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**CHAMINADE PARK TO BE CREATED AND DEDICATED THIS SUMMER,
PART OF CELEBRATION OF BEATIFICATION OF WILLIAM JOSEPH CHAMINADE**

DAYTON, Ohio — Unless you peer closely, you may not notice the turn-of-the-century statue of William Joseph Chaminade sitting unobtrusively in a field behind the Queen of Apostles Chapel at Mount St. John.

"He's sitting out there like a lonely sentinel," says Gary Sierschula, a landscape architect with Woolpert Consultants who has donated his time to develop a spiritual garden that will showcase the statue of the founder of the Society of Mary (Marianists).

In the peaceful setting of the Marianist Provincialate, which sits on what looks like a nature preserve, Chaminade is surrounded by tall bushes, as though in exile. In a striking way, the backdrop symbolizes the humble French priest's life. During the height of the French Revolution, he escaped into exile in Spain for three years after refusing to take an oath of fidelity imposed upon the clergy by the French government.

With Chaminade's upcoming beatification by the Catholic church in St. Peter's Square in Rome on Sept. 3, it's time to bring Chaminade into the public eye. The Marianists in the Cincinnati province and around the world are actively promoting the virtues of their founder, who is gaining long-overdue public recognition 150 years after his death. With beatification, the highest spiritual honor next to sainthood that the Catholic church can bestow on an individual, Chaminade will receive the title "Blessed." Beatification, the final phase before canonization, requires proof of the practice of heroic virtue and one miracle. Besides Chaminade, Pope Pius IX, Pope John XXIII, Archbishop Tommaso Reggio and Dom Columba Marmion will be beatified. A worldwide contingent of between 5,000 and 6,000, including more than 125 from the Dayton area, will make a pilgrimage to Rome next month for a three-day celebration in honor of the beatification of Chaminade. Pope John Paul II will preside over the beatification ceremony.

Locally, with the help of Sierschula's creativity and the muscle power of the grounds crew, the Marianists are creating Chaminade Park. The bushes are coming down. The

statue is being refurbished (it's missing a finger) and emblazoned with the ensignia, "Blessed." The area is being turned into a spiritual garden, complete with pavers, benches, historical markers, a kneeler and special lighting.

"Right now, the statue is unnoticeable," said the Rev. Joseph Tedesco, S.M., provincial assistant for religious life and an adjunct psychology professor at the University of Dayton. "The hope is that people will come out and make private petitions. We have a grotto, but this would be another space at Bergamo for private prayer."

The park will be unveiled at a gathering of all the Marianists in the Cincinnati province on Aug. 18 and rededicated after a special Mass celebrating Chaminade's beatification on Labor Day.

Sierschula, who created a master plan for Bergamo in 1983, said he tried to incorporate Chaminade's favorite words into his design. "The Center" represents Chaminade's role in the center of the Society of Mary. Colorful pavers will be used to create an entry space called "The Foyer." A larger gathering space will be called "The Sodality." A walkway will lead to the statue, and visitors will be able to sit on benches and large rocks since Chaminade used the image of rocks in his writings. A variety of shade, ornamental and evergreen trees will complement the garden's shrubs, perennials and ornamental grasses.

"We're definitely creating a space for him," Sierschula says. "It will be a quiet, contemplative space, where people can go out and think and pray. He'll no longer be sitting out in the middle of a football field."

The creation of Chaminade Park is just one of a series of special projects being undertaken in recognition of the beatification of Chaminade. Actor Martin Sheen, who attended Chaminade High School in Dayton, will narrate a short video documentary. Local celebrations are being planned in more than 100 cities in 34 countries, where the Marianists work in ministries in secondary and primary schools, universities and technical schools, parishes, renewal centers, missions and social justice enterprises. In addition, Fernando Alegre Rosado, of Lima, Peru, designed a special Chaminade beatification logo, and Brother Richard Martens, S.M., of San Antonio, Texas, wrote an original composition, "Do Whatever He Tells You." A series of pamphlets describing Chaminade's life and mission will be produced in English, French, Spanish and Italian. Tedesco, who's spearheading the creation of Chaminade Park, hopes to produce a book, *Who's the Guy in the Hat?*, for grade-school children.

For more on preparations for Chaminade's beatification, visit www.marianist.org.

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For media interviews about Chaminade Park, contact **Father Joseph Tedesco, S.M.**, at (937) 429-0794 and **Gary Sierschula** at (937) 461-5660. For more information about the beatification, contact **Bro. Don Boccardi, S.M.**, at (937) 429-0794 or boccardi@flyernet.udayton.edu. For a digital photo, e-mail parsons@udayton.edu.