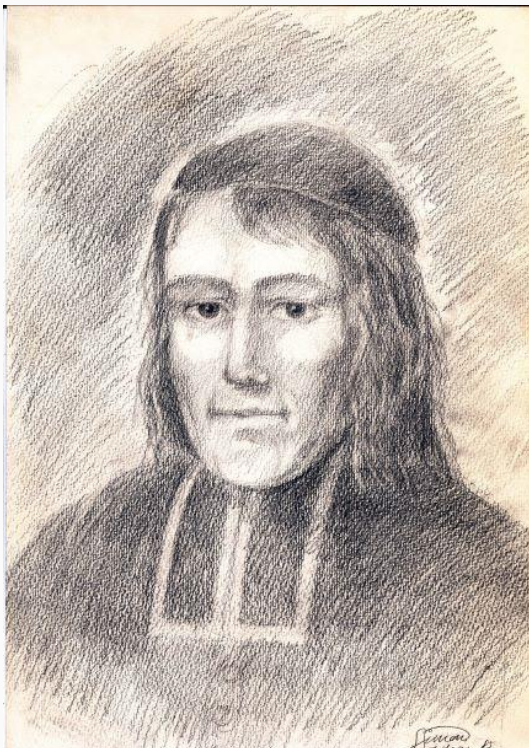


## What if we took a new look at our Founder?

The image that we convey of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade is often distorted because we look at him in reverse, that is to say, as an elderly man struggling with those who have taken power. We are taking this new look so that the true Society of Mary, which he founded, led by the Holy Spirit, is not reduced to something he would no longer recognize. We must return to the man from the college in Mussidan and to his experience in Saragossa.

Blessed William Joseph was a man of his time, marked by the philosophy of enlightenment that he had learned to look at with discernment in order to keep what is right and reject the errors. He became a professor of philosophy in Mussidan. He became passionate about his profession, studying mathematics and physics in depth, to the point of traveling to meet and learn from the specialists of his time. This would be very different from visiting monasteries in which he would have found a lack of fervor.

He was not a man in the clouds, but rooted in the everyday. He learned the management of the college of Mussidan when he was the bursar. His letters reveal his skills in many areas.



The young Blessed Chaminade welcomed the first principles put in place by the French Revolution, but he soon saw their flaws and refused to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

His training, wisdom and skills were recognized when he was entrusted with the reconciliation of priests who had sworn to follow the new regime. Later, he would be entrusted with the administration of the Diocese of Bazas. He was a perfectly educated man who continued his

permanent education through assiduous reading, especially of the Bible.

The exile in Sarragossa allowed him to distance himself from the world and prepared him for his future mission. It is undoubtedly there that he deepened the roots of his faith. From that moment on, he judged and acted by faith. This foundation of faith lasted until the end of his life.

Apostolic missionary and founder of the Marian Congregation of Bordeaux, what attracted so many people to him? Would it be his silence? No! Blessed Chaminade was a man who spoke, who welcomed, who advised. Father Lalanne wrote: "He spoke slowly and at length because his mind was preoccupied with his thoughts as he tried to understand the depths of these ideas. He had a strong propensity to talk for a long time in order to explain these thoughts. This occurred because he wished to make sure that his listeners understood everything well." However, we know Lalanne was a dynamic person. Therefore, we must be moderate in the way we interpret his words concerning Blessed William Joseph. In any case, we are far from the man of silence depicted by many people. In fact, his secret in attracting and leading people to God could be seen in his gentleness, humility and at the same time his firmness, acting only by faith. We find this in many writings. For example, here is the advice he gives about a religious in difficulty: "This subject will be lost, if he is badly led. It is very difficult to lead: it is necessary to have a mixture of severity and softness, of religion and friendship. Attaining these qualities is not easy... »

The one who was taken as a guide for so many people, was a good psychologist; he knew the people and knew what they need, as his grandnephew Firmin Délala wrote in his own way: "His almond-shaped slit eyes were sharp, fine, penetrating. His investigative gaze penetrated the thoughts of your heart: he judged the person and his degree of probity. If he had learned fencing, he would have surpassed Saint George. » !

Let us know how to return to our founding father, let us trust him and let us advance in faith with gentleness, humility and firmness on the path of holiness.