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Francis Friedel

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## **DOGMATIC FOUNDATION OF FATHER CHAMINADE'S DOCTRINE ON FILIAL PIETY**

### **(Synopsis of the Seminar)**

#### *Introduction*

1. For Father Chaminade, filial piety was more than devotion to Mary; it is a way of life; it is the imitation, the extension of Christ's own filial piety toward His Mother.

2. Members of the Society are to:

a. consecrate themselves totally to Mary; look upon her as their mother and themselves as her children; form themselves in the womb of her maternal tenderness to the likeness of Jesus.

b. constitute themselves as a phalanx of apostles of Mary, raised up by her and under her name and guidance to come to the assistance of the Church and of souls.

3. Filial piety becomes the focal point of Marianist spirituality and activity.

a. personal spiritual formation under Mary's guidance to conformity with Christ (perfection)

b. co-operation with the mission of Mary (apostolate)

c. summed up: "most faithful imitation of Jesus Christ, Son of God, become Son of Mary, for the salvation of mankind."

#### *Sources of Doctrine*

1. Scripture: St. Paul: "I live, now not I, . . ." "For me to live is Christ," "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" "Christ the Head, we the members." St. John: "sons of God" . . . "vine and branches."

2. Fathers, Doctors, spiritual writers: Ambrose, Gregory, Anselm, Bernard, Alphonse Liguori, Bossuet.

3. Ecole Française, deriving doctrine from de Berulle espe-

cially through Olier. Father Chaminade drew inspiration from this school but carried doctrine further.

a. Berulle and others had idea of filiation; doctrine centered in Incarnation; considered the "states" of Jesus; emphasized state of dependence and therefore state of slavery; annihilation of the Word taking form of a slave.

b. The idea of filiation is preponderant in the thought of Father Chaminade: "Jesus wished to become Son of Mary to accomplish the work of our redemption; He wishes that, after His example and in union with Him, we become sons of Mary to become sons of God."

c. Father Chaminade's doctrine and devotion are essentially Christocentric: "no one can lay another foundation than that which is laid: which is Christ Jesus." Devotion to Mary is based on her relations to the Incarnation and Redemption.

d. Father Chaminade speaks of Mary as the New Eve, the Mother of Christians, Mother of the elect, Mother of the predestined, Mother of the Mystical Body. Emphasizes her title of Mother of Christians insofar as she is the Mother of the Mystical Body; She is Mother of the Redeemer, who became incarnate to save mankind. Redemption has two aspects:

1. the mystery of the cross—the saving of men;
2. the mystery of the Mystical Body—application of merits of cross to all men.

e. It is in connection with the doctrine of the Mystical Body that Father Chaminade brings out as never before the MISSION OF MARY—the sanctification of men.

"In the womb of Mary, Jesus Christ prepared her . . . to become the Mother of His Mystical Body, as she was the mother of His natural body; for He wished us to receive through her the life of the spirit, as He had received through her the life of His body. We depend upon her for the maintenance and increase of our spiritual life, as He depended upon her for the maintenance and increase of His corporal life."

### *The Mystical Body*

1. Definition: "God is the Father of men whom He has created according to His likeness, but above all, of Christians whom He has adopted by His grace. We must distinguish two bodies in Christ: a natural body and a Mystical Body. He put on the former in the womb of Mary, His Mother; but he made up the latter with all the faithful."

- a. All predestined form one body, whose head is Christ:
- b. Among members there is communion of life, of movement, activity, and spirit;
- c. the Spirit of Christ vivifies all members.

2. Essential elements in the Mystical Body.

- a. Union between Christ and the faithful like union between head and members;

- 1. Head occupies first rank; so Christ has first place in the Mystical Body;

- 2. In Him reside the spirit and the soul; from Him all receive life and holiness;

- 3. Christ is intimately united with the body of the Church.

- b. Common principle of life.

- 1. We become partakers of the divine nature so that we form with the God-man one only and the same Christ;

- 2. As members of Christ and children of the Church, we become the fullness of His Body;

- 3. We become His property, His temples.

### *Generation of the Mystical Body*

1. Viewed socially: the generation was accomplished at the same instant in which Christ was conceived:

- a. "By her consent to the Incarnation of the Word, the Blessed Virgin contributed . . . to the work of our Redemption, and by this very consent she devoted herself so com-



pletely to our salvation, that it may be asserted, she bore all men in her womb as a true mother does her children.

b. "‘She brought forth her first-born Son.’ In her womb is found a single grain of wheat but (in Canticles) it is called ‘a heap of wheat’ because all the elect were contained in this chosen grain. ‘He shall be called the first-born of many brethren.’”

2. Viewed individually. The generation of the Mystical Body continues throughout time until the end of time for at Baptism “all the elect are conceived according to the Spirit in the same virginal womb of the tender love of Mary.”

### *Mary, Mother of the Mystical Body*

1. The Holy Spirit is the live-giving principle which gives this Body life; the same Spirit which is in the Head is in the members. He is the bond of union uniting the faithful with Christ so that with Him they form one Body.

2. Mary’s work is that of a mother—to bring us forth to supernatural life; not mother simply by adoption but in reality. We all have life in Christ; Christ took life in the womb of Mary; we are one with Christ; hence we also took spiritual life in Mary.

3. Mary became our Mother:

a. *At the Incarnation*: here she became the mother of Christians and the Co-operator in their salvation.

1. She bore all men in her womb; the predestined are formed in her in this sense that Christ was formed in her as Head of the predestined.

2. Mary, by her charity, conceived the Son of God according to the spirit as she conceived Him according to nature; in becoming the Mother of the Savior of the world and of her own Savior, she becomes the Mother of Christians.

3. Mary was prepared for her high vocation by a profu-

sion of grace: "The Spirit of God, Who miraculously fashioned the Body of Christ out of the purest blood of Mary in her virginal womb, at the same time fashioned the soul of Mary on Christ and imprinted in her all the features of resemblance; so that, as according to nature, Jesus Christ received life from Mary, in like manner, in order of grace, Mary received the life of her adorable Son and became like Him in all things; the features of conformity were of the highest perfection. . . ."

4. God still left it to Mary to consent to her calling; she is a voluntary intermediary, not simply a channel.

b. *On Calvary*

1. "Mary, at the foot of the cross, has conceived, in her being of grace, all other beings of grace, forming the Mystical Body of Christ, the only Son of God. All the graces that must form the Mystical Body, receive, so to speak, a new luster in her maternal charity. Thus all the elect will have the greatest resemblance, in the first place to Jesus, then to the divine Mary. We may venture to assert that the entire body of the elect, which is naught else but the Mystical Body of Christ, was conceived first of all in Jesus Christ, then in Mary, by the fact that Jesus would have everything transpiring in Him, first to transpire in His Most Holy Mother, thus making her participant in all His mysteries. It was in a manner to announce and confirm the reality of this sublime mystery of the formation of the body of the elect that Jesus pronounced the words: 'Woman, behold thy son' and 'Son, behold thy mother.'"

2. Mary freely consented to the accomplishment of the Redemption; the sacrifice of Calvary is the consummation of the sacrifice begun at the Incarnation.

3. Christ proclaims publicly Mary's Motherhood of the Mystical Body. Here in the following excerpt, it seems

to us, is the core thought underlying the whole doctrine of filial piety: "Is Jesus Christ no longer her son? Let St. John also be her son and with him all the disciples of Christ. Does Jesus Christ, by His death, cease to be her Son, replacing Himself by St. John? No. Jesus wishes to reveal a great mystery to us; it is this, that as Jesus is in us and we are in Jesus, we with Jesus are but one son, one Christ, one Body, of which He is the Head and we are the members. With Him we are but one Son of Mary, one Son of God; He, the Son by nature and consubstantial with His Father and Mary, and we, adopted sons, but one with Him, to become but one with God. . . . Mary was aware of the full import of the words of her Son. . . . Mary then knew that she was beholding this consummation in unity, that her Son and all His disciples were but one son, just as she, her Son, and all His disciples consummated in unity were but one Son of God."

4. In sorrow, Mary brought forth her children.

### *Metabolism of the Mystical Body*

This is living the life of the spirit, the life of Christ; the formation of this life has been confided to Mary; as she contributed toward our salvation in the Incarnation she eternally co-operates in its operations.

1. Formation of the individual member; the Marian character of Father Chaminade's asceticism—the conformity with Christ under the guidance of Mary; she is Mother of the elect because she has brought them forth to the supernatural life; because of her maternal care for them; because of her tender affection. Individual formation consists in the maternal care Mary gives us.

a. At Baptism Mary brings us forth: "all the elect are conceived according to the spirit, by faith and baptism, in the same virginal womb of Mary.



b. Her work continues through our lives: the elect are formed according to the image of Jesus Christ.

1. The formation of the elect is dependent upon Mary: whatever is carried in the womb of Mary can only be Jesus Christ or can live but the life of Christ. "My children, how I am in labor until Christ be formed in you."

2. A fundamental principle of Marian spirituality according to Father Chaminade: with Christ we must be other Christs, sons of Mary; *cum Christo, unus Christus*; we are formed by Mary to resemble Christ.

3. This calls for a high perfection in the religious of his Societies: they must model themselves according to Christ in the maternal womb of her goodness. Child of Mary must be synonymous with saint. "Her ambition . . . is that all the children which her charity has brought forth after Him, be so united with Him, that with Him they may be but one son, one and the same Christ."

2. Formation of the Mystical Body as a whole: the mission of Mary.

a. All periods of the Church's history are marked by the struggles and the triumphs of Mary; she constantly overcomes the world and hell; she vanquishes heresies; she will overcome the heresy of today.

b. She is still the incomparable Woman, the promised Woman to crush the serpent's head.

c. She continues her mediating action on the Mystical Body: as the perfect mother of the just, united with Christ by sanctifying grace; as the imperfect mother of sinners, united with Christ by faith; as the potential mother of unbelievers, separated members but called to share in membership in the divine family.

### *Filial Piety and Its Implications*

This, in the mind of Father Chaminade, is the direct con-



sequence of the doctrine of Mary's spiritual maternity, her motherhood of the Mystical Body. Each is to be another Christ, another Son of Mary; as mother she seeks to form men to the likeness of Christ; hence we must take on the sentiments, the attitudes, the devotedness of Christ toward His Blessed Mother.

1. Filial piety is the reproduction of Christ's own filial piety toward His Mother; piety is taken in the sense of the "pietas," the complexus of traits, attitudes, etc. of a child in respect to the parent. What sort of a Son was Jesus? Christ is the perfect Model, the perfect Son of Mary. We may call it the perfect devotion since it reproduces the devotion of the perfect Model.

a. Like Jesus, those who follow this type of spirituality strive to fulfill toward Mary the obligations of true sons.

b. They are to be formed, nourished, reared by her (conformity with Christ—identical with striving for perfection).

c. They seek to know her better; to love, obey, honor, imitate her; to confide in her; to live in union with her.

d. Above all, they seek to assist her—to co-operate with her in her mission.

2. Total consecration to Mary: springs out of filial piety.

a. On our part, we have chosen her as Mother, bound ourselves to her;

b. On her part, she binds herself to us to love us, to help us in need.

3. Vow of stability in the Society of Mary.

a. Official religious vow recognized by the Church; is a consequence of filial piety; takes on a Marian significance; vow of perseverance in the service of the Blessed Virgin.

b. The Marianist consecrates himself totally and irrevocably in the state of a servant of Mary; the vow is intended to Marianize his whole religious life.

c. The religious life is embraced in Mary's name and for

her glory; the religious so consecrated are to be devoted to Mary, soul and body, to become her auxiliaries, her missionaries in the war against evil in the world; an official declaration of this purpose.

### *The Mission of Mary*

In addition to the stress on filial piety, which appears to us as an original contribution of Father Chaminade, there is also his emphasis on the Mission of Mary in the Church.

1. Concept of Father Chaminade: Mary appeared to him as the irreconcilable enemy of evil; this seems to go counter to our notion of Mary as the sweet, tender, kind, and compassionating Mother. Yet she is the promised Woman who would crush the serpent's head; the enmities will continue until the end of time; she will always carry off the victory. "She will crush thy head"; "Thou alone hast overcome all heresies."

This seems to be an "original" view, by reason of the emphasis, the clearness of notions involved, the fullness of exposition, and especially by reason of the consequences drawn. "We embrace religious life in her name and for her glory, to devote ourselves to her, soul and body, to make her known, loved, and served, convinced that we cannot bring souls to Christ except through His holy Mother."

2. Foundation of this role of Mary: her apostolic role in the world is a particular aspect of her function as mediatrix of grace, which in turn, derives from that of Co-redemptrix; this ultimately goes back to the divine and spiritual maternity of Mary: "Mother of the greater Christ." Mary has been regarded throughout the ages as Queen of Apostles, Help of Christians.

### 3. The Apostolate.

a. Father Chaminade, like St. Grignon (whose treatise was unknown to him) also expressed the conviction to the Holy Father himself: "Our Lord has reserved to His holy Mother

the glory of being particularly the support of Holy Church in these latter times."

b. Out of greater devotion to Christ has grown the consciousness among apostolic souls of Mary's role in the apostolate.

c. Father Chaminade gave zeal in the apostolate as a special mark to his sodalities out of which developed his religious societies.

d. A son of Mary must be an apostle of Mary; one of the duties of filial piety is to *assist* Mary; she needs human instruments; hence the motto: *Maria Duce!* The apostolate must be carried on under the guidance of Mary: "we embrace a state of life where everything is done under thy protection. . . ."

e. Characteristics of this apostolate: an apostolate of faith, of example, and a universal apostolate, for the glory of Mary; vows are made "for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity, the honor of Mary, and the salvation of my soul, I promise and vow. . . ."

f. The apostolate of bringing the knowledge of Mary more fully to souls; a Marian Christocentrism; souls must be taught filial piety.

g. Formation of other apostles of Mary: sodalists, students, affiliates, and others; these apostles become new foci of spiritual influence in their particular milieu or sphere of activity.

REV. DR. FRANCIS FRIEDEL, S.M.,  
University of Dayton,  
Dayton, Ohio.