

*Bro. Augustin Hendlmeier*

**From L'Hermitage to Germany**  
**Studies on the History of the Marist Brothers**

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## Foreword

Involvement with History can occur in a variety of ways and there can be many motives behind that involvement. The motivation for my studies of the History of our Marist Institute was fairly clear to me. History was one of my subjects while a student at University and also a significant part of my work as a teacher. As a Marist, the History of this worldwide Institute to which I belong took an ever more central place in my studies, particularly through a regular return to our origins and a deep interest in the work of Marcellin Champagnat as seen through his letters. (1) This led to a deeper attempt to understand the Institute and to approach it in a more systematic way. The ever approaching celebration of the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute was a further impulse for this study. This book is a contribution to that great event.

The demands of the Provincial Bulletin, the magazine of the then newly established Province of West Central Europe (2000), determined the practical outcome of this study of our Marist origins and history. In the context of the Provincial Bulletin, contributions had to be short; generally, a text of between two to three pages was allowed. The result of this was that articles had to be short and left little place for depth in the presentation. The topics chosen had to be clear, precise and to the point, but always presented with the less historically minded reader in view. And so there developed a kind of mosaic put together from a variety of different themes, as can be seen clearly from the contents page of this book. The choice of topics was fairly random, and was generally determined by the particular interests of the author. In the end, it also came down to specific areas of interest such as the analyses of excerpts from the Annals of Frère Avit or the Origins of the Institute by Br. Paul Sester. Here, my particular thanks go to the latter for his expert advice and numerous revealing talks.

A second focus, alongside the various themes regarding the History of the Institute, is its relationship with the History of the German Marists. The centenary celebration of the Marists in Germany in 2014 was a decisive factor. A fairly concise chronicle of the History of the German Province with some emphasis on specific aspects is already available. (2)

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1 *Augustin Hendlmeier, Marcellin Champagnat in his letters, Furth 2005.*

2 *100 Years Marist Brothers in Germany 1914 – 2014, Furth 2014.*

It is my hope that these focused, short, random insights into the History of the Marists in general, and the Brothers in Germany in particular, will awaken some joy and interest in our history. Over and above that, it is also to be hoped that these titbits will awaken an appetite for the larger and more substantial works of writers such as Pierre Zind, Paul Sester, Gabriel Michel, Alexander Balko, Michael Green and others, but more especially our leading and distinguished Marist historian, André Lanfrey. May this modest book be considered as the 'little Brother' to the recently published three-volume work on the History of the Institute, the first two volumes by André Lanfrey and the third by Michael Green. (3)

It just remains for me to hope that each reader will find something of interest in this patchwork of contributions. The range is not restricted, and the loose structure perhaps allows for picking and choosing what catches our interest.

The year of the bicentenary of the Institute of the Marist Brothers.



*Brother Augustin Hendlmeier FMS*

*Translation from German to English: Brother Charles Gay, Glasgow*

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3 *Lanfrey André, Histoire de L'Institut Des Frères Maristes, Tome 1, Rome 2015; Tome 2, Rome, 2016.*  
*Michael Green, History of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, Volume 3, Rome, 2017.*

## Introduction

I am delighted to be asked to write an introduction to this collection of articles by Brother Augustin Hendlmeier. During my years as Provincial of the Province of West Central Europe I have come to know Brother Augustin and to appreciate his passion for Marist history. As well as being someone who enjoys research and reading, he also has a gift for communicating his knowledge and research with others. In many ways, this is a golden age for Marists who are interested in our history, as we are able to benefit from the researches undertaken by Brothers Alexandre Balko, Gabriel Michel, Pierre Zind, Paul Sester, André Lanfrey and others. We also now have a collection of significant publications enabling researchers to access key Marist texts and articles.

Brother Augustin has made great use of this material and has also undertaken original research into the history of the Marist brothers in Germany. For a range of reasons, not least the “linguistic isolation” of the German brothers, their history is not well known. This is a great shame, as their history contains fascinating and significant moments, not least the challenges of the two World Wars, an extraordinary history of missionary activity and creative responses to challenging times. The record of service and fidelity of the German brothers deserves a wider audience, and this publication will enable Marists throughout the world to become familiar with this impressive story.

Brother Augustin’s interests are not restricted to the history of Marists in Germany. A cursory glance at the Contents page will reveal titles that touch on the early history of the Institute, points of connection with some Popes, interesting stories that can be gleaned from the writings of Brother Avit, and aspects of Marist history in Europe.

Brother Augustin deliberately kept these articles fairly short, as they were originally published in the Province Bulletin of West Central Europe. While the restriction in length necessitated leaving out interesting details in each of these chapters of our history, it also meant that the articles were accessible and straightforward for the general reader. I hope that many Marists will enjoy reading these articles, and will benefit from Brother Augustin’s love of Marist history and his passion to share his knowledge and our “graced history” with others.

This book is being prepared specially as part of our celebration of the Bicentenary of the Institute. Brother Emili asked that we approach the celebration with gratitude, with a spirit of forgiveness for the mistakes of the past, and engagement for the future. In the spirit of brother Emili's thinking about the celebration of the Bicentenary, I hope that these chapters will inspire a sense of gratitude for those brothers who went before us, and for what they achieved – often in difficult circumstances. I hope it will lead us to have a sense of humility regarding the limitations and failings of the past, but, more importantly, to a desire to commit ourselves like our "Elder Brothers in Marist life," to continue the work of Marcellin Champagnat today.



*Yours in J.M.J.Ch.,  
Brother Brendan Geary, F.M.S.,  
Provincial*

# I. Marists and Popes

## 1. Pope Benedict XVI in the spiritual footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat



The few words that Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the people gathered at St Peter's Square immediately after his election, indicating how he sees himself as Pope, might just as well have come from the mouth of Marcellin Champagnat.

In this short speech the Pope shows an attitude of profound humility and genuine modesty and simplicity. He sees himself as a modest instrument in the Service of God and displays a profound religious conviction and genuine faith in divine Providence.

He says: „The cardinals have chosen me, a simple, modest worker in the Lord's vineyard. I find comfort in the fact that the Lord himself can work and act with insufficient means, and more than anything, I ask you to support me with your prayers“.

It was in the same way that Marcellin saw his vocation as an apostle in the Service of the Lord. His awareness of his own inadequacy led him to adopt an attitude of profound humility and modesty, which was the basis for his almost boundless faith in God as he set out to found a new religious congregation. He always saw himself as „an unprofitable servant“. And so this attitude of simplicity became the center of his spirituality.

In a letter to Brother Jean-Marie Granjon, one of his first recruits, he expresses this attitude as follows: „Let us pray that the good Lord reveals his holy will to us and let us always regard ourselves as his humble servants.“ (15th December 1823)

In numerous commentaries after the election of the new Pope what are especially emphasized are his modesty, simplicity and his deep humanity. It is this attitude that will open people's hearts to him and that is also likely to characterize his pontificate. This basic attitude the Pope shows him to be a true Marist in the mould of Champagnat. And so he gives fresh impetus and a new appeal to Marcellin's spirituality and seems spiritually closer to the whole Marist Family than any of his predecessors.

The simplicity of Marcellin in his relationships with people and with God may be the specific contribution that Marists today can offer to those searching for meaning in life amidst the confusion and uncertainty of today's pluralism.

## 2. Pope Francis: Marist Spirituality fully in line with the church

„The three marial Virtues of humility, simplicity and modesty come to us from Marcellin Champagnat. These virtues give a quality of authenticity and kindness to our relationships with our Brothers and with other people we meet.“ (Const. 5)

„At the heart of Marist Spirituality coming from Marcellin and the first Brothers is humility. It expresses itself in simplicity of behavior, most especially in our way of relating to God and to others. We strive to be persons of integrity – truthful, open-hearted and transparent in our relationships“ (Water from the Rock, 33) Marcellin has left us a defining legacy which forms the core of our identity and whose influence and visionary power are, perhaps, only now being sensed fully in the Church. In his lifestyle and in the convincing way in which he presents his office as head of the Church, Pope Francis has made this attitude of humility and simplicity the hallmark of his personal style and so is a shining example to us of the meaning of this Marist Spirituality for the Church today.

In a long article which appeared in the reputable American journal, The National Catholic Reporter, the writer takes stock of the first 100 days of the new Papacy. (1)



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1 John L. Allen Jr: Pope Francis at 100 days: NCR, June 2013

As key signs of the new style it is simplicity and humility which are first mentioned. Alongside that the writer puts his determination to stand back from politics and be there for the ordinary people. The simplicity is demonstrated, according to the writer, more in deeds than in clever announcements. An example of this is yesterday's foot washing in the prison which included two women. His humility likewise shows itself in his behavior, for example eschewing the services of a clerical secretary, but above all in his naturally simple style of relating to people and attending himself to the ordinary day to day things. He is happy to use the telephone and announce himself with, „Jorge here!“ At private audiences he leaves his chair to approach people and greets visitors as equals. But above all he wishes to stress not so much that he is Pope, but rather that he is Bishop of Rome. To make contact with people at grass roots level he regularly calls on friends to hear about local matters. He likes to be casual and free in his speech and to deviate from prepared scripts. The clear conclusion from all this: After 100 days he is pastor of the world.

The article ends with a short anecdote: a Curia Cardinal who liked to appear in full regalia in a restaurant in Trastevere suddenly turned up in simple clothing. On being asked the reason by the astonished restaurateur he said, „Under this Pope simple is the new chic.“ In this way he describes the motto of this new Papacy. As Marists we should be delighted to get affirmation from such a high profile office that our Spirituality is very much *de rigueur* and so we can look forward with interest to the future since we are side by side with the Pope on the way to a new model of Church. He is the new promoter of our Marist Spirituality.

Marcellin's vision will shine anew and offer an attractive compass for the people of today, particularly the youth.

### 3. LEO XIII and the history of the Marist brothers in Germany



On the 26th November 1896 the incumbent Superior General Theophane was received in audience by Pope Leo XIII. In a short conversation the Pope learned of the Congregation, particularly its then present state in the world. He asked if there were brothers in Germany. The conversation has been recorded verbatim. (1)

Here is an abstract:

Pope: How many houses and how many brothers do you have?



Theophane: Holy Father, we have 700 houses and 6000 brothers and novices spread over 100 Dioceses in France, Spain, England, Belgium, America (North and South), Africa and al so in China.

Pope: Oh, 700 houses and 6000 brothers all imbued with the Holy Spirit. But that is wonderful! So, we can say you are not yesterday's men! Do you also have houses in Germany?

Theophane: Holy Father, we have a house in Denmark where the brothers do a lot of good. (2)

#### WHAT IS WORTH NOTING IN THIS CONVERSATION

1. The Pope had Germany within his vision. The developments there are important to him. He had the difficult period of the „*Kulturkampf*“ to contend with and would certainly have preferred to see the Marist Brothers in Germany since it concerned the business of Catholic schools which at that time in the German Reich was hardly thinkable.
2. It is worth noting that Br. Theophane does not go into that but rather points to Denmark, probably due to its nearness to Germany and also the fact that it was overwhelmingly a Protestant country. The founding in

1 Vid. Circulaire 187, 30.12.1896, Vol IX

2 Vid. Augustin Hendlmeier, German Marists in Denmark, Bulletin 2009/, 4

Denmark had certainly been a brave step in the history of the Institute. The founder was a German brother, Weibert, and later there were a number of German brothers working there till 1946. The four houses were part of the German Province.

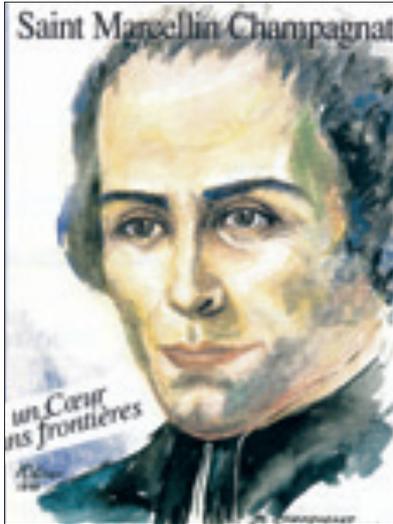
One might well have thought that he could have pointed to the German brothers then living in Belgium (Arlon). In any case, this is the first suggestion from a Pope of the possibility of the presence of Marist Brothers in Germany. In this sense, can we see the first long-term forecast that the founding in Germany in 1914 fulfilled.

Apart from that there is the remark from the Pope, „We can say that you are not yesterday’s men.“ Very interesting. How quickly he caught on to an essential aspect of the Institute and expressed it so succinctly.

## II. Marcellin Champagnat

### 1. A fresh look at Champagnat

#### What is the real basis of Marcellin's spirituality?



A recent study of the life and spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat suggests that the picture which we have of our founder needs to be considerably revised if we are to appreciate the authentic Marcellin and have a better understanding of what underpinned his spirituality.

Although the classic biography by Brother Jean-Baptiste remains the most important source for the life and the work of Marcellin, some utterances on the topic of spirituality which Jean Baptiste attributed to the founder must now be called into question.

The new study referred to above is the in-depth thesis by the Spanish Brother, Manuel Mesonero, published – so far only in Spanish – under the title of „The Spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat“ (Madrid 2003; 248 pages plus 104 pages appendix).

In the first part of this study all the sources which Jean-Baptiste used to depict Marcellin's life and work are carefully presented. The author shows to what extent Jean Baptiste commented on, altered and embellished Champagnat in his attempt to write a hagiography in keeping with his times. Mesonero sums up his findings as follows: „We can no longer rely on the doctrine expounded in this biography for a true picture of Marcellin's spirituality.“ (p. 48).

The second part of the thesis examines the traditional basic components of Marcellin's personality and spirituality. In a detailed and very thorough analysis, the background and the sources which shaped his spirituality are meticulously expounded. Marcellin never developed a spiritual doctrine of his own. Practically all elements of his spirituality and his interpretation of religious life are taken from his favorite models. Here is a short list:

#### *The spirituality of the Sulpicians:*

Practice of prayer life (form of morning prayer, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer of the hour); union of Jesus and Mary; the Holy Spirit, identified with the spirit of Jesus.

### Jean-Baptiste de La Sale:

Same mission in the church; same pedagogical principles (vigilance, good example, atmosphere of familiarity etc.); Special style of religious life: accent on regularity and loyalty to the rules; strictly lived poverty, close community life. But Marcellin stresses equality of all the brothers, whether engaged in teaching or in manual work Francis of Sales.

Method of meditation and practice of the presence of God; childlike trust in Mary; Great trust in God („God knows better than we do.“); importance of humility.

### Ignatius of Loyola (Jesuit spirituality):

Special motto, which characterizes this spirituality: „All for the greater glory of God and the august Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.“ The symbol of the banner, as it is expressed in the circular of 12th August 1837: „We are all fighting under the same banner, that of the august Mary.“ The criteria for the admission to the Institute resemble those from the Constitutions of the Jesuits (letter N° 55 to Colin). But Marcellin stresses also love of work and the material Situation of the aspirant. Humility as the basis of all virtues. The Jesuit principle of obedience as „the basic element of Marcellin’s spirituality“. (p.214) But Marcellin gives the strict Jesuit form of obedience a human touch of his own: „Ignatian austerity is softened by l’esprit de famille’: so dear to the founder and by the picture of the Good Mother, which he wanted to characterize the brothers’ obedience.“ (p. 217)

### The Society of Mary (Marist Fathers):

The Institute seen as „the work of Mary“; the spirit of mission; instruction as its first aim; the early Christianity as model for the brothers.

### As a result of his analysis, Mesonero clearly outlines the fundamental and authentic elements of Marcellin’s spirituality:

Marcellin did not leave his Institute a developed spiritual doctrine.

Marcellin imparted his special charism to his brothers by direct contact and not through written works.

Marcellin was a man formed by „practical intelligence“, great empathy, rich affectivity and strongly pronounced activity.

Marcellin’s relationship to Christ is totally to be seen under the aspect of imitation.

Marcellin’s special devotion to Mary is formed by the notion of the union of Jesus and Mary, He never sees Mary apart from Jesus.

Marcellin’s special relationship to Mary is above all characterized by the expression „our Good Mother“. Here we see his childlike confidence in the Mother of God, which was unconditional.

Marcellin’s piety springs from his total confidence in divine providence.

He refers to it as „resting in God“ and quite often uses the expression „as you know“ (taking it for granted).

Marcellin's spirituality has its focus in simplicity, „In this virtue we have the synthesis of his whole spirituality.“ (p. 228).

This simplicity is manifested both in his easy relationship to people and in his relationship to God, best expressed in his favorite prayer „Nisi Dominus“. („Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it‘,). Marcellin's apostolic spirituality can best be summed up by the following words of St. Matthew's Gospel: „Let the little children alone, and do not stop them coming to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.“ (Mt, 19,14).





## 2. Marcellin's influence on Schools.

### How Marcellin reformed schooling in the countryside.



„However one looks at it, until 1833 (as a result of Guizot's law) when the general attack on primary schooling throughout France was let loose, it was a veritable Augean stable waiting to be cleansed. The miserable state of the teachers, equal only to their ignorance, and the public contempt which their shameful behavior brought upon them, was a disgusting spectacle.“ (1)

This drastic judgment on the prevailing state of primary schools at the time of Champagnat is only one of a number of witness examples of the unbelievably shocking conditions in the area of schooling in the countryside and the extreme poverty of classroom equipment to be found in a report commissioned by the authorities to investigate these matters. The general antagonism and hostility towards education in the villages is also a constant theme. This report and its findings offer an excellent source for an accurate analysis of the background against which Champagnat worked. It is only when one is sufficiently aware of this background that one can truly understand and appreciate the enormous achievement of Champagnat and the extent of the radical reforms he set in motion through his work. We can only conclude from this that Champagnat belongs in the ranks of the greatest school reformers and educationalists for it was with the greatest of insight that he read the signs of the times, drew the right conclusions and found the means to turn them into practice. This is one of the most important reasons for his great success. What the Brothers of de la Salle long before had achieved in urban schools Champagnat now did for the countryside schools with new means and methods. The main pillars of his work were: to send his brothers to teacher training establishments; to continue their ongoing, systematic, professional training; to alleviate the financial burden of the poorest districts; to put in place proper structures for an effective curriculum such as proper classrooms and the possibilities for recreation and relaxation; to guarantee an adaptable form of life for his new community of teaching Brothers which would be able to meet the demands of the situation in the country districts. All this called for great courage and audacity which only such as he could summon with his sense of vocation, his vision and his unshakeable faith in God. When we consider all this, the picture we get of this extraordinary man is even more vivid and deepens our admiration for him.

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1 Lorain, P Overview of the primary school curriculum for the minister for public schools on the basis of authentic documents, particularly the official reports of the 490 inspectors who were tasked at the end of 1833 with visiting all the schools in France, Paris 1837, p.59

The best evidence of this can be found in a source which only recently has become available. It concerns itself with a judgment found in the wide-ranging report, mentioned above, on the state of countryside schools in 1883. This detailed report deserves careful scrutiny which cannot be done here. The report on the conditions in the Hermitage refers to all the pillars of Champagnat's particular approach to schooling mentioned above which made it a unique undertaking and which revolutionized primary countryside education in France. It is a wonderful document, a public appreciation of the particular character of the work of the Little Brothers of Mary, but also a clarion call for us today to carry on Champagnat's work in the same spirit:

*„Loire, district of Saint-Etienne, canton St Chamond:*

Bro. Champagnat, who was born in the hills of Forez (the name of the area at that particular time) has recognized that the communities of that area were totally without the means to provide primary education. For the twenty years after his ordination he directed his whole attention to this need in society and, while there were convents sisters who themselves were poorly educated and offered instruction to both boys and girls, he (Champagnat) educated teachers for boys on his own initiative and using his own means. His establishment for training his teachers made good progress and with confidence he gave his student teachers a distinctive garb. With them he built a house in the district of Saint-Martinen-Coailleux (L'Hermitage) where he is presently occupied in the formation of new candidates. Here also during the holidays, he gathers all the teachers for a period of two weeks and offers them both foundation and on-going formation courses.

The inspector visited them on two occasions and read their statutes. He found nothing in them that was anything but praiseworthy. In his tour he visited six schools in the precinct which he examined. He found everything in the same perfect order as is to be found in the schools of the Christian (de la Salle) Brothers together with very good teaching methodology. In Bourg Argental they will soon have reached Grade 1 and nowhere are they to be found below Grade 3. This Institute has one advantage, namely, that it is sufficient to send only two Brothers to a place and that it is also sufficient to pay only 400 francs for each Brother, part of which or indeed, all of which meets the monthly subsistence. He also allows that a brother can be separated from his colleague to teach in a nearby village or hamlet. So it is very inexpensive for the authorities: and the religious habit gains the brother the trust of the parish priest and families alike. Furthermore, the brothers reject neither the 'mutual method' nor people of other religious persuasions. Neither do they reject the prescriptions of the authorities nor those of the

law. Their whole attention is centered on God and public instruction and education". (2)

Just a few short indicators within the restricted parameters of this essay must suffice by way of explanation for these reported facts:

Marcellin wanted to minister among the poor: therefore he devised a financial structure which greatly unburdened the people in the poorer places (by way of comparison, the cost of one De Ja Salle Brother was 2400 francs and for three it was 7200 francs).

Marcellin was progressive in his thinking and created a new structure for his communities, namely, two or three brothers (of whom one was the cook) and each of the other two could teach in a different hamlet or village.

The brothers were open to new developments: it can be recounted that they even accepted the controversial, mutual method' proposed by the liberals and what was most astounding, they were open to other faith groups.

Marcellin was a pioneer in the formation of teachers (see for example his circulars) and he was on good terms with and well thought of among the secular authorities.

What is not recorded here is one further revolutionary aspect of his work, namely, the erection of spacious school buildings fit for purpose, school yards and hygiene facilities which elsewhere were generally not to be found.

So it is with every justification that we may consider Marcellin a great education reformer.

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2 Ibid. P.322ff



### 3. Some surprising aspects of Marcellin Champagnat

Marcellin Champagnat, sure, we know everything about him. A wealth of large and small biographies give witness to his life and personality. It is more difficult with the letters. Who has actually read them all? Who has tried to extract from them basic features of his character and personality? Who has undertaken the laborious task to discover in them a Champagnat different from the one found in the biography of Jean-Baptiste Furet? Indeed, who has actually read through the whole of that biography since his novitiate and properly engaged with it? Older brothers recall that the so called religious study laid down in the daily timetable was for this specific purpose.

A closer look at the 339 letters and circulars, one of our most important sources in which we find the true Champagnat buried, leads us to ever new surprises. Here one discovers aspects of Champagnat never before recognized. They open up to us a new man, a fascinating personality, a really modern man. In this way he comes much closer to us and we are able to treasure him anew and be proud to be his sons. We must be prepared to rid ourselves of stereotypical presentations of Champagnat and be open to new insights. But this can only be done a small step at a time like the following. Here I will highlight only a few of these particularly surprising aspects of Champagnat as examples of so many others. The basic source is the letters which unfortunately we do not yet have as a single volume in German. The numbering of the letters follows the official edition of the collected letters by Paul Sester „Letters of Marcellin Champagnat“, Rome, 1985.

#### Central Communities

Champagnat was a shrewd man. To make the brothers' work as effective as possible and to keep the costs to the villages as low as possible he introduced central communities. The brothers continued to live in community but for the work in school they were able to spread out individually from this community to various places of work in the nearby towns. This is a modern concept which now in our own day has been put into practice in various places but in earlier times was not implemented. So he wrote to the Vicar General of Nevers in 1834, „Although our brothers do not go less than two together, we can establish a central house from which they can go one by one to the nearby towns.“ (43) And in a long letter of 3rd February 1838 to the Apostolic Administrator at Lyon, Gaston de Pins, he expressed the same view almost verbatim. (171)

### Evening Classes for Adults

In a letter sent on 25th October 1839 to the Parish Priest of Perreux the topic is special classes for adults. To get these going he announced the arrival of a fourth brother: „I am sending you a fourth brother for the adult class. I do not believe it possible for a brother who has spent nearly the whole day with the regular classes to start over again with another in the evening.“ (287)



When he set up these classes he did so with the health of the brothers in mind. Adult evening classes are certainly not his invention, as contemporary reports show, but which we cannot present here due to lack of space. But this initiative demonstrates how determined Champagnat was for other forms of apostolic work and foresaw the widest possible spectrum of work to fulfil his mission. This is also a modern idea and has only recently in our own time found a resonance in the many new forms of apostolate thought out and put into practice by the brothers, but always in the spirit of the Founder.

### Care of Archives

Certainly a little late, but nevertheless it is with determination that Champagnat set out to preserve and look after the heritage of the brothers and of the Institute. The circular of 21st August 1838 contains a number of special requirements of the Directors. One of them reads as follows: „We ask the brothers directors: To impose a brief historical report about the establishment, mentioning the noteworthy events of the year: The number of the children who attended school, winter and summer, visits by inspectors or any other persons in authority, etc.“ (210)

And even more pronounced comes the concern in a special circular to the founders of new establishments: „We would like to have a historical record of the foundation of your establishment for our brothers in your (parish, town), its growth, and the names of its benefactors. We would be delighted to receive this information from you, so we can keep it in the archives of our principal house and those of the respective establishments, where it will stimulate the gratitude of future generations which will reap its fruits“. (78) Of particular note are the reasons he gives for this concern. An important stimulus and warning for us today to preserve carefully the treasure of our archives.

### No Commercial Property

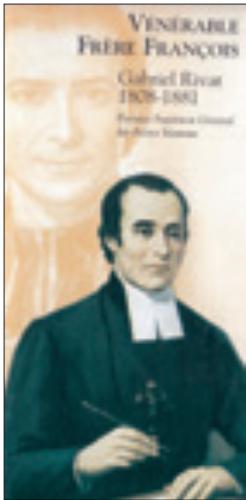
In 1838 the house and land of La-Cote-Saint-André were offered to Champagnat as a gift. We cannot here go into the particular conditions attached to the foundation and its administration which caused Champagnat so many problems. That would certainly be interesting. The decisive rejection of this gift on the part of Champagnat and above all the reason for it are unequivocal proof of his shrewdness and can be considered the rationale for any such property deals: „We have no intention of becoming landowners in the towns where we send our brothers. That would be a burden which would greatly impede our administration and would make many people jealous of us. The taxes, repairs and improvements would drag us into considerable expense. We do not lack buildings; people offer them to us from all sides and we do not have to pay a single penny for them.“ (215)

These are only a few examples which give us an insight into the multilayeredness and complexity of Champagnat's thought and business acumen and which afford us the opportunity to get to know him better. Further examples can follow.



### III. Brother Francis Rivat in Rome

#### 1. Tourist and Pilgrim



In 1858 Brother Francis stayed six months in Rome, from February until August. His aim was to get the official recognition of the Institute and first of all of the Rules.

He wrote a diary, where he noted all the visits he made: churches, sights, liturgical celebrations, persons, especially members of the hierarchy.

His companion was Brother Louis-Marie, who returned home after three months.

During this time he lived as a guest of Father Nicolet, the procurator of the Society of Mary, and Brother Joseph, another member of the Society, in the Valentini Palace which is situated beside the church of Saint Mary of Loretto at the Forum of Trajan and opposite Piazza di Santi Apostoli. Valentini was a Roman banker who bought the palace in 1827. Today it is the seat of the Prefettura di Roma, Government of the Province of Rome. The central location of this big palace proved to be very favorable for his many visits and undertakings.



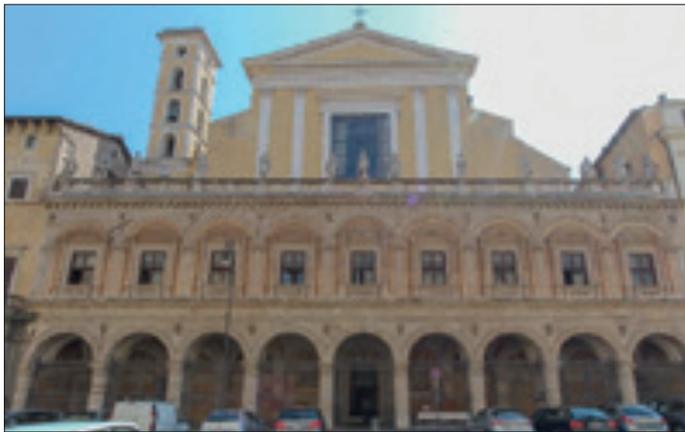
The first part of the journey was covered by boat from Marseille to Civita-vecchia, then by coach to Rome, where they arrived at two o'clock in the morning on February 11th.

On this very day he paid his first visit to Saint Peter's and received the blessing of Pope Pius IX on the square. (Pius IX was pope from 1846 until 1878).

From now on he had a special program of visits for every day, as he had plenty of time left, because of the long-drawn-out schedule for visits to the most influential men of the church. The notes in the diary deliver a fundamental and most interesting insight into the goals of his visits, into the special interests and motives which guided him and first of all they report on his visits to cardinals and as the highlights his three audiences with the Pope. Looking over his many visits on a map of the city, one is guided through

the whole city of Rome and can be his companion of many sometimes very long pilgrimages up and down the city. Above all one gets to know his favorite churches he visited again and again and discovers a variety of churches scarcely known to normal visitors of Rome.

Besides the visits to churches, where he never showed art-historical interests, but all the more liturgical and spiritual ones, one can accompany him to the main sights of ancient Rome. Already on the first two days he went to see the highlights of sightseeing like Forum Romanum, Capitol, Palatine, Colosseum, Termini di Diocletian. But now his secular program was almost fulfilled. Later he also went to see the Termini di Caracalla (March, 27th).



In the very center of his interests were the churches. He visited about 150 during his time in Rome. Among the most visited churches are Santi Apostoli, Nostra di Maria and Saint Peter's, which he visited 26 or 27 times each. Then follow Santa Maria Maggiore (21 times), Il Gesu (19 times), Lateran (16

times), and Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Santa Maria di Loreto and Santa Maria Maddalena, which he visited 12 times each. Then follow Santa Maria degli Angeli (8 times), and San Pietro in Vincoli, San Marco and Santa Maria in Aracoeli (6 times each), and the Pantheon (5 times) Then follows a lot of other churches, some of which he only saw once, such as the well-known churches Santa Sabina or San Martino ai Monti etc. It is interesting that he also only went once to San Lorenzo fuori le mura and only two times to San Paolo fuori le mura. Maybe the reasons were the long distances to cover.

The motives of all these visits were piety and mostly interest in special liturgical celebrations. He almost never mentions any works of art or special items of historical importance. (On his second visit to the Forum and the Capitol on 8 July he mentions the statues and after his visit to the Vatican Museums he lists some items which specially impressed him, such as the Madonna di Foligno by Raphael). In all these things he showed little interest. Art and architecture did not really interest him very much. He was not a tourist at all, he was a pilgrim. And he walked a lot. The record was 9 churches a day (12th May) and 7 (6th June) Moreover, he reports in detail on most solemn liturgical celebrations, especially processions, which he enjoyed very much. And reliquaries of saints and shrines of our Lady were at the centre of his pilgrimages. He always felt like a pilgrim walking in the streets of Rome praying and even saying the office like a monk in the Middle Ages.

## 2. His Mission

The only purpose of his staying in Rome, which lasted half a year, was to get the approbation of the Institute and of the Rules. Therefore in this second part of the summary of his diary shall be reported, what he himself noted about his activities in this matter.



Cardinal Alessandro Barnabo (GA)

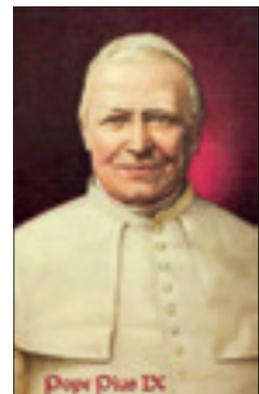
First of all he had to get into contact with the respective influential men of the church, who only could push the difficult process of the Approbation and who could successfully bring it to an end using their influence on the Pope.

The decisive contact with the key figure of the official process of the approbation was soon established by means of the intervention of Father Nicolet of the Society of Mary. Cardinal Barnabo, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, proved to be very open and a real promoter of the undertaking. In the course of 12 meetings with him Brother Francis was always able to create new plans and to get to know how things were developing. He also had talks with four other cardinals, finally with Cardinal della Genga, the prefect of the Roman Curia, whose influence also was of decisive importance. In addition he went to see other important people in the Curia like secretaries and the Pope's chamberlain, Bishop Talbot. In a meeting with the apostolic vicar of Glasgow they talked about the foundation in Glasgow (which really happened in the same year). The highlights in this process were of course the three private audiences with Pope Pius IX. To get these he always had to present the credentials of the French ambassador, the Duke de Gramont.

The meetings with the pope first of all had the character of a courtesy call with the aim of getting to know each other. During the first audience on the 1st of March he offered a memorandum, which was given to all the bishops in whose dioceses the brothers were working, together with letters of recommendation of all these bishops and a report on the Institute. Then he asked for the apostolic blessing for all the brothers.

His commentary: „Oh, how much does His Holiness represent our Good Lord!”

In the second audience he asked for an indulgence of 100 days for the saying of the office and the apostolic blessing for the brothers, and for those in the future. The pope, who again impressed him because of his friendly manner, begged to excuse himself, saying that he was expecting an important letter from Paris. As a sign of his benevolence he pointed out that so far no other congregation had been presented to him with so many letters of recommendation.



The third audience, when Brother Louis-Marie had already departed, and he was alone, was on 9th August and had the character of a farewell visit. Francis reports very extensively and the ceremonial procedure immediately before the audience, with which he was very much impressed. After the greeting he was given the opportunity to explain the state of the talks with the cardinals in quite a long speech. The pope's answer was rather diplomatic and courteous: „In these matters things proceed very slowly.“ Then he wished him a good return journey. By the way, it is interesting to mention a special ceremony: the kissing of the cross on the Pope's shoes. Then he moved back making three genuflexions.

The overall impression he got seeing the pope, Francis describes very briefly and emotionally: „I felt very much at ease in his presence.“

Was his visit to Rome a success? We know that the approbation finally was granted in 1863. A great difficulty on the way to get it is mentioned by Brother Francis himself:

During that time very many new congregations were founded in France and many of them with the same purpose. They all were waiting for approbation together with the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary.

Personally, the stay in Rome was a big success for him. He enjoyed the long time far from L'Hermitage, and especially he enjoyed life as a pilgrim in the centre of Christianity. After the last meeting with Cardinal Barnabo he notes: „I return to France, very happy about all I have seen in Rome and I shall always regard the times I spent there among the most beautiful times of my life.“

Perhaps he also had not forgotten the brilliant firework display on Monte Pincio on Easter Monday, which he watched on Piazza del Popolo and which he describes so accurately in his diary.

### 3. Friend of the Children – Pious Monk

Following the short account of his activities as petitioner of the approbation of the Institute, and an overview of the special character of his pilgrimage in Rome, highlighting his many visits to churches, we aim to demonstrate briefly the contents of the diary concerning the man Francis, his feelings, relations, his kind of piety and other special interests besides churches, liturgical ceremonies and relics of saints. There are only a few indications of this because he took very much care to be objective, and on the other hand he hardly cared about matters concerning his person us such. For example, there is no mention about his companion Brother Louis-Marie, nor of persons he came into contact with in everyday life, nor any hints concerning his relations with the brothers at home during this time.

#### 1. His relations to children

It is remarkable how often he records the times when he met with children in the streets of Rome. Behind these notes one can always sense a certain joy and sympathy.

He shows, being the Superior of a congregation of teaching brothers and having been a teacher for some time, he had an open eye for children. He enjoyed especially the idea of children showing respect and awe, because he was a member of the religious state, wearing the habit. Some examples may demonstrate this feeling:

„I realized acts of respect and sympathy among the children toward the habit, and I like these little Romans. Whenever one of them makes a little mistake and he gets an admonition they always pay attention and are docile.“

„Lamps in front of the Madonnas on the walls of the houses. Children coming to kiss my hands.“

„Choirboy of eleven, black soutane. He opens the chapel with pleasure. We exchange words.“ „Santa Maria Maggiore – On the way two children kiss my hands.“

„In the church two children kiss my hands and my cross.“

„In the Colosseum – children kissing my cross. They greet me again and again.“

„A little child, dressed like a priest, is following me and looking at me; another one, even smaller asks for a medal.“

There could be more examples of this kind. They all prove that he really had a heart for children.

#### 2. His piety

A lot could be said of his special form of his piety. The practical acts of piety rosary, office, everyday prayer life etc. are mentioned only sporadically. For instance, he reports, that he attended three masses on some

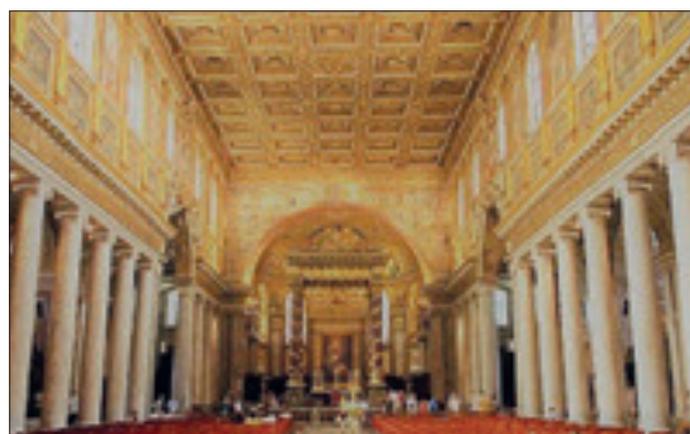
days or mentions his prayers to win special indulgences etc. More seldom are expressions of feelings, but there are some. Here a few characteristic examples:

„In Santi Apostoli – prayer of a soldier kneeling beside me during the two masses; he does not even lift his eyes. What an edification and shame for me, a religious! “



In a very special manner he is impressed by the meeting with Saint Ignatius when visiting the rooms where the great saint lived as General of the Jesuits in the monastery beside Il Gesu. He had the chance to attend mass said by the General, who reminded him very much of Champagnat because of his piety, his modesty

and his „penetrating gaze“. After having attended three masses there, he describes precisely the relics of the saint. His deep emotions are to be realized.



Again and again he takes part in the prayers of 40 hours, which were held in some church every day. On special celebrations of a solemn liturgy he gets overwhelmed by his emotions, as for instance in the Lateran on 29th May, when he notes: „Oh, the church is beautiful because of its priests, its liturgy and its

communion!“ And when he was allowed to take part in the first mass of a recently ordained priest in Saint Peter's, his emotions get the better of him again and he notes: „Piety like an angel, the sweet modesty and charming simplicity of the young priest.“

Much more could be added to show why Brother Francis regarded his long stay in Rome as one of the most beautiful times of his life. He surely had a lot to tell the brothers at Saint-Genis-Laval where the Mother House had been installed on 6th August that year.

## IV. L'Hermitage in the time of Marcellin Champagnat and today

### 1. Everyday Life in the Hermitage

**The Financial Accounts from the time of Champagnat give us an insight into the lifestyle of the brothers.**

The recently published three volumes of the writings of Champagnat and the first brothers (1) create an outstanding resource for all kinds of research into the work, person and charism of Marcellin Champagnat but also of the lifestyle of the first brothers.



In the first volume alongside the instructions of the founder we find the texts which are included in the so-called „Notebooks“ (Les Cahiers Champagnat). In these texts, we find Rules for the Motherhouse, draft brochures about the Institute, drafts of the Common Rule and numerous drafts of letters and many other forms of written material: but we also find the House Accounts for the Hermitage for the years 1826 to 1841. (2)

In his introduction, Br. Paul Sester points out that the authentic notes of the founder are interspersed throughout with later entries of his followers who used the empty pages of the notebooks for their own notes. (3)

The House Accounts begin on January 1st 1826 and end on December 30th 1841 and these are followed by a variety of statements and entries on the financial state of the houses. In the accounts all the expenses for the house are entered, particularly for provisions of all sorts and other materials such as cloth, lime, gypsum, hay and straw to name but a few. Of course, also included are the expenses for various tradesmen such as builders, carpenters, shoemakers as well as the expenses of the butcher and other purveyors of foodstuffs.

A significant place is given over to travel expenses so that we can clearly see the travel plans of the founder and the first brothers. Nor should we overlook the expenses of Doctors and Pharmacies, particularly the constant use of „powder“ (poudre) which was effectively used for wounds.

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1 Origines des Frères Maristes, Recueil des écrits de St Marcellin Champagnat, 1789-1840.

Présentés par Frère Paul Sester, Rome 2011

2 ibid pp. 407-560

3 ibid. p. 1

A quick overview shows the heaviest outgoings for the daily upkeep of the large community of the Hermitage. Grain (925 francs in 1827) and flour take the top place. The regular outgoings for these are over 500 francs and there are regular expenses popping up for charcoal and embers for the laundry and lime for the building work. These many categories of expenditure could be investigated individually; but here we can only illustrate a few particularly interesting points which throw a special light on the lifestyle; it partly concerns details which witness to the practicalities of the Religious Life and how sincerely the brothers took to heart the regulations of the founder in respect of asceticism, food and standard of living.

First of all, the account ledgers bear witness to the fact that the Hermitage was always a genuine business enterprise. Part of this was also the farm with the cattle and pigs. Purchases of cows and pigs, and later sheep are precisely indicated. From these entries we can also gather the general trends in the pricing of these beasts.

The first couple of cows were purchased in 1826 in unusual circumstances due to the unusual fall in prices. In the same year, a further two cows were bought but this time at the normal prices of 89 and 69 francs respectively. Three additional cows were purchased in 1827 with higher prices ranging from 90 to 120 francs. By 1838 there were four further cows with further rising prices as high as 197 francs. In the following two years, there were an additional three. So, between 1826 and 1840 15 cows were acquired. There were others added to these which were eventually put into the care of a farmer and on at least two occasions it is said that money was paid over to a Mr. Bertholon for cows and pigs. These facts are not clear.

The accounts also give an insight into the keeping of pigs. This is quite interesting since the price for pigs is sometimes higher than for cows. The first two pigs come into the stys at the Hermitage on 7th January 1826 at a cost of 221 francs. Two others followed in the same year and four more in 1827 followed by seven between 1829 and 1838. As with the cows, the prices rose steeply. In 1838 they cost 150 francs: 15 pigs in total were bought. Beginning 1840 sheep breeding was introduced and in that year sheep were purchased for 457 francs. (4)

What was put on the table apart from basic foods? The regular appearance of entries for cheese, butter and particularly flour, demonstrates the brothers generally followed Champagnat's stipulations on simple fare. For meat, there were the pigs and for milk, the cows. But it is interesting to note that in the course of the years the diet was broadened.

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4 *ibid.* p. 506

At first there gradually appear increasing entries for eggs and even more so for cherries and apples. Finally „truffles“ (truffes) make an appearance. But these are not the well-known expensive delicacies but simply potatoes. In 1826 there is mention of truffles, but on only a single occasion. They disappear entirely. They reappear again in 1838 and between then and 1841 there are nine entries with the price varying from 20 to 46 francs. Gradually they tried genuine luxury foods like cocoa but hesitantly and in small amounts. The first entry for that (chocolat) appears in February 1838. (5) Only small amounts were bought at first at 2 francs but by 1840 there is an entry for 15 francs. (6)

Now to the topic of tobacco. Smoking tobacco was certainly not in Champagnat's thinking unless snuff for medicinal purposes as seemed to be common practice at the time. In the early years, none of his followers was hooked on it. But the ledgers show that in the course of time it played an ever-great role. The first entry appears in 1837 with the modest sum of 0.5 francs. (7) Then in the same year there are a further six entries each for 1 franc. In 1839 there are ten entries for tobacco and we now see entries for 3 francs. (8) The increase in the use of tobacco is clear in the following years. While in 1837 the expenditure on tobacco was 6 francs it was already 47 francs by 1840. (9) That is how it went on till it was totally forbidden in 1860 when we find the following resolution in the statutes of the General Chapter: „The use of tobacco by the brothers is absolutely not allowed. The necessity and habitual use of it are grounds for not being admitted to vows.“ (10)

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5 *ibid.* p. 472

6 *ibid.* p. 511

7 *ibid.* p. 459

8 *ibid.* p. 517

9 *ibid.* p. 505

10 Br. Avit, *Annales de L'Institut, 2 Epanouissement*, Rome, 1993, p. 423



## 2. Life in the Hermitage at the time of Champagnat

### The Admission Register of the Novitiate as an Indicator of the Situation in the Novitiate



At first sight, the public admissions register (Registre des Inscriptions) (1) which we find in the second volume of *Origines des Frères Maristes* offers us a more or less ordered record of irregular entries of dates, personal information and above all the method of financing the costs

of the novices who entered the novitiate at Hermitage in the period 1825 to 1848. The names of the candidates are entered and, following a particular scheme, certain data are added such as parents, place and date of birth and standard of education in relation to reading and writing or other abilities. But these standard data are not always recorded. The first impression is one of confusion throughout as the many figures which appear in the margin suggest an expenses book. It was actually also intended as such.

Consequently, any statistical analysis is fraught with problems.

However, that does not stop us identifying a certain fundamental methodology nor arriving at judgments about the circumstances there at the time and the inevitable problems arising from them.

Such judgments are about the ages of the novices, their level of education and the highly diverse composition of the novitiate groups together with the attendant problems which are mentioned nowhere explicitly in the Marist sources.

Here we can only offer a short overview and, in the form of glimpses into particular given situations and conditions, arrive at a basis for possible but inconclusive evidence of life in the Hermitage as well as the leadership and administrative style of Champagnat and his successors. First of all, we have to bear in mind what great importance would be attached to laying down sound financial principles for the fledgling Congregation. (2) Here

1 *Origines des Frères Maristes, Recueils des écrits de St Marcellin Champagnat, présentés par Frère Paul Sester, FMS Volume 2. Affirmation de L'Identité d' une Famille Religieuse, Rome 2011, pp 3-247*

2 See, „Marcellin and Money“ (Marzellin und das Geld) in: Augustin Hendlmeier, Marcellin Champagnat, Saint and Founder , based on his letters, Mindelheim, 2005 pp 34-38

Champagnat showed himself to be a realistic thinking administrator who left nothing to chance and sought to put his Society on a sound financial footing. His action in this domain can be garnered from his letters which are frequently concerned with financial matters.

To be accepted as a novice one had to pay a fee of 400 Francs. Most of the candidates could not come up with this amount so a payment plan had to be worked out according to the capacity of each candidate. All later contributions received were then recorded in the register against the particular candidate.

It is interesting to note the fact that one tried to secure oneself financially since experience taught that a whole row of aspirants for the novitiate did not persevere or indeed would have to be let go as suitable. So, one often finds the evidence, „He gave nothing but felt obliged to compensate the house if he had to leave. “This happened when they were unable to pay anything. (3)

The most important information that the register reveals are the ages of the novices. A few examples will show that there were absolutely no specific guidelines in this area to be found and that candidates were accepted when they turned up, whether old or young, whether equipped with rudimentary learning or not: it would seem that age played no part at all. Indeed, there were children among the candidates just as there were late vocations of 40 years of age and even in their 60s. That such a diffuse intake would necessarily create problems is easy to imagine even if there was no talk about it. How could one introduce into the first stages of religious life 13, 14 and 15-year-olds alongside 25-28-year-olds or worse still, those over 30, without problems of adjustment? Which age group had the priority when it came to practical and spiritual tuition? How could one find harmony in groups of such diverse age and experience? Such problems were not going to be overcome simply through humility, piety and adherence to the rule.

The year 1840, that of the death of Champagnat, illustrates a concrete example of this state of affairs. In that year 55 candidates were registered in the novitiate. In 14 cases, there was no age stated. There were 37 enrolments – so everything was fairly fluent. The number of „children“ i.e. those from 13 to 15 years of age was 13 while 6 others were between 15 and 19 years of age.

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3 An Example: *Origines* 2, p.76 (Registration of Br. Didace)

They lived side by side with 18 novices who were between 20 and 29 years of age with two over 30. In the years 1825 to 1827 there were 30 novices of 16 years of age or younger, 10 of whom were just 15; 3 were over 30.

Also of importance are the details of the standard of education of the candidates. These details included only ability in reading and writing. Most of them were described as, „He can read and write a little. “One can only imagine this as a mild description of an extremely low level of achievement. In 1840, 31 of the 55 candidates fell into this category and 7 were judged as being able to read and write. There were also some whose ability was nil and the judgment was simply, „He knows nothing“ (4). This occurred 10 times in the period of the register we are examining.

One can imagine the challenges facing Champagnat and his co-workers in the formation if teachers were to be made out of such poorly educated young and older people who not only had to acquire the fundamentals but must also acquire the skills and methods to teach these to the children as well as live a life in community. A few other interesting comments which offer specific details can be outlined here to give this short sketch a bit more reality. So, in 1839 there is a record of a 9 year-old being enrolled in the novitiate and in 1838 there was already a 12 year-old enrolled. The record of the oldest is held by Br. Spiridion who entered at the age of 60. (5) He was a skilled cobbler and was able to continue in that trade. This was no exception to have a candidate enter with a skilled trade. There were also carpenters and weavers who no doubt found good employment in the commercial structure of the Hermitage.

To conclude, a particular rarity: on 2nd January 1834, two brothers from the same family came to the novitiate, one 14 years of age (Br. Marcel) and the other 12 years of age (Br. Agathon). (6)

These few comments on the register can perhaps give us a clearer and concrete picture of life at the Hermitage and perhaps also deepen our understanding of the accomplishments of Champagnat.

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4 Example Origines 2, p.100

5 Origines 2. p.46

6 Origines 2, p.62



### 3. The Register of the Dead of Hermitage



Among the various records and lists put together in the Hermitage at the time of Champagnat and added to after his death, we find a record of those buried in the graveyard at the Hermitage as well as of those who had been members of the Hermitage community but were buried elsewhere. (1) Central to this is

the account of the death and burial of Champagnat himself. (2) There are 69 persons named as having died since the records started in 1825 but not all were buried at L'Hermitage.

One particular feature is that not only were Brothers buried in the graveyard but also lay people particularly members of Champagnat's family. After Marcellin's brother James was buried there on 16th December 1833 so his children, Jean aged 5, Marie 14, Barthelemy 18 and finally on 9th December 1837 another Marcellin aged 6 were buried there also. (3) After mention of the Founder, 191 deceased between then and 1875 are named; so a total of 261. Apart from the Brothers and relatives of the Champagnat, other lay people found their final resting place in this cemetery, particularly a number of elderly men who had found a place to live there and ultimately had died there. In total 8 men are mentioned, three of whom were 80 years of age or older and the youngest among them just 40. The last one was buried there in 1844. (4) Among them all is one woman, Marie Chevalier, buried there in 1833 at the age of 68. (5) There is also one Marist Father whose final resting place is there in the cemetery, Bro. Louis-Etienne who died at the early age of 28. (6) Also named is Bro. Bret who died in 1837 in Valparaiso on the journey to Oceania. The early missionary Brothers are also named who died enroute or after their arrival as well as those who were martyred; among the last mentioned is Bro. Hyacinth who was murdered along with two Marist Fathers on 4th April 1847. Added to these, three others are named who died in the missions.

1 Origines des Frères Maristes, Recueil des écrits de St Marcellin Champagnat, 1789-1840 présentés par Frère Paul Sester, 3, Structuration et Développement des Frères Maristes, Rome 2011, pp. 301-361

2 Origines 3, pp 315 f

3 Origines 3 p. 309, F, Avit Annales de L'Institut 1, Rome 1993 p.9

4 Origines 3 p. 320

5 Origines 3 p. 311

6 Origines 3 p. 335

The entries of each one who died include dates of birth and death, year of Profession as well as place of birth and the names of the parents. Included are the names of three Brothers who are witnesses. If these witnesses are not named it is a sign that the burials took place elsewhere (68 times) Unfortunately there is no record of the circumstances surrounding these deaths but the ages of the deceased is useful information. One can gather clues as to the age structure within a community and the problems associated with that together with other important information regarding the mortality rate at the time and compare it to the present situation in France. Did the Brothers die at a younger age? At which period and why? From an overview of age at death certain conclusions can be drawn. Such an overview indicates that the majority of Brothers died very young. The 67 named Brothers, Novices and Postulants who ,according to the registers, died between 1825 and 1860 fell into the following age groups (in the case of three Brothers, there is no age at death registered).

14 years of age: 1 (1826, Bro. Placidus from La Valla)  
15 years of age: 3  
16 years of age: 10  
17 years of age: 17  
18 years of age: 22  
19 years of age: 12  
20 years of age: 12

This shows that 77 Brothers died between the ages of 14 and 20 years to which we can add another 80 between 21 and 30. Those who died between the ages of 31 and 40 amount to 18 and between 41 and 50 to 8. There are four between the ages of 60 and 70 and 2 who were 70 or more. Bro. Spiridion Chazelle died in 1875 at the age of 74. (7) Those are the figures for the years 1825 to 1860.

The year 1860 is chosen as the final year since the records after this year are no longer revealing due to the smaller number of burials since the main cemetery was now in St. Genis. (8)

The year 1871 is an exception as 11 Brothers were buried in L'Hermitage among whom were a 16 year old postulant, a 16 year old novice and a 16 year old Brother. It is difficult to know why so many young Brothers died. Was L'Hermitage a special case or was this simply another example of the overall situation at the time? Certainly, looking at the Hermitage food bill

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7 Origines 3, p. 33

8 Annales de L'Institut 2, p. 397

one cannot say it was due to malnutrition. The lifestyle was in no way opulent but in keeping with the majority of the population. We can only arrive at certain judgments on the basis of a few facts. In the early 19th century, the average age of death in France was around 30 years. During the first half of that century the number of casualties from Tuberculosis doubled; in the years from 1837 to 1857 tens of thousands died due to meningitis, mainly people under 30 years of age. (9) In 1839 in the area of Saint Etienne 35% of people died by the age of 4, 7.2% between the ages of 10 and 19 and 14.7% over the age of 70. (10) In 1832/34 there was a raging epidemic of Cholera with a death toll of 100,000 in 1832 alone. There was a further and worse epidemic in 1849. (11) Did these outbreaks have an effect on the Brothers in L'Hermitage? We don't know. Certainly, the deaths of these young men were a great loss for the emerging institute. The Hermitage was a place of grief and a constant battle with death.

### Postscript

We gather the following figures on deaths from the archives of the Parish of St.-Martin-en-Coailleux for the years 1825, 1826 and 1827. (12)

In 1825 there were two deaths of persons between 15 and 30 years of age  
in 1826 there were no deaths in that age group.

In 1827 there were three deaths in this 15 to 30 age group.

These figures indicate that the high number of deaths in the 15-30 age range in the Hermitage was exceptional. The numbers from the Isieux register seem partly to corroborate these figures and partly to cast doubt on them: Deaths in the 15-30 age range are:

1839: 2 (20 and 30 years)	Hermitage: 7
1840: 7 (17, 18 and 20 years of age, 21, 25, 29, 30)	Hermitage: 8
1841: 2 (21 and 29 years of age)	Hermitage: 1

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9 Osterhammel, J. *Changes in the World; History of the 19th Century*, Munich 2011, pp 269 ff

10 *Etudes Foreziennes* 1, Université de St Etienne, 1967, p.189

11 Gepot, J. *La Population Française aux XIXe et XXe siècle*, 1989, p. 42

12 [www.loire.fr](http://www.loire.fr) Archives départementales de la Loire; Archive départementale de Saint-Chamond ; Registre Paroissiaux et d'Etat civil de St. Martin-en-Coailleux ; Registre des Actes de Naissances, Mariages et Décès de la Commune Le Bessat pour les années 1832 jusqu'à 1840.

So, it is still difficult to pinpoint the reason for the high mortality rate of young Brothers in the Hermitage. Unfortunately, we cannot use the figures from the parish of Le Bessat because the entries in the register are for the most part illegible.

The entries in the Parish archives of Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux clearly show the drastic number of the deaths among infants and children; see the following:

	Children under 1	Between 1 and 10	In relation to total
1825	14	3	17 out of 31
1826	9	4	13 out of 21
1827	7	0	7 out of 21

This applies also to Isieux where, for example, in 1839 of the 51 who died, 22 were children under the age of 10; we can add to that 44 who were stillborn.

## 4. Hermitage and Dessau



What is the connection between the renewed Hermitage and the town of Dessau in Germany?

Reflections on the occasion of our pilgrimage to the Hermitage.

The redevelopment of the new Hermitage took quite a long time to complete, following a long process of restoration planning. The remodeling of the cradle of the Institute of the Marist brothers was a courageous and remarkable step forward, a clear visible sign of enormous symbolic power for the departure into a new era of the institute.

How could one dare, or even be allowed, to remodel in such a fundamental way this place most holy for all Marists, this great relic, which was granted us by our founder, by giving it a new, a modern face? Were we allowed to dare to alter the traces of Saint Marcellin and of the first brothers, this nucleus of our Marist history, this holy shrine per se for all Marists in order to develop it according to the needs of a new time?

For many generations of disciples of Champagnat this place, this house, has meant the direct confrontation with their founder. The genius of this holy place has moved deeply all those, who have stayed there for a while, because it was the direct confrontation not only with everything created by the hands of Marcellin, but also with the spirit which took shape in this house, with the genuine spirituality of this holy man and also with the continuity of Marist history.

So the courageous decision of the former General council and the Superior General, Sean Sammon, raised not only enthusiasm and agreement by many brothers but also many reservations and doubts concerning the consequences of such a radical undertaking. All were able to follow the remodeling process in the Hermitage by means of a very open and extensive information policy. The plans and the model could be examined and everybody who was interested could watch closely what was going on in form of many updated documentations in the media.

However, there still remained doubts, and the visitors – brothers and lay-people – travel with great expectations and suspense and surely also with a great amount of curiosity to this most important shrine of all Marists. What will be the first impression? In what way, can the remodeled house correspond with the expectations and the special feelings connected with this house so far?

More or less quickly the reservations and the first thoughts of doubt and skepticism will disappear, because a closer survey and a slow and patient approach to the new look of the house and the new building will set aside the last reservations and perhaps evoke a sudden insight.

First of all the new building on the left bank of the river Gier, with the large dining and assembly rooms and the smaller conference rooms, may cause a feeling of discontentment and astonishment.

But a more intensive look from the opposite terrace may soon reveal the deep harmony between old and new. The very simple shape of the new building, based on some fundamental geometric shapes, is a wonderful counterpart to the old historic house built by Champagnat, which in its structure totally remained the house of Marcellin, but which as a result of the new coloring has got a warmer and more lively aura. The former stern and rather austere look, documented in the dark grey, the natural color of the rocks which surround the house and were used to build it, is overcome in a sensitive manner and has given way to a more friendly, inviting sand colored tone, providing an inviting atmosphere all over the place.

This new building with its great simplicity and clarity is a genuine symbol of Marist spirituality. It does not impose itself in order to contrast with the old house, while in its modesty it proves like a natural addition to the big main building, and even from its function it has got a character of service. And it fits also in a natural way into the specific character of this place amidst an archaic mountainous scenery and the riverbed of the Gier.

The shifting of the two main blocks of the building produces a closure of the whole place to the west and makes a good match with the line of the river, which got a new importance by way of its total uncovering. We all know that for Marcellin the river was one of the main reasons for choosing this place for the Hermitage.

Having made these more basic and general reflections, let us come to the relations between the Hermitage and Dessau in Germany.

All, who deal a bit with the history of architecture, after having read these few remarks and after having had a closer look at the matter, will discern that this building exactly corresponds to the essential features of the so called **Bauhaus architecture**, and in a talk about the house the Catalan archi-

tect Joan Puig-Peg, who in his heart feels himself as a member of the Marist family, confirmed this fact. He admitted that in the planning of this building he was inspired by the leading architects of this style, Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe.



Dessau, a town in East Germany, is the town of the Bauhaus. There the world-famous testimonies of this kind of architecture were built in the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. Today they belong to the World Heritage of Mankind. From 2002 till 2015 Marist brothers lived and worked in this town in an international community close to these great testimonies in the history of architecture, well known all over the world, visited every year by people from all continents. This style had, as already mentioned, led architecture into the modern age. Its aim was functionality, utmost clarity, matter-of-factness, unity of form and function and above all simplicity. Regarding the new building in the Hermitage, one sees a perfect house inspired by this style, a real symbol of Marist simplicity.

Dessau and the Hermitage: what peculiar ways of fate, what surprising insights for everybody looking under the surface to realize the deeper connections of things!

Once more: The harmony between old and new could hardly have better been translated into action than as here in the remodeling of the Hermitage. We ought to see a testimony of the departure into a new dimension of Marist history, which just at this holy place for all Marists reveals the deep rooting in their past, which guarantees their specific character and spirituality.

Let us be inspired by the spirit of Marcellin, who certainly would have greeted with enthusiasm this new great symbol of hope. Let us seek inspiration from the spirit of the new Hermitage, which in its core has remained the old one, the house and the home of Marcellin and of all his disciples in the big Marist family.



## V. History of the Institute according to Brother Avit

### 1. Brother Avit's Annals of the Institute



Br. Avit's (Henri Bilon) Annals of the Institute, unfortunately too little known by the brothers, are a fascinating read. They are a real treasure for the Institute, an inexhaustible source for the history of the Institute at the time of Champagnat and particularly the years following. Br. Paul Sester's three volume work amounting to 1207 pages (Rome 1993), offers us a comprehensive presentation of the life of the brothers and the development of the Institute in its many aspects to 1891; at the same time it is an inexhaustible source for research into our Marist History. It also gives an impressive portrayal of the development and struggle surrounding the specific character of the Marist identity and Mission. Alongside that it is also a treasure trove of Marist documents such as circulars, letters and other communications of the superiors, for the most part presented in summary form.

The Annals belong to a unique genre: they contain texts of a whole variety of types often arranged in the style of a chronicle. It is this which is particularly fascinating. In the first instance, there are the factual accounts of the spread of the Institute and the questions of governance and administration bound up with that, particularly the establishment of many new communities. These accounts are of inestimable value for the historian. There are also many stories of different kinds taken directly from life situations which are authentic, genuine, sometimes gossip but always described as it was, full of freshness and dry humor. Since Br. Avit was a highly intelligent man blessed with a decidedly critical mind and a particular gift for analysis and clear understanding, he was able, while observing from a distance, to present things realistically and make unemotional judgments about them. However, in the process he was often over the top and gave exaggerated judgments which could be subjective, ironic and off the cuff. But he was also able to see things from a different perspective from that of Jean-Baptiste and others; so he offers an important corrective and a necessary addition to the accounts of Jean-Baptiste.

On occasions his propensity for the ironic and sarcastic are in evidence, particularly in scurrilous stories about independently minded brothers or his gloating notes about former brothers whose unfortunate destinies he

approved of. Nevertheless, one feels that the purpose of his critical stance is always the good of the Institute: so he constantly castigated development failings such as the often rash and almost uncontrolled spread of the Institute to the detriment of the proper formation of the brothers. This accounts for his open criticism of Francis and Louis Marie as Superiors General and also for his critical comments on the building and running of many houses. No one was as aware as he was of the situation on the ground since as Br. Visitor he was in many communities and wrote up their „annals“.

Finally, the Annals are an interesting source for historians researching those times. One has only to search out the details. (Examples: cholera in Provence in 1854; details about postal and bread charges; letters of sympathy to Napoleon III after the assassination attempt ...) There is no end to it. But there are some key areas where Avit gives details about himself which say a lot about his personality. The most important pointer is surely his annotation when he was not told of the death of his father; he was deeply affected by this, „I find myself in one of those critical situations in which it is absolutely necessary to remind oneself that one is a Religious.“ (II.234) What a revelation! He mastered all his anger and deep disappointments through his strict understanding of what a religious is and handled them spiritually. His acumen also came to the fore. One example: when the acquisition of a new Mother House in Creux was being considered, he was able to change the minds of those already convinced of the idea (II.286).

It is certainly a problem to know if Avit was always accurate and reliable in his writing. For that we would need a historical critical undertaking. Most assuredly, that would be a worthwhile task but a mammoth one. We would know little of the development of the Institute in the 19th century without Avit and so must consider ourselves fortunate to have the Annals.

Avit writes from the perspective of the historian without moral concern or ideological reservations: everything was frank and to the point. That is why he is so valuable. But how did he manage it? He has left behind a mammoth work and this in spite of his administrative workload which demanded so much of him. This man earns our admiration and through his output plays a role in the Institute equal to that of Jean-Baptiste. Until now Avit is too little known and his importance too little recognized. There are hardly any translations and unfortunately, we have the problem that many people are not the least interested in these historical questions: and yet this history is so important for defining our identity, our spirituality and our charism which everyone talks about today. The same unfortunately goes for our interest in Champagnat.

The superiors at the time were fully aware of Avit's talents and knew that in spite of any reservations they were indebted to him. He was spared neither hostility nor opposition. Some people even set out to malign him and spread rumors about him (II.363). Some were indeed afraid of his rigidity with which he made judgments and as superior acted accordingly. With his farsightedness and clear vision he was often ahead of most people and not always agreeable. But we must not forget how he often portrayed the good brothers.

Of particular interest are his „priestly stories“ and his description of the problems with community chaplains (Marist Fathers). Lurking behind this was the perennial problem of the Marists as an Institute of Brothers, namely the problem of spiritual care under which we have continuously suffered and to the consequences of which the leadership of the Institute paid too little attention. The brothers, much to their disadvantage, were often given chaplains who could not be used elsewhere. The impact of clericalism was already noticeable at that time and many brothers suffered under it. Avit recognized this but occasionally perhaps exaggerated it as he observed with concern too great an influence on the part of the Fathers.

He was also a man full of life's wisdom and without doubt the most important Marist historian of the 19th century. He is a reminder to us to us not to shirk from our responsibility to our heritage. In this respect, he suffered severe disappointments such as the catastrophic and deliberate burning of many of his records.

Again: in spite of the reservations mentioned above, he is deep down the genuine religious as is demonstrated in the widespread recognition he enjoys (II.234) and the most engaged observer of the events in the Institute. His greatest concern was always the good of the Institute and fidelity to the spirit of the founder whom he actually knew personally, since he entered the Institute as a postulant in 1838.



## 2. The celebration of Golden Jubilees

### *Introductory notes*

We are on the threshold of the 200th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Institute in 2017. It seems appropriate that we should now be making steps to bring this to fruition. We will try to do this in a series of contributions for the Bulletin. The basis of these will be the annals of Brother Avit (Henri Bilon), who set out in three volumes {total 1207 pages} in a series of reports, narratives and commentaries, the History of Champagnat and of the Institute from its beginning to 1891. The particular character of Avit's work in terms of its presentation is already featured in the preceding article and so need not be repeated here. Be that as it may, these annals are an interesting and important source for the History of the Institute in the 19th century regarding the development, administration, mission, spirituality, regular activities and lifestyle of the Brothers in the time of Champagnat and later. His motto still applies to us today, namely, „The experience of the past should be our guide to the present and instruction for the future“. In this article we see how the Brothers celebrated a Golden Jubilee. This is a very enlightening extract about the culture of celebration which gradually developed among the Brothers and continues to this day.

In his third volume Brother Avit deals with the period from 1883 when Brother Theophane became Superior General to 1891, a year before his death. He was 73 years old.

### *1881: The first celebration*

Brother Avit tells us that no one had celebrated a Golden Jubilee before 1881. He writes,

„Brother Francis outlived the jubilee by ten years. Neither he nor anyone else had dreamt of such a thing as celebrating the 50th anniversary; not even that of the beloved Brother Xavier who lived more than 50 years in the Institute. Brother Jean-Baptiste (Furet) died a few weeks before his jubilee“.

Brother Francis entered the Novitiate in 1819, so could have celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 1869. Since he died in 1881 he had outlived the jubilee year by twelve years. Brother Jean-Baptiste entered the Novitiate in 1822 and died in 1872, so in his 50th year in Religion. Nor was his jubilee celebrated.

According to Avit it was in 1881 that a Golden Jubilee was first properly celebrated. It was the jubilee of one of the best known Brothers, one to whom Champagnat stood close by because of the „incident“ in the early days, namely Brother Sylvester. He entered the Novitiate in 1831 which

was understood as the beginning of a religious life. But the celebration was indeed modest. There was a little „extra“ at the midday meal and „that was all“ narrated Avit curtly.

### 1888: The Golden Jubilee celebration of Brother Avit

Avit lived through 1885, the year in which were celebrated the jubilees of Brothers Euthymes, Jean-Claude and Gerard. On this occasion there was something „extra“ at the midday meal as well as several speeches.

But now to the celebration of the chronicler himself: actually, it should have been celebrated on 9th March since it was on that day in 1838 that the 19-year-old Avit entered the Novitiate in L'Hermitage. But as he tells us, on the evening before he left on a journey south for several months. So the Superior General postponed the Feast of the Consecration of Our Lady in the Temple and scheduled the jubilee to take place with five other Brothers.

Avit described what took place that day, „A grand solemn Mass. The jubilarians took their places at the top table, which was the Superiors' table and everyone had a share of the ‚extra‘. After the greetings in the hall the six Brothers were accompanied into the study hall where one of the juniors gave a speech“.

Because of its original character, we quote a short extract from this speech. He first turned towards the Superior General, Brother Theophane, and said, „We are the youngest of the children of the Blessed Virgin and we are certain that we are the most favoured children in your heart.“ Then he turned back to the jubilarians and said among other things, „Every day our teachers remind us of the virtues of our venerable founder. But you (jubilarians) who have received his teachings and his care, tell us yourselves much more eloquently than we are able to do, what the virtues are of a true child of Mary and Champagnat. Your jubilee teaches us that we are far distant from the death of our pious founder. But you, dear Brothers, are the worthy signposts with whose help we will not go astray“.

### Further celebrations in future years

At this time the celebration of Golden Jubilees became common in the Motherhouse and in the other communities. So in that same year there were jubilee celebrations for two Brothers in Aubenas and five months before that the Jubilee of Brother Albert in Auriol where the parish priest had organized a great feast. And Brother Avit recounts the celebration in Beaucamps as follows, „The many living in the house in Beaucamps celebrated with great festivity in 1887 the jubilee of Brother Aidant who had been Director there for 32 years.“

In this way, a genuine Marist culture of celebration gradually developed. At that time essential elements included; a solemn Mass, speeches from the Superiors and the „extra“ at the midday table; but Avit gives no details about these extras. Finally, it was recognized as a great honor for the jubilarians to sit at the table of the major Superiors in Saint-Genis or of the local Superior in the other houses. From this we learn that in the forthcoming jubilee celebrations of the Province we are continuing a genuine Marist tradition. We should be glad to carry this on.



### 3. The problem of spreading too quickly

These further aspects of the History of the Institute which are presented are derived from the annals of Brother Avit. In this section we look particularly at two developments and events after the death of Champagnat when Brother Francis was Director, and later Superior General.

#### *The problem of spreading too quickly*

In the decade of 1840 to 1850 there was undreamt of and hugely successful expansion in the number of our schools. The demand for new foundations overstepped itself and the opening of new schools took on the magnitude of an avalanche. This caused some embarrassment for the running of the establishments since those who demanded the schools were generally Bishops, Vicars General or another clergy. The availability of sufficiently qualified Brothers created a significant problem and as the pressure of the demands increased, the result was often unwise and rash decision making. The problem was recognized and attempts made to avoid it. Hence, Brother Francois in 1844 wrote in a letter to the Bishop of Bonald, „In the last 27 months we have opened 25 schools and put in place an extra 100 Brothers. With regard to our resources we are fully engaged. Beyond that we have 60 Brothers in the house but they are too young to be placed in schools or insufficiently prepared“. And already in 1843 he had written to Vicar General Cholleton, „In the last year we have overstretched ourselves with new foundations which have been forced on us. A too speedy growth could damage us and so we have to set up properly any new establishment“.

Avit had clearly recognized this problem and wrote in 1845, „The Superiors must resist pressure so as not to put at risk the interests of the Institute by taking on too many foundations without sufficient qualified Brothers.“ But the developments continued more or less undeterred and in 1846 the number of schools had jumped to 125 with around 20,000 pupils. In spite of 130 entries into the various novitiates, there was concern about vocations of which they could not have enough due to the generally expanding demands. Brother Francis wrote in a circular of 1846, „I encourage you once again to double your efforts to obtain good candidates using all the means that your piety and intelligence can muster.“

To avoid an uncontrolled and damaging development the brakes were applied which in 1847 effectively put a halt on further foundations apart from one in Camaret, although the number of requests in that year was 61. So, one can imagine the pressure on the Superiors, coming on the one side

from the demand for Brothers in the schools, and on the other from the fact that the only Brothers available were too young and not yet fully trained. The danger of fast tracking the training of the Brothers was great but all urging. The problems could not be ignored. So, it could happen that one could go for quantity over quality as Avit explained when he commented on the school at Bourg-Argental in 1852, „The inspector has reported that the school is making little progress. Class one has 88 pupils and the second class 120. So progress inevitably must be weak and a third class out of the question.“

What was to be done in the face of an ever-growing demand which Avit in 1848 estimated at 200? As time went on, his opposition to too swift a growth became more decisive. In 1852 when Napoleon became President and introduced a policy which favoured education through the Church and so increased the demand for such, he wrote, „This situation could be fatal for us. Our Superiors are allowing themselves to flow with the stream and taking on too many new establishments. To set these up we require to put novices in before they have made a proper novitiate and have them under Directors not up to the mark. The inspectorate showed itself inclined to agree and the official letters of appointment brought about neither the personal qualities nor the competence for leadership, and added rather caustically as he was sometimes inclined to do, „they allowed themselves to be deceived and founded another 22 schools in the same year.“

### Protestant pupils

The presence of Protestant pupils in the Brothers' schools could have been a surprising event, but their acceptance into the schools was not a problem and to this day could well be still exemplary. Already in 1843 Avit had indicated that in Anduze the majority of the pupils were Protestant and that they learned the Catechism, said the Rosary and attended Mass. In Cheyland, La Voulte and in other places there were Protestants who took part in all the Catholic exercises such as R.E. lessons and liturgical feasts, and what's more, „without any problem.“ On the intervention of the Parish Priest at La Voulte, the Bishop asked that the Protestants be exempt from these Catholic exercises. However, it was clear that no pressure should be put on the evangelical pupils and that this freedom would continue into the future. This was an issue in La Voulte only. Everywhere else, especially in Anduze, „the Protestants would be the same as the others, and indeed for many it would be even better“.

It is worth noting that these facts are not well known among us and provide a precedent for ecumenical endeavor in our schools today. How ahead of their time the Marist Brothers were in those days!

## 4. Special Events

This is the third part of the series of events and particular incidents in the history of the Institute in the years following Champagnat as recorded in the annals of Bro. Avit. The narration includes certain noteworthy incidents as well as important events in the development of the Institute which give us an insight into the life of the Brothers and the problems of the time.

### *Life at L'Hermitage*

In a letter of Bro. Francis to the missionaries in Oceania cited by Bro. Avit we learn something about daily life in the Hermitage and particularly aspects of the lives of certain Brothers. The laconic and somewhat ironic style of the writing which shows up Bro. Francis as a gifted writer is noteworthy: „Bro. Louis is so taken up with the spirit of Mercantilism that were the journey to Oceania no more difficult than that to Lyon, he would have brought you writing paper and books every month. Bro. Stanislaus dreams regularly of beautiful Madonnas and beautiful ceremonies. Bro. Jean-Joseph keeps the spindle moving as if he were 30 years of age. Soutanes and trousers continue to be provided by Hippolyte and Bro. Jacques is constantly among his cows and poultry. And Brothers Honon and Pierre never give up working on the building bricks. Jerome is always good at leading the horse. You will be pleased to learn that Bro. Spiridion is happily occupied with making shoes.”



### *Plans to Leave the Hermitage*

It is not well known that in 1852 serious thought was given to leaving the Hermitage and to build another Motherhouse nearby. According to Avit the reason for this plan was the house was too small to accommodate all the Brothers at the annual Retreat. But the superiors put forward strong reasons of health for the decision. Avit writes, „The Doctors pointed that the house was unhealthy and that the considerable falling night temperatures were bad for the health of the Brothers particularly so for the sick Brothers.” And so there was soon a plan for a house in Le Creux, therefore near to Isieux in the direction of St. Chamond for which the majority the Council opted. Avit alone was not in agreement and demanded further investigation into the matter and himself brought forward arguments which led to the abandonment of the project. Above all, he pointed out that the new site they had in mind was too open to the wind, too far from

the railway station and above all, it was too near to the factories. This final argument seemed to tip the balance since it would have meant giving up the peace and quiet of the Hermitage.

### *The poorest School*

The really poorest school was certainly the one in Breteuil. According to Avit they were always in „a critical condition“. The very damp classrooms which could barely accommodate 100 pupils had to accept 200 pupils. The financial situation of the Brothers was so poor that they were always in debt „to avoid dying of hunger“. Although the General, Bro. Francis, asked the bishop in those circumstances to be allowed to close the school which the bishop opposed, one could only hope an appeal could be made to the local authority; but there is no record of such an appeal.

### *Brothers wanting to be priests*

The essential apostolate of the Brothers was the teaching in the Primary schools in the countryside. Only this was recognized by the authorities. Had they taught Latin, the schools would have been closed. Had they been able to teach Latin it would have been as Avit expressed, „impossible to hold on to the Brothers.“ „The more pious ones wished to be Priests and others entered the lay teaching service. Every year some were lost to the „illness of Latin“.

### *The use of tobacco*

The use of tobacco had to be reviewed constantly. Needless to say, it concerned the use of snuff since at that time it was used for medicinal purposes. Records from the Hermitage show that with the increasing number of Brothers, the use of tobacco was ever increasing. Already in 1841, Bro. Francois wrote in one of his first circulars, „To use tobacco or spectacles one requires the explicit permission of the Brother General which he will only grant after consultation with the doctor. Anyone who has such permission to use tobacco may not offer it to another“. An interesting note on this topic is the fact that Father Colin was notorious for his use of snuff.

### *The Correction of Novices*

The regulation regarding the clothing of the Novices introduced by Bro. Champagnat was upheld. They were clothed in the soutane but were not allowed to wear the rabat. When this was later allowed then in the event of a Novice having to be punished for some matter or other, he would in the first instance have to stop wearing the rabat for some time and in a more serious case the soutane. In this way, he was seen as a public offender. At the ceremony of the receiving of the habit the parents of the candidates were not allowed to have a meal in the house.

### *Train Journey at Half-Price*

In the course of time many Brothers were making journeys be it because of regular transfers to other communities or due to new foundations or to go on retreat. Also visitors, like Bro. Avit himself, were often on the road. The accounts in the Hermitage show how the cost of travel rose from year to year. In this situation, it was beneficial to come to an agreement with the rail transport company for Paris-Lyon and the one for the South that the Brothers pay only half the standard fare when their journey was on Institute business. To enjoy the benefit from this all that was needed was a copy of the obedience or a permission with the appropriate stamp.



## 5. The Brothers during the Siege of Paris in 1870 and the Commune of 1871

*Introduction:* The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the rule of the socialist Commune in Paris at the beginning of 1871 belong to the darkest period of French history. France had to endure a bitter defeat with the end of the reign of the empire of Napoleon III and the loss of Alsace Lorraine. This marked the beginning of the Republic, the siege of Paris by the Prussian army and the ensuing Reign of Terror of the Commune. The Brothers were living in a residence in Paris totally isolated from the rest of the Marist world. The Director, Bro. Norbert who later became the co-founder of Arlon, did however write a series of letters to the Superior General Louis Marie who meantime had left the city by cable car. So Norbert did not know if the letters had reached their destination and received no reply from outside. These 40 letters are an extremely interesting and authentic witness to the life of the Brothers in this time of great danger and deprivation. What follows here is a short summary but a dramatic chapter in the history of the Brothers. The original letters can be found in the book, „Le T.C. Frere Norbert,“ Paris 1901. Bro. Norbert lived from 1835 to 1899. He entered the Novitiate in Beaucamps in 1849 and from 1876 to 1893 was an Assistant General. After his time in France he worked in Brazil, but died from a tropical illness on board ship on his way home from Brazil.

### 1. The Period of the Siege



„As I write these lines to you, I can hear the whistling of a bomb as it drops a few steps away. It is all right for us here; we will be able to sleep in the cellar tonight.“ This remark in a letter of 9th January 1871 sums up succinctly the dramatic situation of the Brothers during the months of the siege. Over a period of months, the bombs fell as well as grenades and other missiles resulting in many deaths. But the four Brothers lived through this with great fortitude and continued teach their 300 pupils as if it were all quite normal. Again and again Bro. Norbert would say that they were not frightened but rather their trust was in God. Again and again, in almost every letter he assured us that things were going well and there was no call for complaint. In fact, on one occasion he wrote, „I can hardly write this, but I am ashamed to say how well we are doing at this wretched time.“ Yet, they did suffer from the worsening situati-

on of the food supplies. So he described on 4th October that there was only horse meat to be had and later that in the food market only dogs, cats and rats were on offer. Their house in the end was partly turned into a military hospital where 30 wounded people were cared for. Naturally the teaching was curtailed. As he wrote on 29th October, „The teaching continues with some difficulty since our Parisian children have their heads full of slaughter and the noise of firearms.“

A constant characteristic of the letters is an attempt to interpret the poor situation from a religious perspective. On one occasion, he writes, „Here we are in the Catacombs and attempt to imitate the piety of the first Christians. He often repeated that it was a time of testing and punishment, „What a punishing time! How greatly it points to our culpability.“ He saw it as a particular act of providence that on 20th January, when a grenade struck and caused considerable damage, none of the inhabitants was injured. He also mentioned that it was a guarantee of the help of God that many of those who prayed were able to escape their own troops. Steeped in the Marist spirit, he wrote, „It is due to the influence of those who go daily to the Church of Our Lady of Victories to plead with her to save France.“ At last came the cessation of hostilities but the political situation in Paris soon led to a new siege and the domination by the Commune. This led to the civil war and the brutal penalties whereby thousands were executed.

## 2. The Reign of the Commune



After a brief period of calm the political situation developed into a confrontation between the radicalization of the Socialists and the new regime. Bro. Norbert suspected this would lead to further disaster. On 28th February 1871, he wrote, „There is something unusual in the air these days. More than ever, the seven deadly sins are raising their heads. The press

are preaching Socialism from the top of their lungs.“ He felt, „Anarchy is on its way.“ But the Brothers continued their work in the school and were in no way molested. He assessed the situation correctly, „We are on the alert, but we are not afraid.“ But then they had to face fear when the Commune announced the confiscation by decree of all religious ownership and the Bishop as well as other clergy were imprisoned. His short summation of events was, „Our position is critical.“ Then there followed another decree

by which they all had to sign up with the National Guard. When at last the short reign of the Commune came to an end another quite different problem arose; the Superiors advised the urgent abandonment of the town.



Norbert and the other Brothers were decidedly against this, „The situation is tolerable and I am convinced that it is better to remain here than leave.“ But the end of the Brothers in Paris came in a tragic and totally unexpected way. A priest who was a religion teacher, spoke to the pupils about the battle of Lepanto and likened the Com-

munards to the Turks. Knowledge of this unwise statement soon became widespread and the decision to arrest the Brothers decided. After a warning, they had to escape their house very quickly. Bro. Norbert was able to return on 5th June.

#### *An Afterthought:*

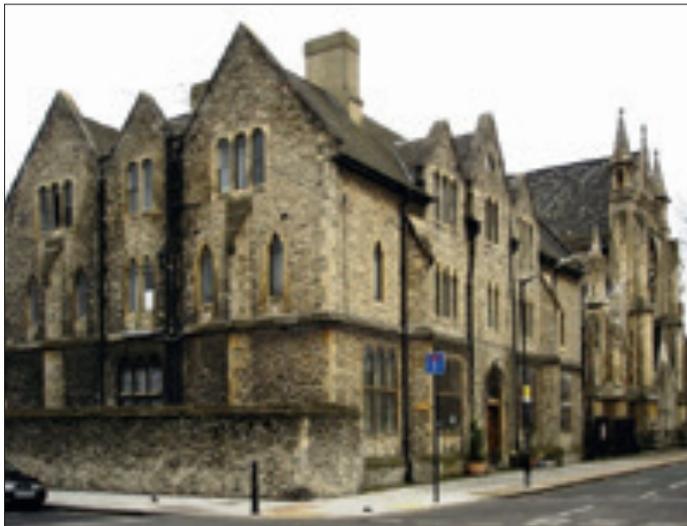
On reflection on the above situation who could not but be reminded of the present situation of the Blue Marists in Aleppo? They are holding out amidst the grenades in a large city and continue with their service to the community; in this they are faithful to divine providence in the spirit of Champagnat in the face of a gruesome destiny and embattled in an absurd situation which comes about as a result of the blindness and megalomania of the politicians.



## 6. History of the Marist Brothers in England and Scotland

Bro. Avit was always a keen observer of important events in the Institute. As a result of his many journeys and his connections with many of the communities he was certainly among the best informed Brothers of the time of Champagnat till his own death in 1892. To document the successful development and spread of the Institute was one of the chief aims of his annals. In this extract, we bring together what he recorded as the foundation history of the houses in England and Scotland. His remarks show a limited picture restricted to the information available to him at the General House of St Genis-Laval. The presentation is in chronological order.

The first entry referring to England is from 1851. He tells us that the Marist Father Quiblier, who was working in London, asked for Brothers to undertake the educations of the Catholic Irish children, „almost all of whom were poor and neglected. “He wanted the Irish Brother Patrick and Brother Louis Benardin but he received a negative response on the grounds that Patrick was still an inexperienced Novice and that Benardin could speak only a few words of English.



However, already by 1853 he was able to report that, along with 40 other houses, there was one opened in **London** after the first three Brothers arrived on 31st December 1852 at the Marist Fathers in Spitalfield.

In 1856 there followed further progress in Great Britain: a Novitiate was to be erected in London and Bro. Louis Bernard was sent for this purpose. But it was a failed attempt since „he had little support and was given no clear directives “ and, apart from that, he was also a sick man. But in Scotland the Marist movement got under way. A request came to the Apostolic Vicar in Scotland from Mr. Mardoch in **Glasgow**, supported by the well-to-do to French salesman Thiebaud and the Bishop of Arras. In 1858 there followed the foundation of St. Mungo’s. Avit remarked, „The schools in London and Glasgow were established particularly for the poor and neglected children. These unfortunate children flocked to the school in their numbers, they were barely dressed in rags and had nothing to eat beyond what the Brothers could give them.“ Already by 1859, there was a further foundation in Scotland, in **Dundee**. Two years later the second

school in Glasgow, St. Andrew's was opened. In 1874 this school was renamed St. Alphonsus since it was situated in that Parish.

Avit was quite clear that the leading Brother in these foundations in England and Scotland was the French Bro. Procope. This Brother had already been active in London and then came later to Glasgow „ where he improved his English which he spoke better than French. Born in France, he became an English citizen and was quite convinced that everything in England and in the colonies was good.” He was chosen for the General Chapter as Assistant General for the new province of the British Isles, Oceania and South Africa. (Bro. Procope lived from 1834-1900). A further step in the development was the setting up of a Novitiate in Glasgow. Bro. Avit reports that in 1868 two novices, Brothers Jarlath and Peter Ignatius made their first vows there. There were at this time in the Institute 79 new Brothers. In 1869 there was a celebration of the Receiving of the Habitat which the Archbishop of Glasgow, Charles Eyre, was present.



Now to **Dumfries**. On this foundation Avit, in his records for the year 1874, indicates that the Superior General turned to the President of Propaganda Fide indicating to him, „The Institute which has been active in England for the past 21 years has in the English mission and in the overseas mission 20 Postulants

and 77 Brothers who run 22 schools. We plan to set up a Novitiate in Dumfries for which we need a minimum of 60,000 Francs but our institute is burdened with debt. But this Novitiate is in the interests of the mission, so I take the liberty to turn to your association.” Avit comments, „The response of the President offered ground for certain hope.” To bear this out, the well-known St. Joseph's College was opened in 1875.

As regards the new foundations in **London**, there were six schools with a seventh added in 1892 when the Brothers took over from the Marist Fathers the running of the parish school at Leicester Square. But Frère Avit only mentions the second school, St. Patrick's in Soho which was opened in 1865 and the third which was opened in Peckham in 1879. The director of the Peckham school at that time was the 28-year-old Bro. Edmund and his assistant was the 20-year-old Bro. Mark.

Finally, as well as the opening of the Novitiate in Dumfries, Bro. Avit also mentions Edinburgh among the 15 new foundations in 1887.

More details of the foundations can be checked out in Bro. Clare's „History of the Province,“ New Edition, 2011, 212 pages.



## 7. Life in a Marist School in the 19th Century

In a letter to the Parish Priest of Chavanay in April 1834, Marcellin Champagnat complains about the attitude of the Mayor. What makes this letter so special is that nowhere else does he express his feeling of anger and disappointment so strongly. He writes, „Not only is he not satisfied with quietening the Brothers, but he seeks to entice them away“ and in fact he refers to the, „tyranny of this person.“ (Letter 41)

What was the Brother's life like in this place? What problems confronted them? What was the working relationship between the Parish Priest and the Mayor? These were questions facing every school founded at the time of Champagnat. So, it is certainly interesting to look for an answer in order to see what the daily life of the Brother was like. We are in the fortunate position of getting an answer, since Frère Avit kept the annals of all the schools, over 500 of them, and recorded many interesting details. What follows is a short summary of the annals of Chavanay. These annals are a good example of what was going on in many others schools in the 19th Century.

To begin with, Avit describes the place with its 1730 inhabitants. It is situated on the Rhone south of Lyon and is more or less 50 Km distant from L'Hermitage. He describes in some detail the geography, history, economic and political situation. Then he starts to talk about the foundation of the Brothers' school. As in almost all cases, the central figure is the Parish Priest. The then Parish Priest of Chavanay, Joseph Gaucher, had been in the place for 52 years. He turned to Champagnat in 1824 and as a result two Brothers were sent to establish a school. The land for the school and the primitive building were donated by a lady who was the first to undertake instruction.

Avit now goes on to speak in some detail about the Brothers who were sent there. The first Director was Bro. Stephan, „a holy Religious of great simplicity and great conscientiousness.“ The poverty was dreadful; they lacked in everything.

In 1830 Bro. Stephan was replaced by Bro. Dominic, a Brother with whom Champagnat had serious difficulties as can be gathered from the letters he sent him. The initial problems came in 1838 with the transfer of Bro. Laurence, one of the first Brothers to come to people's attention in Le Bessat because of his work. He was not a born teacher; indeed, his teaching was an embarrassment. All the people in the village told stories of how he fell asleep in the classroom. So it came about that the Parish Priest wrote a letter to L' Hermitage in which he complained that the good Laurence was not cut out to be a Director nor did he know anything about financial management. There was already a loss of trust on the part of many parents and on top of

that, Bro. Laurence could not produce his teaching certificate since he had lost it. In a second letter to Bro. Francis he was even more explicit and spoke of his inability and particularly his failing memory. So he was recalled in 1840 and replaced by Bro. Simon. But with that came new problems: in a letter, he complained that the children were like "foxes" and that the standard punishment was ineffective. He expressed his wish so, „I believe if it were allowed to use the cane and the whip, things could be remedied." He was then replaced by Bro. Dacien in 1842. The situation of the Brothers worsened since the Parish Priest and his housekeeper took up residence in the house, occupying the best two rooms while the Brothers had to put up with inferior accommodation. In another letter, the Parish Priest remarked of the successor to Bro. Dacien that he was indeed a holy religious but totally unsuited to running a school and the complaints of the parents increased. Bro. Marcel, his successor, soon complained about the two Brothers who were sent to him since both were seriously ill. So, in 1847 Bro. Theophilus took over the running of the school but with the turnover of young Brothers who were sent to him the situation was not improved. After the death of the Parish Priest in 1851 the Brothers could eventually inhabit the better rooms in the house. But there was yet another problem: the house is surrounded on all sides by other houses which allowed the neighbors to view inside the Brother`s house and so their privacy was disturbed.

Frère Avit now comes to speak about the 80s and begins by mentioning that the records of the first 30 years of the school, including accounts, lists of pupils and their personal records were lost. The Director is now Bro. Bassus. The school role averages around 78 pupils of whom 15 to 30 receive free instruction. Bro. Bassus is now the 32nd Director and during that time there were 54 different Brothers active in the school. This demonstrated great instability which was the same with other schools. One of these in 1877 had an accidental death by drowning as a pupil without permission went for a swim in the Rhone. The number of Brothers in the school was generally three but from 1872 to 1875 there were four. This is also a remarkable fact. Very small communities were the rule since the time of Champagnat.

Chavanay could show four Brothers and the school remained till 1904.

# VI. History of the Marist Brothers in Germany

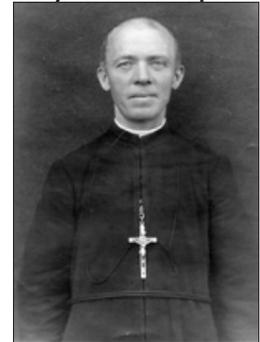
## 1. Marist Brothers 100 Years in Germany (1914-2014)

The beginnings of the German Province of the Marist Brothers took place in Arlon, Belgium. Already, from 1888 many young men from all over Germany were entering the Novitiate X there. The establishment of a community in Germany was not possible due to the consequences of the so-called "Kulturkampf" against the Catholic Church. So for most of the young Brothers their destination was the Missions particularly in Brazil, South Africa and Samoa. The first foundation in Germany took place on 2nd February 1914 in Recklinghausen through Brother Raymond Koop in a roundabout way via Samoa where the Governor of the time had got to know and appreciate the Brothers. He recommended having a school in Germany for the purpose of training young missionaries.



*Frater Leo  
Dorvaux*

With the outbreak of the First World War the German Brothers and novices had to leave Belgium: many (160) were called up for military service and of these 45 died in war. In searching for a place for the Brothers and novices, the „founding fathers“ of the Province, Brothers Armand-Leo Dorveaux and Joseph Verius Porta finally found a welcome from the Baroness von Hornstein in Furth near Landshut. She also put at their disposal



*Frater Josef  
Verius*



*Villa in Furth*

the use of the brewery and part of her estate. The large garden was turned into a vegetable garden and an orchard. After 1919 there was significant growth in what became in 1920 an official District of the Marist Brothers in Germany. Very quickly, schools, Internats and orphanages were taken over as outlets for the apostolate. The number of Brothers continued to increase.

In Furth, a number of manual work places was opened; brewery, farm, distillery as a commercial basis.

With the accession of the National Socialist Movement in 1933 there followed a period of insecurity and the threat from the Government, unfriendly

to the Church, was ever greater until finally the law of 1936 closed all the establishments in Bavaria and later in Remagen and Recklinghausen. Around 150 Brothers lost their work and had to find new opportunities abroad. A foundation in Denmark had just been established and now new foundations were set up in the Netherlands, Poland and in Switzerland and above all in the principality of **Liechtenstein**. Several German Brothers were also working in the international Juniorate (Grugliasco) and Novitiate (San Mauro) in Italy. For political reasons the foundation in Hungary did not succeed and after the invasion of the Nazis, the Internats in Austria had soon to be closed down. At this time a new foundation was opened in South America, in Uruguay. From 1937 the number of Brothers going there to found new establishments increased. The outbreak of the Second World War ushered in a period of severe hardship for the District of Germany. Many Brothers were enlisted in the army and the number of those killed in battle continually increased. In Germany, there were now only two establishments, Furth and Recklinghausen, both of which were taken over by the authorities and occupied by various groups (Hitler Youth, military hospital, refugees). Furth underwent a thorough search by the Gestapo. The loss of those who died in the war, 52 Brothers, and of those who did not return to the Institute after the war was enormous. Of the 235 Brothers in 1938 there were only 87 remaining: 34 were working in Uruguay. One Brother died in the concentration camp at Dachau.



*Villa Blanca – 1937  
First Hous in Vaduz*



*New College in Liechtenstein 1972*

In 1945 a new beginning had to be risked. The communities in Vaduz (Liechtenstein) and St. Gingolph (Switzerland) continued. But Denmark had to be handed over. Soon the work in Cham, Mindelheim and Recklinghausen was taken up again once the occupation by strangers (for example the hospital for the facially wounded in Mindelheim) ended.

In 1946 there followed the raising of the District to a Province, a sign from the General House that was an impetus to further growth which is seen in the building of a student house in Munich, the new building of the chapel and community house of the Brothers in Furth, the renovation of the building in Recklinghausen, but above all in the renovation of the school in Mindelheim and its later expansion.

Cham also had a new school in 1966 and finally Furth also in 1995. By 1967 the number of Brothers had risen to 187. The Internats and schools blossomed. But then came the great crisis at the end of the 60s and the great slump in Marist Germany due to many leaving the Institute and the lack of new vocations. The number of Brothers engaged in school work became fewer and fewer; the running and management of the schools by our own personnel and with our own resources was no longer possible and these were handed over to the respective dioceses. Today the four Marist schools of Mindelheim, Cham, Furth and Recklinghausen are taken over by the Dioceses of Augsburg, Regensburg and Münster. The Brothers had already left Liechtenstein in 1991.



*Cham: Marist College*



*Furth: Residence and Marist College*



*Mindelheim: former Internat and Marist College*



*Recklinghausen: Marist College*

Great efforts have been made to continue to build the Marist Spirit in these establishments through the on-going formation of the lay teachers. This should continue a long and successful harvest of Marist education into the future without the Brothers.

The 100-year history of the successes of the Marist Brothers must not be forgotten; their work must live on in other ways and bear fruit in the Church and society. The present 30 Brothers (2016) belong since the year 2000 to the new Province of West-Central Europe consisting of Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands with its Provincial House in Nijmegen (Netherlands).

To end this short overview of the history of the German Marist Brothers we must highlight the contribution made by the German Brothers to the missions throughout the world. In Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa, China, Oceania and since 1984 in Kenya, the results of their work remain in evidence today. German Marists have been a significant influence in the history of the Institute even if this was not always in the consciousness of many. The centenary jubilee is the best opportunity to honor this. The jubilee celebrations began on 3rd February 2014 in Recklinghausen where the story of the Brothers in Germany officially began. It was there that after a long pre-history in Arlon Belgium the first house in Germany was established.

## 2. Bro. Raymond Celestin Koop (1882-1957)

### Founder of the First Marist Establishment in Germany – Director of the International Scholasticate in Grugliasco Italy



Joseph Koop was born on a farm in Old-Oer near Recklinghausen on the 9th December 1882. He was the eldest of six children. His ability was clearly recognized in the primary school and so he was sent to St. Peter's Grammar School in Recklinghausen. The Parish Priest of St. Peter's with whom he spent his lunch break, advised him to go to the Marists at Athlone in Belgium. So it was that he entered the Postulancy on 29th March 1899 and later in the same

year the Novitiate.

After his first profession on the 14th September 1901 he worked as teacher and prefect in the Novitiate in Arlon. In 1903 he was sent to **Grove Ferry**, near Canterbury in England as he wished to improve his English: he had already learnt French in the Novitiate. His stay in England was to last three years and he soon qualified as a teacher but returned to Athlone where he made his perpetual profession. By this time, he already fostered the idea of founding a community of Marist Brothers in his homeland Germany. The Major Superiors in the Mother House soon recognized his abilities and he was officially entrusted with this task. Time and again he had turned his thoughts to this enterprise and spoken about how necessary it was to have a community in Germany. He had already prepared the way for this as promoter of vocations in Westphalia and the good clerical contacts he made there.

So began a period of intensive exchange of letters and negotiations with the Superior General, whom he kept up to date with his vision in the most persuasive manner, and his negotiations with both clerical and civil authorities. It was in tough negotiations with the Diocese of Münster and the Government of Westphalia that his know-how and his determination paid off. His personal contact with influential politicians was particularly successful as, for example the member of Parliament Prince of Löwenstein and above all the Governor of the German colony of Samoa where the Marists were already working. The Governor was particularly interested in acquiring good teachers for his schools.

So through the influence of these people he finally achieved authorization for a founding in Germany. On 3rd February 1914, the first German Marist Brothers moved into a former Minor Seminary of the Diocese in **Recklinghausen**. The first boarders soon followed on 20th April and finally, the Superior General himself came to a visit. Could there possibly be a better beginning? But soon there was something else to come. As Superior

Bro. Raymond was confronted with the challenges of the Great War. He now became the director of a military hospital for prisoners of war as the house was used for this purpose. The brothers worked as medical orderlies and also looked after the Marist soldiers who turned up on leave. After he had brought his foundation through the initial difficult years he moved on to further shores. After a stay in San Mauro near Turin for his second Novitiate he did not return home.



His next move was as Director of the International Scholasticate at nearby **Grugliasco** where at that time the General Administration of the Marist Brothers was housed. Here he was responsible for the training and formation of the young missionaries, particularly of those from Germany and Spain, who would be sent to various foreign

missionary areas of the Marists. He did this work until 1945. During this time, he also fulfilled the roles of bursar and Director of the Mother House for several years. As a result of his good contact with many of his former students who were working in, among other places, Brazil, China, South Africa and Australia he was one of the best informed brothers in the Institute. The „Big Man“ was a distinctive personality in the circle of the Major Superiors.

Nor did the Second World War years, 1939-1945, pass his work environment by without notice. A long obituary in the newspaper „Voce del Popolo“ (Voice of the people), which appeared after his death in 1957 highlighted the rich blessings of his work for the local population who suffered under German occupation. As the paper asked,



*Giubiasco near Turin: Mother House*

„How many people turned to him in those days? For how many people in Grugliasco and elsewhere did he offer himself as advocate with the military administration?“ And the same paper commented on his transfer to Bairo, „He left Grugliasco quietly and without fuss, ever the true servant of his master who assigned him to another apostolate.“ Can there be any better example of a true son of Champagnat than Bro. Raymond always was? He finally turned home in 1947 where he found a new place of work at Mindelheim in which he was able to use his considerable language skills in individual tuition. The many stresses and strains and exhausting work which had filled his life now began take its toll on his health. Already bearing signs of ill-health he took home to leave to Westphalia in 1957 where he offered the last ounces of strength to the borders of Recklinghausen. He was able at this time to experience the crowning point of his foundation when on 8th April the Bishop of Münster blessed the new school. Then he had to be hospitalized at Dülmen where he died on 3rd November 1957. He is laid in the community grave of Recklinghausen.

Listed among the other two founders of the German Province, Bros Leo Dorvaux and Joseph Verius Porta is Bro. Raymond the third founder of the Province. Since the foundation took place in two quite independent phases we must really regard Bro. Raymond as the founder of the Northern phase and as such the German Province owes him very much. Remembering him is surely obligatory for all of the Brothers. He belongs among the outstanding personalities in the history of the German Marist Brothers.



### 3. The reformatory in Neuherberg near Munich.

#### A very special chapter in the history of the German Marist Province

The history of the German Province is rich in highlights and great works. In the centre of their mission always were schools and boarding schools according to the aim of the Institute. They all were doing very well until the Nazi-Regime stopped the brother's work in this area in 1936. It is a pity that one special work always stood in the shade, which in the perspective of today and looking back at the intentions of Champagnat and according to the aims of the last General Chapter, which wanted a special care for the most neglected and endangered young people, was of great importance. It took an extraordinary position in the education ministry of the brothers not only on a German level but also on a European one. It was the work of the



brothers in the reformatory Neuherberg, the official name was „Knabenerziehungsanstalt Neuherberg“. Father Champagnat surely would have enjoyed it, because hardly any other work better put into life the mission he wanted, to be with the „most marginalized young ones those who need most to be cared for.

This was a work which only can be looked at with greatest respect for all the brothers involved and which looking back to the heritage of the German Marists never should be forgotten. Even Pope Pius XI gave his support by giving a generous donation.

The brothers began their work in 1922 in very unfavorable circumstances. Great courage and trust in God were needed to dare to take over this special ministry with very difficult young people who grew up in miserable social conditions and in many cases had experiences as criminals. The house was of ill repute in this time because of a campaign of the press which delivered reports of scandals. The administration had to be changed. A new beginning should be made with the brothers.

On this background the work of the brothers is to be considered the more astonishing, especially the work of the first director, Brother Augustin Knapp, who held his difficult job in a very clever and competent manner until 1930. In this year, Brother Vincent Schmitz took over and was in charge until the closure in 1936/37, when the Nazi Government stopped the education works run by religious.

We find the best and shortest description of the aim and the purpose of this institution in the yearbook of the school year 1924/25, „The purpose of the reformatory „Sancta Maria“ lead by the Marist Brothers of the School is to provide physical, mental, moral and religious education to children and young people at an age from 7 to 16 and even more, who are endangered and neglected.“

There were two main sections: one for children who had to visit primary school and one for the elder ones, who learned a practical job.

Therefore, the brothers opened a primary school, but first of all they installed a great variety of workshops for manual and technical training, to give them the opportunity to get a solid platform for their life in the future by learning a trade. Most of them worked on the big farm or in the cattle breeding, because they did not provide the needed skills for another training.

They also had the chance to get a training in the large gardening area.

There were also a tailoring, a shoemaker's trade, a carpenter's trade, a printer's trade, a bookbinder's trade and a shop for producing packaging materials.



*Carpenter's Workshop*



*Printery*

Let us talk now of the inmates and the special character of this work more clearly. All of them were sent by the youth welfare of the City of Munich and the Bavarian Government. Statistics give the reasons of the admittance. So in the yearbook of 1928/29 we find these:

Disrupted families	52
Fraud, cheating, burglary	40
Roaming, truancy, aversion to work	81
Sexcrimes	17
Disposition for immorality	22
Disposition for stealing	60
Arson	2
Bad defects of character	11

This list does not need special explanation, it shows clearly, what kind of uttermost problems the brothers had to deal with. A word of the director, Br. Augustin Knapp, in the same yearbook may illustrate this situation. He writes, „Deep, indescribable misery is to be healed. Only strict and purposeful guidance can remove mistrust and prejudices step by step and lead to the good. This is a hard work of patience, which we can only do with God’s help.“

Conditions of work were also worsened by an extraordinary turnover. Here the statistics for year 1928/29:

Number of pupils 1928: 195,

Entries: 90,

Leavers and dismissals (to parents or workshops etc.): 75,

Runaways: 48 (except 12 they all came back again; some ran away several times)

This was the extraordinary workplace of the 12 to 15 brothers like. With great skill and genuine Marist paternal patience and self-sacrifice they formed these deplorable young men to solid and brave citizens who found their place in society, after having learned a good job and having experienced affection and care and a religious atmosphere. Many of them left the house with best certificates and recommendations. The basis was a well-organized and specialized education program. Special medical and psychiatric care was organized as well; also a chaplain cared for religious matters.

A large scale program was worked out for leisure time, it really was exemplary and perfect: musical training of every kind, many outings and walking tours always accompanied by the brass band, afternoons for playing games, games in the forest, soccer on the large playgrounds leased of the nearby barracks, social nights, cinema performances and slide shows and first of all many theatre performances as highlights for all festivities like the director’s birthday. An extraordinary roll was played by the excellent choir, which made all the liturgical festivities to real events.

The every year celebrated First Communions and the confirmations, which took place in Munich, were prepared with great care and were the highlights in the life of every pupil. None of them would have forgotten the celebration of Christmas Eve, the celebration of which had a fixed place in the heart of all and was awaited eagerly, the presents were collected in Munich by a brother who had a special gift to open the hearts of many benefactors. All these events were very favorable to create a familiar atmosphere for these poor children and young men and to open their hearts, which were

hardened and hurt and suffering from bad experiences and lack of love and care. So, the brothers did really a great job in the footsteps of Marcelin Champagnat. Above all religious education was of special importance. They attended mass every day and prayers were well prepared.

A quotation from another yearbook may show the diversity and specialty of the task of the educators, „The educator in the reformatory is also a careers guidance master, because the young age deserves special compassion. To provide these boys with a job, a future, means the main task of our responsibility.

It is very important for us to get to know the individual character of every boy. On the basis of this knowledge we can give a genuine individual treatment for everybody adapted to his personality. This is the only way to come to good results with this kind of young men.“

This extraordinary work in the Marist world and in the purposes of Champagnat was ruthlessly brought to an end by the brutal Nazi-Regime. We should never forget it and should keep in our minds the great ministry German brothers had offered to young men who really were in need and without the help and care of the brothers would have been lost.

We may be proud of this very special chapter of our German Marist history. It was exemplary in many aspects and within the scope of Marist mission ahead of its time.

Father Champagnat would have been enjoying it and would have recognized the brothers involved as his best disciples.

Could this be an example for the future, as we are looking for new ministries? Nevertheless, it can be stimulating our responsibility concerning our Marist history and the great work our Marist predecessors have achieved.

## 4. German Brothers in Denmark

Search for new fields of apostolate and new forms of apostolate today is one of the main concerns in the Institute. But this is not a new experience, it also has been an important part of Marist mission, as a look into Marist history may reveal. It has especially been the case in times of crisis and new orientation, derived from deep rooted changes in world politics or decisive changes in society. And so the brothers in Germany courageously went new ways shortly after the foundation in Germany in 1914 and have accepted new challenges. One of these was the starting of apostolic work in Denmark, a country, where Catholics always have been a very small minority. Today 85% of the population of 5,4 million are members of the Lutheran Church. In 1918 the number of Catholics was about 12 000.

### *The story so far*

Marist history in Denmark began in 1888. In this year, the Apostolic Prefect of Denmark visited the motherhouse in Saint-Genis-Laval on his journey from Rome back to Denmark and asked for brothers for his country. The first missionaries were promptly recruited and sent to Copenhagen. The founder was the famous Brother Weibert Marz. Born in 1859 in Alsace he did his novitiate in Beaucamps in 1875 and now left his home for Denmark together with two other brothers. He worked there until the superiors selected him for



a new and still greater work. He was sent to South Brasil in 1900, where he founded the first establishments and also opened a new field of apostolate for the German brothers. In 1890 the first school was started in **Copenhagen** with 12 students. Until the beginning of the Great War in 1914 the number had increased to 120. In 1911 a second school was opened. But the beginning of the war brought a serious setback. From 11 brothers in 1914 only 3 remained. So a new planning for the future had to be done. Denmark still belonged like Germany to the province of Beaucamps.

### *The brothers from the District of Germany*

When the German brothers were forced to leave Arlon in 1914 and in 1915 found a new home in Furth one of the most important tasks and challenges was the search for new fields of apostolate, above all when the many brothers, who were serving in the army gradually came back home. Out of 120 brother soldiers 45 had lost their lives on the battlefields. So the first visitor of the new German district, Brother Joseph Verius Porta, accepted the invitation of the General Government and in 1919 sent the first two

brothers to Copenhagen, one of these, Brother Josef Sattel, later being the first provincial when Germany became a province after the second World War.

Soon Denmark developed into a favourite field of mission for German brothers. The Copenhagen book of vows shows the names of 24 different brothers, who during this period renewed their vows or made their final vows. 16 of these brothers however left the Institute in the years of war. Nevertheless, the mission of the German brothers was a story of great success. On the whole 26 different brothers worked there until the end on 1946. In 1939 for instance the number was 21. In 1946 finally the last 6 brothers had to leave the country.

An important stage in the history of this very special mission was the starting of a new school in Horsens in 1934, when 4 brothers moved into a beautiful villa, where they installed a small boarding school. But the number of students never got very high.

A remark to be found in the deliberations of the provincial council may show in a small way the problems and the special situation of the brothers which they had to deal with. In the minutes of the council meeting on April 2, 1934 the problem of the building of new toilets in the Saint Mary's school in Copenhagen is one of the issues. As the number of the boarders had increased to 40 and in the house where they slept there were no toilets und lavatories („pas de cabinets et de lavabos“) the brothers and the pupils had therefore to go down to the yard day and night, This problem had to be solved urgently Another interesting topic was the installation of a radio for the school. A „good catholic“ had sent a radio set to the brothers. And the school authorities also had wished to have a radio. The respective answer of the council was, „Brother director promises to watch over the device and also over the brothers, who use it.“ The council approved the application. A new project in Ordrup, where three brothers should take over a little seminary for the whole of Scandinavia was soon closed because the number of students was too small.

### The end in 1946

Once more a flourishing development was stopped abruptly owing to incisive incidents of world politics. Soon after the invasion of Denmark by German troops more and more brothers had to report for duty. Several of these then left the order. So the last six brothers in 1946 were confronted with the problem of how to continue. The superiors in Germany after ongoing consultation decided to finish the mission in Denmark. In the minutes of the council meeting of November 25, 1946 the reasons are given in an extensive and thorough way and then handed over to the General Council. Some reasons shall be mentioned here to give an impression of the realistic



and rational manner in which to assess the new situation after the war, „The Apostolic Vicar wants the brothers to leave and does not show any interest in their further activity in Denmark, Germans are now no longer allowed to teach in Denmark; there were no vocations in this country; all Danish brothers

have left, except one (Brother Olaf Piper). The one and only community would be too far away from the other communities and the German provincial would not be allowed to visit Denmark; boys and girls should attend the same schools; the housing would be a problem, because meanwhile they could only find shelter with the Redemptorists“. And finally, „The province would not mind if another province would take over this mission. For us it is practically impossible because of nationality.“

In the motherhouse the end of the mission in Denmark was finally decided in the meeting of the General Council on December 12, 1946.



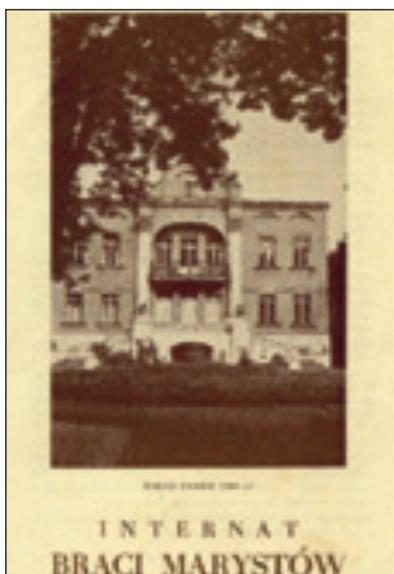
So a special chapter in the history of the German province and also in the history of the Institute had come to an end. The Danish brother Olaf Piper (1912-2007), who spent many years working in Switzerland and then lived some years in retirement in Furth and whom all remember very well because of his great gentleness and wisdom, was the last testimony of this work of Marist mission. No new attempt to reopen the apostolate in Denmark never has been made so far.



## 5. German Brothers in Poland

„In December 1937, we settled down in catholic Poland, opening our first house in the big university town of Poznan (Posen). It was a difficult foundation because of lack of financial means und of personnel. Therefore, brother Josef Rauhut who was born in this country had to be sent back from Brazil, although he had already been working there for 20 years. In the institute, there are some Polish members. But they belong to other provinces and the exchange of personnel is not easy. Nevertheless, in this big country with its 35 million inhabitants who are almost totally catholic, there is a future. Church and state authorities ensure their sympathy and the confidence of the parents in houses run by religious. His Eminency, cardinal Hlond, has encouraged us strongly for this enterprise und confirmed us his deep satisfaction of a project which had been planned for such a long time, now was translated into action. Let us hope, that this boarding school will have a good development in spite of many obstacles, which first of all are connected with the difficult language.

May we soon get good vocations to guarantee the success of this undertaking which will bring the completion of the most beautiful dreams concerning the spread of the institute which blooms in the generous heart of the most reverend brother superior general Stratonique.” (Bulletin de L’Institut, XVI).



But being confronted with reality this great expectations and dreams, connected with this courageous undertaking, show another picture. In consequence of the many difficulties of adaptation and financial validation, first of all in consequence of the then dramatic development of world history this enterprise was given only a short time.

The statement of brother Ingfried Rybczinsky whose name already reveals his Polish roots, may show reality briefly, „In December 1937 three brothers went to Poznan. Soon they moved into a villa at the border of the town and set up a boarding school. The first pupils who went to school in town entered very fast. Then the community was enlarged by four more brothers.” Same of these may be named because they still are known to the elder brothers in Germany: Paul Munko, Ingfried Rybczynski, Leo Zakrzewski, Elmar Rühling. Because of the good relations to the administrator of a ducal castle whose son was in the boarding school a second house, a small castle 30 away could be set up as an orphanage. But things went another way as planned.

On first of December 1939 German troops entered Poland and Poznan was taken over as one of the first places. The brothers had to leave the town. In a great hurry the house was vacated, the furniture put to friends and the brothers found refuge in the houses of brother Ingfried's relatives or the relatives of other brothers. One, brother Paul, even was arrested. Finally brother Ingfried and Leo went to Furth, where they camouflaged as Polish workers got through the war. The rest sought to find shelter in other houses. The last sentence in brother Ingfried's letter, „For me the time I spent in Poland was only short but unforgettable. It should not be.“

Never more an attempt was made again to set foot in this promising catholic land, because the relations were totally destroyed as a result of the war. But today many Polish priests and religious work in Germany.

So the German brothers lost their houses in Denmark, Austria and Hungary and only one in Switzerland remained after the war. In Hungary, Spanish brothers started a new school and they are still in this country, but on another place. Austria and Denmark were lost as workplaces for the Marist apostolate forever.

Comment:

In the history of the German Marist brothers the year 1937 was the most critical one, but also the year with the largest expansion to foreign countries as a consequence of the dramatic political events in this time of the Nazi-regime.

On 1st of January 1937 the German district had 252 professed brothers. There were also 10 postulants and 35 novices at this time. The brothers worked in 14 schools and boarding schools. As a result of the edict published on the 28th of December 1936 in Bavaria all schools run by religious had to be closed at the end of the school year 1936/37 at Easter 1937. This meant that nine houses of the brothers were closed. In consequence, many of the brothers were jobless overnight. They were looking for new works of apostolate. In a short time, these were found in foreign countries. So in 1937 nine new foundations were made, eight of them outside of Germany. The one in Poland was among them.

Here a list of these new foreign foundations:

Austria:	Innsbruck, Graz
Hungary:	Budapest, Högyes
Liechtenstein:	Vaduz
Netherlands:	Almelo
Denmark:	Kopenhagen-Ordstrup
Poland:	Poznan

Also a new foundation installed in 1938 in Switzerland may be put in this development: Buochs at the Lake Luzern. It lasted until 1941.

More than 100 brothers left Germany to work in these houses or in Uruguay or Brazil. Nevertheless 56 brothers still lived in the community of Furth together with 22 novices and 15 postulants. Finally, the outbreak of the war initiated the big loss of brothers as many of them had to join the army and lost their lives on the battlefield or as prisoners of war.

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Aperçu sur le district d'Allemagne, Bulletin de L'Institut, Volume XVI,  
p. 244-255

Familienchronik der Provinz Deutschland, 1965, Heft 3, S. 22-25

Letter of brother Ingfried Rybczynski (eyewitness) to brother Anton Metzger dated from 9th June 1971 (Provincial Archive Furth)



## 6. German Brothers in the Netherlands

„Today we have taken possession of the Castello house in Almelo and set it up as a small religious community. Be assured of our sincere gratitude for such a loving and willing acceptance into hospitable Holland. [...] In the spirit of our Founder we would like to consider ourselves as the helpers of the Priests and strive to work with them to further the spread of the Kingdom of God through word and deed. “ This is what we read in a letter dated 15th May 1937 from Br. Laurian Tilly, the Director of the first Community in Holland, to the Archbishop of Utrecht.

On that day on which they officially moved into the house at Almelo, the „District of Holland“ was founded. How did this foundation come about? What were the motives and how did they unfold? This is what we shall try to show here in this short overview.

The beginnings are closely bound up with the history of the German Province. When, as a result of the Nazi rule in 1936 a whole number of schools and boarding establishments were forcefully closed down, the superiors sought to find working opportunities in other countries, Holland among them, for those brothers who were now free. The point of contact was „a relative of one of the brothers who had a property in Almelo for disposal.“ In a letter to the Archbishop of Utrecht on the 26th January 1937, Br. Leo Dorvaux, Visitor of Germany, reported this. Finally, on October 2nd 1937, Br. Diogène, Superior General, announced in a letter the recognition of the new foundation by the General Council.



So it was that „Villa Castello“ in Almelo became the „birth-place“ of the brothers in the Netherlands. But without the willing assistance of many helpers this would not have been possible. It was indeed a real adventure. Adapting to the new circumstances, particularly establishing a sound financial basis was a great problem. The nine German brothers of the first community sought work and earning possibilities. There was still the „medicinal“ Arquebuse and Biphosphate which had been brought from Recklinghausen. With the

help of Mister Lefering, the owner of a pharmacy, a way was found to set up the distillery in production while his wife taught the brothers Dutch. With the sale of the Arquebuse which, as Br. Laurian wrote to Rome, „was greatly appreciated by the local people“ and the production of various teas and phosphates as well as private tuition, the brothers painstakingly sought to keep their heads above water financially.

But now the brothers had to look for another strong base and workplace to be able to carry out their Marist vocation – above all to get a foot in the area of education and find an appropriate project. The Bishop of Utrecht in a letter on 8th February 1937 in which he gave his approval of the Almelo foundation, gave little encouragement, „But you must understand that the brothers will hardly earn anything from the education of youth since there is already a post primary establishment in Almelo and a Lyceum in Oldenzaal.“

Then there was the idea to establish a Juniorate in Almelo. The financial basis of this was to be a shared project with the Province of South Africa. But this soon fell through. The search for premises for another establishment and achieving the necessary approval was a grueling procedure. One of the aborted projects was Raalte where we sought to found an establishment with the help of the Redemptorists. But because of the negative attitude of the Bishop who wanted to have the Sacred Heart Brothers there, we were not successful. Then an offer in Limburg in a Convent owned by the Dominican Sisters was unsuccessful due to lack of approval from the Motherhouse. Finally, a new project in Zenderen (Azelo) became a serious proposition. On 25th June 1938, it was discussed at the Provincial Council in Almelo and they came to a positive outcome. In the official minutes of the Council details of the financing of a Boarding School were recorded. Then further advantages of this project were put forward: The proximity of the Redemptorist Retreat House; the proximity of the railway station (only 3Km) „where all the trains stop“; and the presence of land suitable for cultivation were all seen as advantages.

Also the advantageous situation for schooling was noted, „Zenderen lies in the middle of population centres, Almelo, Hengelo, Borne and Delden from where Catholic pupils can come to us.“ If nothing else it should also be pointed out that the owner is an amenable person, „The owner, a bachelor of 72 years of age and a good Catholic is prepared to do other things for this project.“ There is a further observation regarding advantages, curiously enough, which should not be overlooked. It is of interest from a historical and cultural perspective, „In Holland everyone, beginning with small children, ride bicycles. So a distance of a few kilometers in this flat land with good streets is no hindrance to going there.“



Finally, in 1939 we come to the founding in **Azelo** where a piece of land of about 10 hectares was acquired. But here also there were unexpected difficulties. Due to administrative factors resulting in the negotiations about the new piece of land at Azelo being initially unclear, things came to a head with a

strong reaction from the diocese of Utrecht. A letter from the Bishop reads, „Your letter of 1st July 1940 has surprised us. We read there that you have transferred from Almelo to Azelo. Do you not know that you should have first sought my permission? [...] Obviously we are now forced to submit to this fait accompli. “ Also consultation with the parish priests was called for. The deeply shocked Superior was able to clarify the situation in a letter. The piece of land which had been acquired lay on the border of Zenderen and Azelo. It belonged in fact to Azelo which the buyers were not too clear about. In the correspondence with the Bishop they had always mistakenly spoken of Zenderen. Br. Laurian most humbly begged pardon for this mistake and named the reasons for the relocation from Almelo, „to Zenderen or rather Azelo.“ Above all the cost of the lease had become prohibitive and the tenancy contract ran out in 1940. He also highlighted the good relations with Father Franke.

To end this short foundation history, it remains only to narrate that the war seriously impacted on the new community as brothers were conscripted into the army and people had to pull through in the midst of great austerity. But now the first two young Dutch brothers arrived in the community at Azelo; in 1944 two others followed from Flanders one of whom was the director. After the war, there were two German brothers still remaining but they soon returned home. Years later, Netherlands became an own district.



## 7. The Marist Brewery in Furth (Germany)

This is the story of an apostolic work of the brothers, which has been unique in the Marist world, and surely will be in the future. The fact of brothers working as master brewers, and that many people when thinking of the Marist house in Furth always connected this with the famous monastery beer, is a matter which has raised some skepticism and lack of understanding.

This very special work of apostolate can only be understood by considering two important aspects by way of explanation. The first one is connected with the history of the Bavarian monasteries, which always has been a story of beer brewing as part of their culture. Even today some very famous beers like Paulaner, Franziskaner and Augustiner are giving testimony of this phenomenon, as also the existence of breweries run by nuns, like the ones in Ursberg and Mellersdorf and well known monastery breweries run by Benedictines in Ettal, Andechs (near Munich) and Weltenburg, which are almost world famous because they are big centres of international tourism. This culture of brewing beer since the Middle Ages has been part of the monks' lives and has been an important factor contributing to their economic welfare.



The second aspect of understanding the existence of the Marist brewery in Furth is to be seen in the history of the German Marist Province. In Furth, there has been a long tradition of beer brewing and the brothers worked in the footsteps of the great benefactress of the German Marists, Lady Baroness of Hornstein, who commissioned

the brothers with the brewery. Her intention was to provide them with a solid economical basis for their apostolic work in Furth after the foundation in very poor conditions in 1915. The brothers willingly accepted this offer and started working with great commitment, knowing well that doing so they were building up an important basis to survive in Furth and to create a very specific Bavarian form of apostolate by way of training boy apprentices in contact with the educational apostolate of the brothers. And they also practiced their apostolate in form of special contacts with local people on whom they exerted their good influence. This brewery has been esteemed because of the good spirit and the good atmosphere created by the brothers and because of their fair work. Many of the then beer brewing brothers are still well remembered in the area of Furth, although the brewery

itself had finished being a monastery brewery and the reminders have totally gone because the buildings were taken down in 2009. Thinking of the good „Klostertropfen“ (Drop of the monastery) makes elderly people in Furth and in the whole region feeling some nostalgia. This may also be the case with the brothers in the community of Furth, where until the fifties a barrel of fresh beer was tapped for dinner every day and every brother got his pint of nice draught beer, which later for practical reasons had to be replaced with bottled beer. In Bavaria beer always has been regarded as a form of „liquid bread.“

### *The history of the brewery so far*

Before the brothers took over in 1921, the brewery could already look back on a long tradition as „castle brewery“. The existence can be demonstrated firstly in a document in 1690, when the noble family of the Lodrons lived in the castle of Furth. But tradition knows that the origins date back to the late Middle Ages. Since 1819 the family of the Barons of Hornstein, the family of which the future Benefactress of the brothers was a member, was managed by tenants, who didn't always do a good job. This was the case until the end of the First World War, when things had deteriorated.

A new lease of life could start only when the Baroness in 1921 offered it to the brothers in form of a lease. She was determined to give this work into good hands and intended to provide the brothers with an economic basis for their work in Furth and the first foundations in Germany.

### *The brewery in charge of the Brothers from 1921–1993 A story of real success.*

On the first of October 1921 the house chronicle of Furth gives the following comment, „On this day the brothers took over the lease of the Hornstein property and of the brewery. The General Council has given 500 000 RM (Reichsmark) for the startup. At this time inflation already had commenced: 1 pound of bread was 1,50 RM, 1 liter of beer was 3.00 RM, an egg 1,50 and 1 liter of milk 2,50 RM.“ (So a pint of beer was the same price as an egg.)

Under the direction of Brother Anton Metzger, the future headmaster of the colleges in Remagen and Mindelheim, every attempt was made to train brothers for this new job, to modernize the facilities and the equipment and to increase production.

Brothers were sent to other famous Benedictine breweries like Ettal and Andechs, where they learnt the skills necessary to be good brewers. Soon the production was enlarged from 2000 hl in the year 1921 to 5000 hl

in 1927 and 20 000 hl in 1937. To achieve this good result many investments had to be made. Beer depots in the nearby town of Landshut and in Munich were the basis for the enlargement of the production. Step by step the brewery was modernised. The minutes of the local council give testimony of these well-planned investments and measures of modernization. For instance, in 1925 Brother Meinrad was sent to the Czech town of Pilsen, world famous for its brewing tradition, to purchase 16 big 60 hl barrels. In the same year, they bought 10 000 liter bottles and 5000 half liter bottles. The liter bottle was the common one in those times in Bavaria. This was also the year of the acquisition of the first lorry, a second-hand one. But another very important point was the finding of new customers. The first depot in Munich was started in 1931, and in 1933 already four inns were supplied with beer from Furth. This could be regarded as a great success, because Munich was a town with many big breweries. In 1935 a fourth lorry had to be bought in order to supply all the customers (inns and restaurants) with „Klosterbier“.

During the Second World War the work could continue as before, and after 1945 the brewery was booming, thanks also to the production of lemonades since 1950. In 1964 the brothers became owners of the brewery and the farm by contract of purchase with the diocese of Regensburg, which inherited the whole property in 1943, when the Baroness died. A real highlight in the history of the brewery was the 50th anniversary in 1971. The celebrations gave testimony „of the good links between the monastery and the village“ as it was written in a long report in the local Landshut newspaper on 20th November. A quotation of the speech given by the then superior of Furth, Bro. Flavius Schmid, may clarify once more the role of the brewery in connection with the Marist apostolate. He said, „The aim of the brewery was the creation of a utility company, which could provide the contributions necessary for the genuine task of the order to establish schools and boarding schools and to be in charge of their maintenance. This idea makes clear, that the staff of the brewery, people from the village, are not to be seen as workers but as members of a big family, which the order feels responsible for.“

On that occasion the distinction of employees was indicated. Eight of them had been working in the brewery already for 40 years. Also 34 innkeepers and depot managers were present. In the following years, the variety of drinks was increased. In a list of 1991 eight brands of beer are listed as well as twenty different lemonades and table waters and of course the famous Arquebuse and Hermite distilled by the German brothers.



Since 1981 the official name of the brewery was changed from „Schlossbrauerei“ (castle brewery) into „Klosterbrauerei“ (monastery brewery). And so the Marist symbol appeared on the bottles and no longer the castle and the village church. This change seemed to be a

promising sign for the future, but things went another way. More and more brothers – in the best times six of them worked in the brewery – left the work for reasons of age or death; and due to the great vocation crises in these years they could not be replaced by younger brothers. So during the last years before the closure only two brothers remained. The rest was done by the economic crisis, which swept away many of the smaller and medium-sized breweries in Bavaria. So the Provincial Council had to find a final solution to these great problems.

In 1993 the last brothers, Bro. Burkard Lindner and Bro. Dietfried Fink, left the brewery, which was sold to a neighbouring brewery. After some years, the beer brewing came to an end and in 2009 the large buildings were demolished.

A small anecdote at the end of this short survey of the history of the brewery may prove the importance of the brewery in the life of all living in the Marist establishment in Furth, from the juniors to the brothers. Sometimes some of the juniors helped out in the brewery during their free afternoons when they were engaged in gardening or working in the fields. There they put together the complicated bottle tops and then were rewarded with a snack. The very appetizing smell of hops, which invaded the monastery up the hill on special brewing days will never be forgotten by all those who lived in Furth in those days, like the author of this report; as well as the daily half-pint for every meal, which even the novices could enjoy.

What would have happened with the Marist house in Furth and with the school, without the important economic contribution of the brewery, and how many places of work would not have existed for people in Furth?

Once more a special chapter of Marist history had come to an end. It should not be forgotten, neither the brothers who worked as master brewers and executed in their own specific manner the directions of Father Champagnat, working in simplicity alongside those who worked directly in the youth apostolate and giving testimony of genuine Marist life to the laypeople on the spot. In this way they also were real Marist apostles, but very

specialised ones. And by the way, they were the last „brewing monks“ in Germany.

Connected with the brewery there was also a farm with cattle breeding. Some brothers very in charge of pigs, cows and poultry.





## 8. Marien-Stimmen ("Marian Voices") Quarterly Bulletin of the Marist Brothers in Germany

From 1910 to 1939 the German Marist Brothers published a bulletin which can be considered a reflection of the eventful history of the Marists in Germany and a source for understanding their particular spirituality and apostolic effectiveness, especially in the missions. According to the vagaries in the Marist history, the bulletin appeared in a variety of places and with various subtitles: but the main title remained ‚Marian Voices‘.

The bulletin first appeared in 1910 in Arlon. As the subtitle of the first volume made clear, it was the work of the Juniorate and was aimed at a German readership, particularly the parents and acquaintances of the young men who were preparing themselves for religious life in Arlon.

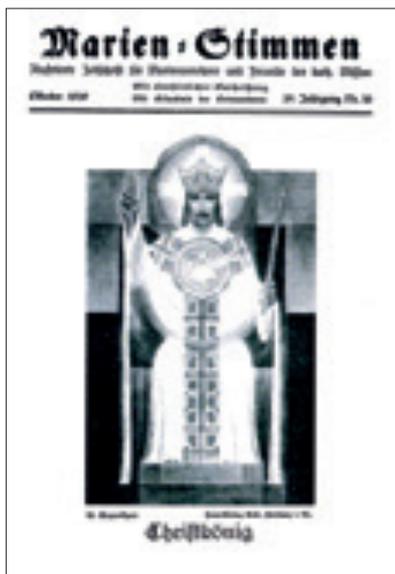


In the introduction to the first issue in Volume 1 the aims and the motivation behind Bulletin were set out, „For a long time now a desire among the parents and friends has been put to us that our Institute should publish a small text that would keep them up to date with the works, developments and hopes, particularly of the mission countries in which the brothers are active. At least partly to meet this wish we have decided to publish a quarterly bulletin.“

The structure of the various issues remained more or less the same right up to the final issue. For the most part, the contents followed the same headings as can be seen from the contents of the 16th volume in 1926:

Devotion and Spirituality; Instruction on Mary;  
For Our Youth (teaching extracts and exhortation);  
News from our various apostolates (particularly in the missions); From Near and Far (News from the communities in Germany and the Province); Humour and Puzzles; Poems and Narratives.

The place of publication was tied to the various moves of the Juniorate: So it was published from 1915 to 1920 in Furth; from 1920 to 1926 in Traunstein; from 1926 to 1933 in Mindelheim; from 1933 to 1939 again in Furth under the new subtitle, „Illustrated Bulletin for Marian Devotees and friends of the Catholic School“. So there were now serials and of course, many illustrations.



With the outbreak of the Second World War and the accompanying turbulent times in Germany the possibility of continuing with the publication was lost. So it was that the last issue appeared in October 1939. The picture of Christ the King on the Cover can be considered a beacon of hope.

In the course of time the bulletin grew ever more widely among the Catholic population of whom the parents of the children in schools and Internats played a major part. Circulation in the 1927 issues reached 14,000 and already 20,000 was aimed at. Among the honorary subscribers in 1933

was the Vice Chancellor of the Reich and Prussian Commissioner, Franz von Papen. His thanks for this honorary membership appeared in the Family Chronicle of June 1933,

*„Dear Brother Director*

*I wish to express my sincere thanks for your friendly words of 19th March and the conferring of honorary membership of your newly published bulletin Marien-Stimmen. I assure you that this is a source of great happiness for me. I hope your bulletin spreads quickly and widely and be a source of rich blessing for the Catholic School.*

*Your loyal servant*

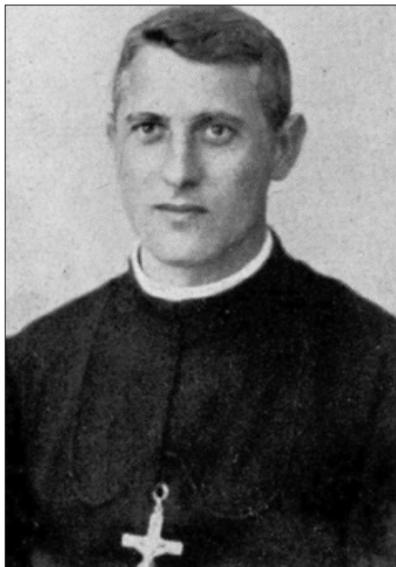
*Franz von Papen (Vice-Chancellor)*

The bulletin always maintained its Marist character and so gave witness to the simplicity and modesty which should imbue the followers of Marcellin Champagnat: the names of contributors and editors of articles never appeared. Only Bro. Magnus, compiler of the so-called „Plauderstube“ (chatting corner“) was named and even that was a pseudonym for the famous Bro. Zimmermann who at that time chaplain in Furth, a giant of a man.

There was an attempt to revive the bulletin in 1959 involving discussions with Hacker Publishers in Gröbenzell who wanted to take over the sales and marketing while the printing and editing would take place in Furth. It did not get beyond this planning stage. As is noted in the minutes of the Provincial Council of 30th August, 1959, “No decision was reached.”

## 9. Brother Johannes-Xaver Goebels 1896-1944

### Victim of the Nazi-Regime in KZ Dachau



On March 17th 1944, Brother Johannes-Xaver Goebels passed away in the hospital at the notorious concentration camp Dachau (KZ Dachau) near Munich.

Together with Dr. Hürfeld, the director of the "Canisianum", a catholic boarding school with 300 boarders, where he worked as a prefect, and three other members at the staff, he was put into jail in Recklinghausen (Westfalia), after having been arrested in Lüdinghausen on September 15th. The charge was: influencing youth against the Nazi-Regime.

The direct reason were some insignificant incidents, done by some hotheaded youngsters in a row which arouse after the announcement of the ceasefire of the Italian troops on September 3rd in 1943. A portrait of Hitler was torn down and another one was turned around. These incidents – the Nazi-officials called them „violent clashes “ – were used by the Gestapo as an opportunity, to initiate the last step on the way to close this catholic educational institution. As the pupils, all together refused any statement when being interrogated some of them were sent to a nearby special home for re-education. Also, the long interrogations of the staff brought no result and they could not find any incriminating material. Nevertheless, five persons were arrested and committed in prison in Recklinghausen among them Brother Johannes-Xavier, the chief prefect. The official accusation was: Neglect of education appropriate to Nazi-principals. This were to be seen among other items in the fact that there were more religious pictures on the walls of the house than pictures of the Nazi-leaders.

Staying in prison was very hard for Brother Johannes because his health was in a bad state and got worse. He suffered from heavy headache, acute problems with his stomach and a deep depression, which derived from fear of a possible committal to the KZ Dachau. But this happened quite unexpectedly. He was put into block 15 as prisoner Nr. 63 118. There he had to live among real criminals. Until his serious illness he was able to do the daily work which they expected him to do. Afraid of the brutal methods used by the doctors and the nurses in the hospital, he tried to get there when it already was too late. Nevertheless, they initiated an operation opening his forehead, because he suffered from a severe meningitis. But he died immediately.

Before getting into hospital a Jesuit priest was able to spend him the holy sacraments. It was on 15th of March 1944 when he crossed the doorway to his Lord. On the third of March a service could be held in the chapel of block 26. After the cremation, the ashes were put together with the ashes of many others on a big pile. So, his relatives refused a delivery of the urn, because they would have sent them any amount of ashes from this pile. Brother Johannes-Xavier is buried on the grounds of the Camp together with 31 590 victims of the Nazis from all parts of Europe.

Brother Johannes-Xavier's life as a Marist after the beginning of the Nazi-Regime in 1933 may be considered as a real example of the fate of many brothers in the German province during the time from 1933 to 1945.

When in 1936 most of the schools and boarding schools ran by German brothers were closed by decree of the Government, brother Johannes had to leave Bad Reichenhall in the beautiful Upper Bavaria, where he had been working for the last four years. Then he was looking for a new job in the newly founded establishments in Austria, firstly in Innsbruck, then in Graz. But he could only stay there for a short time, because after the taking over of the Nazis in Austria in 1938, these foundations had to be left. So he moved to St. Gingolph on the shores of Lac Lemman in Switzerland. For reasons of health he could not stay there either, as the climate proved to be bad for his problems with chronic catarrh. So he finally found a new field of apostolate in his home, when some brothers started work in the Canisianum in Lüdinghausen not far from Recklinghausen in 1939.

Brother Johannes-Xaver was born on August 27th in 1896 in Duisburg-Meidrich. He was the oldest of nine children. His father was a primary teacher. On August 15th 1913 he entered the novitiate in Arlon (Belgium) and professed in September 1914. When World War I broke out, he had to leave Arlon together with all the German brothers, novices and juniors. They found a new home in Furth near Landshut in Bavaria, where the Baroness of Hornstein offered them her villa.

After the war, he lived in Recklinghausen and did his teacher training. In 1922 he did his final vows. Since then he worked in different schools on different places, where he also was superior and deputy superior:

1922 – 1928: Sinzig (on the river Rhein), Superior

1930: Second Novitiate in Grugiasco

1930 – 1930: Traunstein

1933 – 1937: Bad Reichenhall

1937 – 1939: Innsbruck, Graz, St. Gingolph

1939 – 1943: Lüdinghausen (arrest on September 15th 1943)

1944: Death in KZ Dachau (March 15th)

Quotation from his last letter to his family on February 2nd 1944:

„It is a hard trial, which I bear bravely and accept from the hand of God trusting on his help and the help of my heavenly mother ... It is my great consolation, that you all are deeply convinced of my complete innocence and I wish to tell this to all who are close to me. The power to bear all this is given to me only by my faith. May God grant that I still will be able to work in his vineyard for many years.“

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## 10. German Brothers in World War I

### Overview

The number of German brothers already serving in the army in the first weeks of the war in 1914 was 70. At this time also 28 Belgian and 26 French brothers from the province of Beaucamps were also in the army. (1) During the whole war the number of German brothers at the frontline was 120, the number of those who were killed was 45. These numbers are to be found in the report „District d'Allemagne – Origine et progrès“. (2)

„When the war was ended, the released brothers found a home in Furth thanks to the alteration in the building. The war has – what a disaster –



let big gaps in the rows of our brothers. Of the 120, who were called to the flags, 45 have lost their lives. Others returned worn out or sick. What a joy for the superior in the house to see the zeal and the warm affection for these brothers.“ (3)

### *Brothers at home caring for wounded prisoners of war:*



In Recklinghausen (first Marist house in Germany since 1914) a military hospital was installed. In the above mentioned report we find the following remarks on this, „Three months after the opening of the house the Great War broke out. The juniors had to return home, since the house was transformed into a military hospital. The brothers after

1 Familienchronik (Magazine of the German Marist Province), 1971, p. 8 Quotation from Relève, Magazine of the Beaucamps province, Number 40

2 AFMS: Doc. 612. H. 007: handwritten report in French, no author, no date, probably 1927, 12 pages DIN A4

3 A list in the Province archive in Furth with all the deceased brothers, novices and postulants from 1914 until 1969 enumerates 45 brothers and 3 postulants killed in the war. The first brother, Michael Ferdinand Hamacher died already in August 1914, the last one, Kamillus Wagner, on the first of September 1918. From 11 brothers there is no information about the place of death. As for the others, 7 were killed in Russia, 17 in France, 6 in Flanders, 1 in Palestine, 1 at sea, 3 of them died in military hospitals

having been trained as nurses, (4) had to care for the wounded soldiers, who came in great numbers. The good now done by the brothers will remain a mystery of God.

Soon also many wounded soldiers from France, Belgium, Italy, Great Britain and other countries were admitted into the house. Now the zeal of the brothers could develop completely. All these prisoners of war soon got the feeling of being in one great family and competed in the desire to please the brothers, whose zeal and commitment, which let them overcome all difficulties, they admired so much. They especially appreciated the superior, brother Laurian Tilly, who besides caring for all the material issues cared first of all for their spiritual and emotional welfare. Therefore, he installed a day of retreat every three months, which proved to be a great success. Many of the soldiers found their way back to God, and so they had celebrations of first communion and conversions of heretics. The great gratitude, which for these rough soldiers was not only an empty word, was expressed in many gifts to the house.

The celebration of the centenary of our congregation on the second of January 1917 was a great feast both for brothers and inmates. And there were without any doubt some celebrations, which were unique in the history of our Institute: already in the morning special presentations were held in honor of the sons of the venerable founder and they expressed their thankfulness for the work and care being done by the brothers.

The farewell at the end of the war was extremely touching and will always remain in the hearts of all who were witnesses.

7000 wounded were cared for by our brothers. 82 of them were guided to first communion."

In the *Extrait des Annales de la Maison Provinciale de Furth/ Bavière 1918/19* (5) the following notice can be found, „Les frères mobilisés retournent peu à peu, 43 restent sur les champs de bataille.“ The 3 postulants were not included. Then the number would have been 46. These figures could also be true, because of some contradictory remarks in the statistics.

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4 Some brothers were already trained in the normal school in Arlon for this job and got a „Diplom d'Ambulance“.

See: Metzger, Anton: *Chronik der deutschen Ordensprovinz der Maristen-Schulbrüder*, Erster Teil, Furth 1975, p. 57

There also occurs the remark, that some of the brothers worked in a hospital of the John of God brothers in Dortmund from 1914 until 1916, where they lived in a community of 10 to 20 brothers. During the same time two brothers worked in the welfare institution of Rüdeshelm. Doing this the brothers were exempted from military service until 1916. Those in Recklinghausen were exempted during the whole wartime because the house was declared a military hospital.

5 AFMS: Doc. 612. H. 010. 0 4

Officially statements of the Institute say that 1037 Marist brothers from all nations at war took part as soldiers in the war, and 118 were killed. (6) This means that 37% of the German brothers were killed, whereas the percentage of those in general only was 17%.

So far, the graves of 14 German brothers and two postulants who were killed could be identified exactly. The rest could not be found because of uncertain or vague information. These graves are located in Flanders and in the North of France like Menen or Neuville-St. Vaast. (7)



Two of our brothers who died during World War I:

### Supplement concerning the military hospital „Konvikt“ (Marist house)

The „Ledger of the reserve-compartment of the military hospital „Konvikt“ in Recklinghausen Prisoners of war: numbers 1261-4141 Germans: numbers 368-740“ contains exact information about the number, the personal data, the kinds of sickness, the length of stay and other data of the patients. It is kept in the local archive of the Marists in Recklinghausen.

The meticulous registrations give a rather clear picture of the life in a typical military hospital for prisoners of war during World War I. 2880 prisoners of war are registered and also 382 German soldiers, so the summary is 3262. This was done in the period from May 1916 to April 1919. A list of former patients does no longer exist. The statistics contain exact data about age, place of birth, date of entry, date of leaving, kind of sickness and workplace of the prisoners. Also cases of deaths and causes of deaths are mentioned.

6 Chronologie de l'Institut des Frères Maristes, Rome 1976, p. 198, Rome 2010, p. 315

7 Inquiry about war dead: [www.Volksbund.de/](http://www.Volksbund.de/) Graebersuchaend [www.weltkriegsopfer.de/](http://www.weltkriegsopfer.de/) Kriegsopfer. The information is sometimes quite incomplete and vague. But this is the official institution for research on war victims and soldiers killed in action during the great wars.

So the book is to be seen as an important contribution to research the history of prisoners of war in Germany during the First World War.

The first two patients admitted to the hospital who are registered in the book on 31st May 1916 may be mentioned personally: Francois Adde from Ste Nidoque, France, 37 years old, suffering from bronchitis. He left on 30th June. The second one, Constantin Michewski from Jaklowo, Russia, 34 years old, suffering from an injury of his hand. He left on 21st June and worked in the coalmine Ewald.



The great majority of the patients were Russians and Frenchmen. But the number of British prisoners is considerably high. They were 430, among them 22 from Scotland (7 from Glasgow, 4 from Edinburgh, the rest from other places). 8 were from Ireland (among them a man called Harry Castello

from Dublin). Then there were 97 Belgians, 39 from Italy, and some from Switzerland, Portugal, USA and even from Argentina.

Besides these special patients from other countries the bulk came from Russia and from France. The workplace for almost all of them were the coalmines near Recklinghausen and the famous Ruhrgebiet, perhaps the then biggest coalmining area of Europe.

From May 1916 until November 1918 there was an endless coming and going. On some days up to 16 new patients were admitted, usually the number was two to five. The causes of admittance normally were injuries at the workplace like bruises and fractures, but also quite often illnesses like bronchitis, flu, pneumonia, enteritis and so on.

During this period 74 prisoners of war died in the hospital, most of them of pneumonia. Among the dead there were also 8 from Britain.

The last admitted prisoner was John Brown from Edinburgh. He arrived on 7th November 1918 and stayed until 15th November.

Since 12th April 1918 more and more German soldiers were admitted in the military hospital "Konvikt" and got surgery besides the prisoners of war. On 15th April 1919, finally all the patients were sent home or to hospitals in the town.

So a single and special work of apostolate in the history of the Congregation of the Marist brothers came to an end. It deserves not to be forgotten and to be admired. Marcellin Champagnat certainly would have done so.

## 11. German Brothers in World War I

### Contact with at Home

For the German Marists 1914 is a particularly significant year; it is the year of the first foundation in Germany. It is also a significant year in world history; the outbreak of World War I, „the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century.“ Both events are in a tragic way inextricably linked. Since the German Brothers were enlisted as soldiers early on – there were over 100 of them of whom 45 either lost their lives or were wounded – the beginnings of the Brothers in Germany were fraught with a real threat which had to be overcome. The question was how to carry this horrendous burden and how to deal with it. Many of the young Brothers were at the Front and so not only were they absent from contributing to the building of the Province but their service in the army created huge demands for them as Religious. And yet the superiors at the time were able to tackle these problems and find possible ways of mentoring and guiding these „field grey Brothers“ as the soldiers were called, and in spite of everything, help them to maintain close bonds with the Community. Evidence of this is to be found in a whole pile of letters which have been preserved in the archives at Furth. The author of the letters is Brother Raymond Koop, founder of the house at Recklinghausen and Director at this time. The recipients in the first instance were the soldier Brothers who also responded to them as has been regularly mentioned. So there was built up a communication network. The Brother grew up with others into a large widespread family found throughout every war zone and in every garrison. The letters are a splendid source of information about the life of the soldiers on the one hand and the life of the community on the other, i.e. the new community of Recklinghausen. Here we can only present the most important themes in the correspondence.

The main purpose of these letters was above all to maintain the link between the Brothers outside at the Front with the Community at home. To be conscious of belonging to an Institute which one supported and where each cared for and prayed for each other was awakened and strengthened through the correspondence. Naturally at the forefront was news of deaths and wounds. The first such sad report is to be found in a letter of 19th March, 1916 and this can be used as an example of many like it, „Alongside this very comforting news, I must report today the deaths of two of our Religious family at the Front. On 17th February Brother Louis-Bertrand (Ludwig Laux), most recently in Constantinople, died at 12.30 from respiratory problems at the military hospital in Berlin ... At the recent battle in Ypres our dear Brother Leo Corsini (German Haustein) fell. Since then Brother Gottfried (Franz Geiselman) has been declared missing. Let us pray for both of these Brothers.“

Besides these reports of deaths there is also a lot about those wounded or other events which Brothers report regarding wonderful escapes from dangerous situations. Again, only one example can be given here. A Brother writes from the battle of the Somme, „Thanks to the help of God and his Blessed Mother, I have the good fortune yet again to send you and the other loving confrères greetings from enemy territory. I have survived safe and sound the most frightening battle the world has ever known. Thanks and praise be to God! With five officers and 230 men our company went into battle: a single officer and 90 men returned.“ And Brother Raymund added, „Many others have written the same sort of thing.“ (22th September 1916)

These accounts of Brothers, fallen or wounded, are added to by others who experienced life at the Front. It is particularly interesting that these reports express with a certain pride all sorts of accolades and distinctions. Indeed, Brother Raymund demanded of the Brothers that they should not through false modesty neglect to report such well-deserved praise. „Brother Bonaventura-Leo was promoted and recommended for a bravery award and Brother Hermann was likewise promoted.

On behalf of all of us I have sent warmest congratulations. ... When someone has achieved something noteworthy it should be reported at the earliest opportunity in order to bring honour to the Institute.“ (22nd September 1916)

In order to strengthen the ties of the „soldier Brothers“ to the homeland it is to be recommended that when Brothers return home leave they should spend several days at Recklinghausen. Many did this, and for the community these visits were always a source of great happiness. „In the last weeks, we have had numerous visits from our soldiers. All of them have brought us great joy and they all have left us happy and content. Whoever has leave of absence, do not neglect to visit us.“ (18th July 1916)

Reports of a particular Apostolate among the Brothers at the Front are another focus of the letters. Again an example, this time emerging as a result of the Month of the Rosary, „A Brother from the Prussian Imperial Reserve Forces went regularly a short time ago with his comrades to the local Church which had been heavily shot at, to pray the rosary kneeling on the cold stone floor. How good it was that this Brother fulfilled all his obligations to prayer and the Apostolate.“ This is cause for a note of concern about the youngest Brothers, „I fear that particularly our youngest soldiers could forget or even neglect these Apostolate duties due to diffidence.“ (22nd September 1916)

It is also noteworthy that Brother Raymund often stated that he was in constant contact with the Superior General and kept him informed of the situation of the soldier Brothers and the life of the community at home: „It is a joy to read the edifying letters from the Front. I do not hide the fact that from time to time I communicate to the Brother Superior General news of the edifying attitude of our soldier Brothers.“ (2nd April 1917) Again in this way the clever psychologist strengthened the self-awareness of his Brothers. I wonder if these letters are still available in the general archives. Unfortunately, it is not possible to present here the many interesting comments about the life of the community or about Arlon.



## 12. German Brothers in World War I

### Life in Marist Houses



In the preceding article, we looked at the letters which Brother Raymund sent from Recklinghausen to the soldier Brothers and dealt with the basic aspects of the lives of these soldiers and the connections which the Superiors kept up with them. In this part, we put before you further information but mainly about the life of the community at home, about Arlon and particularly the events at the military hospital for prisoners of war which had been set up in 1916 at our house in Recklinghausen.

Brother Raymund wrote consistently about the liturgical feasts of the year in order that the soldier Brothers could participate in these focal points of the community life. In this regard it should be pointed out that this particular „liturgical culture“ among the Brothers did not change right through till the Council. Rather, the Feasts were celebrated in the traditional manner, first in Arlon and afterwards in all the communities as we can read in the letter of 7th July 1916. Here we have effusive writing about the Feast of Saint Joseph, the great Feasts of the Church, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost and, of course, the Feasts of Our Lady. So, we read the following about the particular way in which the month of the Rosary is celebrated, „We have begun the month of the Rosary in the traditional way; each day we pray the rosary at 8.00 a.m. and none of our sick brothers is absent. We sing again the lovely old Maria hymns which we sang so enthusiastically in the unforgettable chapel at Arlon. The devotion of the Brothers is truly uplifting and greatly edifies those who are staying here on leave of absence. Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother we hope for rich graces and the blessing of an early peace.“ (20th October 1916)

For the Juniors, the traditional annual Feast of Saint Aloysius is the high point of the year. And this should remain so, well into the 1960s, at the Juniorate in Furth, „In spite of the war, the Feast of Saint Aloysius was particularly well celebrated.“ (7th July 1916)

These feasts were always an opportunity to renew and deepen our connectedness with the Brothers outside of community, „The Feast of the Annunciation was celebrated this year on 27th March. At Communion and at prayer time our thoughts were on the Brothers out there. Not a day passes but we

think of our absent Brothers. We are with them in spirit in the trenches and in their quarters." (2nd April 1917)

Present at all these celebrations, as a general rule, were the prisoners of war from France, Russia, Belgium and Britain who were being cared for and looked after by the Brothers in the house. They took an active part in the prayers and liturgical celebrations of the Brothers. We paid special attention to this since it was an opportunity to practice an appropriate apostolate. We read something of this in a letter for Pentecost in 1916, „The Feast of Pentecost was a joyful day for the whole house. We had the joy of six soldiers present. Almost all our sick people (in the hospital) went to Communion. Many of them had not experienced such good fortune for a long time. “And of the Feast of Saint Joseph in 1916 we read, „Our patients are participating in great numbers; over 50 went to Communion, many for the first time since their first communion.”

In this way, it was possible for the Brothers working in the hospital to create in a splendid way a positive climate; one felt the togetherness with the sick as one does in a family and the sick greatly appreciated it. A letter of 4th March 1916 strongly confirms this, „It is nothing but good news which we send from our house. As always, we have between 120 and 140 sick and wounded who are all quite content. Also, the Brothers are happy to dedicate themselves to them, filled as they are with the best of spirit. “It was also good for the prisoners that the Brothers were skilled in foreign languages. In the midst of war the Brothers’ house was a haven of peace and reconciliation. Even the hymns at Mass were sung in the language of the patients as on Saint Joseph’s day in 1916, „How movingly and joyfully they sang, ‘Voici l’agneau de Dieu’ and the well-known, ‘Bienheureux témoin de l’enfance.’ Anyone able to stand on his feet went to the High Mass.” And the festivities continued in the dining room. „True to tradition, the kitchen staff provided an appropriate menu which showed no sign of a war in progress and which everyone to a man praised.”

But the heart of the Brothers lay always in Arlon. For this reason, any news from Brother Raymund always had something added from the old homeland. The death of the Director, Brother Ferdinand who had died suddenly on 19th February 1916 was particularly described in detail. Everyone knew him well since he had been their Superior just one or two years earlier, „Almost everyone knew this good Superior and had experienced the excellent qualities of heart and spirit of this outstanding Religious. It was thanks to his dedication and creativity that the community at Arlon was so successful and that for many young Germans the road to the Marist family was so smooth.” (4 March 1916)

A few more bits of news give us an insight into life at Arlon during the war. „The war orphaned children of Luxembourg are to be put into the care of the Brothers at Arlon. There are already four at the moment and others will follow. Brother Gilles is seen as the prospective Director. Brother Edbert is the supervisor and Brother Emil Meinrad is to be a teacher in the new foundation (June 1916). A month later it is reported, „In Arlon everything is running smoothly in the Internat as well as in the orphanage. After the autumn holiday the house will be as full as it was before the war. (7 July 1916)

Again and again the periodical „Voices of Mary“ was pointed to and the news items it contained. Nearly every Brother had the latest issue sent to him, as their addresses were known.

We are in the middle of the war, so it is appropriate to end this report with a quotation from a soldier's letter: Brother August Regis writes, „Dunkerque a été bombardé par nos pièces de grand calibre, établies à 90 km. La Ville a reçu une vingtaine d' obus de 700 kilos. Les effets en sont terribles... Naturellement, j'ai peur aussi. Place au fond du Collège des Dames, j'étais en compagnie des élèves et des professeurs. Nous avons récité le chapelet; quelle anxiété pendant les cinq minutes, qui séparaient les détonations, et qu' on est heureux de se sentir en paix avec le Bon Dieu.“



## 13. German Brothers in World War I

### Brothers at the front

Many German Brothers were conscripted and soon found themselves at the front where 45 fell in battle. They were young and most of them had just recently left the Novitiate and Scholasticate in Arlon. What a brutal intrusion into their lives! They were steeped in their Marist Vocation and the ideals of Religions Life and imbued with a deep piety. Now they found themselves confronted with the gruesome reality of war. Their faith and their vocation were sorely tested. How could they survive this and how, under such extraordinary circumstances, could they remain true to their vocation? Indeed, how in this milieu could they offer a sign of their trust in God and particularly as Marists, their trust in Mary and so be for the other soldiers a source of help in making sense in this mindless world of brutal fighting and death? Letters which at the time were published in our periodical *Marist Voices* give us an insight into their experiences and their response as Marists, namely their trust in Mary in the middle of this war situation. These letters offer splendid authentic witnesses of Marist life in the war. A few, for the most part, short examples will bear this out and also how soldiers practiced their faith in war.

*Brother A.R. writes in 1916:*

„Shortly before Christmas we received the order to proceed to the front line. We had hardly moved when we were surprised by a fire as if from hell. We had to wait a short time in our communications trench. The frightening thunder of cannons was all around us and the sky was a flaming red. The concern was if rescue were possible. The correct response followed immediately, ‚Hail Mary, full of grace ... thy womb Jesus, who for us carried the heavy cross.‘ It was a response of faith and hope. As the danger rose so also did the trust in Mary. Suddenly, a deafening bang, a jolt – ‚Mary help us!‘ – and we were covered in rubble . We feverishly worked our way out, helped by people rushing by. A short time dragged by and all five of us were safe together. In union we all cried out, ‚Thanks be to God and 25 yards further on, Hail Mary full of grace ... thy womb Jesus, who was crucified for us.‘ The muddy beads glided through our fingers. There immediately in front of us a shell landed, exploded and threw to the ground knocking us out. I came to my senses again. I was filled with horror as I caught sight of my next encounter: several comrades lay blown to pieces on the ground. The angel of death had passed very close to me. A heart-felt prayer to our heavenly mother came from my quavering breast. I was bleeding from a number of wounds: it was clear that in this moment of the greatest danger Mary had stretched out her protecting hand over me and

engaged me for further new and thankful service. Four men dragged me through gruesome darkness, sodden mud, sludge and cold from one pothole to another caused by falling shells, till finally after four hours we arrived at the medical station. Escape from disaster. Hail Mary!"

*Brother Joseph Ludwig writes from France in October 1916:*

„Once again it is October, the month of the rosary. And those of us at the front have not forgotten the rosary. Certainly our brave Bavarian reserve forces don't let the opportunity slip by to take part in the Rosary when their service duties allow it. In G there was rosary every evening, and although this was prayed in French our ‚Greys‘ (German soldiers who wore grey uniforms) appeared each night in large numbers and prayed the rosary for themselves. When the devotions were over and the locals had long gone, they remained kneeling in front of the picture of Our Lady and prayed in peaceful piety.

A few days earlier I came to the village of R which was only a few hundred yards from the front. Most of the inhabitants had fled. The war had not left the small church untouched since there is a gaping hole on the side wall. But inside were a number of ‚greys‘ quietly praying the rosary. Not far off was the thunder of war and French shells swished loudly through the air. But the pious petitioners did not allow themselves to be disturbed. ‚Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen‘ continued slowly with deep devotion. It was a touching sight. Those who when outside fight like lions, pray here like little children.“

*Brother Anton Michael writes in 1915:*

„How many experiences could I recount in which Mary clearly protected me! In every assault, I prayed to her for protection. Hundreds of shots were fired towards me but she always spread her protecting mantle over me. Evidence of this I have from 19th February. For the first time, I was charging with others. A comrade fell to the ground silently but screaming. We had to go back since we were wedged between two machine guns. As we were trying to scramble back into the trenches there was a salvo of about ten shots near me. A bullet struck through my canteen utensils but I was fully protected. From our group of eight, five were killed and two were wounded. I alone remained – thanks to the protection of Mary. Daily, even hourly I had further evidence of the particular protection of our Good Mother ... What I have most to be thankful for is that I am now fully removed from the battle zone since I have been for some time now in the foreign language department.“

## 14. German Brothers in World War II

In 1937 nine Brothers were already in military service, in 1941 their number increased to 96. The first ones were killed in action at the end of 1941. (1) Until 1945 the number of brother soldiers was 130. (2)

Today the number of brothers, novices and one postulant who were killed in action can be fixed at 52: 37 of them were killed in action, 15 were posted as missing.

These who were posted as missing in 1946 must be added to those killed in action, because no further information could be found after intensive research done by the tracing service.

In a first survey in 1950 on the casualties during the war, those posted as missing are not yet listed under the dead, because the difference of time was still too small and at least for some of them there could be hope, as many of past German soldiers were still in prisoner-of-war-camps in Siberia. (3)



A new list from 1969 containing all the brothers who had died in Germany since 1914 gives facts which can be quoted with great reliability. (4)

Most of the brothers were buried in normal military cemeteries, the great majority of them in Russia. Only the graves of six brothers can be fixed as sure,

because they were buried in official cemeteries for German soldiers cared for by the War Graves Commission. (5)

1 Archive FMS,Rome: 612. H. 009: Renseignement sur le District de Furth

2 Pénible situation du district d'Allemagne. In Circulaire IX (1940-1947), p. 411

3 Familienchronik (Bulletin of the German Province), Number 3, March 1950 There one can find short notes concerning the brothers insofar as this was possible because of the little information which was available. Also some parts of the letters are being quoted.

4 Provincial Archive in Furth: „Our deceased Brothers, Novices, Postulants and Juniors of the German province“, 1969

5 Lists of the War Grave Commission. In: [www.volksbund.de/Graebersuche](http://www.volksbund.de/Graebersuche)



The youngest of those killed in action was the postulant Theodor Oster, just 18 years old, when he lost his life in Russia. Three of them were 19. The oldest one, Brother Herman van Look, who died in a military hospital in Germany, was 48. The rest were all between 20 and 35.



It is a pity that there are so few written testimonies left from these brothers in form of letters sent home from the different battlefields. Some quotations may allow a brief insight into the feelings and thoughts of these brothers:

Brother Luitpold Korte wrote in a letter on 16th September 1942, „I have experienced that God gives his grace also here in the horror of the front line in Russia, a land where it seems that God is totally forgotten.“ He was killed at the age of 28 by a Russian sniper.

And Brother Ansbertus Schäfer who was infantry lieutenant, wrote in 1943 in his last letter from Russia, „Being so close to the enemy every single

day is a precious gift. I am very confident that my heavenly mother will not abandon myself and my men in the dark hours.“



*Soldierbrothers in leave in Furth*

## **VII. Marist Brothers in Europe**

### **1. World Congress of former Marist Pupils in Brussels**

Internationality was one of the main themes of the General Conference held in September (2013) at the Hermitage. Here in our own Province there are new and stronger efforts for closer cooperation among the schools and teachers from the various countries. The Education Conference to take place in June in Spain should contribute towards this. Against this background, it is certainly important to point out that with regard to internationality, over a long period of time at the Level of the whole Institute, and with particular participation from the countries of our Province, many good things happened. The various topics of discussion at that time were brought to reality. It is to be hoped that we find the strength to build anew on the foundations laid at that time.

More than 500 former Marist pupils, delegates of their own countries, gathered from 12th to 19th August 1967 in Brussels for their Fifth World Congress. Under the direction of the Belgian Roger Schmitz, who as Vice-President was standing in for the ill President, and the Secretary André J. Cerise, supported by a comprehensive team the very varied program ran its course.

The presentations, the working groups and the various discussions took place in the Brussels Congress Centre which was bedecked with the papal flag and those of the participating countries. Mass was celebrated in the cathedral. On some afternoons buses were standing by for trips to the nearby Marist communities, beauty spots and works of art. Free time was used by the participants in lively exchanges of ideas of the many themes discussed we can highlight the following:

- European organizations must work differently from those in South America.
- The Association must concern itself with more than religious formation.
- The purpose and functioning of the Association must be disseminated in the schools.
- Former pupils who share the same profession should keep in contact.
- The whole family of former pupils should be included in the Association.
- Each country should provide contributions to the Association Magazine, *Unitas*.
- Regional bulletins should be distributed more widely.
- In each school a clubroom should be set up as a centre for formation and leisure activities.

Serious attention deserves to be given to this motion of the President: „The former Marist students must as quickly as possible find ways to be Mission volunteers in the developing countries. I suggest for the time being for a period of two years.“

There was also a special moment to remember the founder of the Christian Youth Worker Movement, Cardinal J. Cardijn († 24th July 1967) whose work in many respects remains an excellent example.

Brother Hildebald Müller, representative of the German Marists, on being asked what impression the Congress had made on him, replied, „The other countries were very keen to establish contacts with the Germans. The public expressions of support for good causes cannot be praised sufficiently. Hopefully, at next year’s European Conference in U.K. we will be well represented.“ Brother Hildebald was accompanied by Mr. Sehleser, an EU official from Brussels, and the Rwandan ambassador in Bonn, his Excellency Muchigan.

Also, Cardinal Suenens from Brussels, a moderator at the Second Vatican Council, sent two messages to the participants at the Congress.

Source: Report in the magazine, Kontinente, 1967, No. 6

## **2. Marist Brothers in the service of Integration in a multicultural World in the former Yugoslavia**

The harmonious living together of Christians, Muslims and Orthodox is perceived by many in Western Europe as a problem, the solution to which is regarded by many in these countries to be one of the biggest challenges of the future for both Church and State. Our own Marist history is rich with examples of work in many areas of apostolate. But with the presence of the brothers in the former Turkish Empire from 1904 to 1918 and then in some of the ensuing States with the Provincial House in Constantinople, the brothers have shown in an exemplary way how Christians can live together with Muslims and Orthodox.

A particular witness to this can be found in the memoirs of Br. Hilaire Detraz which can only be found on the Internet at [www.bernard-meha.fr](http://www.bernard-meha.fr). Br. Hilaire (1902-1980) worked from 1922 to 1929 in Monastir, modern day Bitolj, a town in Macedonia which at the time was part of the State of Yugoslavia newly erected at the end of the First World War. Already, since 1905 the French brothers had been working in a school there at the invitation of the Lazarists, who had responsibility for the local parish. This school continued till 1929 when, for a variety of reasons which we cannot go into here, the brothers moved to Belgrade where they remained till 1940.

With a few excerpts from his memoirs we can let Br. Hilaire speak for himself about how to express the particular character or ethos of the school and, most importantly, how to establish the unique aspects of this special apostolate which, in view of the new direction that Marist Apostolic Life was taking, demonstrated an exemplary and modern approach. These admirable apostles of Champagnat were real pioneers who conducted their work with the mind of Champagnat in new ways. Today we would call it „Insertion“ where new communities see their future.

„In the town, there were many Macedonians who spoke Bulgarian, Greeks, Jews, Albanians and Romanians (and certainly also Turks). But there were few Serbs and even fewer Catholics.“ The brothers took over a school which had been run by the French since 1875 but which by this time was barely surviving. During the First World War the school found itself in the middle of the war zone and was destroyed. It was rebuilt in 1919.

On the particular apostolate of the brothers Br. Hilaire wrote, „All our undertakings were pursued with the greatest of prudence: above all there should be no show of zealotry or proselytism. The wearing of the Marist habit itself could have proved to be a provocation in the eyes of the Turks, Jews and Orthodox. But the brothers were never subjected to abuse on that

account. The very presence of the brothers alone was certainly a witness as was also the example of a conscientious and united community."

As religious we could not allow ourselves to be satisfied by simply teaching the ordinary secular subjects. There was no Religious Education on the timetable but there was provision for ethics.

For this, students were divided into two groups: the Christians, of whom the great majority were Orthodox, were instructed on the elements common to both Christians and Orthodox, while the other group were introduced to the ethical principles practiced by Jews and Muslims.

I personally was responsible for a course with non-Christians. The students were very attentive. At the beginning of one such course I was asked by one of the Turkish students:

„Why do you never talk about Jesus Christ?“ „Because none of you is a Christian or believer.“

„But we would like to learn about Jesus. Can't you tell us his story?“

„No, I am not allowed, because we may not recruit for our own faith. If I talk about Jesus then you shall go off home and repeat it. We would then be accused of trying to convert you.“

„But, Brother, we wouldn't say anything.“

„No, no, no! I know what will happen. The minute you are gone, the whole world will know. We promise to say nothing.“

„Are you prepared to swear to that? Yes, Brother.“

„Fine then. Be quiet and say nothing till I have finished.“

Finally, towards the end of his life while writing up his memoirs, it struck Br. Hilaire that the work of the brothers in these extraordinary circumstances was all part of God's providential plan. He saw in this, above all, work in the spirit of the Ecumenical Movement. He wrote, „In 1903 all the schools in France were closed by Combes. In this way he freed up many apostolic workers who could be put to service in other parts of God's vineyard. All those who sailed for Constantinople found a welcome and work at the very center of Orthodoxy. So they were able to preserve their vocation and open up pathways towards Church unity.“

And then he writes,

„An Institute must be able to do something for its future. It must unceasingly be renewing the scope of its mission as well as its, trailblazers '. It will die if new vocations do not enter its ranks. Even though the school in Monastir was situated in an apparently thankless area – there were never more than two or three Catholics – nevertheless, it gave to the Institute two converts who were attracted by the good example of a community stamped with zeal and unity.“

So much from the memoirs of Br. Hilaire, which hold for us a very interesting and important chapter of our Marist history.

The school which had been transferred to Belgrade in 1929 had to be closed in 1940 as a result of the turmoil following the tragic events of the Second World War. There were no attempts later on to establish a Marist foundation in Yugoslavia or in those places which followed it as part of the artificially created communist State. Why not?

The particular work of the brothers in this area should be looked at in a new light. This short piece could be the first step in that direction. Marist schools as privileged places of integration of religions and cultures as was once the case? It' s worth thinking about!



### 3. Marists in Belgium during World War I

#### 3.1. Life in Mouscron

In the Marist history of Belgium, the year 1914 marks a deep break. The consequences of the occupation by German troops and the ongoing battles in West-Flanders influenced life in many Marist houses and brought about profound changes and great burdens and problems. Brothers were called up and some lost their lives on the battlefields, like brother Emile-Francois, who after being involved in the battle of the Marne was killed near Verdun, according to the „Annales“ of Warneton. Others left the country. Germans and then in 1918 Allies occupied schools. Although lessons were still going on anyhow, serious disturbances and losses were common. It is a pity that the resources about this difficult time are very poor. In the archives of the former Marist province of Belgium in Brussels-Linthout, the „Annales“ of many of the houses are kept, but not of all of them. But unfortunately, the statements on events during the war are infrequent and brief. The reason may be that the annalists were frightened to record political matters. So only in the „Annales“ of three houses some more detailed notices on special incidents during this time are to be found. These are Verviers, Mouscron (Centre) and Warneton.

Reflecting the situation in the other houses, the notices in the „Annales“ of Mouscron shall be quoted. They offer a realistic and concise overview of the dramatic events and problems in a Belgian Marist house, situated in the frontline. It is likely that in other houses similar events occurred and this report is typical for others:

#### 1915–1916: Return from holidays with nothing special happening.

From time to time aeroplanes disturb the attentiveness of the children. Every morning at 9 o'clock school soup is served. In the first days of January, while we were just saying the Office, a German officer („officier boche“), accompanied by four soldiers, entered to confiscate 500 bottles of wine for the German troops. We got a receipt, which could be cashed in later. They also took over our playground. After this visit we hid our many hens in order to rescue them from the „boches“.

This year we were able to increase the number of pupils from 435 to 465.

#### 1916–1917

We are obliged to give up the wool from our mattresses. We hire a field, to assure our potato harvest. Beer is no longer available. We are no longer

able to do the supervision on Sundays because of lack of fuel and light. We try to get things from the farmers: corn, eggs... Sometimes gas is lacking, so we must restrict the lighting. To get wine for mass we have to ask the commandant.

### 1917-1918

We begin lessons, although some of the parents are frightened to send their children because of the threats of danger. 200 meters from our house a munitions dump is being installed. During night bombs are falling in the area, but God has saved us, he has heard the prayers we are sending to him. In brother Angonius we are having a good lightning conductor. Some German soldiers have quartered in our property, but not yet in classrooms, nor in the house. We lament the death of two of our pupils, who were killed by bombs near the station. Everywhere we grow something. Each Thursday, when we have a day off, we go looking for food. Doing this we also get into the frontline, where many troops are passing, but we are always under the protection of Providence. On our property, all animals are gone except the dog.

### 1918-1919

We are not able to start lessons in January, because we ran out of food and the Germans have occupied all the classrooms. We are threatened to leave the house, but the Allies free us on 18th October. We spend eight days in the cellar. Mouscron is bombarded for three hours. On 29th October we start lessons again, then the armistice takes place on 11th November.

Step by step we settle down. Irish troops occupy our property and the study. The playground is occupied by horses and mules. Also English troops are arriving and claiming food. A group of German prisoners of war has to repair during eight days the damages done by the English. We get compensation for the quartering of the troops

### 3.2. Fate of some Belgian brothers during World War One.

Some few remarks on the situation and on some events during the war are related in the „Annales“ of the house in Verviers. Also, the remarks on the fate of some brothers give evidence to the way brothers were affected by the war. The following notes also may be typical for similar situations and fates of other brothers:

#### *1914–1918: Dispersion of the community*

On 4th August the Germans occupied the town at 10 o'clock. Every day new troops arrived in big contingents and quartered in the college (Saint-Francis-Xavier) Classrooms, festivity hall and all other usable rooms were occupied by soldiers. The sheltered parts of the schoolyard and some of the classrooms gave shelter to the horses.

When on 15th October all persons belonging to the Allies were asked in public notices to appear in front of a commission to be controlled, the French brother Charles-Gabriel who was excepted from military service thought it clever to leave Belgium.

With the help of Mr. Maystädt, a dentist, he was able to pass the frontier without problems. He went aboard a ship for England at Vlissingen. There he passed some months. Being classified as suitable for military service by a recruiting commission he had to go to France and had to work in the administration until the end of the war.

Brother Joseph-Liguori left the Congregation, which he already had been planning for a long time, and escaped to Britain.

Only one brother remained in the house, brother Urban-Joseph, who taught the first class. In the other classes of the beginners either priests, fathers or laypeople were teaching. These many changes had a bad impact on the studies of the children.

Poor brother Emil-Francois, who since the beginning of the war was called up to the infantry regiment 310 in Dunkerque, had his baptism of fire on 20th August and had to suffer all the hardships and privations of the precipitate retreat to the Marne. After being wounded by a shell in the battle of the Marne, he was brought to Brittany and got nursing there. After his recovering, he was ordered to the 8th Infantry regiment.

This regiment occupied in March 1915 the section of the front Les Eparges south of Verdun. There the good brother was killed on the field of honour for France.

This happened during a heavy bombardment, when the trenches were levelled and filled. The survivors reported that several of their comrades had been killed and were buried under this Flood of iron. The letters, sent to him by his parents and his confreres were sent back with the remark "missing".

For a week a glimmer of hope was maintained, but finally one had to submit to the facts.

Brother Emile had been a member of the community from 1911 until 1914. He was an excellent religious with a solid piety and gifted with a happy character, joyful and open, esteemed by his pupils. His name is on the board of honour of teachers and pupils of Saint Francis-Xavier's, who died for their native country.

Brother Alfons-Adrien, who had been called up to the ambulance service was shifted to the military hospital in Bergues (Nord) and spent there a year. Then he was added to a group of orderlies and spent the second year in different sections on Oise and Somme. Then he was transferred to the Orient. The boat left the harbour of Marseille on 1st January 1917 direction Saloniki. Then they moved into the area of Mostar in Serbia. Having spent there 16 months he returned to France and was deployed in different sections of the front of Verdun. After the armistice, his regiment marched to the Rhine to occupy part of the bridgehead of Koblenz on the right side of the Rhine. In March 1919 he was discharged."

The example of Brother Emile-Francois may be mentioned as representative of all the Belgian brothers who were killed during the war. We must not forget these brothers, and this article should be seen as an opportunity to recall their memory. May they rest in peace when they are united with the German brothers who also shared their tragic fate in this terrible event of world history.



