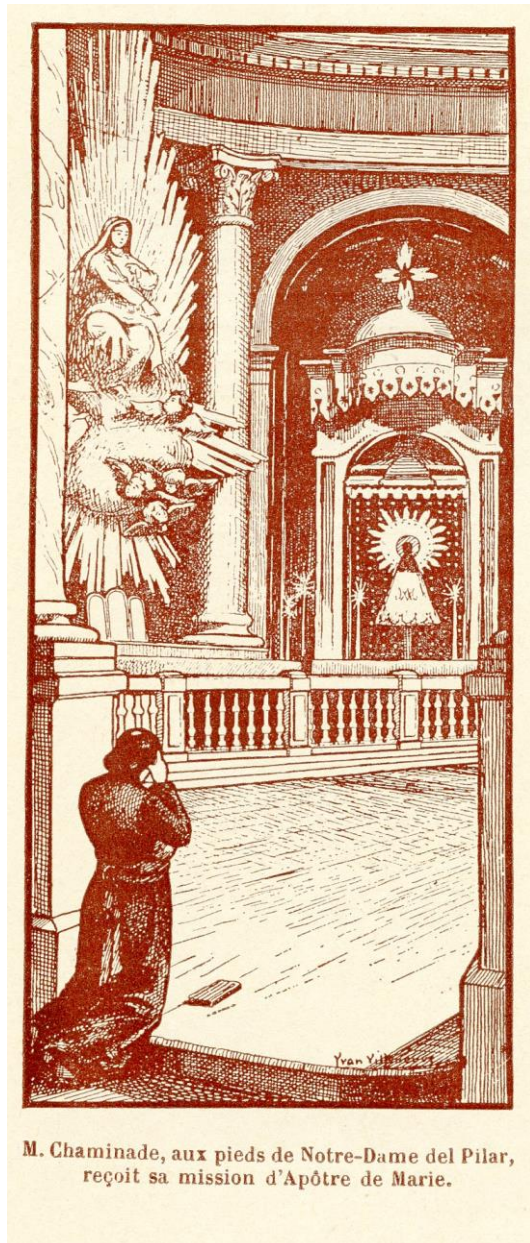


A pilgrimage to Saragossa with William-Joseph Chaminade

At last we arrived, after days of public carriages and walking, but what happened on the evening of October 11, 1797? The whole town is decked out with flags and the procession of the Virgin of the Pillar advances. My companion, Guillaume Bouet, is overcome with emotion and our tears flow, sweet and bitter at the same time, after all that we have experienced during the Terror and while the mission was resuming, my oratory was full and I had reconciled so many priests with the Catholic and Roman Church. What does God want to tell me? What is his plan for me, for Guillaume, for my brother Louis who should join us?

In Mussidan, apart from the financial problems, we had our normal routines and I deepened my knowledge of mathematics and physics. For this I did not hesitate to travel: Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseille, Paris... All this without forgetting the essential: my consecration to God and to Mary. Hence, when they wanted to make us take the oath on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, we refused. Our "no" was categorical. I left my brother and Father Moze, and I went to Bordeaux, to settle our parents and meet up with old acquaintances, parents of students, and the Vicar General Langoiran who was waiting for me. We had to move on and adapt.



During the Terror, my ministry was reduced to a minimum. I admit that beyond fear, I liked to play tricks on my pursuers by changing my clothes, my profession. Above all, I had absolute confidence in the Immaculate Mary who protected me many times. I had my oratory in the suburbs of Sainte-Eulalie with several possible exits and I was not too far from Saint-Laurent, to greet my aging parents.

After the Terror, I opened my oratory at my legal home on rue Dabadie, which was quickly too small, and moved to rue Sainte-Eulalie (now Paul-Louis-Lande). There, God made me understand that it was necessary to start with the youth in order to regenerate society. A small group had formed and I accompanied several of them, in particular the former noble, the citizen Lamourous (the "de" is no longer allowed). She was distraught at my departure, but I promised to write to her in the hope of finding a safe way to insure that the letters arrived.

Now, here we are in Zaragoza. Certainly the Virgin was waiting for me, there, on her pillar, to speak to my heart. Together with other priests, we cultivate the virtue of hope and prepare missionary plans. We have to live well, and we create plaster statues and white paper flowers. However, the physicist in me uses certain processes so that by

dipping them in a secret mixture, in front of the stunned people, they changed to many different colors. Yes, we had to adapt once again.

In these three years of retreat, Our Lady has worked on my heart. I understood that it was necessary to be strong in faith, like the unshakable pillar. I understood, like the Apostle James, that she sent us on mission in faith, hope and charity. I can't wait to leave. However, we still have to wait a little bit longer. In the meantime, I spend hours at the feet of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar*, as it is called here. Yes, I am sure of it, the Immaculate will triumph!

For your reflection after reading this text:

How do we adapt to change?

Is faith the driving force of our lives?

What is our hope?

What relationship do we have with Mary Immaculate?