activities, but a more current source of information was required. On February 18, 1974, the weekly (later semi-monthly) *Sodality Bulletin* appeared. This brief news sheet announced upcoming meetings and reported the whereabouts and activities of sodalists. And as a device to strengthen friendships among members, the community inaugurated Broadway theater excursions on April 21, 1976. To date, members have shared over seventy shows.

In 1978, the sodality marked its twentieth birthday. It now met every three weeks on Sunday evenings usually at St. John's Home. From January 1975 to June 1981, it made available

monthly prayer meetings in members' homes for those able to attend. In 1978, it replaced the annual retreat with fall and spring days of recollection held at retreat houses or St. John's Home, and that same year the community revised its constitution and by-laws. On November 24, 1978, fifty-five sodalists, family, and friends gathered in the basement of the Convent of the Holy Child in Old Westbury to celebrate a liturgy marking two decades of community life. Having advanced in spiritual and apostolic commitment and stabilized in numbers, having united more fully with other lay and religious Marianists in the Family of Mary, the sodality listened with joy to Father Jansen's recorded message from Lusaka, Zambia, where he now served at Matero Secondary School. The founder reminded members of the need always to have confidence in and love the Mother of God, with whom he started the community.

CLCLI (SOLOP) in the 1980s saw the families of members grow and the role of sodality in members' lives develop. On July 11, 1981, nineteen children of friends and members joined in the sodality's first children's liturgy and picnic, an event marking the opening of the group to the full families of members. Indeed, families have been welcomed to paschal suppers, picnics, consecration masses, and other spiritual and social functions over the years, but the children's liturgy was the first designed especially for the young. Families are now an integral part of CLCLI's (SOLOP's) Memorial Day weekends at Cape May Point, New Jersey.

From the late 1960s into the mid-1980s, the sodality gathered at the Marianist residence at the southern tip of New Jersey during Memorial Day weekend and occasionally Labor Day weekend for spiritual discussion, prayer, and fun. After May 1983, as obligations restricted the numbers of those able to attend, the weekends ended, but in May, CLCLI (SOLOP) resumed the program and centered it on family spiritual and social activities. Since 1990, the Memorial Day

Cape May weekend has been the occasion of a Family of Mary gathering of lay people from the whole New York Province of the Society of Mary, and CLCLI (SOLOP) diaspora, the sodality's associate members, have participated with their families.

The apostolic responsibilities of CLCLI (SOLOP) members have been a matter of discussion over the years. As recently as 1996, there have been calls for group involvement in some apostolic project to supplement the members' individual apostolates. However, the work and family commitments of members and their wide geographic separation have made such involvement impossible. The community has tried over the years to involve itself in the international sodality movement and maintained membership in the National Federation of Christian Life Communities for many years. CLCLI (SOLOP) had representation on the Family of Mary Council of the Marianists' New York Province, and for two years in the early 1980s the sodality created contacts with similar Marianist communities across the country by composing newsletters sharing what each group was doing.

For several years, CLCLI (SOLOP) accepted responsibility for Family of Mary gatherings and liturgies first in West Hempstead at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish chapel and, after 1985, at St. John's Home, where each Columbus Day weekend (the Feast of Our Lady of the Pillar) CLCLI (SOLOP) joined with the St. John's Marianists, Marianist Associates, and the Marianist League in a liturgy celebrating the Marianist World Day of Prayer. In 1996, CLCLI (SOLOP) members helped form the Board of Directors of Fr. Paul Landolfi's Saragossa Press, dedicated to disseminating Mary's message. And in 1998, the community began investing in a farm program in Mexico, helping a family initiate a herd of goats in order to provide the family with a regular income. The program is called the Marianist Animal Gift Program: DeCamp, a rural

development project of the Marianists in Mexico.

Aside from these activities, the community's group apostolate became the people of Misión Noell in Villalba, southern Puerto Rico, near Ponce. In 1978, Father Raymond Middendorf, who had helped direct CLCLI (SOLOP) at St. John's Home, assumed a position at the mountain mission parish. CLCLI (SOLOP) kept contact with him, and one member spent much of each summer working with him and the poor in the barrios. Now, at the sodality's request, Father Ray selects each summer one or two barrio families in need of help, and CLCLI (SOLOP) adopts these families and solicits funds for them and the mission through the Sodality Christmas Fund, which originally (circa 1963) collected canned goods and gingerbread houses for the people assisted by the Little Sisters of the Sick Poor.

Father Ray uses the money to purchase clothing and household goods for the families and to help other needs of the mission. In late autumn, CLCLI (SOLOP) meets to pray for the families and wrap personal Christmas gifts which Father Ray distributes to the families on the Epiphany, the Feast of the Three Kings. The families, in turn, pray for those who help them. This effort is the sole group apostolate of CLCLI (SOLOP). However, the community expects all members to choose a personal apostolate.

No human association passes without change, and certainly CLCLI (SOLOP) has seen its share. Its government has simplified, its understanding of membership has deepened, and its realization of Mary's role in members' lives has grown. On April 13, 1986, the community approved a new constitution and by-laws, with a preamble identifying CLCLI's (SOLOP's) mission as calling its members "individually and communally to personal holiness through a living of the Christ life and specific consecration to Christ through Mary." Members "imitate

Mary in her openness to the Father and allow Mary to form Christ in their lives, so that they might lead all people to Jesus Christ.”

Wherever members moved, whether to Maryland or Massachusetts, San Francisco or New Jersey or Pennsylvania, they remained alert to the mission of CLCLI (SOLOP) and helped form or strengthen new communities of faith. Back on Long Island, the sodality inaugurated a major recruitment in September 1985. Apprehensive at first as to how new people would understand and fit into a membership that had formed into a family and knew each other very well, the older members, meeting now at the Marianists’ Inwood residence, soon found fresh enthusiasm because of the commitment, talent, and love of those they welcomed in.

On October 8, 1983, CLCLI (SOLOP) members and friends shared a twenty-fifth anniversary Eucharist at the Sacred Heart Chapel of Molloy College, Rockville Centre. Father Ray Middendorf, whom the sodality flew up from Puerto Rico; Father Jack Kelley, then-director of CLCLI (SOLOP); and Father Anthony Jansen, on home visitation from his Zambian duties, concelebrated a mass of thanksgiving and renewed commitment to the Marianist calling.

At a party at the Coral House following mass, members, their families and friends danced, supped, and wistfully watched slides of 1960s beach parties, members’ weddings, the 1967 trip to the Montreal World Exposition, St. Swithin’s Day picnics at Holy Child School, Wildwood amusement rides, Christmas carolling, and pizza parties. They shared memories also of the summer day in 1976 when half the community met on Long Island as the other half met in Vienna, Austria, for prayer during the community’s European tour. And the New York Province Provincial, Father Patrick Tonry, sent the community a beautiful, Italian, hand-carved statue of the Madonna and Child, a statue that has since spent time in members’ homes and at

all Sodality meetings.

Less spectacularly, but no less fervidly, the community marked thirty years together on the Feast of Christ the King, November 22, 1987. Father Jansen again presided, and messages from members across the nation included renewals of consecration and reminded all that the group's heart is faith and hope in Christ and total cooperation with His Mother Mary.

In the 1990s and into the new millennium, the community continues to meet monthly, sometimes in members' homes and sometimes at Molloy College in Rockville Centre. CLCLI (SOLOP) holds fast to its ties to the Family of Mary and keeps the Society of Mary fully aware of its activities. At times, the community invites speakers, such as Father Conrad Dietz of Cathedraql Residence of the Immaculate Conception, who offered a 1991 spring program for CLCLI (SOLOP), and Sister Jeanne Agnes Geraghty, O.P., who offered reflections on prayer, the rosary, and apostolic life. Since 1994, however, Father Paul Landolfi, S.M., has instructed the members in the vigors and values of Father Chaminade's System of Virtues.

At St. John's Home on September 11, 1993, Father Anthony Jansen presided at a Mass marking the opening of CLCLI's (SOLOP's) thirty-fifth year. Days before he was set to return to Zambia to resume work at Matero Secondary School in Lusaka, Father Anthony brought together the sodality, the Society of Mary, the Marianist League, and Marianist Associates into a visible reminder of our union with Mary in her Family.

In 1994, the community began a 13-month examination of the text of its Act of Consecration to Jesus through Mary, following discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the consecrated life. The proposed revision went out to members and friends, and responses came from as far away as Father Jansen in Zambia. Father Paul Landolfi helpfully directed the discussion

to a fruitful end, and on June 25, 1995, the community adopted its new Act of Consecration.

The years since 2000 have seen a stability in the community. The sodality reverted to its original title, The Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar, on October 17, 1999; adopted the Royal English Department of Molloy College in Rockville Centre as the venue for most of its meetings; and accepted a monthly meeting schedule, a change dictated by the growing apostolic and liturgical responsibilities of its members. In 2002, at the behest of Director Father Paul Landolfi, the community began to focus on its apostolic activities. Father asked whether the group as a whole could have an impact on social issues that members might bring to it. And so the community opened its meetings to presentations of public policy issues in the expectation of a group letter to influence those deciding such matters.

Through the years following the focus on apostolic endeavors, members struggled to find ways to affect the development of issues such as illegal immigration policy and poverty on Long Island. Mary Weiler, a sodality member and director of Outreach in St. Sylvester Parish, Medford, regularly reminded members of ways to keep in touch with legislators and brought the community to use its Christmas Fund to help the indigent on Long Island after Father Ray Middendorf retired from Mission Noell in 2005. The community also spent 2007 examining and praying over Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*.

The year 2008 marks the sodality's fiftieth anniversary, a time of reflection and celebration. But not a time to relax. The world needs dedicated Catholic laymen to spread the word of the Lord and accomplish Our Lady's mission. Whatever Mary has in mind for this community, however long it survives and makes a difference in people's lives, depends on the seriousness with which each member takes this consecration and collaborates with the Mother

of God in the work of her divine Son. The journey has been long, mysterious, painful at times, more often joyful, and always full of wonder. But the journey is far from finished. With Mary, the sodality will not fail.

### **Marks of a Sodality Member**

The sodality forms its members into alert, active, dedicated Catholics committed to bringing Christ's word to a distracted world. Members strive toward critical, reflective acceptance of the Church's moral and dogmatic teachings, service of the Church, daily prayer, full participation in the sacraments, active involvement in a chosen apostolate, mature and stable commitment to the sodality community, special devotion to the Mother of God in the Marianist tradition, and a consecrated way of life.

### **Consecration**

Consecration is an especially significant trait. It is the setting aside of oneself for God's purpose. The sodality consecration is an act of love in response to God's call to the members, who freely offer their life to Jesus through Mary and request that God accept them. In the sodality, consecration is made at a public ceremony before a representative of the Church (usually a priest). Consecration, always made within a particular community, requires not only an intensified spiritual and apostolic commitment but also a duty to aid other members in living the sodality way of life.

Consecration, a recommitment to the Catholic life initiated at baptism and strengthened at confirmation, demands reflection and prayer. It is therefore permitted only after a period of preparation during which the member learns its meaning and responsibilities. Upon completion

of this preparation and with the approval of the permanently consecrated members, in consultation with the sodality director, one may make a limited commitment (temporary consecration), renewable for several years and leading to permanent consecration. Though consecration is a serious commitment, breaking the promise does not involve sin.

### **The Sodality Act of Consecration**

The sodality's Act of Consecration, recited at the annual Consecration Mass in December and at the conclusion of regular cell meetings, has undergone various permutations. The current version the community adopted on June 25, 1995, following close examination of the meaning of each phrase:

O loving God, we thank You for having called us to be members of the Family of Mary and for inviting us to be consecrated to You through Mary, Our Lady of the Pillar, and in her spirit of faith and love.

We praise You, for You have always loved us, calling us out of darkness and sin through Baptism, strengthening us with Your own Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and calling us to a deeper faith-filled life through this Consecration.

Your Spirit molds us into the likeness of Jesus, Your Son. May we learn each day to listen more closely and to follow the inspiration of Your Spirit.

Mary, we seek to imitate your faith. With a mother's love you guide us in our growth in the likeness of Jesus. Help us to live as you taught your Son to live; teach us to love all people as Jesus does.

At this moment, we offer ourselves to you that we may become more like Jesus and be present in this world with the same disposition that He had. As you cooperate with God's plan to bring Christ to the world and lead all souls to Jesus, we desire to cooperate in your mission of bring Jesus to everyone and bringing everyone to Jesus.

We make this consecration to God through you and in your honor, Mary, within the Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar. May the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Amen.

## **Mary's Role in the Community**

According to its constitution, SOLOP is a community of Catholics "under the patronage of Our Lady of the Pillar." Traditionally, the sodality movement has accepted Mary as its model and has sought to emulate her total affirmative response to God's calling: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." The sodality recognizes that, in the pattern of salvation God has chosen for His people, they must freely accept His love, as did Mary throughout her life and certainly today.

The sodality consecration is therefore to Christ through, or in union with, Mary, the model and most successful Christian. *The General Principles of Christian Life Communities* most effectively summarizes Our Lady's role: Since the spirituality of our groups is centered on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ; she is the image of our own collaboration in His mission. Mary's cooperation with her Son began with her "fiat" in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation. This cooperation, continued all through her life, inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary, who by accepting the designs of God became our mother and the mother of all. Thus we confirm our own mission of service to the world received in baptism and confirmation. We venerate the Mother of God in a special manner, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.

## **Our Lady of the Pillar**

The particular title of Our Lady of the Pillar recalls the shrine in Saragossa, Spain, at which Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, exiled from France during the French Revolution, received the inspiration to return to Bordeaux and establish the Madeleine Sodality, which played an

important part in re-establishing the Church in southern France. From the Madeleine Sodality came the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. The Society of Mary created and directs the sodality and the entire Family of Mary.

Donald Attwater, in his book, *A Dictionary of Mary* (1956), details the importance of Our Lady of the Pillar to the Spanish kingdom:

The Virgin del Pilar is at Saragossa in Spain and is celebrated among all Spanish-speaking people. The statue stands on a marble pillar in St. Mary's Church, and it is popularly associate with the apostle St. James the Elder, who is said to have established the sanctuary in consequence of a vision of Mary. There is no serious evidence of the shrine older than the twelfth century. It is difficult to see the statue itself because of its stiff robes, but it is a small standing figure of Mother and Child, carved in wood. It was crowned with a diadem of great value in 1905. Military insignia are found near the statue in recognition of Mary's being patroness of the armed forces of Spain, under the title of Immaculate for the army, Mount Carmel for the navy, and Loretto for the air arm. The Feast of Our Lady of the Pillar is kept throughout Spain on October 12.

### **Sodality Motto**

The motto of the Sodality of Our Lady of the Pillar, reflecting the nature of the community's consecration, is "Ad Jesus, Per Mariam," "To Jesus, Through Mary."

### **The Apostolate**

Mary's *fiat* is particularly inspirational when sodality members approach their apostolate, bringing Christ to others in the world. All members, by their consecration, emphatically

proclaim themselves witnesses to Christ, in Whose Name the community works to sanctify society. Traditionally, sodalities adopt specific communal apostolates. SOLOP has attempted a number of group apostolates, beginning with the Summer Program, a public lecture series given in the 1960s at Chaminade High School in Mineola. The community sponsored two Philippine children in the 1970s through the Christian Children's Fund, and in the 1980s the sodality edited a newsletter attempting to unite other Marianist lay communities across America. But because members live far from each other and have diverse occupational and personal commitments, group apostolates have had to be limited.

In the 1980s, the sodality became involved with Mision Noell, a Marianist parish in Villalba, southern Puerto Rico. Former SOLOP director, Father Raymond Middendorf, S.M., began working at the mission in 1978. Through newsletters and vivid personal sharings, Father Ray interested the sodality in the people of his mountainside barrios (districts). One sodalist, Mary Russo, devoted portions of her summers in the 1980s to Father Ray's people and spent weeks visiting with and ministering to the parishioners and organizing parish records. On August 28, 1983, the sodality adopted Mision Noell as its group apostolate. The involvement took the form of prayer for the mission, its religious and laity, and material help in the form of donations of money and clothing.

Each Christmas, the community adopted one or two families whom Father Ray selected. The Sodality Christmas Fund collected money for the families and mission, and Father Ray used the money prudently to purchase what the families need. In early November, the sodality gathered to pray for the family and wrap small personal gifts which Father Ray brought them on the Epiphany, the Feast of the Three Kings, when Puerto Rican children receive their

presents. Before the families opened their gifts, they offered prayers for the sodalists. (Formerly, the night the sodality wrapped its gifts for the mission families was the night the community caroled in a member's neighborhood, though in those days the wrapping took place in mid-Advent.) As part of this apostolate, the community also paid a portion of the medication costs of a severely paralyzed young man in one of the barrios of Mision Noell.

The community forwarded a check to Father Ray each June to help the young man's family with his substantial expenses. This apostolate ended in 2005 when Father Ray was transferred to the Marianist community in Hollywood, Florida. But in 2007, the community began to adopt families through the Parish Outreach Program of St. Sylvester's Church in Medford, Long Island.

Other apostolic action is the individual responsibility of members, who must use their talents in personal work in their own milieu. Members exercise their apostolic action in their daily occupations, as well as in more formal ministries. Some, for example, serve as music ministers, religious education teachers, liturgical planners, Eucharistic ministers, and lectors in their parishes; some work with social justice issues; some minister to family members and friends in need of spiritual, emotional, or physical support or who are elderly or in ill health; some work to bring justice, harmony, and ethics to their work place; and some serve in their communities by participating in food pantries, music ministries, or other organizations.

And each member seeks to encourage others to join the sodality. Members identify their apostolic activities with one another at sodality meetings and seek advice and prayer from them. Since 2003, this apostolic sharing has become a more prominent feature at sodality meetings, and members have sought the community's backing for some apostolic endeavors,

such as having the community send a group letter to the state legislature in support of a particular bill. Ideally, all members' apostolicity is animated by a spirituality nurtured by frequent prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading.

One group apostolate also involves participation in DeCamp: A Rural Development Project of the Marianists. On October 4, 1998, the community authorized a grant of \$2100 from the Sodality Building Fund to purchase sheep for the poor in Coatzacoalcos, Vera Cruz, Mexico. The Marianists of the St. Louis Province invest the funds, purchase the animals, and help families begin a flock from which they can earn a living. The community has subsequently reinvested the profits it receives from this investment in the poor.

### **The Spiritual Life**

The sodalist takes seriously the life of prayer, but this sodality does not specify the forms of prayer its members must use. Traditionally, the sodality has encouraged members to attend frequent Mass and Communion, recite the rosary, meditate, and seek spiritual direction. What is evident at meetings is the progress and struggle members make in conversing with the Lord and His holy mother Mary. Blessed Chaminade encouraged his sodalists to pray the Prayer of Faith, a regular recitation of confidence and belief in the Lord and a request that that faith be ever stronger: "Lord, I believe; Help my unbelief," for without faith, no Christian apostolic work is possible. Sodalists also seek Our Lady's guidance and assistance and pray that they fulfill their consecration promise as she would have them do.

The community itself gathers for prayer at every meeting. Cell meetings open with prayer and conclude with petitions, thanksgiving, and a renewal of the Act of Consecration. The readings and discussion at meetings and the days of recollection most frequently focus of

building the spiritual life in the Marianist tradition. The sodality's group apostolate centers on prayer, for the adoption of a family for Christmas includes not only financial assistance but also a rosary for them, who in turn offer prayer for the sodalists. The *Sodality Bulletin* reminds members of the needs of others who are ill, unemployed, or in some way discomforted and includes a necrology and prayers for the dead. In 1999, the sodality encouraged its members to offer some sacrifice each First Friday in response to Mary's call to holiness when she appeared at Fatima. And annually, the community opens its year with the Consecration Mass, including consecration of new members and renewal of consecration of present members. For the sodality to function as her arm in the world, members must ever be in prayerful contact with Mary and her Son.

### **Sodality Meetings**

The sodality has four types of meetings:

**Executive Council Meetings:** Periodically, the sodality's three officers meet to prepare the calendar of cell meetings and handle community business. The Council keeps an eye on the direction the community is taking and proposes policy. The Council's meetings are normally open to all members, and its decisions require approval by the General Assembly.

**General Assembly Meetings:** The General Assembly is the full membership of the sodality. Usually, the membership discusses and approves Executive Council proposals during the business portion of the next regular cell meeting. On rare occasions, however, the Prefect may call a General Assembly Meeting for extended consideration of an important issue.

Regular Cell Meetings: Most sodality meetings are Regular Cell Meetings. These gatherings for prayer, discussion of readings, presentations, business, and socials are the heart of the community's work, where members share their spiritual and apostolic growth and call on each other for support. They are called "cell meetings" because they continue the work of the sodality's old New York Cell, which in the 1960s planned the direction of the whole community but was just one of several groups (cells) of members meeting across the country in Boston, Worcester, Providence, and Washington, D.C. Over time, the Regular Cell Meetings were held on various days and at various hours; at present, meetings take place on Sunday afternoons or evenings in the Royal English Department of Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York. One or two members plan a meeting following this pattern, though the order of elements may differ:

- Opening Prayer
- Apostolic and Spiritual Sharing
- Presentation of the Reading or Meeting Topic
- Period of Reflection
- Discussion of the Reading or Topic
- Adoption of a Resolution
- Closing Prayer or Prayer of Petition
- Recitation of the Act of Consecration
- Business
- Social

Special Meetings: On occasion, the sodality has special meetings, such as a day of recollection (usually in fall and spring), the consecration mass, or a prayer service.

### **Admission to the Sodality**

Any Catholic over the age of eighteen is welcome to apply for membership in the sodality.

Taking several years to complete, the admission process bespeaks the serious nature of sodality

commitment. Prospective members attend a meeting as observers to get acquainted with the people and activity of the community. Those interested in joining request unconsecrated membership, which the Executive Council grants for a limited period during which the new member and the sodalists come to know each other and share the sodality way of life. Upon completion of this initial phase of membership, the individual may request temporary consecration. The permanently consecrated members then evaluate the individual's contributions to the community and determine whether to grant temporary consecration. They decide in consultation with the sodality director. Members may renew temporary consecration for several years.

Permanent consecration is the ultimate stage of participation in the sodality. Those requesting permanent consecration must submit a letter to the prefect explaining what consecration means to them and why they wish to take this commitment. Upon approval of the permanently consecrated members, acting in consultation with the director, the members may take permanent consecration, a lifelong commitment to the sodality way of life, though not binding by sin if broken. All members must eventually choose permanent consecration or separation from the sodality. Consecration is taken at the annual Consecration Mass near the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

### **Blessed William Joseph Chaminade**

The Sodality is the product of the inspired work of Blessed Father William Joseph Chaminade.

Born on April 8, 1761, in Perigueux, southern France, Father Chaminade was ordained a Catholic priest just as France was about to explode in anti-Catholic revolution. In September

1797, he went into exile from Bordeaux to Saragossa, Spain, a priest in disguise and ever in danger of arrest and possible death at the hands of the Church's enemies. The night before his journey, he wrote: "What is a faithful man to do in the chaos of events which seem to swallow him up? He must sustain himself by Faith. Faith will make him adore the eternal plan of God. Faith will assure him that to those who love God all things work together for good."

In Saragossa, he prayed at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar and planned his future work. Here he received inspiration from Our Lady; he was to be her missionary and found a society of religious to work with her to restore the Church in France. Father Chaminade spoke of this vision to his first religious: "As I see you now before me, I saw you in spirit at Saragossa long before the foundation of the Society. It was she who laid the foundations, and she will continue to preserve it."

Father Chaminade returned to Bordeaux in 1800 and established Sodalities of Our Lady, which spread their influence throughout France. He gathered men and women who dedicated their lives to Mary's service. These sodalities began to rebuild the French Church, and from the sodalists he created two religious orders: the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, whom Father Chaminade founded with Adele de Batz de Trenquelleon in 1817, and the Society of Mary (Marianists), whose first seven members took their vows on September 5, 1818. To this day, these communities continue Our Lady's work around the world.

From the Chapel of the Madeleine in the old section of Bordeaux, Father Chaminade's work spread. Even today, the Madeleine is a center of Christian inspiration, where Marianists, both lay and religious, united in what Father Chaminade called the Family of Mary, come to pray, meditate, and receive the sacraments. There, he invited husbands and wives, teachers,

chimney sweeps, young men and women, seminarians, priests, and representatives of every social class. Together they responded to Mary's words at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you." The outstanding characteristic of this Family of Mary was and remains a deep spirit of faith.

For Blessed Chaminade, faith expressed itself most perfectly in the imitation of Jesus Christ:

A true Christian cannot live any life but the life of Our Saviour Jesus. When we try to imitate Him the divine plan is carried out in our lives. The Blessed Virgin is our model. She is a very exact copy of her Son Jesus. When we are devoted to Mary, we will imitate Jesus.

On another occasion, Father Chaminade said:

Jesus made Mary the companion of His labors, of His preaching, of His death.

Mary had a part in all the glorious, joyful, and sorrowful mysteries of Jesus.

The deposit of faith is entirely in Mary. At the foot of the Cross she held the place of the Church. The mysteries which were announced to Mary were accomplished because she believed.

Blessed Chaminade died on January 22, 1850, and was buried in the Carthusian Cemetery in Bordeaux. In 1871, his remains were placed in a large square plot where a monument was erected in his memory. Father John Lalanne, the first Marianist, said on that occasion: "We were witnesses during our younger days of his life and words. We affirm that we never saw him spend a day, not even a single hour, at anything which did not relate to God and to the welfare of souls." In 1973, Pope Paul VI announced that Father Chaminade had practiced virtue in a heroic degree.

This proclamation of the Church, declaring Father Chaminade “Venerable,” was the first official step toward canonization. In September 2001, Pope John Paul II proclaimed William Joseph Chaminade “Blessed.” The cause for his canonization advances.

*This life of Father Chaminade summarizes a text  
Reverend Joseph A. McCoy, S.M., and Sister Alberta  
Rohrkemper, S.N.D., composed.*