

## A People of Saints. Marianist Holiness

Blessed Chaminade wrote to the priest Noailles in 1826: "The main spirit of the Society, which is to present to the world the spectacle of a people of saints, and to prove by the fact that today, as in the primitive Church, the Gospel can be practiced in all the rigor of the spirit and of the letter". Blessed Chaminade wished that all his disciples, the laity of the Marian Sodality, the religious Daughters of Mary and the religious of the Society of Mary, also those affiliated to the Society, and now the Marian Alliance, all form "a people of saints". Some of these disciples have been declared models of holiness and intercessors of the Marianist Family: Blessed Chaminade and Blessed Mother Adèle, Blessed Martyrs Carlos, Fidel, Jesús, Jakob, Miguel, Florencio, Sabino and Joaquín, Venerables Lamourous, Faustino, Domingo and Vincente, and Servants of God Miguel and Father Halter.

In a beautiful and complete article of the *Dictionary of the Marianist Rule of Life*, Father Salaverri makes a wonderful doctrinal exposition of Marianist holiness in our origins, in the tradition of the Society and in the Marianist spirituality renewed according the theology of consecrated life of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.



Marianist Icon by Fr. Salvatore Santacroce, SM  
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Our Founder summarized his ideal of holiness for the two Institutes he founded in these words to Father Louis Rothéa in 1822: "How I wish you to become a saint! Let us count as synonymous in the expressions saint and son of Mary!"; and in a letter to Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon: "With saints we shall succeed in everything, but, with ordinary or imperfect religious, we shall do almost nothing". For this reason, and in the first article of the first Constitutions of 1839, we read that "the little Society that offers its feeble services to God and to the Church, under the auspices of the august Mary, proposes two principal objects: 1°) with the grace of God, to raise each of its members, to religious perfection [...]". Where we must understand the term "perfection" as "holiness". Fr. Salaverri explains that "the Spanish version uses "sanctification" in articles 49 and 4.17a. In article 1, the Spanish translation uses the word "perfection", but in the sense of fullness. The word "holy" ("people of saints") is found twice in Article 33. In articles 34 and 49 it speaks of "sanctity" ".

Therefore, the evangelical fullness or perfect imitation of Christ, to which the Marianist religious is called, is called "holiness". This is the main reason why we have entered Marianist religious life and it is the necessary condition for fulfilling the second purpose proposed by the Constitutions of 1839: To work for the salvation of souls and the propagation of the Gospel.

However, much clearer than my explanation are the words contained in Fr. Salaverri's article and the chapter on personal sanctification in the *Spirit of our Foundation*. In both texts, you will find the words of the Founder and his disciples and the articles of the 1983 Rule of Marianist Life. Good spiritual reading for summer vacation.

José María Salaverri, *Sainteté*, in *Dictionnaire de la Règle de Vie Marianiste*, Rome, CEMAR, 1988, 792-808.

Idem, *Holiness*, in *Commentary on the Rule of Life of the Society of Mary*, Dayton, NACMS, 1994, 579-603.

Idem, *Sanctity*, in *Dictionary of the Marianist Rule of Life*, Madrid, ed. SM, 1990, 689-702.

*La sanctification personnelle du religieux, première fin de la Société de Marie*, in *L'Esprit de notre Fondation, d'après les écrits de M. Chaminade et les documents primitifs de la Société*, Nivelles, Imprimerie Louis Havaux-Houdart, 1910, vol. I, 51-72.  
*The Personal Sanctification of the Religious, the First End of the Society of Mary*, in *The Spirit of Our Foundation, according to the Writings of Father Chaminade and of Our First Members in the Society*, Dayton, St. Mary's Convent, 1911, vol. I, 53-74.