

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, Administrator

By administration is meant the activity that a subject, whether a natural or legal person, continuously develops in favor of particular interests and for the realization of its ends. The purpose of the administration of a social group is to ensure its vitality and permanence. This must be understood not only in the sense of mere survival or static conservation of the group, but in a dynamic way, so as to promote development and vitality as a whole. Our Rule of Life captures this aspect well in its allusions to the continual growth of the person and of the community, to the adaptation to the new times (cf. RV 39).

As for Father Chaminade, we note his aptitudes and dispositions in the situations in which he was called upon to exercise the functions of administrator.

- **Property Manager in Mussidan**

A property manager is a person who ensures the administrative management, both technical and financial of a house. William Joseph, who was admitted to the congregation of St. Charles at the end of his Latin studies in 1776^[1], seems, from that date, to have also been associated with the functions of property manager performed by his elder brother Jean-Baptiste^[2]. Because of his administrative position, he was able to make only short stays in Bordeaux, after having followed the courses of philosophy and physics at Mussidan from 1776 to 1778. For William Joseph, it was after his subdiaconate that, in this area as in others, he would be ready to exercise his full potential.

- **Administration of the Diocese of Bazas**

Chaminade had returned from Spain in 1800 with the title of administrator of the Diocese of Bazas. The last bishop of that city, Bishop Saint-Sauveur, had died in 1792, in the midst of his family, leaving a great reputation for modesty, goodness, and wisdom^[3]. Father de Culture, his vicar general, governed the diocese provisionally, but he soon succumbed under the weight of age and the sufferings endured in captivity. It was then that Bishop de La Tour du Pin, metropolitan of Bazas in his capacity as archbishop of Auch, thought of entrusting the charge of this diocese to Father Chaminade, who already knew many priests there because of his duties as a penitentiary, and who had shown great administrative qualities on this occasion.

The administration of this diocese was a heavy burden, for the diocese of Bazas was

vast. It included the whole of the present department of the Gironde, and extended from Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, on the Dordogne, to Casteljaloux in the Lot-et-Garonne, including the arrondissement of La Réole. Since 1792, except for the short interval of 1797, when Father de Culture was able to exercise his authority, the diocese had been left to itself; only a small number of faithful priests remained and the reorganization was made even more difficult by the total absence of archives, the documents having all been destroyed during the Revolution. To fulfill his task without sacrificing his ministry in Bordeaux, Father Chaminade enlisted as his secretary a priest who had worked with him during the days of the Terror, the Fr. François Pineau^[4]. Moreover, as he was unable to reside at Bazas, he installed in the town a sub-administrator, the Fr. Pierre Fabas, formerly archpriest of Lauzerte, in the diocese of Cahors^[5]; he conferred a similar title on two other priests, Fathers. Pourget and Lugat, for other parts of the diocese.

This measure did not exempt him from frequent visits to the entire diocese to see for himself the state of affairs and to deal directly with his constituents.

^[1] Cf. G. Caillet, *Circular of 13 February 1850* : "Received, at the age of 15, teacher at Mussidan... »

^[2] G.-J. Chaminade: "I worked as a trustee for sixteen to seventeen years... (to Father J.B.Lalanne, April 26, 1836); "In my early youth I fulfilled the functions of syndic in a more considerable house than Ebersmunster... (to François-Joseph Enderlin, January 7, 1839).

^[3] Bishop Amédée de Grégoire de Saint-Sauveur (1708-1792), a native of the diocese of Mende, chaplain to Louis XV, bishop of Bazas since 1746, was a deputy to the States-General, and was unable, despite his efforts, to prevent the suppression of his see. Bishop de Cicé offered him hospitality in his archiepiscopal palace in Bordeaux by a letter of October 31, 1790. He refused, and preferred to die in the midst of his family (January 16, 1792). He had asked to be buried among his poor in the small cemetery of the hospice of Bazas. His modest tomb can still be seen there. (Cf. O' Reilly, *Hist de Bazas*; 1840).

^[4] François Pineau was a young priest, ordained in 1790, "having all the ecclesiastical virtues," say the Official Notes of 1802; he only lacks a better voice for the pulpit. After the Concordat, he was appointed vicar of Saint-Michel in Bordeaux. Parish priest of Saint-Nicolas de Graves in 1816, he died a titular canon on October 15, 1845.

^[5] Pierre Fabas was born in 1761; he remained in the diocese of Bordeaux after the Concordat and was appointed parish priest of Auros. He died on March 9, 1818.



A sculptural group depicting the Marianist Family, created by the Ecuadorian sculptor Mario Tapia, a former Marianist student. The sculpture, inaugurated in 2001, adorns the entrance to the General Curia at Via Latina 22.

- **Calm in business**

In business, Chaminade brought peace, calm and self-possession. No doubt he burned with the desire to extend the glory of God and wrote, for example, to a priest of Auch: "Ah! Let's work! As you know, my ambition is to light the fire of divine love throughout France"; and on the same day, to the prefect of the Sodality of Auch: "By the great mercy of God, for a long time I have lived and breathed only to propagate the cult of the august Mary." Yet, he maintains an admirable composure and observes to the letter the precept he gives to his children: "The spirit of God," he tells them, "is very active, but it is not rushed." "Let us be careful," he said again, "let us take care not to worry ourselves; let us always be aloof from work. Let all our fire be concentrated in our hearts, which must seek only to please God in everything." Mother Adèle admired him on this point as on many others and offered him as an example to her daughters: "See,"

she said to them, "how Father Chaminade does it: he is not in a hurry, he is always self-possessed; yet he does much work, because grace does much. "

This, in fact, is his secret: he counts on the Holy Spirit to operate with greater freedom if he is not constantly busy: "Do what depends on you," he writes to Brother Clouzet, "to gain complete peace of your soul and sustain you there. The busier you are, the more often you need to go back to prayer and recollection. Do this at least at some main action of your morning and evening. In order that all this practice may produce its full effect, at each principal action of your day, enter into a deep recollection, suspending for one, two, and even three minutes all other thoughts, feelings, etc. Moderate your natural activity and hope for the best." To the same he also said: "It must come to the point that the love of God dominates your whole soul." The greatest labors and the most numerous occupations, commanded by this divine love, do not disturb the soul. Love itself only becomes more and more inflamed. Elsewhere: "Do not worry, my dear son, about the great number of affairs with which you are charged. You will not lack the assistance of our divine Patroness. "

- **The Three Offices – Government Organization**

Eminently united in the person of the Superior General, the offices were divided among his Assistants, so as to ensure the proper functioning of all the services, while maintaining unity of impulse and direction. We find the Founder's thought explained in a letter to Father Chevaux, and applied to the particular government of the community of Saint-Remy, for the local administrations had to be modelled on the central government: "You can see, my dear son," he said to him, "that the government may continue to go on perfectly just as it is that all must be done *per modum unius*, as you say, that the Superior is really the center of everything, although within their spheres of authority the Heads are in themselves centers. Is it not the same in the universe? Haven't the planets their own particular moons? God has established general laws which admirably sustain this great order of the universe. I have great confidence that if the general laws of the religious state, and even of Christianity, are well observed, this kind of government well extended will lead us to great order. I do not intend to say that the government cannot be organized differently, but it is the one our old Constitutions have introduced into the Society, and if well understood, it is better because it can

suffer without alteration, all necessary modifications. "[6]

- **Wisdom in administration**

Chaminade did not reconsider his decision, after concluding that the case should be dismissed, whatever the request was made to him. Thus the foundress of the Good Shepherd of Rouen, Mrs. Anjorran, begged him to lend her his assistance in the drafting of her Constitutions. "I'm not hiding from you," he said[7], "the embarrassment I feel in answering you. On the one hand, your entreaties are as humble as urgent, but on the other, I believe I see so clearly that God does not wish that I should occupy myself with a work to which he has not called me, that I could not meddle in it, even in the slightest degree without definite rashness or temerity." Also, among other reasons for his refusal, he alleges, on the one hand, the indications of Providence which has inspired him negatively in relation to this work, and, on the other hand, "the immensity of his own works" which require an immense amount of time.

If he found himself faced with an enterprise which human prudence advised him not to do, but to which he felt himself drawn by an appeal from on high, then he was even less hasty than in any other circumstance. He let the inner conflict resolve itself as if of itself, until the will of God appeared more manifest; then he trampled human wisdom under foot and threw himself entirely into the arms of Providence. In the meantime, his hesitation was expressed in yeses and no's which some took for skill and subtlety, and which were only the expression of various influences exerted on him by opposite motives. Of cases of this kind he said[8]: "As you may have noticed, I hardly take a side until I see that I can no longer draw back."

William Joseph Chaminade showed a wisdom enlightened by the light of faith, in the administration of his works despite the opposition of his assistants during the conflict he had with them in the last ten years of his life.

[6] November 23, 1831. Letters III, 609.

[7] June 11, 1839. Letters V, 1143.

[8] To M. Lalanne, Letters III, 588, of 30 April 1831.