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Celebrate Chaminade

12.21.2010 | Catholic, Campus and Community

A presidential task force at the University of Dayton is planning special liturgies, exhibits, lectures and events throughout 2011 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade's birth.

Chaminade, a French Roman Catholic priest, survived the French Revolution and started the Society of Mary, also called the Marianists, in 1817. The Society of Mary founded the University of Dayton in 1850.

"Father Chaminade saw that in the midst of social change, which can be radical and disruptive, institutions can remain vibrant and grow. He believed new times called for new measures," said University president Daniel J. Curran. "That philosophy guides us everyday as we live out the Marianist mission on campus."

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 was the beginning of the Marianist family out of which developed the Society of Mary.

The University of Dayton's celebration includes:

- Noon, Jan. 10, Venerable Adele de Batz de Trenquelleon celebration Mass in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception followed by a reception.
- 4 p.m., Jan. 22, Chaminade Day celebration Mass and reception in the RecPlex. The University will host all members of the Marianist family in the area.
- 3 p.m., Jan. 24, Blessed Chaminade banner dedication in the lobby of Kennedy Union, followed by a reception.
- 6 p.m., Jan. 27, Founders' dinner in Kennedy Union Ballroom. All are welcome, but space is limited. RSVP to RectorEvents@udayton.edu by Jan. 21.
- 4:30 p.m., Feb. 7, Marianist Heritage Lecture by the Rev. Martin Solma, S.M., provincial of the Marianist Province of the United States, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.
- 6 p.m., Feb. 25, annual Lackner Awards Dinner honoring faculty and staff who personify the Catholic, Marianist mission of the University of Dayton, invitation only.
- 6 p.m., March 11, Maureen E. O'Rourke Marianist Student Award dinner, invitation only.
- Noon, April 8, Cincinnati Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr presides at Mass on the anniversary of Chaminade's birth in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, followed by a reception.

In addition, the Marian Gallery will feature the artwork of Marianist artists throughout February. Other special events, in the planning stages, include spring and fall lectures, reading groups and a proposed symposium on the role of laity. A large banner of Chaminade will drape a wall in Kennedy Union during the year, and plaza banners will offer tribute to the founder of the Marianists. The University has commissioned Bro. Joseph Aspell, S.M., to create a sculpture of Chaminade, which will be installed in the Central Mall.

Why does an 18th century priest remain so relevant in contemporary times?

"We celebrate Blessed Chaminade's birthday because his life and vision still inspire people all over the world today to work on the transformation of the world," said the Rev. James Fitz, S.M., rector. "Chaminade wanted to create faith communities that made the Gospel alive in every age."

For more information, call the rector's office at 937-229-2899.