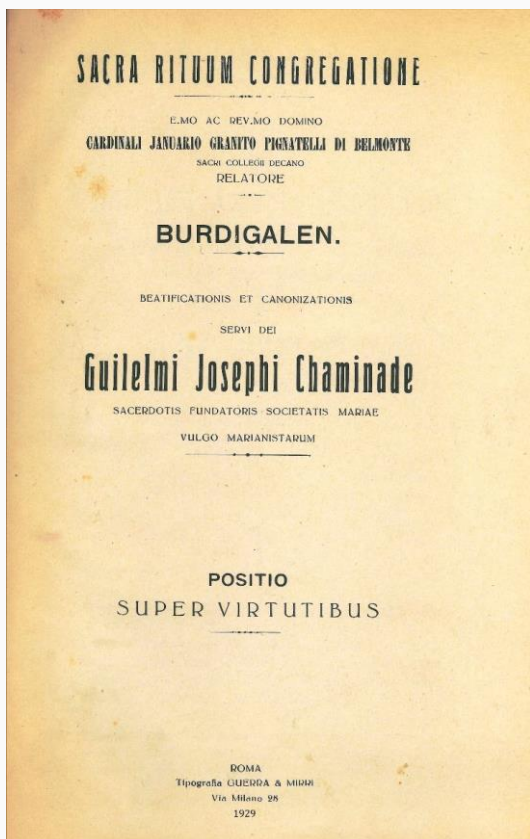


## Blessed Chaminade Hope in God: Believe-Trust-Act

With the Bull of convocation of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025, *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis wishes to make hope the central message of this Jubilee Year. The Pope wants to encourage our hope against the climate of fear that dominates the world at the present moment. In the face of the unpredictability of the future, "conflicting feelings arise: from confidence to fear, from serenity to discouragement, from certainty to doubt. We often find discouraged people, who look to the future with skepticism and pessimism, as if nothing could offer them happiness. May the Jubilee be for all, the opportunity to rekindle hope."

Theological hope, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches (no. 1817), "is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy spirit. *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful*" (Letter to the Hebrews, 10:23).



In this sense, Blessed Chaminade's hope "was of a completely supernatural nature; for in God alone could be found its object and motive: for the divine Glory" (Canon Henri Lelièvre, *Positio.1929*, p. 618). The hope in God of Father Chaminade was full because his apostolic works had for their purpose the glory of God and the salvation of souls. For this reason, Fr. Henri Lebon affirms that "the virtue of the hope of the Servant of God was as heroic as his faith." His motto might be "God is our help, he is our strength, the rest is nothing" (1819 letter to a Marianist director).

Blessed Chaminade's whole life was an act of hope, from the moment in 1791 when the revolutionary agents expelled him from his Collège of Mussidan and he was led by Providence to Bordeaux at the young age of 30. From that moment we see him undertaking his great apostolic works for the glory of God and trusting in Him alone: first, during the clandestine exercise of the priestly ministry during the time of the revolutionary Terror; then, in exile in Zaragoza where he lived poorly; and on his return to France in 1800 when he developed an active campaign for the re-Catholicization of the metropolitan area of Bordeaux. Finally, this unshakable hope-trust in God shone forth in a particular way in the history of his religious foundations, which developed in the midst of many adversities. So much so that he never ceased to repeat that "trials are the seal of God's works." In all the difficult situations in which he had to live (revolutions, persecutions, clandestine activities, exile, foundations, problems with his religious, with the police, with bishops, with creditors...), his face radiated a serene state of mind, which manifested his full trust in God.

The hope of our founding father was an active hope. Blessed Chaminade did not undertake a work until he was fully convinced that it was the will of God; then he did not hesitate at all and did not back down; His confidence was unwavering. He once said that "all the works I have undertaken, believing that God commanded me, are the ones that have yielded the best results." Blessed Chaminade wanted supernatural hope to direct all his disciples; because fear is the effect of trusting only in our human strength and not believing that God is with us.

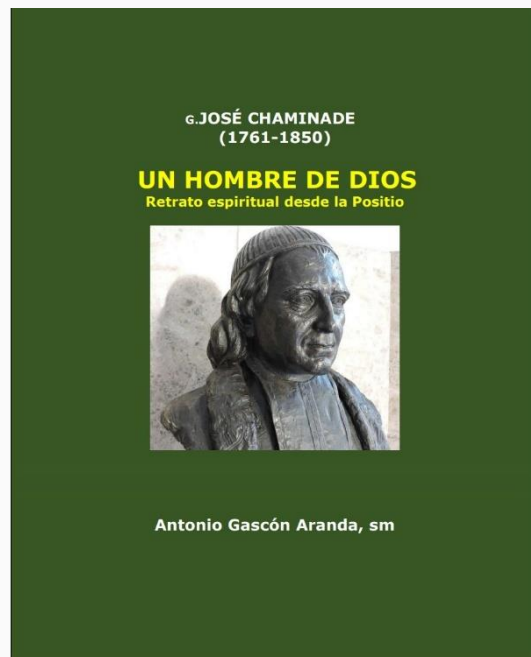
"Every time God gives you a commission or an order," he writes to a Marianist director, "he gives you his grace along with the command. Do you think that God does not know your weakness and that he does not know that you are incapable of executing what he commands you? certainly he knows it; but, then, why does he order us to do so if he knows that we cannot do it? Because He is almighty and because He intends to help you, provided you implore His help with full confidence" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio*. 1929, p. 612).

To Father Chevaux, a deeply religious spirit, but of a timid character, he says that he needs to overcome the depression caused by the office entrusted to him, because, he asks, "Have you not been legitimately sent [to this office]? Why don't you put your trust in Jesus and Mary?" In his letters of spiritual direction to Mademoiselle de Lamourous, he wrote to her, with great psychological and

spiritual insight: "If the divine light makes known to you the depth of the abyss of your nothingness and your misery, your trust in God will be your support. Ah, then you will be strong!" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio.1929*, p. 614).

Blessed Chaminade's confidence shone brighter in the face of difficulties. A well-known one was the surprising purchase in 1823 of the large estate of Saint Remy, by the audacity of his secretary Bro. David Monier, without consulting Chaminade and with hardly any financial resources. However, the Good Father accepted the *fait accompli*, saying: "If the works we undertake are the works of God, what are we to fear? [...] God is our support" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio.1929*, p. 613). Later, in the face of the persecution of the July Revolution of 1830, he affirmed: "Our sorrows and difficulties, far from discouraging us, must encourage us without ceasing to undertake what we believe to be the work of God." Like many founders, Chaminade had to overcome *significant financial difficulties* to support the works that God had inspired him to found. In this regard, he wrote to Father Caillet, who was very concerned about the debts contracted by the young Society of Mary: "Pray and pray insistently that I never get ahead of the orders of Providence in the works that we believe we are undertaking in its designs. [...] God is acting in this way to make us increase our trust in him and to make us live in complete dependence on his grace" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio.1929*, p. 615). Finally, in Blessed Chaminade hope and trust in God are identical as seen in the expression: "We must not be anxious but adore God's plan" and also "I am not anxious; everything is in the hands of God" (Fr. Charles Demangeon, S. M., *Positio.1929*, p. 633).

Blessed Chaminade united hope in God with human prudence and sagacity; for his faith was always assisted by reason. "I have never had any fear," he said, "but trust in the Lord; I have never been dejected, but have done all that we can do on our part, without embarrassment or uneasiness, so as not to tempt Providence. Because we do not concern ourselves with our own business, but with those of Our Lord and his Holy Mother."



*Blessed Chaminade transmitted to his disciples this trust-hope in God; We cite an example: to the Marianist sister Mother of the Holy Spirit (only 22 years old), superior of the community at the head of the school of Tonneins, the Good Father writes that "if we act like this with our little human calculations we will not do anything great, and we will not deserve to be employed in the work of God" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio*.1929, p. 617). Hence Mother Marie de la Conception de Batz said to her sisters: "See how the Good God rewards our Good Father, because he acts only for His glory. Sometimes it seems unwise, humanly speaking, but God intervenes to make his works prosper at the moment when they seem to sink." Blessed Chaminade himself realized this, when he recognized that "the divine Providence in which I place all my trust, visibly assists us in all our works; however, it does not do anything in advance, but acts at the right time, when we have a need, or an economic debt; so that I dare to undertake only what is sufficiently indicated to me in accordance with his designs" (H. Lebon, S. M., *Positio*.1929, p. 617-618).*

In short, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade was a priest tried by innumerable concerns and problems caused by his numerous apostolic works, undertaken during the political and cultural changes that he had to live through throughout his long life, in the violent transition from the society of the Ancien Régime to the modern, liberal society. The pastoral zeal to sustain the faith of his disciples and to strengthen their works brought him heavy tribulations. However, hope expanded his heart in the expectation of eternal beatitude; for, like the Apostle,

he ran towards the goal, fixing his eyes on the glory of heaven (*Saint Paul to the Philippians*, 3:13-14).

To have a broader knowledge of the virtue of hope in Blessed Chaminade, you can read in Antonio Gascón, *G. José Chaminade. Un hombre de Dios. Retrato espiritual*, Chapter 3 *Hope: Believe-Trust-Act*. Click on the link (only in Spanish): <https://biblioteca.familiamarianista.es/chaminade-un-hombre-de-dios-retrato-espiritual/>