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This Man Deserves a Party: Archbishop to Preside Over April 8 Mass Honoring Father Chaminade

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March 28, 2011
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NEWS RELEASE

THIS MAN DESERVES A PARTY:

ARCHBISHOP TO PRESIDE OVER APRIL 8 MASS HONORING FATHER CHAMINADE

DAYTON, Ohio — A colorful poster hanging in residence halls on the University of Dayton's campus says it all: "He survived a revolution, accepted a call from Mary and co-founded a community whose spirit guides UD more than 200 years later.

"This man deserves a party."

The University of Dayton will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade on Friday, April 8, with a special liturgy and lots of birthday cake.

The Most Rev. Dennis Schnurr, archbishop of Cincinnati, will preside over a 12:05 p.m. Mass in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception on campus, followed by a reception in Kennedy Union and birthday cake in all the residence halls. The celebration is open to the campus community and the public. To RSVP, send an e-mail to events@udayton.edu.

During the height of the French Revolution, Chaminade escaped into exile in Spain after refusing to take an oath of fidelity imposed upon the clergy. When he returned to Bordeaux, he brought together an eclectic group of merchants, priests, teachers, chimney sweeps, former soldiers and others from all walks of life who drew their inspiration from Mary, the mother of Jesus, and believed strongly in service to youth and the poor. This gathering grew into the Marianist Family, including the Society of Mary, the founders and sponsors of the University of Dayton.

"Celebrating the birth of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade 250 years ago is a fitting way to show our gratitude to God for this remarkable man's legacy. The faith, vision and tenacity with which Blessed Chaminade inspired others during his often-difficult life continue to bless us today through the charism of the Marianist Family. How fortunate we are to have such a strong Marianist presence in the archdiocese of Cincinnati," Schnurr said.

The Mass and reception are part of a number of special liturgies, exhibits, lectures and events throughout 2011. Upcoming events include:

- On the eve of the anniversary of Chaminade's birth, students will take part in a candlelight prayer vigil and procession that starts at 8:15 p.m. on Thursday, April 7, in the chapel. The group will walk, in song and prayer, to Marycrest Hall for the 9 p.m. Mass in

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Our Lady of the Pillar chapel.

- As part of Challenge 250, the rector's office will collect donations of 250 coins or dollars during the week of April 8-15 to support Chaminade's vision of social justice. The donations will benefit three international Marianist projects: Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School in Nairobi, Kenya; REDS (Ragpickers Educational Development Scheme), a residential technical training program in Bangalore, India, for young boys to move out of life on the streets and gain employment; and EYES (Education Yielding Empowerment and Self-Help), a program through the Marianist Sisters in India to provide training for women and girls in tailoring, computers, and candle and incense making and health services for children in the REDS program.

- All graduates at the spring commencement ceremonies May 7-8 will receive a commemorative Chaminade medal with their diplomas as a symbol of their University of Dayton education.

- A group of faculty will culminate their involvement in a Chaminade seminar by taking a May 22-June 3 pilgrimage to Bordeaux to visit holy Marianist sites.

- As part of the first-year summer reading assignment, incoming students will read two essays about Chaminade's life and his influence today.

- The University will host a lay leadership conference on Nov. 12.

The yearlong celebration kicked off on Chaminade Day with a Jan. 22 Mass that drew about 800 people in the RecPlex on campus.

Why celebrate an 18th century priest?

"Blessed William Joseph Chaminade has been called a 'pragmatist with a vision,' said the Rev. James Fitz, S.M., vice president for mission and rector. "His vision of faith formation, building community and transforming society are central to the vision of the University of Dayton. We come together to give thanks for his legacy that still inspires the Society of Mary (Marianists), the founder and sponsor of the University. As we come to a better appreciation of the gift, the better able we are to pass it on to a new generation of servant-leaders."

For more information, visit the Chaminade 250th Celebration web site (www.udayton.edu/rector/chaminade250) or the Facebook page or call the rector's office at 937-229-2899.