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*«In the different countries and cultures where we are active in the apostolate, we keep up to date our knowledge of the Founder, of the first Brothers, and of the history of the Institute, so that we can maintain, deepen, and develop our spiritual heritage».*

Const. and Stat. 164.2, p. 113

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Marist Note-books, of which this in the first issue, intend to make known our latest findings in the research of our origin and on those things which characterize us as Marist Brothers. They propose to be a means of divulging the results of these findings and of publishing the documentary sources. The reader can thus find food for thought, form his own opinion and draw his own conclusion. As far as the authors are concerned, they will be encouraged in their efforts, knowing that they are accomplishing a real apostolic task.

The appearance of the Marist Notebook will not be at fixed periods. Each issue presents three distinct parts: general information, study papers, and the publication of documents hitherto unedited.

The publication will make known the present works on research into the history of our origins, on our spirituality, and, in a general way, on all that relates to our common heritage. This section is open to all those Brothers who are keen to share interesting material for our Institute.

The second part puts together the written essays, the outcome of particular research. The themes will be chosen and developed by authors, under their responsibility.

The third part will be for the publication of the writings of Our Founder, with the exception of his letters, already published. The documents will be presented, like his letters, with the same critical approach. They could, in due course, be gathered into one volume like that of "The Letters of M. Champagnat".

These Note-books are to be printed simultaneously in four languages: English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. In this way, a greater number of our Brothers could draw from the fountain of our spirituality. We remain open to all suggestions that will lead to an improvement of the presentation and content of this Marist Notebook.

With the hope that this undertaking, which begins at the close of Champagnat year, may be blessed with success and will continue to flourish, thanks to the collaboration of all, we express our brotherly sentiments.

Roma, 6th June, 1990

*The General Council*



# INFORMATION

## OUR ARCHIVES

Br. Paul Sester

As we begin these Essays in which there are continual references to our archives, it would be normal to present them not only as we have them today, but also in such a way as to show how they have evolved over the 167 years of their existence. In truth, giving their history is not an easy task — they are like good servants who do their work in a hidden manner, without drawing attention to themselves. Now and again we are reminded of them by the odd allusion in a report, by the beginning of a new branch in the archives, by some accident which wipes out a whole section.

So what I want to do is to examine certain events in our history which have enriched the archives from time to time, or have led to their loss. So as not to forget important events, and also to avoid going into excessively detailed research, I have limited myself to examining the various stages chronologically, though occasionally I have had to take some event further in time and then go back again to a new start.

**1822**

Obviously, the founder of our archives is Fr Champagnat himself. From 1822 onwards, with the sudden arrival of eight postulants at the same time, he started a register which he was to continue for the rest

of his life, in which he noted the names of the postulants, their age, where they came from, what level of education they had, whether they had a "certificate of good conduct", and the amount of money they brought, noting how much remained to make up the 400 fr demanded of them. We can see in this register, as does Fr Coste (OM1, 60-61), the beginnings of our archives. The successors of the Founder kept this register going till 10th February 1848; it is still in our archives and is a source of much information which we do not find elsewhere.

## 1829

Seven years later, 1829, sees the start of another stage of the archives. We read in Br. Avit (AA, p. 90) "up till this year, there had been no register of taking of the Habit nor of emission of vows. To fill this gap, the V. Founder began three registers: one for taking the Habit, the second for temporary vows, and the third for perpetual vows. As he met each Brother, he asked him to sign into the registers, the notice of his taking the Habit, of his temporary vows, and of his perpetual profession". When the Founder began these registers, was it his intention to start an official archive? Who knows? The fact is that they have come down to us, and are among the most precious of the documents we have for the history of our beginnings.

## 1836

What follows shows clearly that Fr Champagnat did have the idea of leaving written documentation behind him for future generations. In the preface to his "Biographies" (English version: "Our Models in Religion") Br. Jean Baptiste states that even before 1837, Fr Champagnat had told him that it was important to write down, for the benefit of those who were to come "what we do and what we say in our time" (op. cit. p. XX). The avowed aim was "to edify the Brothers of the future, and to serve as a rule for them". It would seem that he was already looking forward to his far-off successors, to us.

He is even more explicit in a letter which he sent in 1836 or 7 to the "founders of our establishments", in which he says, "We would like to have a brief history of the setting up of the Brothers' establishment in your parish/town, of the improvements that have been made, and of the names of benefactors. We would be very pleased to have this information from you with a view to keeping it in the archives of our principal house as well as in each individual house..." (Letters of Fr Champagnat, 1, p. 185).

Towards the end of 1836, he began also to make copies in a notebook of all the administrative letters which he had to write as part of his work as head of the group (op. cit. p. XXXVII-XXXVIII).

Before finishing this section, I think we should salute the realism of the Founder in the way he began our archives, unlike certain other people, who, through humility, and not wishing to draw a veil over divine intervention, saw fit to destroy personal documents (cf. OM1, pp. 27-32). Fr Champagnat was of the opinion that God works through the agency of man. So the preservation of our archives should be for us an important task, even more so since it goes back to the very beginnings of our Congregation.

### 1856

This is not to say that the archives have not had their ups and downs since their inception. On the one hand, they have had to put up with various changes in the location of the Generalate; on the other, there have been times when they have been enriched or impoverished by circumstances, or by the people who used them. In the preface to his *Life of the Founder*, Br. Jean Baptiste states: "The documents which make up this life have not simply been found lying around. They are the fruit of fifteen years hard work, and have come to us from:

1° the Brothers who have lived with Fr Champagnat... these Brothers have given their contribution in writing...

2° ...

3° the writings of our good Father, the mass of letters he wrote to the Brothers and to others... We have found precious information in a great number of the letters written to our holy Founder by the Brothers and by all sorts of other people..." (*Life*, 1856, pp. XVI-XVII).

There is no doubt that this enriched our archives, but not as much as one might think; of the notes written by the Brothers, none of the originals remain. Did the author himself destroy them after using them, on the pretext that sufficient has been preserved in the text he made up from them, seeing that this was the reason for writing them in the first place? It is not impossible that this is what happened. The same thing applies to his own personal notes, of which nothing remains but a few fragments... His death came on him quite suddenly, and he did not have the time to destroy everything himself. In addition, he had not yet finished his "*Meditations on the Incarnation*" — on the day of his death, he was still correcting the proofs (Circ. IV p. 303). In this case, what motive did he have for getting rid of his material so quickly, when, barely two months after his death, Br. Louis Marie asked in a Circular that the

Brothers who had documents on the life of the deceased should send them to him; this would indicate that he did not already have the information contained in personal papers. Another point: the documents which he was able to gather, and quite numerous they were, have come down to us only in the form of copies in notebooks. Is it not strange that we do not have the original of any of the many letters written by Br. Jean Baptiste? It would seem that Br. Amphiloque had some at least of these documents when he wrote the life of Br. Jean Baptiste in 1917, since he quotes from letters of three Brothers. Perhaps it was he who transcribed the documents we have in the notebooks, with the margin almost half the width of the page. The conclusion we must draw is that our forebears considered the content of the document to be more important than the document itself.

### 1858

After this digression, I will get back to the chronological sequence, to the year 1858, when the headquarters of the Institute was transferred from Notre Dame de l'Hermitage to St Genis Laval. In his "Abrégé des Annales" Br. Avit states: "During this transfer, many things went astray. The archives suffered very much, and a certain number of important documents, official letters, reports of visits, etc... were lost. This is to be regretted" (Mss. Bk 6, p. 507). It would have been even more regrettable if we had had to count among these losses, various documents directly concerned with Fr Champagnat, such as letters — we do know of the disappearance of at least some of them.

### 1860

In my opinion, one of the more important events in the history of our archives is the starting of a register of the minutes of the General Council. The first we have begins in 1860, when Br. Louis Marie took over the reins of government, although he was at that time only Vicar General. The register is entitled: "Council of the Rev. Br. Superior General". Register it is, though it is actually no more than a thick notebook, 21.30 cms by 17, containing 164 pages, of which only the first 85 have been used; it comes to an abrupt end, like a child's exercise book with something he did not want to continue, with the date and the first words: "Session of 25th January 1876". Since the problem here does not directly affect the history of the archives, I leave it aside for the moment.

The summaries are very succinct, with no signature at all in any of the entries. As an example of the style, we give here the beginning of the minutes of the first session:

Session of the 12th October 1860

Personnel of the Mother House

Director: Br. Chrysogone, Assistant  
Procurator: Br. Anobert  
SubDirector: Br. Marie Clement  
1st class of the Noviciate: Br. Placide  
2nd ditto: Br. Euthique  
3rd ditto: Br. Augustinus  
4th ditto: Br. Gatien

School ("Ecole de Reserve")

1st Class: Br. Tite  
2nd ditto: Br. Constant

Personnel of the Hermitage

Rev. Br. François, SupGen, is asked to undertake the direction of the house.  
Econome: Br. Theophile  
1st Class: Br. Sylvestre  
2nd ditto: Br. Arcade

Visitors

Brs Avit, Aquilas, Callinique

Various appointments

Breteuil: Br. Marie Jubin  
Lavalla: Br. Vincent and Egesippe  
Lorette: Brs Ismael and Bertuin

Boarding School Economes

In accordance with Art. II, Chap. XI, of the 1st part of the Constitutions, the Council decided that there should be an econome appointed in the following houses: Neuville, St Didier sur Chalaronne, Valbenoite, Charlieu, Breteuil.

The following appointments were made: Neuville: Br. Conrad

la Cote

Valbenoite

(This is the end of the report of this first session)

As another example of the style of the minutes, the following gives some idea of the details dealt with by the General Council at the start of Br. Louis Marie's period of office:

- “1. Br. Jean Baptiste will be in charge of preparing the kitchen book.
2. Care must be taken to see that the stockfish is de-salted and well cooked. The healthiest method of preparing it will be chosen”.

(This is the complete entry for this session).

Despite such petty detail, particularly at the beginning, I must stress the importance of these registers, which, unfortunately with gaps, continue to the present day, and give us a rich source of information for a serious history of the Institute.

## 1867

In a short Circular dated 19th July 1867, Br. Louis Marie recalls the death of Br. Pascal, AG, which had taken place on the same day one month previously, and asks the Brothers to send him any letters they have and other information that they can give about the deceased, so that Br. Jean Baptiste, who was writing his “Biographies”, could add that of this Brother. We only have to read the notice on Br Pascal (B1, pp. 276-330) to see that the Brothers were generous in their answer to this appeal. But today we must admit that not one of these letters from the Brothers has come down to us, only some personal notes of Br. Jean Baptiste. This once again shows us the small value that was placed at the time on preserving original documents, as opposed to preserving their content.

## 1870

Three years later there was an event of a different nature, which, although political, had an effect on our archives. After the disaster at Sedan, the whole of France was waiting for invasion, and there was no opposition to the taking over of large houses to billet soldiers. And so, on the 13th October 1870, “the soldiers who were billeted on us arrived at the Mother House. The Brothers of the house took refuge in the Hermitage, with only a few older Brothers remaining to look after the house... All the furniture of the house was brought for storage to the chapel, which, with the museum, the library, and the Superior General’s quarters, was exempt from requisition” (‘Short History of the Province of St Genis, pp. 15-16). Br. Avit confirms this, and adds that in this transfer, in which almost all the Brothers took part, there was “a certain inevitable pellmell, in the course of which a part of the archives went missing” (AA, Bk 7, p. 654). Our historian this time does not express his regret, but the way he mentions the archives shows that the event touched him deeply.



## 1876

When the soldiers finally left the house, "everything was found to be in a state of dirty disorder" (Brief History, p. 15). However, everything was gradually restored to what it had been before, thanks to the reparations for war damage granted by the State. However, the development of the Institute soon required some reorganization. And so we find, in the minutes of the Session of 16th October 1876 of the General Council: "A report was made on the necessity of organizing the infirmary on the second floor of the west wing, so that the rooms of the Br. Assistants, the Secretariate, the Procurator's office, the archives and the library can be arranged on the first floor". To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that there is talk of a specific place for the archives, even if the exact location is not specified, nor what Brother was directly responsible for them; doubtless it was the Br. Secretary General, even if the Rules of Government of 1854 do not mention this.

## 1881

However that may be, someone had to look after them for a good dozen years, and, in the use he made of them, he enriched them considerably; we are talking, of course, of Br. Avit, well known as the author of the Annals. In the session of 12th March 1880, the General Council acceded to his request, made on grounds of illhealth, to be relieved of his duties as Assistant General, responsible for the Province of Bourbonnais, which the preceding General Chapter had put him in charge of a little more than three years previously, on the 15th August 1876. His intention was certainly not to be able to do nothing, but to do something he had always wanted to do, since he had been appointed Visitor in 1859. He recalled that on the 12th November 1860, the General Council had made the following resolution: "7. — The Br. Visitors are responsible for preparing the Book of Annals in each house. To this end, they will bring all the notes they can to the Mother House, where these books will be prepared by a Brother appointed to edit them" (Register, 1. p. 11).

On the 14th November of the following year, the same Council decided that: 5. — The Visitors will draw up the annals of each house for the year starting from their previous visit. A Brother from the Mother House will be charged with asking the local Directors to furnish a brief history of the establishment from its foundation up to 1861" (id. pp. 27-28).

This, without doubt, is at least part of the mass of documents gathered in the space of ten years, whose loss he had noted in 1870, a loss which he was led to report not simply because his interest lay in this

direction, but also because he had been largely responsible for gathering all this material. But what is the use of lamenting losses? In order to make up, once he was freed from other responsibilities, "he travelled for two or three months of the year, through areas that he had been through before, going from one house to another, and gathering up here and there the documents which, added to his extraordinary memory, would serve as a basis for the Annals of each house of the Institute. When he had amassed a huge stock of notes, he shut himself up in his room, and, with the help of his secretaries, started to put them in order, giving himself totally to the patient, careful, persistent, work of editing them all. It is hard to visualize the pile of notebooks he has left as a witness to his immense work — the general Archives of the Institute and those of some 600 individual houses, some of which had been closed" (Biographies. vol. 2 p. 7). According to the dates he put at the start of each set of Annals, the first to be done is that of Mornant, begun on 21st April 1881. Two more followed in the same month: Duerne, begun on the 27th, and Aveize, on the 30th. During the next months, fourteen others followed: St Genis d'Argentiere on the 1st; Ste Foy d'Argentiere, 2nd; St Laurent de Chamousset, and St Romain de Popey, 3rd; Villecheneve 5th; Bully, 9th; St Forgeaux, 11th; Thizy, 12th; Cours, 15th; La Clayette, 19th; Varennes sous Dun, 21st; Monsols 25th; Tranayes, 28th; Matour, 29th. I have given this list in detail to show his method — of grouping the houses together by region. This confirms what we are told by his biographer, that he went to all the places to gather the information. At the same time as he was doing these Annals, he started also his «Summary of the Annals», in 1884 — this history of the Institute starting with the family of the Founder, in 1775, and coming up to 31st May 1891. It consists of 8 thick notebooks, totalling 860 pages, and another 24 pages of footnotes. On the 31st December 1891, he was still working on the annals of Bizonnes, when, according to his biographer, "towards the end of the month of December last (1891), there appeared the first symptoms of a serious illness" (op. cit. p. 11), and on the 7th February 1892, his earthly life came to an end about 2 in the afternoon.

The work he has left us, still unpublished except for a part of the Summary, astounds us by its sheer size and by the application he put into it for over ten years. It is not perfect, and there are quite a number of mistakes, above all in dates, but how can these be avoided when, as normal in writing a history of beginnings, one has to rely on the memory of old men because no one thought to write things down at the time? Obviously the houses of the Province of the North, which, for him, were hard to visit, do not get the same treatment as the others. It is easily seen that the annals of these houses were not written by Br. Avit, at



least not by him alone, but mainly by Br. Marie Ferdinand (Nury Ambroise), a Brother of Viviers, who, at the age of 63, left Aubenas in 1888 to go to St Genis to help the historian. Did he go to visit the places himself to gather the information? We do not know, but we have traces of correspondence with Brothers of the Province, particularly with Br. Sigisbert, Master of Novices at Beaucamps. In the Province of Bourbonnais we have a similar situation, where a Brother whose name we do not know took upon himself the task of continuing the Annals of Br. Avit up to 1903.

In finishing this note, I must point out that we will never know the extent of our indebtedness to Br Avit. Apart from the Annals, he has also left us many precious documents which he used himself. If our archives have for the majority of the houses then in existence, a more or less complete file from their foundation up to 1880, is this not due at least partly to Br. Avit? The fact is that most of the documents he quotes from are still to be found in our archives.

## 1886

Br. Avit was working on the annals of the Province of ND de l'Hermitage when, on the 2nd February 1886, Br. Theophane, SG, published his Circular announcing the introduction of the Cause of Beatification of Fr Champagnat (Circ. VII, p. 254). The archives were to be used to the full, especially those dealing with the Founder, and they would now be enriched with further documentation. In the Circular we find: "1. I ask the Brothers who have had the happiness of knowing the Founder, or who have heard about him from the the first Brothers or from other persons, to put in writing what they have heard... 2. Any Brother who has anything written by Fr Champagnat is asked to send it to me. The Brothers are also asked to let us know of any other person, clerical or lay, who has such documents..." (op. cit. pp. 256-257). Over and above this, the Superior General wrote a circular to the priests who came from Lavalla: "Permit me, Rev. Father, to appeal to your kind help in sending us notes on our holy Founder. Memories of your childhood and of your families will, no doubt, bring back something to you about the life of our Founder, or of some of the things he did when he was curate in your parish of Lavalla. I would be very grateful to you if you would let us know of any traditions about him among the Catholic families of the area" (RCLA, vol. VIII, no. 9216). It is certain that at this time many documents were added to those already in the archives, and perhaps for the first time, were carefully catalogued. The writings of the Founder were transcribed into books, some of them more than once, for we have four

different copies of these books containing more or less the same documents. The notices received from Brothers and others are added in. Apart from those of the first Brothers, collected in 1886, the originals have not survived. As for Fr Champagnat's own writings, we can say definitely that from this time on there have been no further losses, on the contrary, there have probably been additions of letters and other writings, but it is impossible to say definitely which ones, because the tragedies that were to come changed the whole situation.

### 1903

The effects that the year 1903 had on an Institute too centred on French territory are well known. On the 3rd April, the house of St Genis was notified that within three months all those living there had to be out. To find a place of refuge, to acquire a house in a foreign land, to prepare this house, to move the whole administration of an Institute of 7000 members — and all this in the space of 93 days! Small wonder if those concerned were thrown into disarray! In conditions like this, moving house is as bad as a fire. Objects of some value were given for safe keeping to trustworthy people, sometimes handed over entirely. As for the archives, they were divided into what was to be taken away, and what was to be burned — we are told that the burning lasted for a number of days. How interesting it would be today to have those documents which were thought to be compromising at that time! However, it is no use having vain regrets, and we should be happy that essential papers were brought along by the General Administration and were able to survive in some sort of storage before the organization of the new house.

### 1917

The dust was able to settle up till 1916, as I cannot see anything during this period which would cause any problems. Then from 1916 there was the beginning of the preparations for the celebration of the Centenary of the Institute — an occasion for a return to the history of the past, beginning with consultation of the archives. It would have been good to have them all to help in drawing up, in Vol XIII of the Circulars, the complete list of all the Brothers who had died since the beginning, the list of all the establishments arranged by Provinces, and above all the chronology, which for fifty years was to be practically the only guide to our history. It must be said that the archives themselves are never mentioned.

## 1921

The same thing happened with the publishing of a new popular biography of the Founder by Mgr Laveille, which was brought out by Téquui during 1921. On 2nd March 1918, "The Superior General put the motion, and the Council unanimously agreed to the proposal of Mgr Laveille, Vicar General of Meaux, who had the idea of writing for us a popular Life of Ven Fr Champagnat, about 500 8vo pages, to cost about 8000 francs" (Minutes of the Gen Council, vol 7, p. 313). The voluminous correspondence brings out the fact that the writer used the documents furnished for the cause of beatification, and also the writings of the Founder. The Brothers were prudent enough to send him one of the volumes of copies of the writings, but as he came to the end of his work, he wanted at least to see some of the originals. In spite of the distance, and the fact that they had to cross from one country into another, they were sent to him. It would appear that they were duly returned, as there is no sign of any demand being made for them later.

## 1948

After the war, with the coming of Br. Léonida, a new era began in the history of our archives. They are brought out of the cupboard and begin to take their place in our organization. In the notes for the Annals of the Motherhouse, made between August 1948 and January 1959, the annalist notes his arrival as follows, dated 4th August 1948: "Arrival of Br. Jules Victorin, appointed as archivist by Rev. Br. Léonida, SG, on 20th June. He came from Grugliasco (Italy) where he was working in the Second Noviciate" (op. cit. p. 1). As far as I know, this is the first mention of an archivist, an event which calls for a remark.

As to his exact work, nothing is laid down exactly. No doubt the first thing he had to do was to prepare a place for the archives, for, in the next year, we find in the same notes: "1949, Saturday, June 25th, — Over the last few days, we have emptied out Room No. 7 on the first floor, in the centre of the building, which is going to be our Archive Room. A whole stock of different documents will shortly arrive by special lorry from the old Mother House at Grugliasco (Italy)" (id. p. 9). The arrival of all this material is not noted. Does it consist of the whole content of the archives, which then were outside of the direct control of the General Administration for ten years, or only of a part of it? If a part, which part? We can see that in this area there was a lot of organization to do.

1955

Br. Jules Victorin does not tell us anything about the state in which he found the archives when he took over. We learn something about it through the researchers who had to consult them a few years later, round about 1955, such as Br. Louis Laurent, who was preparing his paper for the Diploma of Higher Studies in 1956. In his bibliography, the "General Archives of the Little Brothers of Mary", as he calls them, are mentioned with this remark: "They have been transferred a number of times... this explains why they have not been catalogued individually, or even classified to any large extent; in addition, the place in which they are kept now does not allow anything to be done except to pile them up" (op. cit. p. 11)! He reckoned that it would be impossible, if not quite useless for his studies to attempt even a rough classification, so he gives only brief references to their contents. Then in January 1955 he began a series of articles in the Bulletin of the Institute under the title "A Contribution to the beginning of historical studies on the origins of the Little Brothers of Mary". This scientific study achieved the aim announced in this title, on the one hand, and on the other, drew attention forcibly to the state of our archives.

At the same period, Fr Jean Coste SM went through our archives in view of preparing a work he was bringing out in collaboration with Fr Gaston Lessard, the "Marist Origins". Giving his sources, he speaks at length about our archives; he starts by giving a brief look at their history (OM1 pp. 60-61), then a brief inventory of what he found. It is clear that there was no systematic classification of the documents at the time. The Br. Archivist found the documents tied in bundles or in filing boxes, or he classified them himself in some manner, marking the contents of each file with a number in blue pencil — which can still be seen on many of them. It is certain that he had not the means of doing anything better, for he was definitely not lacking in enthusiasm for his work, as his activity shows. In fact, profiting from the chance he had, he did a lot of research on the family of the Founder, gathered information orally from some of the older Brothers, put together a whole crowd of articles for our different periodicals, particularly one series headed: "Our Archives", in which he gives a brief list of the documents, some of which he transcribes to illustrate what he was dealing with (BI XXII, pp. 381, 452, 524, 597). I cannot finish this section without mentioning the source list given by Br. Pierre Zind, in his "New Congregations of Teaching Brothers in France from 1800 to 1830" (pp. 527-529).

Thanks to these various works, the archives were coming to be open to the public, to such a degree that it was becoming more urgent to find

some way of letting them be used more easily. The new Generalate in course of construction at the time offered great hopes for the future.

In its meeting of 25th June 1960, the General Council decided to call Br. Fernando Luis Rey to work in the archives. He was just in time to prepare for the transfer to Rome, which took place in May and June of the following year. So it fell to him, under the direction of the Br. Secretary General, to instal the archives in the new quarters and the furniture put at his disposal. This was, for the time being, only temporary, because with the mass of the material, it was more than difficult to get a clear picture of the whole. So he took as his first task, the most urgent task, to prepare a card file for each document. For days on end, he was typing out the cards, identifying each document and summarizing its contents. Even if half of the cards were found later to be of little use, we cannot but praise the courage and devotion of the archivist.

### 1965

While he was still working on this project, the General Council decided that these precious documents would be better preserved by being copied on microfilm. So Br. Peter Hilary Provost, of the Province of Poughkeepsie, USA, was called to do this, a task that occupied a number of years. The result was 29 rolls of 32mm film, containing a mass of information on the Founder, his notebooks and registers, the History, particularly the complete series of the Annals of Br. Avit, not to mention the annals of the General Administration with the complete Minutes of the General Chapter up to and including the XVth of 1958. Several copies were made and distributed to those Provinces which asked for them, so that our Archives are no longer centralized solely in the Generalate.

### 1967

The need for classification was brought out more strongly by the requirements of consulting the archives which were beginning to be felt necessary in research on our origins. This was increased by the appearance of the "Marist Origins" by J. Coste and G. Lessard, as also by the presence in the Generalate of many Brothers pursuing courses of study, who wished to draw on our history for subjects for their theses. So when the term of office of the then Br. Archivist came to an end, this was a factor in the choice of his successor. The General Council called Br. Sean Hanary, Province of New Zealand, and he came to take up the position in December 1967. In a report he prepared some three years later, he gives a brief summary of the state of the archives. "In December 1967,



several of the General Council asked me to undertake the reorganization and the systematic classification of the archives. It was evident that there was an urgent need for this to be done, for the archives were not classified in any scientific fashion. Several valuable indexes had been set up, to help in finding some documents, but the archives in general were simply classified under broad headings, with no detailed cataloguing. The type of furniture left much to be desired, and almost all the available space was already taken up, which presented a real difficulty in view of the continual growth of the archival material.

The furniture was partially modified in order to use the space better, and to help to preserve the documents, as well as helping in their classification, and in facilitating research. Although the vertical system is not the most suitable for archives, we had to make the best use of what we already had...

Classification. There is no classification system which is the best for all archival systems. Certain basic principles and procedures must be taken into account, but each Archive has to work out its own system to give the best results. I visited a number of Archives of Religious Institutes and spoke to their curators, and was able to work out a system for our own archives which filled our own needs in our own situation.

Each of the more important documents has been classified in a separate file, so that there is no need to look through a number of documents for the one wanted, and so there is less danger of damage".

Actually, Br. Sean divided up the archives, after putting books, registers, etc to one side, into seven main groups: 1. The Founder; 2. History; 3. Administration; 4. Relations with other bodies; 5. Personnel; 6. The Provinces; 7. Finances.

All documents about 1. The Founder, have been classified in detail, as also 2. History and 5. Personnel, though for these last two continual up-dates are necessary. So, starting from this scheme, the basis of our classification is fixed, and it is sufficient to follow on the lines already drawn up in classifying the many documents in the remaining groups.

## 1974

Br. Alphonse Bertrand, of the Province of Levis, Canada, took over from 1974 to 1980. Research for the Vatican occupied a lot of his time, so that he was not able to carry out as much of his enormous task as he would have liked. The mass of documents about the Provinces makes up about half of the total archives, and was the object of a first rough sorting, but not of a detailed classification. It must be remarked that continual additions of new documentation do not make the work easier.

Among new acquisitions, I must mention, without being able to give precise dating, the archives of St Paul Trois Chateaux, a mass of documents containing such things as original documents of Francois Mazelier, dealing with the foundation of his Congregation and its union with ours, etc... This has been roughly classified, but the work of detailed cataloguing remains to be done.

## 1979

Despite all the work still to be done to make our archives completely accessible to researchers, a large part is already there. It became necessary to make sure that the original documents were preserved — some were beginning to suffer from continual handling. The letters of the Founder were most at risk, and they are the ones that merit preservation most. The situation was laid before the General Council, which decided at its Plenary Session of September-October 1979, to have these letters restored by the experts in the Vatican. Since then, researchers have been given photocopies to use, the original being preserved, though they may sometimes be shown in order to satisfy a certain pious curiosity, or to appease the doubts of a more meticulous researcher.

## 1985

With the General Chapter of 1985, we enter — once again! — into a new era, that of information technology. All of the administration is to be computerized, including the archives. After putting some sort of order into the most recently arrived documents, which were still in boxes, all cataloguing has been halted for the moment to enable all attention to be given to putting all the documents on computer. In this way the inventory and the classification can be done at the same time.

Two helpers have been appointed by the General Council to semi-permanent work in the Archives, to spend their days at this back-room task the end of which is still hidden under the mass of documentation. Up to now, some 20,700 records have been made, each one a single document. These are the documents dealing with the Founder (No. 1), and with the French Provinces (No. 60), which, apart from being the most complete in documents from the past, are also the object of most of the research being done at the moment.

Time, feeling for the methodology, and patience, are required to allow today's archivists to offer to the public an instrument for their research which is speedy and which works. This is the end that history leads us towards, and that we accept with good grace, with all its ups and downs, in the name of our predecessors, looking forward to a fruitful future.





# **MARIST STUDY CENTRE**

## **Province**

### **Rio de Janeiro**

Br. Luis Silveira

#### **1 - How it originated**

The idea of founding the Marist Study Centre was formulated by Br. Gentil Paganotto, the Provincial, along with members of his Council at a meeting 27 to 31 August, 1986, at Recanto Marista, Areias.

It has a Centre of its own, inaugurated on the 15 August, Champagnat Year 1989, at the following address:

Rue Aimorés, 2480/2 andar  
Bairro Santo Agostinho  
30.140 Belo Horizonte (MG)

It is being maintained by a group of volunteer Brothers and is open for participation, either temporary or permanent, to all the Brothers. It also serves the Marist mission.

#### **2 - The Aim of the Study Centre**

It is to bring about the possibility to deepen our Marist Life, so as to better discover our religious, spiritual, apostolic, and educational sources.

#### **3 - Function of the Marist Study Centre**

3.1. Organise and maintain the service of providing documentation about texts, audiovisuals that refer to:

Our Founder  
The Institute  
The Province of Rio de Janeiro

3.2 Establish a library and newspaper library on themes specifically Marist.

3.3 Promote systematic study of  
The Founder  
The history of the Congregation  
Marist Spirituality  
The Marist Brothers' Teaching  
Methods  
The History of Brothers in Brasil  
The History of the Province Rio de  
Janeiro.

3.4 To arrange retreats, courses,  
conferences on Marist themes.

3.5 Publish books and articles relat-  
ed to the life and mission of the  
Marist world.

3.6 Translate and spread informa-  
tion about the words and writings  
of the Marists.

3.7 Publish the biographies of the  
Brothers of the Province.

3.8 Collaborate with those who  
wish to delve into Marist studies  
and help them in their work of  
research.

3.9 Offer the Brothers informative  
material about:

The Founder  
The Institute  
Marist iconography

3.10 Collect and keep the histori-  
cal material of the Houses of the  
Province.

3.11 Remind the establishments of  
the importance of documenting their

history, of elaborating new materi-  
al and of using the productions and  
the services of the Centre.

3.12 Work with:  
The Provincial Commissions  
Other working units and publica-  
tions of the Provinces and of the In-  
stitute

3.13 Serve as a Memory Bank for  
the Province

3.14 Maintain close contacts with:  
The General Secretariat, Rome  
The Postulator General  
The Brothers who do research work  
Other centres of the same kind

#### **4 - Books published by the Marist Study Centre during the past 3 years (1986-1989)**

Fr. Pierre Zind, Vision Panora-  
mique de l'Histoire de l'Education  
en Europe, 1987.

Fr. Pierre Zind, Le Bienheureux  
Marcellin Champagnat et ses Petits  
Frères de Marie, 1988.

Fr. Pierre Zind, Suivant les Pas  
de Marcellin Champagnat, 1988.

Fr. Roque Plínio Loss, Biographie  
du Fr. Helvídio Loss, 1988.

Fr. Zeferino Falqueto, Biographie  
du Fr. José Antônio Batalha, pre-  
mier Mariste brésilien, 1988.

## **MARIST HERITAGE STUDY CENTRE** **Province** **of Western Mexico**

Br. A. Brambila

### **A new call**

In the first few months of the year 1989 letters were despatched to the Provincial Superiors of Central America, Ecuador, Central Mexico, Western Mexico and Venezuela, inviting them to send Brothers to take part in courses that CEPAM was organizing for the first time. They were informed that the courses would consist of three consecutive summer sessions and that the objective was to study as deeply as possible, the Marist spiritual heritage.

### **An enthusiastic response from the start**

The answer was not long in coming from various Provincials. There were 9 participants for the Summer of 1989: 2 from Central America, 2 from Venezuela, 1 from Central Mexico and 4 from Western Mexico. The work had good results; the atmosphere was excellent.

### **What CEPAM wants to become**

CEPAM is an organisation which has as its aim the study of the

spiritual Heritage of the Institute. The abbreviation is derived from the French name "Centre d'études du patrimoine spirituel mariste". One of the objectives of CEPAM is to organize courses during Summer. At the same time, it carries on its work as a centre for consultation and assistance, for the reading of documents, for giving courses on the heritage to the Novitiate, and for doing research into material received, research that eventually will find its way into the different archives.

### **Its origin**

CEPAM came into being through a reflection: We have a large number of written documents on Marcellin Champagnat, already published or as yet unedited. How to organize all this material and make it accessible to the Brothers? Where to do this work and who is to do it? What system, what methodology is to be used to achieve this end?

Acting on the statute 164.2, the Province of Western Mexico saw the necessity of creating a Centre that would collect all this material, a centre where people could come to pursue studies on our common heritage. The Province officially started the project and gave it the official name CEPAM in April 1989, regarding it as one of the Bicentenary projects. This was done in the city of Morelia, Michoacan, at the Novitiate.

### **For whom it is intended**

The obvious beneficiaries of CEPAM are naturally the Brothers of the Marist Northern Arc of America. The Provincials are invited to send people who later on can be the spreaders of Marist heritage in their own Provinces. It has been envisaged that the group of participants should not have more than 15 Brothers at a time, so as not to lose the richness of the interaction among the participants.

### **The objectives it tries to achieve**

— To know the Institute better and facilitate the study of Marist spiritual inheritance.

— To gather study material: documents, findings, lists.

— Make the transcribed documents accessible to the Brothers.

— Make easier the publication and the editing of documents, study papers, and commentaries which have been written.

— Make the Brothers conscious of the need for writing the history of Provinces.

— Present to the Brothers a physical and psychological milieu where they could develop their faculty of dialoguing with their Founder, Fr. Champagnat.

— Give rise to community effort to live together our love for Marcellin and for all things Marist, by making available opportunities to speak on such topics in a frank

manner, in full liberty, and at one's ease.

— Equip the Brothers to be the transmitters of Marist values.

— Start the writing of Brothers' Biographies.

— Take care to preserve the information regarding the deceased Brothers of the various Provinces so that they are mentioned regularly in the religious calendar.

### **How it works**

The work of CEPAM is based on a general understanding of intercommunication that could be explained as follows: All that I have discovered on the life of the Founder, however insignificant it may seem, I do not keep for myself alone. I must let it be known for the benefit of others. The work is therefore performed not only on a personal level, but also at a sharing level, by group interchanges.

The choice of studies, books, articles, essays on Marist themes is left to the initiative of each individual, taking care that participants have different themes. At the end of his studies each participant will let the group know the work he has done. The study of the documents takes places as follows: a general presentation, one's own personal analysis of the documents made known to the group, free exchange of views on the document under study.

### **Materials that are available**

CEPAM is in its early stages and is on its way up. At the moment it owns of a series of Marist publications: books, theses, a collection of Circulars, Bulletins of the Institute, FMS, biographical notes...

There are two computers with a total capacity of 60 mega. A fairly large number of files and transcribed documents are in memory and can be referred to as required. They are given in double column, with the original in French and the corresponding version in Spanish.

### **The pervading atmosphere at CEPAM**

It is to be understood that CEPAM is not only a place where Marist reading material is being gathered. It offers, especially, occasions of going back to the sources, and that irreplaceable personal experience that contact with the Founder brings.

From the very beginning a prayerful atmosphere has reigned, nurtured by progressive contributions concerning our common heritage. A fraternal spirit helps the participants to grasp more deeply things that are Marist. Manual work, little celebrations, and community gatherings are all there to vary the load of purely intellectual and brain-taxing pursuit. Fraternal encouragement gives a constant emulation in the work of research and its propagation.

## Looking ahead

As the «places» of meeting our Founder are so abundant, we should perhaps be obliged to split CEPAM into different domains or departments. Here are the possible divisions:

- Active or passive correspondence related to Founder.

- Diverse documents (civil and ecclesiastic Acts, homilies, resolutions, testimonials)...

- Studies on the Founder: Books, articles, theses.

- Rules.

- Biographies of the Brothers.

- Writings and pronouncements within the Institute (of Superiors General and General Chapters).

- History of the Institute and that of the Provinces.

- Historical context (social, cultural, spiritual and geographical context of different periods).

As part of a world-wide project, CEPAM is thinking of organising at The end of the 3 Summer sessions, a group pilgrimage to the Hermitage.

## Our fondest hope

It is hoped that study centres of this kind will spring up in all parts of our Institute. During the holidays, or on special occasions, such centres could render excellent service to Brothers desirous of maintaining, deepening, and developing their knowledge of the Founder and of the Institute.

Without a shadow of doubt, the necessary complement to these local centres would be the creation of a Centre of Studies at a higher level. This would be in Rome, which, moreover, would be a centre of co-ordination, advice and animation.

# STUDIES'

## FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S CONFESSOR

Bro. Gabriel Michel

### I. The pieces of the puzzle

In his 1856 biography of Fr. Champagnat, Bro. Jean-Baptiste speaks of the confessor who “abandoned” his penitent, who was being criticized and calumniated by many of his confrères (English trans., 1947, p. 119).

In the mind of our biographer there is an implicit criticism of this mysterious personage who allowed himself to be “prejudiced by false reports” (*idem*) and who was “tired of all the rumors he had heard” (not in English translation).

We even get the impression of a hard-hearted man, since Marcellin “besought him to continue to direct him, but in vain, so he was obliged to seek another confessor” (*idem*).

Evidently, if the man in question was still living in 1856 and read the book, he would not have found it very flattering. As we will see, that seems to be very much the case.

In his passion for the truth, Bro. Jean-Baptiste shows enough insensitivity or cynicism for us not to be too surprised at the way he pillories several of his contemporaries. In his first edition (of which he was very quickly obliged to rewrite four pages) he speaks without equivocation of Fr. Rebod's heavy drinking (he knew the man had been dead for thirty years)

and of Fr. Courveille's moral problems (he thought he was dead, but in fact he was still very much alive).

Nor does he hesitate to criticize, in chapter eighteen of the first part, "Father P", whom all the Brothers and many other people could easily recognize as Fr. Pompallier. But since he knows that the latter is still alive, he makes sure to soften his remarks.

In the case of Fr. Champagnat's confessor, he may have thought that nobody was going to investigate to find out just who that was. He gives the impression that this old story from the 1820's concerns someone with whom the Founder had no further contact after this incident.

But in fact, he uses expressions which not only can be cross-checked, as we will soon see, but which are confirmed by other testimony. Let us compare Bro. Jean-Baptiste's text with a quotation from one of Fr. Champagnat's letters.

Bro. Jean-Baptiste's text

As the Father never undertook anything without consulting his confessor, he was extremely grieved to find himself blamed by one who had hitherto been his friend and guide (*idem*)

Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Claude Duplay (1832)

It can truly be said that the Little Brothers of Mary exist because of Father Jean-Louis Duplay, your brother. I would never have undertaken this work, still less continued it, if he had not formally approved it. (Letter 26)

This letter of Fr. Champagnat's is addressed to Fr. Claude Duplay, who became parish priest of Marlhes after the death of Fr. Alliot. The Marist Brothers left Marlhes in 1821 because the school building was so unhealthy. Fr. Alliot died in 1822 and Fr. Claude Duplay made a few minor improvements in the building, which Fr. Champagnat agreed to reopen in 1832. It was in this context that he wrote the letter in question. He speaks first of all about the problems of the early foundational years of the Little Brothers of Mary, and then he jumps to 1824 and subsequent events. The allusions are very clear, even if he gives no specific dates.

The second part of the letter tells us that Jean-Louis Duplay is a friend of Fr. Dervieux, the parish priest of St. Pierre in St-Chamond. The latter had just radically changed his opinion of Fr. Champagnat and now he could also help Jean-Louis Duplay to understand better the man he himself had so badly misunderstood for four or five years.



Jean-Louis Duplay was a professor and then economé at the major seminary of Lyons from 1817 to 1830. Whenever he returned to Jonzieux, he could easily stop in St-Chamond to visit Fr. Dervieux, the parish priest of St. Pierre. It was no doubt there that Marcellin went to visit him, even though Chausse, the biographer of Jean-Louis Duplay, situates these conversations in Lyons.

Even if Fr. Dervieux had told Jean-Louis Duplay — as I presume he did — in 1823-23, "Stay away from that Champagnat. He's the sort of man who insists on doing everything his own way"; he could now see clearly that he was wrong, and that the new bishop, De Pins, who had been well informed by Fr. Courbon, the vicar general, had complete confidence in Champagnat and in the Society of Mary.

But, let's read what else Marcellin had to say in this 1832 letter: "Even more, when there was finally question of its definitive approval, I went to speak to him, as I always did about any important matters".

This is a clear allusion to Marcellin's letter and visit to the new bishop, the encouragement he received from the latter to build the Hermitage, and his promise of financial help. That puts us at the beginning of 1824. Jean-Louis, a level-headed man, had at first felt that Marcellin should not move too quickly; but since the archbishop, who had arrived in February, had already shown his approval in March, why say no?

"Even though he was interested in my project, he did not at first think I should leave my position as assistant in La Valla, to devote myself to it entirely.

"After he had a chance to discuss my work at length with Fr. Dervieux, parish priest of Saint-Pierre in Saint-Chamond, his opinion changed. When I saw him again, he told me he would be very sorry if my projects did not succeed.

"He told me again that I must go on, that my work was God's work, that I had nothing to fear".

This text shows that Fr. Dervieux's turnabout also brought about that of Jean-Louis Duplay, if indeed that was even necessary.

In a document dated 3rd March 1824, i.e., three weeks after Bishop De Pins' arrival, his Council officially declared itself in favor of the foundation of the Marist Brothers:

"16. Fr. Champagnat, assistant in La Valla in the township of St-Chamond, is having good results in training Brothers for the schools: it is decided that he is to be encouraged in this good work." (OM, I, n° 95).

A few days later, on 17th March, the archdiocesan council expressed its positive attitude even more forcefully:

"Fr. Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte, intends to establish the Brothers of Marcellin Champagnat in a building where he already has Sis-

ters, but in a totally separate section. His Lordship would approve the Institute, and they would have a diet more in keeping with their difficult work. [Fr. Rouchon evidently had not forgot his visit to La Valla two years previously, and the excessively frugal menu he encountered there]; the name 'Little Brothers' appeared fitting for this Institute. More detailed information will be requested about the whole matter". (OM, 96).

It is well enough known that Fr. Champagnat had already decided on the site for the Hermitage. In May 1824 he bought the land where the house would be built. Everything progressed very rapidly, and Inspector Guillard, who came to St-Chamond in June to visit the elementary schools, has left us a few words about this rapid evolution of opinions:

"The parish priest [undoubtedly Dervieux] who has just come from Lyons, assured me that His Lordship the archbishop has authorized the Brothers of La Valla. Fr. Brut [parish priest of St-Martin, later principal of the secondary school of St-Chamond] added that they have already bought a site in the town of St-Martin Acoislieu for their house for their professed members. At present there are no other primary schools in this township than those of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine and those of La Valla".

Obviously, Fr. Duplay had not waited until June to tell Marcellin to throw himself wholeheartedly into his new mission, and that he had resumed his function as spiritual director of the founder of the Little Brothers of Mary a few months previously, if not sooner.

## **II. Why did Brother Jean-Baptiste confuse matters?**

How did Bro. Jean-Baptiste come to know this story about the Founder's confessor?

One gets the impression that Fr. Champagnat must have told him one day in confidence about all the problems he had had, without naming names, and that after the Founder's death, his biographer alluded to them without knowing who was involved. Besides, when one is writing in 1856 about a story from the years 1820-1824, one may presume that nobody is going to check the details. This was just one more annoyance among so many.

But the similarity between Fr. Champagnat's letter and Bro. Jean Baptiste's text also permits of another interpretation, which would be as follows: Bro. Jean-Baptiste knew that Fr. Champagnat had never had any other spiritual director than Jean-Louis Duplay, and other brothers also knew as much. Now, in 1856, Jean-Louis Duplay was superior of the major seminary of Lyons, and he would surely have been among the readers of this biography. Hence the need to be careful.

If Bro. Jean-Baptiste spoke of the "confessor" of 1820-1823 as someone who had definitively dropped Fr. Champagnat, the brothers would therefore be led to think of someone other than Duplay, and conclude that the latter became his "confessor" only afterwards.

But in fact, it is sufficiently sure that Duplay was his confessor from the beginning: Marcellin's letter is clear on that point. One could also add the testimony of Chausse, in his *Vie de l'Abbé Jean-Louis Duplay*, I, p. 278:

"Amidst all these contradictions [in 1820-1823], Fr. Champagnat often went to the seminary in Lyons to speak with Fr. Duplay, his friend and counsellor. He took his advice on everything concerning the good of his Institute and its future".

Perhaps we should not make too much of that sentence, since Chausse is writing thirty years after Bro. Jean-Baptiste and may simply have quoted the latter. But he may also have had other sources.

### III. Why would Jean-Louis Duplay have "abandoned" Fr. Champagnat?

Let us try now to understand Fr. Duplay's problem. Even if the "abandonment" was very provisional, we still have a right to ask why a man as highly-esteemed as he would have acted that way.

First of all, he was a young man at the time, only a year older than Marcellin. That shouldn't surprise us too much, since Cholleton, for example, who was Marcellin's professor and who later became Vicar General and ultimately a Marist Father, was of the same age, and yet he was the spiritual director of the 1816 group of seminarians who were to become Marist Fathers.

It was logical for Marcellin to choose Jean-Louis Duplay as his spiritual director, both for his personal life and for his ministry in the confessional at La Valla. The latter had been assigned to the Argentière seminary and then to the major seminary of Lyons, as a professor of moral theology, and his position was less rigorous than that of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

But Jean-Louis Duplay the professor had to take into account Fr. Bochard, the Vicar General in charge of seminaries. He knew that Champagnat had made it a point to resist the pressure Fr. Bochard was putting on him to unite the Marist Brothers with his Brothers of the Cross, and seeing that nearly everybody was blaming Champagnat, he would have felt uncomfortable telling him "It is your duty to resist that pressure". How could he, a young teacher, be sure that Champagnat was right and the authorities wrong?

Without a doubt, more than one person at the major seminary and

elsewhere criticized Fr. Bochard, as can be deduced from this letter from Fr. Courbon to Cardinal Fesch in exile in Rome:

“Fr. Bochard works indefatigably. He makes mountains out of mole-hills; his will must prevail in everything. He tries to be everything in the major and minor seminaries and the religious communities: superior general, local superior, econome, etc., etc.

“He wears everybody out, because he also changes his mind constantly; when he takes a liking to someone, that person becomes a paragon, and he praises him to the skies. When he turns against someone, he cannot stand him any longer and tries to have him transferred; when he has dreamed up a project, it must be carried out. If God made him bishop (1), the seminaries and religious communities would chant a *Te Deum*; the other Vicars General would shake each other by the shoulders and shout ‘*Deo gratias!*’ ”. (OM, doc. 33).

Jean-Louis Duplay would have needed charismatic enlightenment and courage to encourage any resistance to Fr. Bochard. He more than likely must have said, “Go see Fr. Préher in Tarentaise, or Fr. Brut at St-Martin or someone else like that. I don’t feel capable of judging your situation objectively. I’ll pray for you and we’ll resume our dialogue later”.

That is no doubt the sort of thing Fr. Duplay might have said, so as not to discourage his friend and to put things off until 1824, a year which would prove to be full of all sorts of hope.

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(1) Courbon is certainly thinking of another diocese, since he is writing to Fesch. There could be no question of hinting at a replacement for the latter, who was supremely obstinate and who would remain in Rome until his death in 1839, without ever agreeing to resign from the see of Lyons.

# MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT, EDUCATOR

Br. A. Balko

## I - THE VOCATION OF AN EDUCATOR

### **The historic moment**

1789, year of the birth of Marcellin Champagnat and of the modern world. This co-incidence assumes the value of a symbol when we think that by his vocation as a Christian educator and founder, this humble priest was destined to consecrate his life to the evangelisation of a period of history which extends to our own times.

We know that the immense forward movement which characterised this epoch was to a great extent founded on the progress of the sciences, on their application to technology, and on their being disclosed through teaching.

Father Champagnat belongs to that group of zealous men of vision who knew how to read the signs of their times and who set out to implant the leaven of the Gospel into the powerful, historical movements of popular education. Through the Christian school and through Christian instruction they contributed to the evangelisation of the very sources of modern civilisation, based, as it is, on science and education.

If the vocation of the Church is to evangelise the successive periods of history, it can be affirmed that through the activities of the founders

of teaching Brothers in the nineteenth century, the Church has been perfectly faithful to its mission to youth. We know, besides, that beyond the realm of primary instruction there lay the global concept of life which was the ultimate goal. It is thus that the Christian zeal of the Brothers was challenged by the crusade of the official teachers, those "Black Hus-sars of the Republic", as Charles Péguy called them.

## **1. Starting point - the call of youth**

We may wonder what directly motivated a child of the countryside like Marcellin Champagnat to involve himself in education. He was not gifted for intellectual work properly speaking; on the other hand, he was very much attracted to all sorts of manual work, in which he excelled. However, he belonged to an outstanding rural family, in which education had become a tradition. His father, in particular, was remarkably well educated for that time and place, which led to his being given various responsibilities in public administration.

The son of the head of the district of Marlhes necessarily had to confront the difficulties involved in getting an education. But the boy was so put off by the process of learning to read, and the classroom manner of the village "magister", that he decided never to set foot in school again. But such a resolution could never hold in a day when education held the key to the future. With a bit more maturity and reflection, the young man allowed himself to be persuaded, and finally decided to go to the minor seminary, like many of the sons of the best rural families.

However, his difficulties with studies were real, as the teacher of the little secondary school in Saint-Sauveur concluded. This was Marcellin's brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, who agreed to prepare him for his Seminary Studies; but he soon pronounced him wholly unsuited to academic pursuits. However that judgement was ignored and the poor lad laboured for eleven long years in preparation for ordination. Doubtless the secret of his determination lay in the gradual unfolding of a personal vocation to Christian Education combined with that of the priesthood. One can discern the first outlines of this in his first intimate "Notes" which have come down to us from as early as 1810.

It often happens in the lives of the Saints that it is an encounter with some great obstacle which commits them to the total gift of themselves to God or their neighbour. Champagnat's boyhood painful experiences ripened into a heartfelt resolve. His eyes were opened to the miserable situation in which the majority of country children found them-



selves as regard ideal schooling and Christian education. With typical simplicity he states it as follows:

*"Born in the Canton of St. Genest Malifaux in the Department of the Loire, I, due to lack of capable teachers, only succeeded after immense difficulties in learning how to read and write. From that time onwards I realized the urgent need of an Institute which would provide country children with good, cheap schooling after the example of the De La Salle Brothers who catered for the needs of the poor in the Townships".*

The above extract allows us to surmise that the young country curate, faced with a far from satisfactory situation, had already made schooling and education his very own personal ideal. In the wider context, his attitude was in tune with the new ideal of Christian and religious renewal which resulted in the upsurge of popular schooling, especially in the Diocese of Lyons.

## 2. In the service of the poor

By his ardent nature and overflowing energy Father Champagnat was drawn to youth and education. On the other hand his simplicity of soul endeared him to children and his sense of compassion attracted him instinctively to the poor, the waifs and orphans. The earliest writings of his that have come down to us (Seminary Resolutions - 1810) mention both his vocation as catechist and care for the poor.

*"My Lord and my God I promise to instruct others in your divine precepts and to teach Catechism to the poor as well as to the rich".*

In his letter (Jan. 29th - 1830) to Bro. Barthelemy, the Founder clearly expresses his soul's longing:

*"Tell your pupils that I love them — that I never go up to the Altar without thinking of you and your dear children — that I would love to have the happiness of teaching and to concentrate all my attention, in a very special way to the formation of these young souls".*

That excerpt from the good Father's pen summarizes perfectly the essence of the apostolate of the school. Love for children is the special mark of the teacher's vocation. Prayer puts at our disposal the very power of God — sole master of the souls he has created, and which crave our collaboration. The daily classroom tasks secure for us those direct contacts which alone promote lasting educational influences which is the principal aim of school activity.

Throughout his life Father Champagnat's vocation was a prey to two more or less opposing attractions — namely, his drive to provide general schooling and his strong compassion for the poor, orphans and the homeless. This same problem continued to worry the Brothers throughout the history of the Institute. It was a question of being faithful to the ideals of the Founder and those of the Gospel. We could perhaps affirm that the educator's vocation and the attractions of compassion normally combined in directing Champagnat's disciples towards the Christian education of the lowly. The education of the impoverished and hardworking populations ought to be the normal apostolate of the Brothers.

In a letter from Paris (on the 3rd Feb. 1838) to Mgr. de Pins he states clearly his objectives:

*"You are aware, My Lord, that my sole aim in founding the Little Brothers of Mary was to provide rural Parishes with the benefits of education which the excellent De La Salle Brothers cannot supply owing to the lack of financial resources. Therefore in order to attain my objectives I was constrained to adopt stringent economies in order to overcome these obstacles — whilst at the same time maintaining teaching standards"*.

Fr. Champagnat's practical good sense rendered him especially sensitive to the financial difficulties of poor Parishes. It was this preoccupation which forced him to allow the establishment of two — Brother Communities, at the risk of being thought imprudent. A letter of 1824 is particularly indicative of the Father's determination to come to the help of the less well-off:

*"So as to help the poorer Parishes we send them two Brothers for the winter months only. Then they come back to the Mother House to earn their keep so as not to be a burden on the Community. Our only demands on the said Parishes are the payment of 400 francs, housing, and suitable furniture"*.

Fr. Champagnat's disciples geared their life-style to that of the busy populations to whom they were sent and adapted the rhythm of their lives to theirs by alternating teaching and manual work. Many of our first Brothers were worker — Brothers who returned to the Hermitage in spring to earn their living there in the exercise of a trade. A letter to the Prefect of Montbrison (11 Feb. 1829) emphasized this, even suggesting that by way of sympathy with the lot of the poor, the Brothers were prepared to experience unemployment:

*"As I have already had the honour of informing you, we have undertaken the manufacture of ribbons so as to usefully occupy the periods*



*of school closures. For the greater part of the last two months we have had no pupils. Several of our Brothers have come back to the Mother House because the children of the Parishes which employ them, are all engaged in farming”.*

### 3. The evangelical stamp of Compassion

In No. 8 of Fr. Champagnat's Notebooks we find a definition of the aim of the Institute of which few Brothers are aware.

*“Teaching children in general but particularly poor orphans is the goal of our Institute”.*

Here we see compassion, the inner core of Fr. Champagnat's Charism, clearly expressed in forthright terms. Furthermore we know that abandoned children were particularly welcomed at La Valla in the early days. Here are some unembellished accounts of the Brothers' first apostolic undertakings:

*“Bro. Jean Marie housed two little waifs”.*

(O.M.2. p. 734)

Similarly Bro. Jean-Baptiste emphasizes the Founder's predilection for this kind of Apostolate. (Life, Part II)

*“When he was appointed Curate at La Valla he found a number of impoverished and negligent parents who condemned their offspring to ignorance of the truths of Religion by not sending them to either school or catechism lessons. He took their children and housed them with the Brothers and saw to their feeding and clothing. There were 12 the first year. The numbers increased in the following years until the house could accommodate no more”.*

Furthermore the Hermitage was destined, from the outset, to house a “Trade School” for orphans.

*“As soon as we have finished the building and our means enable us to install running-water we shall take in children from Institutions for the destitute. We shall ameliorate their plight by giving them a Christian education and those of them who exhibit upright dispositions and a desire to learn shall be employed in the house”.*

The above excerpt, which reveals the Founder's personal ambition, supplies us also with the key to an historical and psychological puzzle.

Many a visitor to the Hermitage wondered why Fr. Champagnat, so noted for his common sense, wished to build such a large house in that enclosed valley where it would have to withstand the buffeting of both floods and avalanches.

In his day the farmsteads were situated at a safe distance from the river. Only mills and suchlike were built on the riverside. Thus we see the importance Fr. Champagnat attached to the canal which ran through his newly acquired property. It would supply the source of power for the workshops and the apprenticeship centre that he planned for the professional training of the orphans. As a boy, Marcellin saw in his father's mill the multiple applications of the water-wheel. Being very skilful with his hands and having been brought up to do all kinds of jobs he had a natural flair for technical instruction which had the advantage of being eminently beneficial to the less well-off.

Unfortunately even Founders meet with failures. The Trade-centre, which got under way at the Hermitage in the Autumn of 1825, had to be shut down at the end of the first school-year because of serious lapses — which alone could have stopped Marcellin. The more or less uncared for children he had gathered together fell easy victims to bad habits which threatened to contaminate the whole group.

*"Right from the beginning we planned to receive pupils, both boarders and externs. We found ourselves obliged to abandon the project. It has caused the loss of several Postulants and much damage to the remainder".*

This first failure, however, did not discourage the Founder, whose charism was rooted in compassion. On the 15th January as he drew up the "Statutes of the Institute" he added the following significant paragraph:

*"The aim of the Institute is still to run Orphanages or shelters for reformed offenders and those in moral danger".*

(Notebook No. 8)

That addition, which so well expresses the Father's personal preoccupation, was inserted in the "Rule" of 1837 and was repeated in the Statutes and other writing until the New Rule was published in 1852 — when mention of it was dropped.

It is understandable that after the death of the Founder his disciples, interpreting the signs of the times, plunged headlong into the Apostolate of the Schools. In view of the changed circumstances of the present times that fond dream of our Blessed Founder should deserve our attention. It should be emphasized however that it is a question of supplementary zeal that in no way opposes the fundamental aim of the Institute which is to provide for the Christian education of youth.

The return to the original intentions of the Founder, on the other hand, is of deep evangelical significance. The example of the Saint has ever demonstrated that charity towards our neighbour is firmly based on the two wings of zeal and compassion. Mission and compassion have always characterised the Apostolic action of the Church of Christ.

## II - THE SALIENT GUIDE-LINES OF AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

### 4. Simplicity

To discover his vocation as Educator, Marcellin Champagnat simply relived his own adolescent experience as he came to grips with the new demands of schooling in his times. From his own personal difficulties, the needs and aspirations of the youth of his own milieu were borne in upon him. He saw the necessity of special care and attention for the poor and forgotten. All that can be seen as the normal reaction of a generous soul as it progresses through life along the path of genuine endeavour and goodwill — enlightened by the grace of God. Thus Fr. Champagnat's pedagogical expertise flowered as he clung to a simplicity of approach that goes to the essentials, and he reaped therefrom balanced and rewarding educational insights.

Thus Fr. Champagnat is not an inventor of new educational approaches. Like the majority of born educators, he is a man who applied pedagogic theories from whom and wherever he found them. He admits freely to adopting the teaching techniques perfected by St. John Baptist de la Salle, who for his part, had, to a large extent, borrowed them from his predecessors. The 1837 "Rule" urges the Brothers to study often and carefully the "School Guide", the pedagogical vade-mecum of the De La Salle Brothers.

*"The Brothers will look upon the study and practice of the 'Guide' as one of the surest means of succeeding in their work. Therefore they will frequently read therein the sections that are applicable to themselves — so as to understand them perfectly and apply them faithfully".*

Yet, despite this external imitation of school organization, Fr. Champagnat's disciples seem to have, from the very beginning, made a clear distinction between themselves and their models — by the spirit which animated their pedagogical outlook. The little booklet entitled "The twelve virtues of the good teacher" by the Ven. de la Salle gives "Seriousness"

pride of place. A paragraph from the earliest of his letters that we possess (1st Dec. 1823) transports us straight away into a completely different pedagogical ambience. Whilst giving news of the various schools, here is what the writer stresses in his report on Tarentaise:

*"Things are progressing nicely at Tarentaise. The pupils agree that Bro. Lawrence was a very 'nice fellow' but that his successor is 'nicer' still".*

The expression "nice fellow" effectively conjures up in the mind's eye a happy atmosphere. It suggests such characteristics as simplicity and kindness which eloquently describe a friendly teaching milieu — where relationships are easy and open — and where a welcoming family spirit prevails. This general harmony is perfectly in tune with Bro. Sylvester's description of the Spirit of the Institute:

*"In both groups, Fathers as well as Brothers, the Spirit of the Institute takes on all the characteristics of Family life, with its simplicity, its informal relationships and real friendship".*

It should be noted that if the Founder mentions approvingly the expression "nice fellow" it is because it corresponds with his personal view of the ideal teaching ambience. Furthermore the anecdote reveals that the Father himself practised that same simple, friendly dialogue with the pupils.

Thus from the very beginning, there was a special cachet in the relationships between teachers and pupils which distinguishes and characterizes Marist Education. Furthermore this special characteristic is not the result of chance. The entire personality of Marcellin, the behaviour of his disciples, as well as the spirit he passed on to them, are stamped with the mark of simplicity. Broadly speaking, the religious and especially the professional life of the Marist Brothers recall those of the De La Salle Brothers. Nevertheless the special interior spirit which animates their daily religious life is distinctly Marist.

This spirit of simplicity veers automatically towards the essentials and emphasizes the basic elements. Moreover it should be stated that the real object of Education is to inculcate fundamental human qualities.

The worldwide ideal of Marist Education is thus defined by Bro. Sylvester when he affirms that the Little Brothers of Mary strive to "form good Christians and upright, worthy citizens" (page 248). This uprightness and propriety is naturally focused on the characteristics of truth, sincerity and justice.

*"For the Spirit which teaches us abhors duplicity".*

(Wis 1,5)

Brother Avit paints a more detailed tableau of Father Champagnat's first disciples and of their educational work:

*"The new teachers trained by the good Father were not learned — but their piety and their good example charmed the public and attracted numerous pupils. They taught them Catechism, love of God and their parents as well as reading and writing. People preferred them to their lay counterparts, who were scarcely more educated, but much less religious. Besides most districts had no schools or were dependent on itinerant teachers who turned up during the Winter months".*

(Annals, p. 28)

In fine Fr. Champagnat's simplicity focused his educational drive on the real essentials and operated in a family atmosphere which of necessity ought to imbue every truly educational milieu.

## 5. Education in the service of life

To educate is to promote an awakening of the soul — to open up new vistas on life and to face up to the challenges of existence.

The burgeoning demand for general schooling in Fr. Champagnat's time was one of the principal trends in post-Revolution France. The Brothers, as an integral part of the population, co-operated simply, fully and enthusiastically in this new upsurge.

*"The Little Brothers of Mary are a new and excellent instrument for the propagation of a complete, moral and religious Primary Education — nothing more, nothing less. These efforts are exactly what the University is looking for".*

(Baude to the Minister of Ed. Salvandy, 5/11/1838)

The great zest for life which Fr. Champagnat possessed having been thwarted by a kind of intellectual handicap, took on new energy out of fellow-feeling with the youngsters of his surroundings who were struggling with similar drawbacks. Thus the dynamic temperament of the future Founder reveals itself — a temperament of responsive compassion, leading to action. From then on schooling was to become for him a means of meeting and helping children, especially the poorest and most uncared for.

This enthusiastic impulse, which fired his ambition for the flowering of youth, is rich in human and religious components, such as love of life — the need for friendship and communication — a sympathetic approach to people and things — an appreciation of the various profes-

sions — religious fervour, love of God and Our Lady. Full of vitality and love of youth he sets out to bring them basic culture and partake in their burgeoning enthusiasm for decent living.

Children understand and follow true-born Educators because they offer them real values. Their innate instincts which impel them towards growth, similarly incite them to accept the inherent sacrifices necessary for their human and spiritual progress. One of the most outstanding traits of Fr. Champagnat's vocation as educator was what we might term his obsession with the education, formation and guidance of his disciples. His ideal of dynamic life affected his entourage and expressed itself in a general human and spiritual tendency to achieve perfection. His powerful educational drive was accepted by everybody, for it embodied his rich human and spiritual qualities among which were his goodness and sense of humour. The Hermitage was, in the full meaning of the word, a house of formation.

True educators are full of life and give themselves enthusiastically to the service of their fellow men. This "happy band" ambience, and the outgoing and infectious character which radiates therefrom, develops qualities of prime importance in the field of education. Marcellin Champagnat demonstrates that he understands children and their special needs. As well as having the basic subjects taught he insists on singing lessons and the provision of a playground. The Brothers' school must provide a family atmosphere, where simplicity and kindness imbue relations between teachers and taught — where filial devotion to Our Lady and her Divine Son and a pervasive religious atmosphere prevail:

*"They have only to open their hearts and Jesus and Mary will fill them".*  
(4-2-1831)

*"God alone can make them happy".*  
(3-1-1831)

These two quotations bear witness to the instinctive understanding and basic aspirations of youth towards life, as well as the conviction that God alone can fulfill their yearning for happiness. This self-same religious attitude is put forward as a never ending prolongation of the fundamental love of life and happiness.

*"As for me, I have come so that men may have life and have it more abundantly"*  
(John 10,10)

One of Fr. Champagnat's characteristic traits is his efforts to bring about a kind of fusion of the temporal and the spiritual — a blending of the human with the divine which is the very essence of Christian edu-



cation. The pupils', prayer-life is firmly sited on love, which is the well-spring of their relations with their parents, brothers and sisters, their friends and teachers.

*"Never cease reminding your pupils that they are the friends of the Saints in Heaven, of the Blessed Virgin and especially of Jesus Christi — that He is most anxious to possess their young hearts — that He yearns for them and that it his greatest sorrow to see them fall into the clutches of Satan — that he would be prepared, if necessary, to die once more for them on the Cross in St. Symphorien itself. Tell them that God loves them and that I love them — seeing that Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin and the Saints love them so much".*

(Letter to Bro. Barthélemy at St. Symphorien Nov. 1st 1831)

This pedagogic attitude is in direct keeping with the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, (Catechesi Tradendae, 25-10-1979) reminding us that the Catechism should lead to a meeting of minds between Christ and the individual. In Christ alone can we find salvation and eternal life...

## 6. A warm understanding of and empathy with the pupils

It is clear that children's aspirations and Fr. Champagnat's reactions to them fitted in with the economic, social and cultural background of contemporary society. In the family environment of the period the personality and the freedom of the child evoked but scant respect. From an early age he was employed on the land and was caught up in a harsh farming life-style. Fr. Champagnat's simplicity, his keen perception of the actual state of things and the urgent changes and improvements the situation demanded — plus his deep love of children gave birth to sound, and betimes modified educational attitudes — often in advance of his times.

His pedagogical lettres are those where he speaks most of love, declaring instinctively that it is more necessary for them than bread. A human being is a person who responds to love alone. The child must feel himself loved and appreciated for his own sake — apart from any qualities he may or may not possess. Education is a love-based dialogue.

This lively and very human affection excludes "stand-offishness" and the traditional "solemnity" affected by teachers of the day. An artificial pose smothers the "joie de vivre" and impedes the relationships for which the pupils crave.



The distinguishing mark of “good natured fellow” which the pupils ascribed to the first Brothers and commented on approvingly by the Founder, speaks volumes for the kind of classroom relationships marked by simplicity and kindness. These qualities reflect a family atmosphere where attitudes are open and genuine... a real home environment flourishing under the sun of goodness and the warmth of the family hearth. This “tender affection” clearly prohibits the sternness of a cold, impersonal discipline. It eliminates especially brutality — so opposed to that kindly attitude of mind so essential to education. The 1837 “Rule” expressly states that the correction for serious misdemeanours should be dealt with during the following lesson and that the blackboard pointer should be always firmly secured in its appointed place. A revered tradition in the Institute forbids the Brothers to strike a pupil. (N.B. It was probably this tradition that prompted Bro. Alessandro to proclaim Fr. Champagnat as the originator of “preventive discipline” before Don Bosco’s time).

The famous dream mentioned in the “Life of the Founder” in which the Brothers are depicted in semi-military pose is probably best interpreted by his preoccupation with the sincere affection for the pupil which he constantly strove to inculcate. On the other hand the fact that the scene takes place in the house and the garden where the young Brothers are working shows clearly that education in the handmaid of life and that it flourishes best in the family environment.

## 7. Love of work

Here we come across another essential element of Marist education intimately linked to family solidarity... training for work and love of work well done. Work being of prime importance in life it is of necessity a major facet of the education of youth.

*“The link between family and work is illustrated in the life of St. Joseph. It is the family that teaches children to work. A person’s humanity matures through work. In honouring St. Joseph we are rendering homage to the two basic human dimensions — namely the sanctity of the family and of work”.*

(John Paul II)

The love of work which safeguards the lay character of Marist religious life rejects that kind of other-worldliness which would frown on the human so as to emphasize that which is strictly religious only. For those who know Fr. Champagnat and the traditions that he bequeathed to his disciples, there should be no ambiguity on this point. In a complete Christian education the human and spiritual elements are intimately interwoven.

Love of work and its practical application establishes a salutary balance in Marist educational outlook. Relationships marked by spontaneity and goodness are polarized and governed by a common effort towards the accomplishment of the task in hand. Thus the necessary discipline finds its basis in the very nature of assignments and imposes itself as an indispensable condition of life and personal growth. Obedience and respect for authority, already part and parcel of the family spirit, are thus rendered easy. On the other hand we recognize the gentleness and strength of the Marist genre of education which characterized the Founder's personality.

## 8. A feeling for the individual and confidence in youth

Being a man of deep sympathies, fully alive and a doer, Marcellin Champagnat's interest was in the individual. He welcomed each person and identified with his most intimate aspirations. The prerogative of simplicity is to be receptive and to relate fraternally with the aspirations of those with whom it comes into contact. This is an essential facet of education, for it allows easy communication with the pupils so as to identify with their ambitions and follow their efforts, their discoveries, their failures, their enthusiasms with love and sympathy. It may be that this freshness of companionable simplicity is the trump card of the Marist educational approach. Jaded and blase teachers should have no place in education.

Bro. Sylvester fondly relates the special attention of Fr. Champagnat in his own regard when, as a mischievous youngster, he entered the Novitiate. This loving care changed him bit by bit and finally anchored him firmly in the religious life.

It was a similar experience that caused Bro. Conon, after recounting the Founder's kind attentions to him personally, to exclaim — "The good Father was very kind to me as he doubtless was to everyone else".

One of the fundamental characteristics of a true teacher is an unshakable confidence in the desire to grow and the possibility of improvement, which animates the young.

*"Education is possible only when it is based on a solid confidence which continually exceeds its own hopes of venturing into the unknown, of challenging the present and of belief in the future".*

*"The efforts to educate must first and foremost take note of the logic of love".*

(Margaret Lena in the Spirit of Education, Fayard 1981, page 25)

We are pleased to find in the “Rule” the Blessed Founder has left us, clear evidence of his firm belief in the possibility of progress and improvement among the pupils.

*“The parents must be always advised that their children show much promise and that with a little effort, care and mutual co-operation, they will improve”.*

It is interesting to note that the expert to whom the revision of the proposed “Rule” was entrusted, criticized the Founder’s optimistic stance:

*“Isn’t this a bit much, especially if it’s not true?”*

Fr. Champagnat maintained his stance in spite of the apparent logic of his critic which he considered not to be that of a true educationalist. Parents and authentic teachers agree 100% with his intuition. The “high-brow” makes an impersonal judgement whilst the educator, through a kind of connivance with the aspirations of youth, through the power of love and confidence, sets a real transformation in motion.

The Christian teacher is moreover aware that he shares in the goodness of God with whom he co-operates in the work of continuous creation. In the aforementioned life of Bro. Barthélemy Fr. Champagnat attributes to Our Lady the unconditional love of the Heavenly Father for children.

*“Tell your pupils that Jesus and Mary love them dearly — those of them who are good because they are like Jesus Christ, who is goodness itself — and those of them who are not yet so because they will become so — because the Blessed Virgin loves them too — since she is the Mother of every pupil in our schools”.*

(21-1-1830)

There we see a wonderful educational optimism offered to the pupils! — an optimism based on the most reassuring medium of religious sentiments. Here we touch upon another fundamental element of Marist education — the gentle figure of the Good Mother — who presides over our “family spirit” and sustains our confidence. At the same time it stamps all relationships with the seal of fraternal friendship which corresponds to the deep aspirations of our pupils.

## **9. A readiness to adapt - to seek new solutions**

One of the practical aspects, which from the very outset characterized Fr. Champagnat’s pedagogical outlook, was the necessity to be ever

with the pupils, to share in their interests and see them provided with a cultural background which is the very home and atmosphere from which to draw the means of development. It was his intuition of the importance of such an educational set-up and of the living presence of highly esteemed persons, that led the Founder to clearly perceive the necessity for consultation between parents and teachers in the difficult task of guiding the pupils towards full development.

The paragraph on confidence, quoted higher up, was included in the 1837 "Rule" under the heading — "How the Brothers should act in their contacts with Parents". "There are times when the parents of certain pupils should be consulted on how best to deal with them. A Brother who is discreet and full of the spirit of his vocation need never fear such encounters" (pp. 42-43).

The educator's trust and faith is not unfounded for it presupposes a minimum of effort and goodwill on the part of the pupil, and a lot of care and attention from the teacher. Here we recognize the traditional devotedness of the Blessed Founder's disciples, who, as befits a family, give themselves over completely to the task of education. But it is this consultation with the parents which justifies and conditions both the optimism and success of the teacher.

The Founder's writings, the main gist of which is to be found in the 1837 "Rule", are still more emphatic: "Betimes it is very necessary to consult the parents... There are circumstances when it is imperative to send for the parents of certain children and talk things over with them".

At a time when the "Rule" re: consultation with parents was inexistent or was overlooked through mistrust, Marcellin demonstrated great optimism and a fine spirit of independence. It was not simply a matter of sorting out trifling current concerns but a means of examining and agreeing on the best means of procuring a good education for the children. The needs of the spirit, the family ambiance and confidence in God, whose help should be sought prior to parent meetings, allowed the good Father to highlight an educational innovation whose full importance is much appreciated today.

The same 1837 "Rule" shows us another facet of integrated education where Champagnat was a pioneer. At a time when the Clergy were solidly hostile to a Government spawned by the 1789 Revolution, Fr. Champagnat knew how to demonstrate equal respect for both the Civil and Ecclesiastical Authorities. "The formation of good Christians and worthy citizens" was an ideal as realistic as it was courageous in a Church which allowed itself to blunder into a political quagmire. The young Christian had to be prepared to hold his place and feel at ease in his natural, everyday milieu.

*"By both their teaching and example they shall accustom their pupils to goodwill and respect for the Civil Authority and its magistrates, whose authority emanates from God himself".*

It took a deal of courage and a deep understanding of the contemporary social conditions to swim against the current, at a time when most of the Clergy showed their political opposition.

*"The Little Brothers of Mary, religiously adhering to their chosen educational philosophy have, both before and after the events of 1830, clung to it independently of all political Parties".*

(Baude, M.P. for the Loire, 5-11-1838)

A document in the Prefecture of the Loire suggests that Fr. Champagnat's respect for the Civil Authorities is a fixed principle.

*"One must join in praise of the Marist Brothers who, whenever discord erupts in an area on their account, have refused to take over the school until such time as their staff can count on the support of the Authorities and of at least the majority — if not all — of the local inhabitants. Thus while not disavowing their commitment and their success, the Little Brothers of Mary have employed them in such a way as to temper the sometimes excessive zeal of their Religious Authorities".*

(Monbrison, 24-5-1838)

Marcellin Champagnat does not disguise his feelings. He openly declares his willingness to co-operate with the Government for the good of the pupils.

*"Fully desirous of working under the patronage and in accordance with the Government's views, for the benefit of the children, we are prepared to take any steps it recommends to us so as to achieve complete harmony of action".*

(4-1-1840)

The Parish Priests had to adopt the Founder's spirit of conciliation if they wished to have Brothers in their Parishes.

*"Our custom being to found schools only after formal agreement beforehand, with the Authorities — both Civil and Ecclesiastic. We commit ourselves only on these conditions.*

(22-10-1839)

In his own perfectly practical way Fr. Champagnat proclaims his esteem for both the Civil and Religious Authorities and urges them to collaborate in the education of youth. This wise policy is still very necessary in our own times.



*"I am very keen that you co-operate with the Sub-Prefect and the Mayor. We know from experience that matters always work out best when our schools are appreciated by the powers that be, and our custom is to found them only after obtaining their go-ahead. I have no doubt but that you will do your best to co-operate with the Sub-Prefect and the Mayor and thus arouse their interest in your work".*

(Letter to the Parish Priest of Nantua, Aine 2-6-1840)

Fr. Champagnat's artless and action-prone nature forced him to ignore some of the accepted, contemporary pedagogical views. In view of his own difficulties in learning how to read he imposed a "reading method" on his disciples which favoured beginners.

He would certainly have been one of the pioneers in Technical Education had he been able to realize his ambitions. The original concept for the Hermitage was to gather in orphans from the local "Homes" and give them a more advanced professional training in various trades whilst at the same time giving them a solid Christian formation. These plans stemmed as much from his compassion for orphans and the poor as from his personal flair for manual handicrafts. His obsession with education and his keen interest in the emerging popular schemes of the period, prevented him from bringing to fruition his own personal projects.

His letters reveal that he was deeply interested in the establishment of *schools for the deaf and dumb* which were making their debut at that time. He was all set to found several such schools but he was unable to do so because the authorities at the specialized training college in Paris refused to admit Brothers, who were interested in that particular field.

We feel it a great pity that Fr. Champagnat never committed to paper his own personal projects and leanings. We are well aware that he lacked neither the personal independence nor initiative to bring them to fruition had the conditions been favourable.

## 10. Conclusion

Marcellin Champagnat, an outstandingly simple man, wholly given to direct action, quite naturally devoted himself to the service of life and education. He was an educator pure and simple. His simplicity and outgoing personality quite naturally oriented his sympathies towards children and youth. Even if he has not written up his pedagogical views he has transmitted his enthusiasm, his attitudes and his orientations to his disciples. Like their Founder they devoted themselves completely to education. They inherited their Father's spirit of simplicity and his deep love of children.

In his day the Blessed Founder knew how to identify with the aspirations of youth, especially the poorest among them. He saw clearly that the new, contemporary drive towards schooling and professional qualifications was attracting large numbers to the various centres of education. Simplicity is open to life and inspires goodwill and praiseworthy initiative, which is ever ready to communicate that *joie de vivre* which renews itself in every generation through the intermediary of youth.

Furthermore, simplicity goes for the essential and thus finds itself at ease in the powerful movement which orients the youth of today towards fundamental human values, in order to escape contemporary alienation and fortify themselves for new departures.

To conclude, it must be said that Marcellin Champagnat was not a theoretician but he had a profound feeling for life. His personal orientation towards education was not particularly special but it was all-consuming.



## BROTHER JEAN-BAPTISTE FURET Biographer of Marcellin Champagnat

Br. Paul Sester

The appearance of a new edition of the *Life of M.J.B. Champagnat, by One of His First Disciples*, seems to me an opportune moment to become better acquainted with its author, in order to get more out of his work. I am the fourth person to treat this subject. The first biographical note on Bro. Jean-Baptiste appeared on 8th April 1872, two months after his death, in the form of a circular by the Superior General, Bro. Louis-Marie. He asked that those brothers who had documents which concerned the departed (letters, conference notes, etc.) send them to him in view of a more in-depth biography. This work never appeared. In 1917, on the occasion of the centenary of the Institute, Bro. Stratonique, then Superior General, put Bro. Amphiloque Dydier in charge of getting the project underway again. The results were so disappointing that they remained in the archives in manuscript form. It was not until 1953 that a biographical sketch worthy of the importance of the man appeared in *Nos Supérieurs* (pp. 11-69).

I have no intention of writing another one; the one I have just mentioned is enough to satisfy our fraternal piety. As I said in the title, I want to concentrate on the man as author of the *Life* of the Founder. Someone once told me that fifty percent of any biography is about its author, and only the other fifty percent is about the subject of the book. Without haggling over the accuracy of those statistics, I asked myself whether, in the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, it was possible to isolate

what is really about its author, so as to have a clearer picture of the man he is presenting. I found that this would be an impossible undertaking, but that what I could do was to get to know the author better by studying his personal writings, where the ideas he develops are his alone. I chose two of the latter, not because they have never been published, but because I think they best meet that criterion: they are *his* letters, and *his* manuscript on the apostolate of the Marist Brother. To these two sources I added testimony received from various individuals.

To discover the kind of man Bro. Jean-Baptiste was, and the role he played in the creation of our Marist tradition, I will discuss his background, his personality and his ideas. Then, in light of all that, I will attempt to go more deeply into his conception of the *Life*, not to criticise it, but to understand better the meaning he attaches to certain expressions and the import of certain events.

## HIS BACKGROUND

What was there about Bro. Jean-Baptiste which made Bro. François ask him, late in 1840, to undertake the writing of this biography? What credentials did he have which made it likely he would succeed? He had just handed over the direction of the school in St-Pol-sur-Ternoise to Bro. Andronic, in order to assume the function of Assistant, which the General Chapter of the preceding year had conferred on him. Neither a good memory nor a talent for writing can substitute for the formation needed for such an undertaking. So, how did he acquire that formation?

Let us note first of all that Fr. Champagnat made good use of the young brothers who entered the congregation endowed with a certain amount of intellectual baggage; he very quickly entrusted them with important positions. The example of Bro. Louis-Marie is typical but far from unique. In the elections of 1839, Bro. Jean-Baptiste is placed almost on a level with him, even though he had only a rudimentary education in 1822 when he asked to be admitted to the congregation. In other words, his personal qualifications were out of the ordinary.

### His family

If we are to believe reports from that period, his family background was of little help to him. His hometown, Saint Pal-de-Chalencon, is described as an old fortified city, with some 2000 inhabitants, in the department of the Loire, near the border with the Velay. It is located

in a mountainous area, with an average altitude of 950 metres; at the time it was far removed from any major roads. Although the soil was not particularly fertile, the inhabitants lived almost exclusively on what they could wrest from the ground by dint of hard work with "agricultural methods too primitive to produce a good harvest" (Tavernier, *Le diocèse du Puy pendant la Révolution*, p. 3). To augment these meager resources, Saint John Francis Regis, and after him the Béates [women who followed a way of life similar to that of a modern secular institute], had encouraged the women to make lace at home, which they began to do, even in the most remote hamlets.

Most of the people were poor, but hardy enough to endure both the physical and psychological hardships of life. They were also poor in terms of education. "The considerable number of illiterate people indicated in the registers of the rural parishes, both before and after the Revolution, leave no doubt on this point. Many peasants did not even understand French" (*op. cit.*, p. 7). Many villages had no school for boys, but the girls took advantage of the devotedness of the Béates, who were to be found in nearly every parish. Their influence certainly has something to do with the fact that, "The people of the countryside remained not only practicing Catholics, but also deeply attached to their religious beliefs, and on the whole, they remained so during the whole revolutionary period" (*op. cit.*, p. 7).

## Religious formation

That was no doubt the sort of setting into which Jean-Baptiste Furet was born on 24th September 1807. Even if "his energetic nature and precocious intelligence" led him to make the most of the time he spent in class, he had certainly not reached the level of a school certificate by 25th March 1822, the date on which Fr. Champagnat wrote his name in the register of those entering Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. Barely eighteen months later, there he was, named to Bourg-Argental, no doubt as cook; but shortly afterwards, his life was threatened by illness. Even if we give him credit for the highest possible capacity for assimilating knowledge, we can still imagine what level of education he could have acquired in so short a time.

Certainly, given his preoccupation since childhood with saving his soul, he must have concentrated his efforts on "religious study". So it was that, in late October 1822, he could answer Fr. Champagnat's question about the three kinds of Churches (cf. *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, ch. XX). We know from other sources that during his entire life, he limited

his studies to this one single area, but he must have taken advantage of every free moment his work allowed him to become an expert in the field.

He apparently remained in his first community only one year, since he seems to have moved several times during the next two: to Feurs, Millery, and then Saint-Symphorien d'Ozon. We may presume that those three assignments sufficed to establish his teaching ability, since in 1826, he was sent to open the school in Neuville-sur-Saône, which he continued to direct until 1836, with only a one-year hiatus, in 1830. After a two-year stay in Charlieu, Fr. Champagnat entrusted him with the foundation of Saint-Pol-en-Artois. The remoteness of that establishment must have showed him what total confidence Fr. Champagnat had in him, even to the point of dispensing him from returning to the Hermitage for the 1839 retreat, during which he was elected second assistant to the Director General, Bro. François.

### **A self-taught man**

Amid all his teaching, organization, and other responsibilities, how did he still find time to continue his personal formation? There can be no doubt that we are faced here with a superior personality, in terms of both intelligence and will-power. "I admit", he confided to one of his correspondents "that I loved study to the point where the venerated Fr. Champagnat told me that it was a mania... The only thing I was madly in love with was the study of religion, and that always with the aim of being useful to my neighbor" (Letter of 1st July 1865).

That last sentence is significant, in that it sheds light on his mindset. The fact that while still on the family farm he preferred to stay in the house, helping his mother make lace, rather than to go work in the fields (*Nos Supérieurs*, p. 13) already indicated he was of a contemplative rather than an active bent. So it is no surprise that he did not wait until adolescence to satisfy his double desire to study and to live closer to God. He must have enjoyed mulling over ideas more than striving amid the hustle and bustle of the world, which is why spending his leisure moments in idle conversation attracted him far less than stocking his memory with the thoughts of the saints. The testimony of the student who ran errands for him when he was cooking at Bouillargues is revealing: "Without fail, any time I went into the kitchen I found the brother cook either standing in front of the little stove or writing at his desk. I saw many others after him, but never one quite like him. There was a man who never wasted his time!" (*Ibid.*, p. 30). That was how Bro. Jean-Baptiste continued his formation throughout his life: by making use of every free moment.

## Marked by the Founder

Consequently, his entire education was acquired in the Institute, which allows us to say that he received a preponderant part of it from Fr. Champagnat. On the one hand, contact with the latter from youth onwards must have made a profound impression on him, all the more so since the Founder exercised a strong influence over the young men who came to him. On the other hand, the way people of that day understood the study of religion could only have strengthened the likeness between the thinking of the disciple and that of his teacher. Rather than following a process of logical deduction from rational principles, they looked to Scripture and the Fathers of the Church for affirmation and confirmation of what they referred to as "the truths of salvation". *L'homme religieux*, by Father Saint-Jure, is a typical example of this method. This book was extolled by Fr. Champagnat (cf. *Vie*, 1856 ed., vol.2, pp. 306-307), and it could well have provided Bro. Jean-Baptiste with both resources from which to draw information and a way to use it. Out of love for research as much as out of duty, he took it upon himself to expand his knowledge of the sources from which the teacher had drawn his ideas without having been able to develop them, for various reasons. As a result, what he presents is the same doctrine, but better worked out, so much so that he will later claim to be transmitting the real thoughts of the Founder, and the testimony of his first readers will bear him out (cf. Bro. Sylvestre, *Mémoires*). Bro. Louis-Marie, in the circular mentioned above, did not hesitate to say that, "If Fr. Champagnat has lived on thirty-two years after his death, it is because of Bro. Jean-Baptiste, who has continued and perfected his work". Then a bit later on, he adds, "Has he not been like a second Founder for us?" (*Circulaires*, IV, 305). By this latter statement, the Superior General was certainly indicating that he had made his mark on the Institute as much by the strength of his personality as by his own ideas.

## HIS PERSONALITY

There can be no doubt that Bro. Jean-Baptiste had made his mark even before 1839, even though it is hard for us today to know why this was so. In any case, there is no other way to explain the number of votes he received *in absentia* at the General Chapter that year, even though he had never really been involved in the central administration of the Institute.

But it was especially later on, as Assistant, that he made his greatest contribution and showed how much he had to offer. However, he was

not the kind of man who made his presence known by dramatic actions; he much preferred the sort of silent meditation which gives birth to major projects and gradually nourishes them. His major talent was his facility for rapidly grasping the details of a situation or the elements of a problem, finding a solution, and then applying it calmly but with unshakeable firmness. This is the way he handled the assignment given him at the outset of his term of office: to bring about the integration with our congregation of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and then two years later, that of the Brothers of Viviers.

He had such a way with people that one brother could state, "We listened to Bro. Jean-Baptiste as to an oracle, whether during his conferences, which were captivating; or in his private conversations with us, which we very much enjoyed; or in his letters, whose arrival was always a source of delight". Another brother said much the same thing: "For me, his words had the weight and almost the importance of dogma. If Bro. Jean-Baptiste said it, the matter was settled. His decisions and his opinions had the force of law" (Amphiloque, *Biographie*, p. 87).

### **His hold over the brothers**

Yet, his ministry has left practically no visible trace, apart from the testimony of a few brothers who lived with him. We have some letters of Bro. Jean-Marie Bonnet who was director of the house in St-Paul, but there is hardly a single document from Bro. Jean-Baptiste himself, who was generally responsible for the administration of those provinces. However, Bro. T  rence, who was a novice at St-Paul the year of the integration, went so far as to say, "This incomparable brother literally did for the Institute and especially for the two provinces in the South, what St. Paul did in the apostolic college to establish the kingdom of the Gospel among the Gentiles" (*Ibid.*, p. 20).

While not minimizing the fact that many documents have been lost, we must still presume that Bro. Jean-Baptiste's style was very discreet, as he worked with individuals after having imposed the traditional structures on them. Bro. T  rence goes on to say, "He made himself all things to all men, as did St. Paul, and he showed us in his own person the true and perfect image of the Little Brother of Mary" (*op. cit.*, p. 80). That does not mean that he dissociated himself from administrative work; but since he lived at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, and knew his own charism, he preferred the role of spiritual director. This explains the imposing number of letters he wrote, of which about 600 have come down to us in the form of copies. Bro. T  rence estimated that he alone received "near-



ly two hundred letters from Bro. Assistant during the years he was in charge of the Province of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux" (*op. cit.*, p. 70).

The rest of this brother's testimony and that of several others shows that his work was not without success. In the circumstances of his day, "how much patience, attention and prudence he needed in his correspondence, in order to train, instruct and encourage men who until then had received very little formation! And how admirably he carried out that disagreeable and difficult task! What savoir-faire and tact he showed in dealing with his men, even in being able to cut to the quick without hurting people!" (*op. cit.*, p. 82).

Bro. Fuscien (1838-1916) states that "Among the outstanding qualities with which Providence had so lavishly endowed Bro. Jean-Baptiste, there is one which was doubly valuable for me: his adeptness in directing people and drawing the best out of them in spite of their defects. Instead of interfering with their personal initiative or paralysing it, he was content to reorient it, direct it, and encourage it" (*id.*, p. 77).

In the same vein, a third brother, whose name is not mentioned, declared in his turn, "It is a pleasure for me to acknowledge that one of the greatest favors heaven ever gave me, was to have met a spiritual director like Bro. Jean-Baptiste as soon as I entered religious life. I have no doubt that I owe my perseverance to his skillful direction... In that incomparable leader of souls I always found the enlightenment, strength and courage I needed. If I overcame my faults, mastered my passions and perhaps did some good, I certainly owe it, after God's grace and Mary's protection, to the care taken by Bro. Jean-Baptiste, who always enjoyed my total confidence and esteem, and who so many times showed me his affection and interest" (*id.*, p. 79).

### A gift for correspondence

As we have seen, writing letters held an important place in the life of the Brother Assistant, in terms of both the time it took as well as the interest it aroused among the brothers. Their lively, simple and direct style shows no small degree of originality. For the most part, they are letters of direction. Though their author rarely speaks of himself, they still tell us a great deal about his personality.

These letters can be divided into two periods. The first, covering the early to mid 1860's, are calmer and more fully of imagery. Most of them are to young brothers who needed help to begin their spiritual journey, so while they contain more criticism, their tone is much more paternal. The second period covers the five or six years before his death, and



is characterized by a more serious tone, perhaps because most of his correspondents then were directors, to whom their author could speak about the cross which heavily burdened his own shoulders, because of both illness and somber presentiments of the sad events about to befall the Church and society in France. I have intentionally left the boundaries of these two periods rather vague, because there is really no clear demarcation between them, and in any case, many of his letters are undated.

At the outset, the reader is surprised by the allegorical style and jovial tone of these letters, especially those from the first period. To illustrate more clearly what he finds lacking in his correspondent and help him better to accept the criticism, he uses imagery, sometimes humorous, sometimes biting, as well as some curious expressions which at times border on vulgarity. For example, to correct one brother's whimsical frivolity, he advises him "Instead of going by leaps and bounds and fits and starts, I want you to go gravely like the Rhône. I would like you not to pay any attention to what is going on in your attic [imagination]; it wouldn't bother me if you abandoned it to the rats and took no more account of what is happening there than of what is happening in India. Take care of your heart, your will, your conscience, your reason or judgment, but despise your imagination" (1863).

This does not mean he actually despised the latter faculty since, in saying goodbye to another brother to whom he had just given several bits of advice, he wrote, "There's more than enough there to keep you busy and to give your imagination a cup of coffee" [i.e., stimulate it] (1858). And in another letter: "To move away from the fire when you are cold, to leave the fountain and start drinking sand, are both signs of insanity and one would have to be a bit cracked to do either". I could go on multiplying similar examples, since that was his normal way of admonishing and encouraging the brothers. In so doing, he was doubtless manifesting his own cheerful character, which was nourished by a fertile imagination, which he used not so much to show off his style but rather as a surer means to reach the goal he had set for himself. His unique and constant aim was to warn, affirm, reform and stimulate the brothers in order to help them make progress in their spiritual life; and he considered this his duty towards those for whom he was responsible. He never wrote a letter nor even a paragraph which was just polite talk or an expression of opinion; he did that only in passing, and by allusion, if he felt it was needed in order to stir up enthusiasm.

### **An authoritarian appearance**

If, as one might suspect, there are reproaches, warnings, and sometimes even threats, they are always counterbalanced by encouragement, of

which his letters are full, and the whole is presented in simple and direct language, wrapped in original expressions, deliberately designed to put things in context and to brush aside the last obstacles to preparations for a fresh start. Writing to a young brother who was inclined toward immodesty in his looks and toward “particular friendships” with certain students, Bro. Jean-Baptiste offers, in conclusion, this recommendation: “Bridle those two foxes and say your prayers well, and I tell you that you will be a good brother, one of our best sons, one of those I love most. Adieu”.

The clarity of his language is reinforced by a certain assurance in his affirmations, and by the firmness of his recommendations. The reader never finds himself confronted with the sort of hesitation, offer of alternatives or irresolution which would leave him undecided about what road to take or whether he really needed to take one at all. He is left with no choice, no possibility of evasion; at best he has the liberty to limit himself to trying it out, on condition that he later give an account of his efforts. Thus, for example, on 19th March 1862, he wrote: “Today’s office says that Abraham’s two servants stayed at the foot of the mountain while the holy patriarch and his son Isaac climbed to the top... The children of God climb Calvary. The people of the world stay down below, with the asses. Which group do you belong to?... Tell me where you spent your Lent and then I will know which you are”.

## Verbose style

There is another element which, depending on how one looks at it, either softens or reinforces his style: his verbosity. Letters like the one I just quoted, which contain only one recommendation, as well as those in which only one virtue is set forth, are rare. More often that not, when Bro. Jean-Baptiste recommends one thing, he cannot refrain from adding another, and then another, which he had not mentioned previously, as in the quotation above about the two foxes, where the promise he makes obliges him to mention prayer, although he had not done so at all in the rest of the letter. Even more surprising is the following enumeration:

“So, what do I want from you? One more step; that’s not much, but I prefer that you always go slowly, rather than see you lose ground after I made you run forward. So this year, we will take one step in detachment from creatures, in regularity, in piety, in exactitude in fulfilling the responsibilities of a director. We will stay home a little bit more, we will have a little less contact with the world, we

will be a little less familiar with the students, our only intention will be to raise them for God, we will make war on self-love and all those little passions which disturb our heart.

Is this a trap he keeps falling into, or the result of a love which wants to see the beloved grow beautiful in every possible way? Whatever, these may be small steps... but designed for a centipede! Here is another passage which shows us his verbosity more in the form of his being carried away: "Do you know what the devil wants to steal from you? Three things: your vocation, your purity and your salvation, the grace of God, your very soul". The arithmetic of the heart is not the same as that of the mind! Many spiritual writers, especially Fr. Saint-Jure, whom Bro. Jean-Baptiste read so assiduously, vote for his acquittal by their own frequent use of the same sort of verbosity.

Whatever impression the brothers got from all this, it was certainly not one of dispersion, for behind all these multiple injunctions could still be felt the present of a director, who was at the same time their leader and father, and who was not afraid to say what he thought, nor to confront any kind of situation for the good of his children, as he often called them. This authoritative tone can be found in all his letters, and even if it is sometimes surprising, it is always reassuring, like solid ground on which one can walk without fear of falling into hidden traps. If the brothers disagreed sometimes with their superior, it was certainly not because he was lacking in frankness, but rather because of his uprightness which gave him the courage to say what he was able to discern even in the shadows. The following examples, chosen from among the most typical in his letters to different persons, will be illustration enough:

You will be secure and happy so long as you are in my hands, but if you want to get away from me and be your own director, you will be unhappy and you will go astray. May God preserve you from such a misfortune! Goodbye; I bless you and promise to take good care of you.

Yes, it is the devil who is pestering and upsetting you; but he will not get anywhere, because I will be the master, you will obey me, you will make your vows, you will keep them, and you will go to heaven.

I am counting on you, brother, never to forget the good principles I gave you. Remember that obedience, purity, love of Jesus, and fear of sin are the virtues I especially recommended to you. I strove above all to form your spirit, your heart and your conscience... a docile and upright spirit; a sensitive, thankful and fervent heart; a timorous con-

science, delicate and transparent as crystal, that's what I want from you.

## Realism

These examples may color Bro. Jean-Baptiste as outrageously authoritarian, if we do not put them in proper context. The persons to whom he is writing are mostly brothers whose formation at Saint-Paul or at Vivers had not been even the bare minimum required for a religious. One of them, Bro. T rence, says as much:

I arrived at Saint-Paul in 1842... I was thirteen and a half; the entire community, which was very small to begin with, was a hodge-podge. We were six novices, young brothers or postulants, entrusted to a teacher who was supposed to make us recite our catechism lesson and the gospel of the week, and also teach us spelling and arithmetic; meanwhile, Bro. Jean-Marie, the director, responsible for transforming Fr. Mazelier's children into Marists, did everything he could to make everything go as it should. He saw each of us in private from time to time, while supervising and instructing his religious community. Four months after I received the habit, that is, after eleven months of preparation, I was sent to a community and put in charge of the kitchen, and then of a lower class, and then of a higher class. My preparation for the latter made it possible for me to obtain my elementary *brevet* [certificate of competence], and occasioned my appointment to the formidable function of director at the age of eighteen.

Bro. Jean-Baptiste realized immediately that his main task was to form these brothers and to lead them from their infancy in the spiritual life to the manhood which their physical growth had already attained. He tackled this task, indispensable both for these brothers as individuals and for the society of which they had become members, with all the courage and seriousness required for a mission received from God. His statement to a brother who was about to leave the Institute was certainly valid for all the others:

I am prepared to do anything, provided I save you from shipwreck. I am yours; do with me whatever you wish, but give me the consolation of being of use to you, of saving you, and spare me the sorrow of seeing you perish.

The enthusiasm he brought to his task sprang partly from his sense of duty, but also from his personal talent for this sort of apostolate, as

well as from the confidence and attachment which the brothers in general felt towards him. So it is less surprising then that he asked some of them to open themselves to him for their spiritual direction. "Always share with me", he wrote to one of them, "everything that goes on within you; I tell you that if you do, God will bless you". And another received this invitation: "Keep me well informed of your conduct, your temptations and all your problems, so that I may help you to bear them and teach you to fight against the great thief who is lying in wait for you". Now and then, one or another balked; in such cases, the superior did not hesitate to make him take the bit in his teeth again:

Why are you making such a fuss about staying at my heels? Haven't the moon and the other satellites been staying at the sun's heels for six thousand years? I still have to lead you around like an infant for six years, then I will wean you — it being understood that you will have become wise, that you will have profited from my education, and that you will have swallowed all my pills nicely.

He reproaches one for writing too infrequently, and another for being too cold towards him. Surely, he knew what he could and should say to each one, since he knew his brothers and was interested only in their improvement. So, in other cases, he senses that freedom must be respected: "I do not want to love you more than you love yourself. I am giving in to you because that is how it has to be, but I am giving in only to you, and I intend to be your second in this matter".

### **Respectful love of others**

It is clear that he never tried to use the brothers, even when he asked them again to tell him how they had put his advice into practice, as for example when he wrote this to one of them: "Come on! Be brave! Be sure to do what I've told you and to give me a full account at Easter of how your efforts worked out". On the other hand, we may presume that at least most of these brothers went along voluntarily with their superior's demands, since, besides his genuine love for them, he had the gift of understanding them, of sensing their moods from what they shared with him. Some, like Bro. Bonius, a former master of novices who had been trained by him, claimed that, "He read hearts like a book: The words he spoke to us prove what I just said" (*Amphiloque*, p. 83). The assurance with which he made assertions in his letters might confirm that statement. The reader can judge for himself from these two excerpts:

I understand your problems better than you think and better than you describe them.

It is possible that I am rash-judging you; I would like to hope so, but I fear I am seeing things only too clearly. Think about it; I will go along with whatever you say.

Other statements go even further, leading one to think he had the gift of spiritual enlightenment. How else can one take seriously such declarations as:

I asked for a place for you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and it was promised to me.

Be good, you have a short time to live! "Who told you that?", you ask. My answer is: the only thing I was ordered to tell you is that you have a short time to live.

Have you forgot that I am God's clairvoyant for you? Know then that it was under that title that I sent your young brother back to you. In the divine light, I saw that he was useful to you, that you needed him.

The love he showed the brothers is expressed in some fashion in almost every letter, and corroborated by the testimony of those who were their recipients. Even though there may have been something of the sentimental in it, his love did not remain on that level, for it was expressed in even stronger tones to brothers who were in difficulty or suffering from some moral or physical handicap. Moreover, this love ultimately blended with his love for God. In one of his letters, we read:

You are amazed that I love you so much. I love you because Jesus loves you, because he entrusted you to me and I am in charge of your spiritual education, because you have a beautiful soul and if you take care of it, it will shine like a sun in the sky. Lastly, I love you in order to make a good brother of you, and I will never be happy until I accomplish that.

In another letter he shows himself even more fatherly, trying to make a young brother react, to shake him out of his torpor, that lair of the devil:

Courage, dear brother; strive manfully to love Jesus... Please do not listen to your boredom, your sadness... I ask you, I beg you, to fight them with your whole soul. I would suffer if I knew you were suffering. So when your difficulties begin to weigh you down, write me; an exchange of feelings, sharing your problems with me, will bring you relief.



Far from being selfish, his love for his brothers is only a means of leading them towards God. He is ready to step aside when he can see that the impetus he has given them is producing its effects.

### **Discretion about himself**

This self-effacement is shown concretely by the fact that he seldom speaks about himself, especially during the first period, where we find only passing references to his past, his feelings of inferiority, or requests for prayers for his intentions. His letter of 9th May 1861, however, dwells far more on these topics, to the point of making us wonder about the real meaning of this passage:

In addition, I charge you and I command you to ask for my conversion, since I am worse than rusty, cold, stiff; I am evil and I need your fervent prayers to make me good, very good, eminently good.

By contrast, the letters from the second period are more serious, and he shows himself more oriented toward the hereafter, which he is approaching along the path of suffering, even while he is paradoxically preoccupied with political developments in France and the rest of Europe. In July 1870, fearing that all sorts of calamities — “famine, war, and maybe the plague” — were about to stike his country, he recommended prayer and faithful observance of the Rule, “in order to turn aside God’s anger”. When France was faced with total disaster in January 1871, and the International Workers’ Association began to emerge from the shadows, he saw it as an act of Providence aimed at the purification of religious: “It is the finger of God at work for the Church, for his elect, chastising and protecting them at the same time. It is all over; he wants no more tepid religious. We must become saints, live fervently, or expect to be cast into the world”.

In another letter the following week, he continued the same line of thought: “Anyone who is not fervent will fall, and so much the better; we will be fewer, but stronger; quality will make up for quantity”. And a few days later, he added: “I am happy and at peace; developments have no more effect on me than if they were taking place on the moon”; finally, in an undated letter, which must come from this period, we read: “As for me, I also look up to heaven and say with the beloved disciple, ‘Come, Lord Jesus...’ I am waiting for you!...”. On 5th February, seated in his armchair because his asthma made it difficult for him to lie down, he peacefully breathed his last.



## HIS IDEAS

Bro. Jean-Baptiste is still present among us through his voluminous writings, including his letters which reveal his personality as well as his ideas, which I will now try to present in structured fashion. Since most of his letters seem to be answers to specific cases submitted to him, it would be a mistake to look there for a developed body of doctrine. Bro. Jean-Baptiste, according to his biographer, “belonged to no particular school, and preferred the common way above all others... He was happy to harvest wherever he could” (*Nos Supérieurs*, pp. 43-44).

In other words, we cannot expect to find in his writings any really original ideas, properly so-called. He simply took from various authors whatever suited him, his attitudes, and his formation; in a word, whatever he thought was the teaching of the Church. These ideas were then organized within the framework established by the Rule, without the least attempt at modification, still less at innovation. His only personal contribution is the interpretation he gives them, according to his own judgment in the light of specific circumstances.

### Above all: save one's soul

His biographer tells us:

He based everything on this fundamental idea of Our Lord: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he finally loses his soul?” (Mt 16,26). “To save one's soul”: to him, that was everyone's great and only task on earth. That was his major concern all his life, from childhood on, when he got this idea from the hymn, “All we have to do is save our souls”, right up to his death, since the last letter we know he wrote ends with the words, “Man has only one thing to do on earth: save his soul; all the rest is illusion and folly — don't ever forget that” (*id.*, p. 44).

In other places, he lets it be known that “to save one's soul” means nothing else but to sanctify oneself, to merit heaven to which only the saints are admitted, since there is no middle ground between heaven and hell. Heaven, for which we were created, is won at the cost of effort and struggle, while the road to hell is the one we are naturally inclined to take, and the one towards which the devil is moreover trying to attract us; so we have two enemies to fight.

## **War on the devil**

The devil's weapon is temptation: every desire which draws us towards evil, towards not doing our duty, towards stopping all our striving and just following our natural inclinations. This is why he becomes especially aggressive with those who decide to go the other way. "Everyone is tempted to some degree", wrote Bro. Jean-Baptiste, "and... those who are tempted more often and more violently are those whom God is calling to greater perfection, especially religious; oh, yes: religious are the ones the devil hates most of all!" (A letter of 1859). Therefore, to him, the entire life of a religious is a battle with the devil. Our strategy should be to resist without trying a frontal counter-attack.

It is not the devil we must fear, but sin.

"But he keeps on tempting me!"

That's what he's supposed to do; he's just doing his job. How about you? Are you doing your job, which is to resist him? Don't worry about bad thoughts, they're not a sin; fight them and despise the whole thing (21st March 1863).

In more than one letter he goes so far as to praise temptation as occasion for practicing virtue:

When you become really spiritual, you will call all your temptations your friends, because that is what they are. God forbid you should want him to take any of them away from you; if he did, it would only be as a punishment, since he would be depriving you of the basic components of sanctity and the food of your soul. (11th January 1865).

It would be an exaggeration to say he always attributes the beginnings of temptation to the devil, even though the latter is there every step of the way; the second enemy we have to face in this battle is never far behind.

## **Control human nature**

It should be clear enough that our human nature gives the devil a fertile field for his attacks: "At your age, the most dangerous temptation is really the temptation against the holy virtue... What feeds these temptations and makes them so strong is sensuality" (9th July 1860).

In another letter he speaks of persecution "by all the demons and all the passions" (15 March 1864). Following the doctrine taught by spiritu-

al writers, Bro. Jean-Baptiste designates by the word "passion" every strong inclination of our nature which manifests itself as a desire for satisfaction. Since the sin of our first parents, our whole nature has been so corrupted that of itself it can produce only evil. In his essay on education, he writes:

Children bear within themselves the seeds of all the passions and vices. Their soul, enveloped in the darkness of profound ignorance, is incapable of any spiritual function. It responds only to pleasure and physical pain; it seems to exist only for the body and at the outset has only a purely animal life. And yet, at that very moment there begins the empire of the senses, the love of well-being, the desire and search for pleasant sensations and the horror of unpleasant and painful sensations. This humiliating servitude which the child contracts by the very fact of being born is the source of all the sins which he will one day commit in order to give his body its ease and sensual pleasures. It is also the cause or the reason for all the battles he will have to endure to free himself from it if he wants to be virtuous. (*op. cit.*, p. 174).

Therefore, whatever comes from our human nature is evil; the desires it feels and the pleasure it enjoys are at the very least suspect. Only what comes from the will — effort and sacrifice — are capable of leading us along the road to salvation. There can be no doubt that this voluntaristic concept of the spiritual life was shared by Bro. Jean-Baptiste. "Is it not written", he reminds his correspondent in another letter, "that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and that only those who do holy and constant violence to themselves will take it by force?" (May 1858). In another he affirms that "To become holy means to wage war on the devil and combat our poor corrupt nature... Warfare is our normal state" (20th March 1869).

Another proof of this voluntarism is his frequent use of the word "virtue", especially in its general sense of being virtuous, of practicing virtue. "You are made for solid virtue", he concludes while encouraging a brother, "and... you would spoil all your faculties if you did not use them for that purpose" (22nd January 1862). To him the word means the result of our efforts to make our spiritual faculties serve what is good, which presupposes our rejection of contrary appetites; in other words, mortification. In this context, let me note that he never speaks of self-mastery, either because his source hardly ever used that expression, or because he thinks it better to lead those he is directing along the path of a radical break with nature. "Your great penance", he advises someone, "must be the interior kind, control of the passions. To wage incessant war on self-

ishness, on sensuality, on dissipation: right there you have great penance... which is what makes today's saints" (15th December 1865). He wrote even more radically to another: "Do not be afraid to immolate human nature; it must die in order to rise and leave its weaknesses behind in the tomb" (9th January 1863).

## Follow Christ

What remains after he has immolated nature, and what he has to rely on, is Jesus Christ. "Why is man on earth?" he asks in another letter; he answers, "To serve God. What does it mean to serve God? To suffer for him to the point of immolation" (6th March 1863). How could we doubt that this is the central theme of his spirituality, since he comes back to it time and time again? It contains nothing new, nothing which is not current; but the abrupt way he presents it shocks our contemporary sensibilities. Maybe it is even a too-rigid interpretation of the less negative spirituality taught by Fr. Champagnat, which preferred offering to immolation.

Despite the jovial tone of his letters, the atmosphere which Bro. Jean-Baptiste creates, as Bro. Louis-Marie emphasized, is very much that of a serious mind. For him the way of religious life is the way of the cross. Since Jesus redeemed us through the cross, we must sanctify ourselves the same way. To follow God's Son made man for our salvation, is to give glory to God. How many times, especially during Lent, he reminded the brothers he was directing of the lesson of the cross! Let me cite just this passage, in which, to stir up the courage of a young brother who was devastated by his difficulties, he makes a complete presentation of his thinking on the subject:

And now, little brother, I want you to go live on Calvary, for here we are in the holy season of Lent. Stay there with Jesus and Mary. Look at the sufferings of Jesus and Mary and feel them deeply, and don't come down again until you have thoroughly grasped: 1) the goodness of Jesus; 2) the frightful ugliness of sin and its horrible malice; 3) finally, what your soul is worth and how much it cost Jesus (1859).

The grace of God, as one can well imagine, is the only way to bear up under such renunciation. The first of these graces is a religious vocation, which imposes this way upon us: "To become a brother is to commit oneself to becoming holy"; but it also gives us, through the Rule, the means to do that. Hence the importance of regularity which the su-

perior recalls ceaselessly to the Brothers Director. He urges all to be faithful to grace so as not to fall into tepidity and laxity.

Fidelity to both the Rule and to one's duty to sanctify oneself is possible only through prayer. We can say that prayer is expressly mentioned at least in every third letter. We often find it joined to the love of Jesus Christ and his Mother. Sometimes, depending on circumstances, he mentions intimacy with Our Lord:

Here is a secret which I will share with you: enter the Heart of Jesus, hide yourself there; its heat is infinite, so you cannot but be melted there, leave all your imperfections there, and emerge completely renewed or completely remolded into the image of the divine Heart (30th July 1859).

But passages like that are rather rare. Is that because he thinks that those he is directing are still too much novices in the spiritual life, or because he himself, too much a man of will-power, has hardly ever had such an experience? The latter supposition would also explain his rather surprising way of speaking about it. In either case, it proves that he adapted himself easily to the common way and was distrustful of extraordinary phenomena.

## **Be a religious**

As can be seen from this presentation, the way he proposed is so common that up to this point it presents hardly a single specifically Marist characteristic. In fact, apart from some answers to specific questions about school organization, one can find in his letters relatively few recommendations, for example, directly concerning the apostolate. Even though the latter is one element of our Marist vocation, it is not considered to be part of its essence, as the last Council affirmed, but rather, one may say, a sort of parallel way, even though it is continually linked to that essence. One of the rare letters where he takes up this problem is unfortunately not a model of clarity. The director to whom it is written has apparently not been getting very good results, because of his own superficial attitude:

Seclusion and regularity will give you serious habits and a solid mind-set, things which I highly prize in a religious and which are, in fact, so necessary for a man capable of doing good... I tell you again, do not let incidents, circumstances or trifles sidetrack your zeal. All you need on that score is good will. Remind yourself that you owe it to yourself first of all, and that you are a religious for your

own sake. Consequently the world should not bother you for trivia. Get it into your head, dear brother, that while on this earth you must not just make noise but bear fruit [here he makes an untranslatable play on words: *non en faisant du bruit, mais en faisant du fruit*], because you must save not only yourself but also all those you teach and direct. Now, to contribute to the salvation of others, you need more than ordinary holiness, for if you have only enough virtue for yourself, how can you give any to others? (17th May 1851).

What emerges from this text is the idea that we cannot sanctify others unless we first sanctify ourselves. Here, Bro. Jean-Baptiste parts company with Fr. Champagnat, who leaned more toward the idea that the apostle sanctifies himself through his devotedness towards his neighbor. Bro. Jean-Baptiste certainly stresses the fact that the apostolate gives us many opportunities for practicing virtue, as he puts it, but he does not seem to see the sanctifying power of devotedness in itself, even though it may be a source of great joy.

### **Be an apostle**

This does not mean, however, that he was suggesting a monastic vocation for the brothers; he was certainly far from doing so when he inveighed against one brother director:

You are wrong to say that you want to remain in seclusion. You were not made for seclusion but for combat... Do you know what you remind me of right now? St. Peter on Mt. Tabor. He said to Jesus Christ, "It is good for us to be here!" Remember that the sacred text says that St. Peter did not know what he was saying and was speaking like a child. Brothers, like the apostles, are not made for Tabor, but for Calvary, for running around the world to save lost sheep. (6th March 1863).

In his unpublished work on education, we read:

St. John Chrysostom remarks that Jesus Christ, having asked Peter if he loved him, had no other answer to all the assurances the apostle gave him, except, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep"; meaning: if you really love me, there is no better way to prove it than by busying yourself with saving the souls I have redeemed with my blood. (Manuscript, p. 13).

So, for Bro. Jean-Baptiste, to be a brother means to work at becoming a saint, on the one hand, and on the other, to devote oneself to the



salvation of children — two goals, of which the second needs the first, although each remains distinct.

This principle of subordination is also valid in relation to studies undertaken to help one succeed in the apostolate. This is why, even though he recognized that most of the brothers had too little intellectual formation, Bro. Jean-Baptiste warns them about the thirst for knowledge, which he considers to be excessive among the people of his day. In a long letter, he gives a complete explanation of his thinking on this subject. Despite its length, I think I ought to quote the passage which concerns us here:

You are right to place study among your temptations and the things which bother you, because for you it is a snare. To put it in clearer terms, it is not the study which is evil, but the passion you have for it; it is the subject of your study which is not good. For a teacher to prepare his classes is all well and good, but since your studies give you an aversion for teaching, it is clear that they are defective and that you are simply seeking vain self-satisfaction. Study is drying up within you the spirit of your state.

Study is good and necessary, but it must be regulated. To do that, you must follow three rules: 1° The aim of all study should be its usefulness for one's neighbor; otherwise it is a waste of time for a religious, if not something worse; 2° It should produce good effects in the student; any study which does us harm is a vice; 3° Any serious study done by a religious should lead to greater fidelity to his vocation; that is, it should give that religious the means to do greater good, to become capable of doing greater things for his neighbor and for the Institute. Judge your passion for history in the light of these three rules, and you will see whether it is good... Yes, love study, devote yourself to it, but change the subject-matter: set aside history on a grand scale and replace it with religion; then study will bring you virtue and contentment... Study religion, love God, become a saint: there, dear brother, is your program (1st July 1865).

*(to be continued)*



# DOCUMENTS

**1**

## **Resolutions**

**of**

**Marcellin CHAMPAGNAT**

**Seminarian**

**Parish Curate**



**9th January 1812**

An 8-page leaflet, 13.5 × 10cm, gray paper; writing on four pages, the others blank; no title.

*Original in AFM, 131.1; Life, pp. 14, 19 ff.; OM, I, doc. 17.*

Since 1st November 1805, Marcellin Champagnat had been a seminarian at Verrières, where on 1st November 1811, at the age of 22, he began the study of rhetoric. In a manner of speaking, he had grown up with that institution. When he crossed its threshold for the first time, it was only a year old. Its dilapidated condition had not improved much in the interval, and there was still a very easy going spirit among its students. Fr. Périer, its founder, “was no organizer, and for all his good will, he did not have enough control to establish order and discipline, which are indispensable in a house of this type” (Chausse, *Vie de J.L. Duplay*, 1, p. 91). In such a setting, it is hardly surprising that the students sometimes wandered through the village in “happy gangs” and that Marcellin, life of the party that he was, found this a natural outlet for the pressure which built up within him because of his difficulties with studies! In 1807, however, Fr. Linossier arrived as assistant to the superior; he established discipline and gave a solid push to studies. Two years later, in 1809, Fr. Barou succeeded Fr. Périer; he followed the same line and established in the house a religious atmosphere conducive to its goal. Marcellin Champagnat, having been touched by divine grace, had himself undergone a similar evolution. There is no evidence that he ever questioned his priestly vocation, but it is one thing to take life one day at a time, and quite another to think seriously of one’s future and help it gradually to unfold. Having been in the house for six years, having gained the confidence of his superiors and a natural ascendancy over his fellow-students, he might well have been tempted to take advantage of his position and let things slide. But his teachers constantly impressed upon him that becoming a good priest was not simply a question of learning Latin; it was far more important to become a man of God, because a priest’s ministry is much more one of example than of words. These resolutions, taken perhaps after a monthly retreat, are aimed at anchoring that conviction in his mind and heart.

1 copie page 107 134/1  
 Oe Monseigneur et mon. dieu,  
 je vous promets de ne plus vous offenser  
 de faire des actes de foi des perances  
 et autres semblables toutes les fois  
 que je pourrai de ne jamais retour-  
 ner au cabaret sans nécessité de fuir  
 les mauvaises compagnies; et en tout  
 de ne rien faire qui soit contre vo-  
 tre service, mais au contraire de donner  
 de bons exemples de porter les autres  
 à pratiquer la vertu autant qu'il  
 sera en moi; d'instruire les autres  
 de vos divins préceptes, d'apprendre le  
 catéchisme aux pauvres aux orphelins  
 qu'à des pauvres riches, faites, mon  
 dieu, comme vous, que je accomplisse fidèlement  
 toutes les choses que vous m'avez ordonnées  
 et que je sois fidèle à vous.



O mon Seigneur et mon Dieu, / je vous promets ne plus vous offenser, / de faire des actes de foi, d'espérance / et autres semblables toutes les fois / [5] que je penserai; de ne jamais retour- / ner au cabaret sans nécessité; de fuir / les mauvaises companies et, en un mot, / de ne rien faire qui soit contre votre / service; mais, au contraire, de donner / [10] de bons exemples, de porter les autres / à pratiquer la vertu autant qu'il / sera en moi; d'instruire les autres / de vos divins préceptes; d'apprendre le / catéchisme aux povres aussi bien / [15] qu'aux riches. Faites, mon / divin Sauveur, que j'accomplisse / fidèlement toutes ces / résolutions que je prends.

My Lord and my God,  
 I promise never to offend you again;  
 to make acts of faith, hope  
 and the like every time  
 I think of it; never to go back  
 to the tavern without necessity; to avoid  
 bad companions and, in a word,  
 not to do anything which would go against  
 my serving you. I promise, on the contrary, to give  
 good example; to lead others,  
 as far as I can, to practice virtue;  
 to instruct others  
 in your divine teachings; to teach  
 catechism to the poor as well  
 as the rich. Divine Saviour,  
 help me to carry out  
 faithfully all these  
 resolutions I am taking.

---

15 - riches, pr. pauvres.

17-18 fidèlement... prends, pr. fidèlement toutes le... tous les engagements que je viens de faire.

J'avoue Seigneur que je ne me connais  
 pas mieux que j'ai eu un bien grand  
 défaut, mais j'espère que n'ayant fait la  
 grâce de les connaître vous me ferez aussi  
 celle de les combattre vainement au combat-  
 tant avec courage c'est ce que je vous  
 demande ~~de tout~~ du plus profond  
 anéantissement de mon cœur du vin pour  
 de plus est principalement à vous que  
 j'adresse ma prière vous qui, par ~~ce~~  
 par votre profonde bonté, avez combattu  
 et vaincu l'orgueil humain donnez moi  
 vous en courage cette vertu et vous remettez  
 en moi le trône de l'orgueil, non seulement  
 parce qu'il est insupportable aux hommes  
 mais parce qu'il se tient à votre sainteté  
 St. vierge, St. Louis de Gonzague c'est  
 à vous, principalement que je  
 m'adresse maintenant pour moi qu'il que  
 je sois votre indigne serviteur

J'avoue Seigneur que je ne me connoissois / [20] pas encore; que j'ai encore bien grands / défauts, mais j'espère que m'ayant fait la / grâce de les connoître, vous me ferez aussi / celle de les vaincre en les combattant avec courage, c'est ce que je vous / [25] demande du plus profond / anéantissement de mon coeur. Divin Coeur / de Jésus, c'est principalement à vous que / j'adresse ma prière, vous qui, / par votre profonde humilité avec combatu / [30] et vaincu l'orgueil humain, donnez-moi, je / vous en conjure, cette vertu et renversez / en moi le trône de l'orgueil, non seulement / par ce qu'il est insupportable aux hommes, / mais par ce qu'il déplaît à votre sainteté. / [35] Ste. Vierge, St. Louis de Gonzague, c'est / à vous principalement que je / m'adresse; demandez pour moi, quoique / je sois votre indigne serviteur,

I admit, Lord, that I still do not know  
 myself, that I still have very great  
 defects; but I hope that since you have given me the  
 grace to know them, you will also give me  
 the grace to overcome them by fighting them  
 courageously. This is what I  
 ask you from the depths  
 of my humiliated heart. Divine Heart  
 of Jesus, I address my prayer  
 mainly to you, to you who  
 in your profound humility fought  
 and overcame human pride. I beg you  
 to give me this virtue, and to overthrow  
 the throne of pride within me, not only  
 because others cannot put up with it,  
 but also because it displeases your holiness.  
 Holy Virgin, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, I turn primarily  
 to you; even though I am your unworthy servant,

23 - vaincre, pr. combattre.

25 - du plus, pr. dans le plus.

28 - vous qui, pr + pour rendre.



à cet adorable sang d'enferme dans  
 la grâce de son couvent, et que son  
 forment, je combatte et vainque  
 mon amour propre et mon argent.  
 je prends au jour d'hui la résolution  
 le 9 janvier 1812. la résolution de  
 le combattre, et toute les fois qu'il  
 aura l'avantage sur moi je ferai la  
 penitence que je vivrai pour je parlerai  
 sans distinction à tous ceux qui me  
 quel que repugnance que je pourrai  
 éprouver; puis que de ce moment je  
 reconnais que je suis que l'orgueil  
 qui si oppresse pour quoi les ai-je  
 est-ce à cause de moi tout je suis le  
 dernier de ma classe est-ce à cause de  
 mes vertus je suis un orgueilleux?

7

à cet adorable Cocur de Jésus, / [40] la grâce de me connoître et que, me / connoissant, je combatte et vain-  
que / mon amour propre et mon orgueil. / Je prends aujourd'hui, / ce 9 janvier 1812. la résolution de / [45]  
le combattre et toute les fois qu'il / aura l'avantage sur moi, je ferai la / pénitence que je m'impose. Je parle-  
rai / sans distinction à tous mes condisciples / quelque répugnance que je puisse / [50] éprouver; puisque,  
dès ce moment, je / reconnois que se n'est que l'orgueil / qui si oppose. Pourquoi les méprisé-je? / Est-ce  
à cause de mes talents? Je suis le / dernier de ma classe; est-ce à cause de / [55] mes vertus? Je suis un orgueilleux;

ask the adorable Heart of Jesus  
to give me the grace to know myself, and once  
I know myself, to fight and overcome  
my self-love and pride.

Today,  
9th January 1812, I resolve to  
fight it, and every time it  
gets the better of me, I will perform  
whatever penance I impose on myself. I will talk  
with all my fellow-students without exception,  
no matter how repugnant I find  
some of them, since I recognize now  
that it is only pride that  
keeps me from doing so. Why do I despise them?  
Because of my talents? I am the  
last in my class. Because of  
my virtue? I am very proud.

39 - Jésus, pr. + de.

43 - aujourd'hui, pr. + la résolution.

est en la coupe de la bourse de mon  
cor car c'est Dieu qui la fait, en son  
il a pu tout construire. en fin de la fin  
un qu'un peu de de papiers  
non



---

est-ce à cause de la beauté de mon / corps? C'est Dieu qui l'a fait, encore est- / il assez mal construit, enfin  
je ne suis / [59] rien qu'un peu de poussière.

Because I have a good-looking  
body? God made it, and in any case it's  
badly enough put together, and I am  
nothing but a pinch of dust.



**3rd May 1815**

An 8-page leaflet, 13.5 × 9.5 cm; white paper; writing on pp. 3 through 7.

*Found in AFM 131.2.*

Even though the following text reads almost without interruption, except after the words “to talk so much” at the end of the first section, it is still not homogeneous. These resolutions were not all made at the same time, but on at least four different occasions. The first was probably made after the annual retreat of 1814, and the others during subsequent monthly retreats. Two reasons support this hypothesis: first, it is hardly likely he would have stressed the single point of silence several years in a row; second, Marcellin Champagnat’s basic mind-set hardly leads one to think he would have stayed very long with the same formula.

These resolutions give us a glimpse of a person who is calm, with no particular anxieties or worries, but who is perhaps too sure of himself. We may presume that his theological studies are proceeding normally and that his spiritual life is growing deeper, leaning more and more towards simplicity.

As for silence, it was strongly insisted on in seminaries. On several occasions, in 1686 and 1691, Fr. Tronson warned a seminary rector: “I am not surprised you find it difficult to make the seminarians observe silence at the doorways of their rooms. However, you should not give up because of the difficulty, nor should you neglect anything in your efforts to have it observed; without it, no matter how much effort you put into trying to run your seminary well, and no matter how much vigilance you exercise, you will never succeed” (Msgr. Icard, *Traditions des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice*, p. 40). Fr. Olier also never stopped recommending the observance of the rule of silence (*Vie de M. Olier*, vol. 2, p. 302). Hence the importance Marcellin Champagnat apparently attached to it.

2 copie page 109

Resolutions qu'on me fait sous  
la protection de la Sainte  
Vierge

première resolution

je ne parlerai point ni dans  
les confers ni dans les degrés  
soit par signes ou autrement  
sans nécessité

je ne parlerai point un  
plus, soit avant soit après  
le brévière, soit en classe  
ou pendant la lecture  
en un mot je garderai  
constamment le silence d'une

131/2 3.

Résolutions que je mets sous / la protection de la Sainte / Vierge. / Première résolution. / Je ne parlerai point du (tout) dans / [5] les corridors, ni dans les degrés, / soit par signes ou autre- / ment, sans nécessités. / Je ne parlerai point non / plus, soit avant, soit après / [10] le brévière, soit en classe / ou pendant la lecture, / en un mot, je garderai / constamment le silence d'une

Resolutions I place under  
the protection of the Blessed  
Virgin.

First resolution.

I will not speak at all in  
the corridors nor in the stairways,  
either by signs or other-  
wise, without necessity.  
Nor will I speak at  
all, either before or after  
the recitation of the breviary, in class  
or during the reading; in a word, I will keep  
continual silence from one



recreation à l'Église sans une  
 grande nécessité. après la cla-  
 sse ou la conférence je ferai une  
 visite au saint Sacrement.  
 Je me promènerai pendant mes  
 récréations indifféremment avec  
 tout le monde.  
 pendant la classe conférence  
 ou autre exercices qui demandent  
 de l'attention je ferai mon pos-  
 sible pour être attentif.  
 Je tiendrais aussi pendant les  
 mes récréations de moins un  
 registre en parotes.



recreation à l'autre, sans une / [15] grande nécessité. Après la cla / sse ou la conférence, je ferai une / visite  
au Saint Sacrement. / Je me promènerai pendant mes / récréations indifferamment avec / [20] tout le monde.  
/ Pendant la classe conférence / ou autre exercices qui demande / de l'attention, je ferai mon possi- / ble  
pour être attentif. / [25] Je tacherai aussi, pendant / mes récréations, de moins me / répandre en paroles.

recreation to the next, except in cases of  
great necessity. After class-  
es or conferences, I will make a  
visit to the Blessed Sacrament.  
During my recreations I will walk  
with everyone  
indiscriminately.  
During classes and conferences,  
or any other exercise which requires  
my entire attention, I will do my best  
to remain attentive.  
I will also try  
to talk less  
during my recreations.

Je promets de encore de nouveaux  
 de remplir moyennant la grâce  
 de Dieu toutes les résolutions  
 si dessus énoncées  
 à votre tout est  
 Je me garderai bien de  
 médire de quicque se soit sur  
 quelque prétexte que se pour-  
 che  
 et bon Dieu vous comble de sa  
 misère ayez pitié de moi je  
 vous en conjure. Je salue  
 vous savez que je suis votre  
 octave à la vérité je suis  
 indigne d'une si grande  
 faveur mais c'est en cela  
 même qui est votre tout  
 à mon égard. ainsi soit  
 131/2 5

Je promets encore de nouveau / de remplir moy(en)nant la grâce / [30] de Dieu, toutes les résolutions / ci-dessus énoncées. / Ainsi soit-il. / Je me garderai bien de / médire de qui que se soit, sous / quelque prétexte que se puisse / [35] être. / Mon Dieu, vous connoissez ma / misère, ayez pitié de moi, je / vous en conjure. Ste. Vierge, / [40] vous savez que je suis votre / esclave, à la vérité je suis / indigne d'une si grande / faveur, mais c'est en cela / même qu'éclatera votre bonté / [45] à mon égard. ainsi soit-il.

I promise once again,  
with the grace of God,  
to keep all the resolutions  
I have set down above.  
Amen.  
I will be very careful  
not to criticize anyone, under  
whatever pretext.

My God, you know how wretched  
I am, have mercy on me, I  
beg you. Holy Virgin,  
you know I am your  
slave. I am really  
unworthy of such a great  
favour, but even on that point,  
your goodness towards me  
will shine forth. Amen

---

28 - promets, pr. + de.

31 - ci, pr. si.



Qu'il y ait une sorte de  
 L'acception de mots et de signifi-  
 cation de l'union saire de mon  
 Bateau 3 may mit huit.  
 ceux quinze  
 je prends de nouveau la resolu-  
 tion de remplir toutes celles que j'ai  
 déjà prises et j'en prends de  
 nouvelles que je mets sous la  
 protection de la bñe M<sup>re</sup> vierge  
 de M<sup>re</sup> Martin de St Louis et de  
 St Louis St patron et barcelone.  
 1<sup>re</sup> toutes les fois qu'après mon  
 examen du soir j'aurai je me  
 reconnaitrai coupable de quelque  
 médisance je me prierai de  
 mon dévouement.  
 2<sup>re</sup> toutes les fois que je me

Aujourd'hui, veille de / Lacension de Notre Seigneur, / veille de l'anniversaire de mon / Batême, 3 may mil huit / [50] cens quinze. / Je prends de nouveau la résol(ution) / de remplir toutes celles que j'ai / déjà prises et j'en prends de / nouvelles que je mets sous la / [55] protection de la très Ste. Vierge, / de St. Martin, de St. Louis g. et de / mon St. patron Marcellin. / 1° Toutes les fois qu'après mon / examen du soir je me / [60] reconnaitrai coupable de quelque / médisance je me priverai de / mon déjeuner. / 2° Toutes le fois que je me

Today, the Vigil of  
the Ascension of Our Lord,  
the eve of the anniversary of my  
baptism, 3rd May 1815.

I renew my resolution  
to keep all those I have  
already made, and I take  
new ones which I place under the  
protection of the Most Holy Virgin,  
St. Martin, St. Aloysius Gonzaga,  
and my holy patron, St. Marcellin.

1° Every time my  
evening examen makes me  
aware that I have  
criticized anyone, I will deprive myself of  
breakfast.

2° Every time I

47 - Lacension de, pr. + noutre.

49 - 3, pr. 5.

56 - g. supralineam.

59 - du soir, pr. + j'aurai.



J'aurai reconnu coupable de quelque  
 mensonge - ou de quelque  
 exagération - je dirai le misère  
 pour en demander pardon à  
 Dieu.  
 Je prendrai la ferme résolution  
 de ne me servant de la grâce de  
 Dieu, fidèle à tout ceci.  
 Sancta maria ora pro me  
 Je t'ind de gousage et de la b  
 se en Monum de St martin de la  
 voir vivants et d'oups de verges  
 mois de marie  
 177 R l'union  
 131/2 7



serai reconnu coupable de quelque / [65] mensonge ou de quelque / exagération, je dirai le miserere / pour en demander pardon à / Dieu. / 3° Je prends la ferme résolution / [70] d'être, moy(en)nant la grâce de / Dieu, fidel à tout ceci. / Sancta Maria ora pro me. / 1e St. Louis de Gonzague et de la Ste. Vierge / 1e en l'honneur de St. Martin si le / [75] Roi reviens et deux Ste. Vierge 6 / mois de Marie. / St. J.F.R. 1e mes - (1)

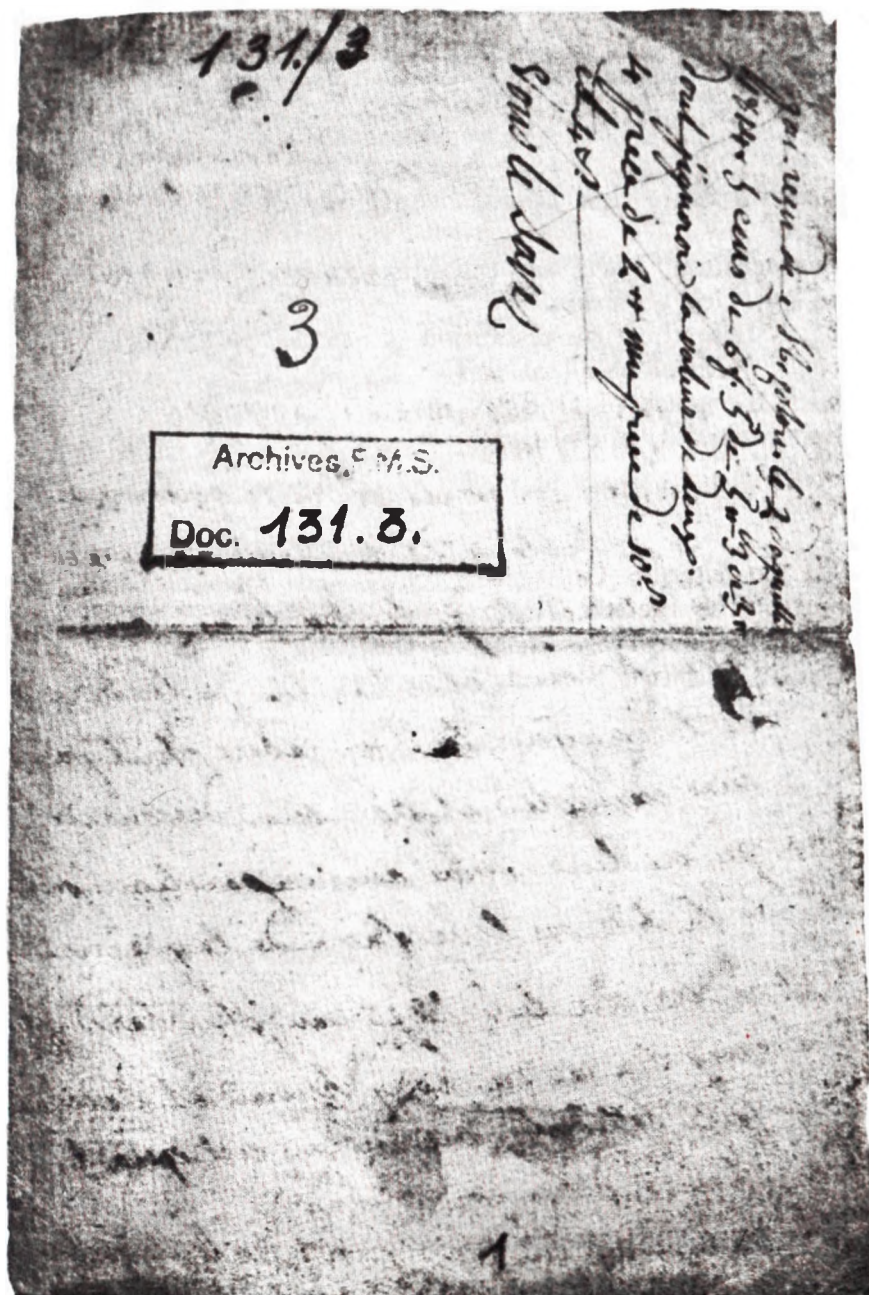
become aware that I have been guilty of a  
lie or any  
exaggeration, I will say the Miserere  
to ask God's pardon.  
3° I Take the firm resolution  
to be faithful to all of this  
with the grace of God.  
Sancta Maria, ora pro me.

\* \* \*

1st St. Aloysius Gonzaga  
and of the Blessed Virgin  
1st in honor of St. Martin if the King  
returns and two Blessed Virgin  
6 months of Mary St. J.F.R. my (1).

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(1) It is impossible to decipher what he meant by this postscript.



## First Rules for Vacations

A four-page leaflet, 15 × 10 cm, gray paper, writing on pages 2 through 4. On the first page, written length-wise, one can read: "I received from M. Colin, 2 July 1814, 5 six-franc coins, 5 of five francs, 3 of three francs; I do not know the value of two of them. Four two-franc coins; one of ten centimes and four centimes. You know...

*Cf. AFM, 131.3: Life, pp. 22-24.*

According to Br. Jean-Baptiste, the following text, which he himself reproduces in his biography of Fr. Champagnat (*Life* pp. 22-24), are the "rules he drew up at the diocesan seminary, for his first vacation" (p. 23), which would mean 1814. But from an examination of the text, it would appear that the vacation in question is actually that of 1813, preceding his entrance into the major seminary.

Marcellin received tonsure, minor orders and the subdiaconate from Cardinal Fesch on 6th January 1814 (OM, I, doc. 26, p. 171). From that date, he was bound to the recitation of the breviary, but he makes no mention of it in these rules, as he will in the following ones. In addition, he decides that he will get up no later than five-thirty, so as to make only a quarter-hour of meditation. Both these points are substantially altered in the second set of rules, which specify five o'clock rising and a half-hour of meditation, which corresponds with the schedule of the major seminary. The fact that he does not follow that schedule in these first rules, but only in the second, would seem to indicate that the first set precedes his entering the major seminary.

But that still does not solve all the problems, because the next of these first rules indicates a break with the past, as though something new had happened. If, for example, this was the first time he was going on vacation as a seminarian in cassock, we could understand that he would have to change his attitude, because of the respect which his garb would inspire. But there is nothing to indicate that this was the case, because as a rule, the cassock was received only with tonsure. Was his decision to maintain a somewhat distant attitude dictated merely by the fact that he was about to take a step higher, an almost definitive step on the road to the priesthood? Without any further indications, it's hard to say. Nevertheless, the overall tone of these rules hardly matches the image we have of their author from other sources, and we can attribute it only to his still rather naive "first fervour".



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3. Règlement que je dois observer  
pendant mes vacances.

- 1.<sup>o</sup> je passerai mes vacances dans ma  
famille.
- 2.<sup>o</sup> je ferai très peu de voyages.
- 3.<sup>o</sup> je m'accommoderai autant qu'il me  
sera possible à la manière de mes  
mes parents. je les traiterai tous  
avec douceur et charité. je tâcherai  
de les gagner tous à jésus christ par  
mes exemples et par mes discours.  
je ne leur dirai aucune parole qui ait  
le faict ou leur faire de la peine.
- 4.<sup>o</sup> je ne me lèverai jamais plus tard que  
cinq heures ou cinq heures et demie.
- 5.<sup>o</sup> je serai toujours au moins un quart  
d'heure d'oraison.
- 6.<sup>o</sup> je me reposerai tous les jours autant qu'il me  
semblera.

Reglement que je dois observer / pendant mes vacances. / 1° Je passerai mes vacances dans ma / famille. / [5] 2° Je ferai très peu de voyages. / 3° Je m'accommoderai, autant qu'il me / sera possible, à la manière de vivre de / mes parent. Je les traiterai tous / avec douceur et charité. Je tâcherai / [10] de les gagner tous à Jésus Christ par / mes exemples et par mes discours. / Je ne leur dirai aucune parole qui pût / les fâcher ou leur faire de la peine. / 4° Je ne me lèverai jamais plus tard que / [15] cinq heures ou cinq heures et demie (1). / 5° Je ferai toujours au moins un quart / d'heure d'oraison. / 6° J'assisterai tous les jours, autant qu'il me

Rules I should follow  
during my vacation.

1° I will spend my vacation with my family.

2° I will travel very little.

3° As far as possible, I will adapt to my parents'

lifestyle. I will treat everyone

with meekness and charity. I will try

to win them all over to Jesus Christ by my example and words.

I will not say a single word to them which might anger or hurt them.

4° I will never get up later than five o'clock or five-thirty. (1)

5° I will always make at least a quarter-hour's meditation.

6° As far as possible, I will attend

---

6 - autant, u, supra linéam.

(1) Bro. Jean-Baptiste expresses it more clearly in the *Life*: "My normal rising time will be at five o'clock and never later than five-thirty" (p. 20).



131/3

Sera posée au Saint S. à la messe  
 après laquelle je me rendrai dévot  
 pour étudier ma théologie au moins  
 pendant une heure après quoi je pourrai  
 m'occuper à quel<sup>que</sup> chose.  
 2<sup>e</sup> à midi moins un quart l'examen  
 particulier à midi je prendrai la  
 nourriture qu'on m'aura préparée après  
 avoir prie Dieu de la bénir.  
 3<sup>e</sup> je tacherais de me lever toujours de table  
 avec appétit pour éviter l'indigestion et  
 les autres vices qui en sont la suite.  
 4<sup>e</sup> je me ferai un oratoire <sup>hors d'une cha</sup> que je  
 dédierais à la Ste. Vierge et à St. Louis d-  
 gonzague et la ferais faire avec prière  
 et vagues à une autre pratique de  
 dévotion prosterné devant un crucifix  
 je pourrai en esprit le très saint Sacrament  
 de l'autel.



sera possible, au saint Sacrifice) de la messe, / [20] après laquelle je me rendrai (2) de suite / pour étudier ma théologie au moins / pendant une heure, après quoi je pourrai / m'occuper à quelque autre chose. / 7° A midi moins un quart, l'examen / [25] particulier. A midi je prendrai la / nourriture qu'on m'aura préparée (3) après / avoir prié Dieu de la bénir. / 8° Je tâcherai de me lever toujours de table / avec appetit pour éviter l'intempérance et / [30] les autres vices qui en sont la suite. / 9° Je me ferai un oratoire hors de ma cha(mbre) que je / dédierai à la Ste. Vierge et à St. Louis de / Gonzague et là j'irai faire mes prières / et vaquer à mes autres pratiques de / [35] dévotion. Prostrné devant un crucifix, / j'adorerai en esprit les très Saint Sacrem(en)t / de l'autel (4).

the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every day,  
 after which I will go (2) immediately  
 to study my theology for at least  
 an hour, after which I will  
 keep busy with something else.  
 7° At a quarter to twelve, my particular  
 examen. At noon I will eat the  
 food which has been prepared for me (3) after  
 having asked God to bless it.  
 8° I will try always to leave the table  
 still a little hungry, in order to avoid intemperance and  
 the other vices which flow from it.  
 9° Outside my room I will make an oratory which I  
 will dedicate to the Blessed Virgin and to St. Aloysius  
 Gonzaga, and I will go there to say my prayers  
 and perform my other  
 devotions. Kneeling before a crucifix,  
 I will adore in spirit the most Holy Sacrament  
 of the Altar (4).

23 - autre, au, supra lineam.

31 - hors de ma chambre, supra lineam.

(2) Bro. Jean-Baptiste's rendering is: "after which I will return home immediately" (*Vie*, 1, pp. 24-25; not in English editions).

(3) Bro. Jean-Baptiste modifies resolution number 7 as follows: "At a quarter to twelve, my particular examen, as at the Major Seminary; then dinner preceded by grace before meals" (cf. *Vie* 1, p. 22). The phrase, "as at the Major Seminary", is incorrect, if we follow the hypothesis proposed in the introduction, and there is really nothing to justify this addition. The second variant, "then dinner" corrects the no doubt erroneous impression which could be given by the original, according to which Marcellin intended to eat alone. Why does he feel the need to insist on saying grace? There is no reason to suppose that his family did not say it. Maybe he meant that he himself should say the prayer or bless the food.

(4) Bro. Jean-Baptiste omits the phrase "outside my room" and specifies that it was in this oratory that Marcellin intended to adore the Blessed Sacrament, in spirit. This variation no doubt better expresses the author's real thought, but we do not know if that holds true also for the omitted phrase.

10<sup>e</sup> je jeunerois tous les vendredi au Mont  
 de la croix et par mon de vote redemptio  
 11<sup>e</sup> pour mes confessions et communions  
 je suivrai le conseil de mon directeur  
 12<sup>e</sup> j'instruirai les ignorants riches ou pauvres  
 sur ce qui regarde leur salut  
 13<sup>e</sup> je visitrai les malades autant que je  
 pourrai  
 14<sup>e</sup> je tacterai de ne me brouiller jamais  
 avec les personnes de Sexe.  
 15<sup>e</sup> pour le soir de tacterai de passer  
 encore une heure pour la theologie.  
 16<sup>e</sup> je ferois la priere du soir en commun je  
 tirai en mon particulier le sujet de  
 mes oraisons  
 est avec votre Secours à Saint Omer  
 que je prie Dieu ce petit règlement  
 faites que votre divine fide soit pour  
 agréable et qu'il me garde pendant  
 mes vacances et pendant toute ma vie  
 de ce qui pourrai les dévoter  
 à vous etc.

10° Je jeunerai tous les vendredis en l'honneur / de la mort et passion de notre Rédempteur. / [40] 11° Pour mes confessions et communions, / je suivrai le conseil de mon directeur. / 12° J'instruirai les ignorants riches ou pauvres / sur ce qui regarde leur salut. / 13° Je visiterai les malades autant que je / [45] pourrai. / 14° Je tâcherai de ne me trouver jamais / seul avec les personnes du sex. / 15° Pour l'étude du soir, de tâcherai de prendre / encore une heure pour la théologie (5). / [50] 16° Je ferai la prière du soir en commun (6). Je / lirai en mon particulier le sujet de / mon oraison. / C'est avec votre secours, ô Sainte Vierge / que j'espère suivre ce petit règlement. / [55] Faites que votre divin Fils l'ait pour / agréable et qu'il me garde pendant / mes vacances et pendant toute ma vie / de ce qui pourroit lui déplaire. / Amen / [60] L(oué soit) J(ésus) C(hrist).

- 10° I will fast every Friday in honor  
of the death and passion of our Redeemer.  
11° I will follow the advice of my director  
concerning my confessions and communions.  
12° I will instruct the ignorant, both rich and poor,  
in what concerns their salvation.  
13° I will visit the sick as often as I  
can.  
14° I will try never to be  
alone with persons of the opposite sex.  
15° For my evening study, I will try to spend  
another hour on theology (5).  
16° I will say night prayers in common. (6) I  
will read my meditation subject  
in private.

It is with your help, O Blessed Virgin,  
that I hope to follow these few rules.  
Grant that it may be pleasing  
to your divine Son and that he may preserve me, during  
my vacation and throughout my entire life,  
from whatever might displease him.  
Amen.  
Praised by Jesus Christ.

---

38 - honneur, ur, supra lineam.

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(5) "For" or "during" evening study means the same thing, according to Bro. Jean-Baptiste; the implication being that it was normal for Marcellin to have an evening study period, since there was always one in the seminary.

(6) Br. Jean-Baptiste renders "in common" as "with my family" which certainly clarifies Marcellin's intention.



## Second Rules for Vacations

An eight-page leaflet, 9.5 × 14 cm, gray paper, with writing on pages 2 through 6.

*AFM*, 131.4; *cf. Life*, pp. 23-24.

Father Champagnat obviously drew up this text during the time he was a subdeacon, since he does not celebrate Mass but does recite the breviary. So we can date it from his vacation of 1814, or even 1815. According to Bro. Jean-Baptiste (*Life*, p. 23), it was a complement to the preceding rules, from which it differs, not only in terms of the two points just mentioned, but also by the two hours of extra study and its more relaxed tone.

What is most surprising is the note at the end, dated May 1821. These seven lines of the manuscript are certainly in the same handwriting as the rest and are found all alone on page 6, i.e., on the back of page 5, where these rules end. There can be no doubt, therefore, that it refers to the latter. The element of surprise does not only spring from the fact that this addition says these rules should apply not only during vacation time but also, it would seem, to ordinary days, which is conceivable. What is more surprising is that Marcellin returns to vacation rules which are at least five years old, and on the anniversary of his baptism, makes them his rule of life. In the interval, as will be seen from the following document, he had drawn up other resolutions, which he renewed from time to time. Also, in coming back to these particular rules, he does not bother, or does not think it necessary, to change such expressions as, "after which I will go to Mass"; "I will attend two Masses"; "if I cannot amuse myself with anything else". Unfortunately, all we can do is raise the question, without having any answers. But it is important that the reader be aware of it.



131/4  
 Sainte Vierge, je n'ignore  
 pas, que sans votre protection,  
 je ne sois incapable de remplir  
 fidèlement ce petit règlement  
 sur les exercices et les occupations  
 du temps de mes vacances; c'est  
 pourquoi j'implore votre puissant  
 secours auprès de Dieu, et j'espère  
 que, en votre tendresse pour les  
 pêcheurs qui désirent leur conversion,  
 vous voudrez bien m'obtenir la  
 grâce de l'accomplir punctuellement  
 et cela pour la plus grande gloire  
 de votre très miséricordieux fils.  
 ainsi soit-il.

St Jean François regis vous qui  
 êtes si puissant auprès de Dieu  
 pour obtenir la guérison du corps, la  
 guérison vous m'obtenez à l'égard de l'âme  
 cette sainte image créée à l'image de  
 Dieu, ne jettez pas  
 aussi

Sainte Vierge, je n'ignore / pas que sans votre protection / je ne sois incapable de remplir / fidèlement ce petit règlement / [5] sur les exercices et les occupations / du temps de mes vacances; c'est / pourquoi j'implore votre puissant / secours auprès de Dieu et j'espère / que, vu votre tendresse pour les / [10] pécheurs qui désirent leur conversion, / vous voudrez bien m'obtenir la / grâce de l'accomplir ponctuellement / et cela pour la plus grande gloire / de votre très miséricordieux Fils. / [15] Ainsi soit-il. / St. Jean François Régis, vous qui / êtes si puissant auprès de Dieu / pour obtenir la guérison du corps, le / seriez vous moins à l'égard de l'âme (1), / [20] cette substance créée à l'image de / Dieu? non cela n'est pas ainsi.

Holy Virgin, I know  
that without your protection  
I am incapable of faithfully  
keeping these few rules  
about prayers and work  
during my vacation time. That is  
why I implore your powerful  
help with God; and I hope  
that, in view of your tenderness towards  
sinners who are seeking conversion  
you will deign to obtain for me the  
grace to carry them out in detail,  
for the greater glory  
of your most merciful Son.  
Amen.

St. John Francis Regis, you who  
are so powerful with God  
for obtaining bodily cures,  
would you do less for the soul (1),  
that substance created in God's  
image? No, that would not be possible.

---

(1) Allusion to the conversion mentioned above.



124/2  
 C'est donc par cette intercession  
 aussi bien que par celle de Marie  
 que j'irai remplir la règle  
 que je me fais presentlyment

Je me leverai à 5 heures.  
 Je ferai immédiatement après une  
 demi-heure d'oraison.  
 après cela je visiterai mes petites  
 heures après quoi j'irai à la messe.  
 après la messe ou avant je choisirai  
 une heure pour étudier l'écriture. Je  
 j'en une 2<sup>e</sup> pour étudier la théologie  
 avant dîner. après dîner je prendrai  
 une récréation après près d'une heure  
 et demi ou deux heures. S'il y a  
 quel que malade dans les environs  
 ou quelqu'autre personne qui ait  
 besoin de mes conseils je prendrai ce  
 moment pour les aller visiter

3

C'est donc par votre intercession, / aussi bien que par celle de Marie / que j'espère remplir la règle / [25] que je me fait présentement. / Je me lèverai à 5 heures. / Je ferai immédiatement après (2) une / demie heure d'oraison. / Après cela je réciterai mes petites / [30] heures, après quoi j'irai à la messe. / Après la messe ou avant, je chois(ir)ai / une heure pour étudier l'Ecriture ste. / J'en (3) une 2e pour étudier la théologie / avant diner. Après diner je prendrai / [35] une récréation à peu près d'une heure / et demie ou deux heures. S'il y a / quelque malade dans les environs / ou quelqu'autre personne qui ait / besoin de mes conseils, je prendrai ce / [40] moment pour les aller visiter.

Therefore, through your intercession,  
as well as Mary's,  
I hope to carry out the rules  
that I am about to make for myself.

I will get up at five o'clock.  
Immediately after (2) I will make a  
half-hour's meditation.  
After that I will recite the Little  
Hours, and then I will go to Mass.  
I will set aside an hour, before or after Mass,  
to study Sacred Scripture.  
I will (3) a second hour to studying theology  
before dinner. After dinner I will take  
about an hour and a half  
or two hours for recreation. If there is  
anyone sick in the neighborhood,  
or anyone else who may  
need my advice, I will use this  
time to visit them.

---

31 - choisirai, ir supra lineam.

(2) After washing up and perhaps after morning prayer, as the seminary regulations stipulated.

(3) Read, "I will set aside", which was no doubt omitted through oversight.



ce temps écoulé je prendrai  
 encore deux heures une sera  
 employée à regarder les traités que  
 j'ai déjà vu et l'autre je tirai  
 quelque ouvrage concernant ma  
 position et mon état. je prendrai  
 encore une heure de recreation à la  
 suite de laquelle je recevrai mon  
 office c'est à dire vespres matinales et  
 laudes pour le lendemain  
 j'aurai aussi soin de me consacrer  
 une demi-heure avant souper  
 pour faire une lecture de prieres  
 tous les dimanches et fêtes  
 j'assisterai aux deux messes et  
 a vespres pour la communion  
 je suivrai autant qu'il me sera  
 possible l'usage pratique du seminaire



Ce temps écoulé, je prendrai / encore deux heures: une sera / employer a repasser les traités que / j'ai déjà vu, et l'autre je lirai / [45] quelque ouvrage concernant ma / position et mon état. Je prendrai / encore une heure de récréation à la / suite de laquelle je réciterai mon / office, c'est-à-dire vêpres, matines et / [50] laudes pour le lendemain. / J'aurai aussi soin de me ménager / une demie heure avant soupé / pour faire une lecture de piété. / Tous les dimanches et fêtes / [55] j'assisterai aux deux messes et / a vêpres. Pour la communion / je suivrai autant qu'il me sera / possible ma pratique du séminaire.

After this time, I will set aside  
 two more hours: one for  
 going over the subject matter  
 I have already studied, and the other for reading  
 some book about my  
 position and state in life. Then I will take  
 another hour's recreation,  
 after which I will recite my  
 office, viz., Vespers, Matins and  
 Lauds for the next day.  
 I will also be careful to set aside  
 a half-hour before supper  
 for spiritual reading.  
 On Sundays and feastdays  
 I will attend two Masses and  
 Vespers. As for receiving Communion,  
 as far as possible I will do  
 what I did in the seminary.

J'aurai ~~soin~~ de me choisir le  
 temps entre les deux heures  
 une heure pour lire l'écriture  
 St. et le soir après les offices  
 si je puis je ferai le catéchisme  
 aux enfants que j'aurai soin de  
 préparer. Je cherai aussi de  
 choisir après une heure pour  
 étudier la théologie.  
 quant aux visites <sup>ou de</sup> ~~inutiles~~ je  
<sup>ne puis bien les</sup> ~~ne puis~~ rendre que le moins que je  
 pourrai je ne pourrai à aucun  
 temps défendre et de quel les gens  
 pourraient prendre de la sur  
 l'escandale. Je m'occuperai pendant  
 mes recreations a quelq. ouvrage de  
 main si je ne puis m'attacher a  
 autre chose c'est en mon lieu ce  
 que je pere accomplir enoyant ~~chose~~  
 grâce 5

J'aurai soin de me choisir le / [60] matin entre les deux messes / une heure pour lire l'Ecriture / ste. et le soir après les offices / si je puis je ferai le catéchisme / aux enfants que j'aurai soin de / [65] préparer (4). Tacherai aussi de / choisir après une heure pour / étudier la théologie. / Quant aux visites inutiles ou de pure bienséance je / n'en rendrai que le moins que je / [70] pourrai. Je ne jourai a aucun / jeux défendu et du quel les gens / pourroient prendre de là un sujet / de scandale. Je m'occuperai pendant / mes récréation à quelque ouvrage de / [75] main si je ne puis m'amuser à / autre chose (5). C'est ô mon Dieu ce / que j'espère accomplir moy(en)nant votre ste. / grâce.

I will be careful to choose  
 an hour between the two Masses  
 for reading Holy Scripture,  
 and after the evening services,  
 I will if possible teach catechism  
 to the children which I will carefully  
 prepare. (4) I will also try to  
 set aside an hour afterwards for  
 studying theology.  
 As for merely social visits or courtesy calls, I  
 will make as few as  
 possible. I will not play any  
 forbidden game, or any which  
 might scandalize people. During  
 my recreations I will do manual  
 work if I cannot amuse myself with  
 anything else. (5) My God, this is  
 what I hope to accomplish with the help of your  
 grace.

---

68 - ou de pure bienséance, supra lineam.

76 - ô, pr. au.

---

(4) "which I will prepare" refers to the catechism lesson.

(5) The sense is, "if I cannot find anything else to do for relaxation".



134/4  
 jour de mon Baptême je  
 renouvelle les résolutions ci-  
 dessus écrites. je prie avec  
 la grâce de Dieu les avertisse-  
 a continuer des au jourd'hui  
 veille de l'Ascension  
 1478 - Mai - Samedi neuf heures  
 du soir

6

Jour de mon Baptême, je / [80] renouvelle les résolutions ci- / dessus écrites. J'espère avec / la grâce de Dieu  
les accomplir / à commencer dès aujourd'hui / veille de l'Assension. / [85] 1821 mai (6) Lavallas neuf heure  
/ du soir.

On the day of my baptism,  
I renew the resolutions  
written above. I hope with  
the grace of God to keep them,  
starting today,  
the eve of the Ascension.  
1821 May (6), La Valla, nine  
p.m.

---

(6) According to Fr. Champagnat's breviary, the eve of the Ascension that year fell on 30th May.





## 12th October 1820

An eight-page leaflet, 16.5 × 11 cm, white paper, written on pages 1 through 5.

*AFM, 131.5; cf. the adapted text in Life, pp. 36-37.*

The first text below was probably written later than the one which follows it, since the former says, "I renew my resolution never to omit my meditation", which is merely mentioned in the preceding text (1.4; AFM 131.4) as one point of his program, while in text 1.6 (AFM 131.6) it is the subject of a specific resolution. However, since we cannot be sure, we have kept this text in fifth place, where tradition has placed it.

This is not a homogeneous text, since it includes three successive additions. The original text runs from numbers 1 to 8 inclusive, since number 9 is a sort of introduction and from that point on the handwriting is different. It can be seen that this first addition goes from number 9 to number 11; then comes the second, which is the 1820 renewal, and finally the third, which is dated 1828.

It is not easy to determine the date of the first two parts. They are certainly from the first years of Fr. Champagnat's parish ministry, since he mentions visiting the sick and hearing confessions. That puts us somewhere between 1816 and 1820, perhaps closer to 1820, if text 1.6 (AFM 131.6) really comes before this one.

We can see that here again he returns to an earlier text. After eight years, during which (May 1821) he renewed the preceding resolutions, he returns to this set, out of which he specifically selects only the last three. Finally, we should remember that in 1828, he is no longer vicar, but completely involved with the brothers and residing at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage. We can say that he tended not to complicate matters, and was satisfied with whatever came to hand.

Archives F.M.S. 131.5  
 Doc. 131.5.

~~Conseil de nouvelles~~  
~~Resolutions que je prends et~~  
 que je mets sous la protection  
 de la très Ste Vierge

L. J. G. O. ad M. G. D. et  
 M. D. G.

Je renouvelle la résolution de  
 ne jamais oublier mon vœu.

2 Dans le courant de la journée  
 j'irai toujours rendre ma vœu  
 au très St Sacrement, et à la très  
 Ste Vierge

3 toutes les fois que je partirai  
 soit pour aller voir un malade  
 ou pour quelque autre affaire j'irai  
 encore visiter le très St Sacrement  
 et à la très Ste Vierge

Recueil de nouvelles / Résolutions que je prends et / que je mets sous la protection / de la très Ste. Vierge.  
 / [5] L(oué soit) J(ésus) C(hrist) O(mnia) ad M(ajorem) G(loriam) D(ei) et H(onorem) V(irginis) M(ariae) D(ei)  
 G(enitricis). / 1 - Je renouvelle la résolution de / ne jamais omèttre mon oraison. / 2 - Dans le courant de  
 la journée / [10] j'irai toujours rendre une visite / au très St. Sacrement et à la très / Ste. Vierge. / 3 - Toutes  
 le fois que je partirai, / soit pour aller voir un malade / [15] ou pour quelqu'autre affaire, j'irai / encore visiter  
 le très St. Sacrement / et à la très Ste. Vierge.

Collection of new  
 resolutions I am making and  
 which I place under the protection  
 of the Most Blessed Virgin.  
 Praised be Jesus Christ. Omnia ad Majorem Gloriam Dei et  
 Honorem Virginis Mariae Dei Genitricis.

- 1 - I renew the resolution  
 never to omit my meditation.
- 2 - During the day  
 I will always make a visit  
 to the Blessed Sacrament and to the most  
 Blessed Virgin.
- 3 - Every time I leave the house,  
 whether to visit a sick person  
 or for whatever other purpose, I will  
 again visit the most Blessed Sacrament  
 and the most Blessed Virgin.



211 431/5  
~~ce que je t'ai par la voie~~  
~~de la voie~~  
~~de la voie~~  
~~de la voie~~  
 1. toutes les fois que mal enu  
 je me reconnaitrai coupable de  
 quel <sup>que</sup> médisance je prendrai trois  
 coups de discipline.  
 5. un pareil nombre quand je  
 porterai à mon avantage.  
 6. je ne manqueras pas tous  
 les soirs de faire mon examen  
 de conscience.  
 7. toutes les fois que je ne  
 serai pas fidèle à remplir  
 ces résolutions trois coups de  
 discipline en union aux  
 souffrances de J.C. et par ce  
 triple coup je prétends faire  
 2.



4 - Toutes les fois qu'à mon examen / je me reconnoitrai coupable de / [20] quel(que) médisance, je prendrai trois / coups de discipline. / 5 - Un pareil nombre quand je / parlerai à mon avantage. / 6 - Je ne menquerai pas tous / [25] les soirs de faire mon examen / de conscience. / 7 - Toutes les fois que je ne / serai pas fidèle à remplir / ces résolutions, trois coups de / [30] discipline en union aux / souffrances de J.C. et par ce / triple coup je prétend faire

\* 4 - Every time I realize, from my examen,  
that I have been guilty of  
uncharitable words, I will give myself three  
blows of the discipline.  
5 - I will do the same thing whenever I  
talk in my own favor.  
6 - I will never omit  
my evening examen.  
7 - Every time I have not  
been faithful in keeping  
these resolutions, three blows of  
the discipline in union with the  
suffering of Jesus Christ, and by these  
three blows I intend to make

---

18 - pr. 4 texte raturé, en partie illisible où l'on peut tout de même lire: Ce que je saurai par la voix de la confession, jamais .... je n'en parlerai quoiqu'il n'y ait point danger de violer le secret. A partir de là, i.e. du N° 4 les chiffres ont été rectifiés: 4 actuel était avant 5, le 5 était 6, etc... jusqu'au 11 qui était primitivement 12.  
20 - quelque, que supra lineam.

---

\* At this point there is a crossed-out resolution, which is still partly legible: "What I will know from confession... I will never mention, even though there be no danger of violating the seal". From there on, the numbers have been changed: the present 4 was previously 5, 5 was 6, etc., down to 11 which was originally 12.

131/5  
 me, cette D'amour à la très  
 Ste. Trinité ~~avec son~~ qu'un  
 acte de foy et de courage  
 la très Sainte Vierge de faire  
 agréer elle-même cette chétive  
 création au Maître Souverain de  
 toutes les créatures.  
 8<sup>e</sup> Je fais tous les mois ces résolutions  
 9<sup>e</sup> Je me souviendrai tout ce qui est sur  
 la terre et dans le ciel est à vous  
 je donne aussi moi-même l'être à vous  
 par une oblation toute volontaire, et  
 d'être immuablement et éternellement  
 à vous.  
 10<sup>e</sup> Je ne ferai, ferai aucune instruction  
 que je ne l'ai préparée.  
 11<sup>e</sup> Je me souviendrai toujours que je  
 porte Jésus Christ dans mon cœur

3

une acte d'amour à la très / Ste. Trinité aussi bien qu'un / [35] acte de fois et je conjure / la très Sainte Vierge de faire / agréer elle-même cette chétive / action au Maître souverain de / toutes les créatures. / [40] 8 - Je lirai tous les mois ces résolutions. / 9 - imi... 49 (1) Seigneur tout ce qui est sur / la terre et dans le ciel est à vous. / Je désire aussi moi-même d'être à vous / par une oblation toute volontaire et / [45] d'être immuablement et éternellement / à vous. / 10 - Je ne ferai aucune instruction / que je ne l'ai préparée (2). / 11 - Je me souviendrai toujours que je / [50] porte Jésus Christ dans mon coeur.

an act of love to the Most  
Holy Trinity as well as an  
act of faith, and I beg  
the Blessed Virgin to make  
this paltry action pleasing  
to the Sovereign Master of  
all creatures.

8 - I will read these resolutions every month.

9 - imi... 49 (1) Lord, everything on  
earth and in heaven is yours.

I also desire to be yours  
through a totally voluntary oblation and  
to be unalterably and eternally  
yours.

10 - I will never give any instruction  
which I have not prepared (2).

11 - I will always remember that I  
carry Jesus Christ in my heart.

---

47 - ferai, pr. ferez.

---

(1) Read: *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, Book IV, Chapter IX, which begins: "Chapter IX - On how we should pray for ourselves and everyone else when we offer the Holy Sacrifice. "The soul: 1. Lord, everything in heaven and on earth is yours. I desire to consecrate myself to you by a totally voluntary oblation and to be unalterably and eternally yours". (French text from *Manuel du chrétien*, Mame Frères, Paris, 1812, p. 797).

(2) Fr. Champagnat's habitual expression, which must be understood in a positive sense. He does not mean that he will not give the instruction he has not prepared, but that he is binding himself always to prepare it and never to improvise.



131/5

je renouëlle au jour d'hui  
 Douze octobre 1820. les résolutions  
 cinq. Six. Septe huit neuf dix  
 onze douze et je ajoute celle  
 de donner sous les yeux une somme  
 à l'étude de la théologie

2<sup>e</sup> je veux encore mieux pratiquer  
 la vertu de douceur que je n'ai  
 pas fait.

3<sup>e</sup> être plus recueilli et moins  
 dissipé.

4<sup>e</sup> je ne ferai jamais raison que  
 je n'aie prévu le sujet et que je  
 ne m'y sois préparé.

25 Quittet vers 8 heures  
 et venir à la messe sous la  
 protection de la M<sup>re</sup> M<sup>re</sup> Pierre  
 Jean François Régis.

Je renouvelle aujourd'hui, / douze octobre 1820, la résolution / cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix, / onze douze et je ajoute celle / [55] de donner tous les jours une heure / à l'étude de la théologie. / 2° Je veux encore mieux pratiquer / la vertu de douceur que je n'ai / pas fait. / [60] 3° Etre plus recueilli et moins / dissipé. / 4° Je ne ferai (j)amais oraison que / je n'ai prévu le sujet et que je / ne m'y sois préparé. / [65] 25 juillet 1828, à onze heures / et demi, à Valfleury (3), sous la / protection de la très Ste. Vierge, / St. Jean François Régis,

Today, 12th October 1820,  
I renew resolutions  
five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,  
eleven, twelve and I add one  
to spend an hour every day  
studying theology.  
2° I also want to practice better  
the virtue of meekness, which I have  
not done.  
3° To be more recollected and less  
distracted.  
4° I will never make my meditation  
without having first read over the subject and  
prepared for it.

25th July 1828, at half-past eleven,  
in Valfleury (3), under the  
protection of the Most Blessed Virgin,  
St. John Francis Regis,

---

(3) In one of his notebooks, Bro., François remarks, "Fr. Champagnat never took the Brothers from the Hermitage to Valfleury (...) Nor did he ever let them go there as a community" (505.17, p. 547).



731/5  
je renouvelle les résolutions  
ici de nouveau en particulier  
1<sup>o</sup> 3<sup>o</sup> 4<sup>o</sup>

je renouvelle les résolutions / [70] ci-dessous (4) et en particulier / 2°, 3°, 4°.

I renew the resolutions  
below (4) and especially  
2°, 3° and 4°.

---

(4) Read: “above”.



## Resolutions

Single sheet, 16.5 × 8.5 cm, gray paper, writing on only one side.

*AFM*, 131.6.

This text is certainly only a fragment; it may be the third page of a four-page leaflet. The first perhaps contained an introduction in the form of a prayer, which was later torn off. This text is independent of the preceding one (1.5; *AFM* 131.5), and the paper is of a different color and format. As was noted in the introduction to the preceding text, this one was probably written first, although it is impossible to find sufficient proof of that hypothesis. In any case, these are the resolutions of a man of action who is concerned about preserving his prayer life.

We may find it surprising that he makes no mention of the work involved in founding the brothers. We can barely detect, from his mention of visits to be made outside the parish, that he is referring to an apostolate which exceeds its boundaries. Here, we are obviously not dealing with a rule of life, but with resolutions concerned only with the interior life. That does not alter the fact that even a few simple allusions would have been enlightening for us.



1<sup>re</sup> <sup>copie pour 11/15</sup>  
 Après dîner sera content de  
 visiter les malades de la paroisse  
 s'il y en a et s'il n'y en a pas  
 de partir je ferai toujours une  
 visite au très saint Sacrement  
 ce que je ferai encore toutes les  
 fois que je sortirai pour aller  
 rendre quelque visite fort hors  
 de la paroisse tout de même.  
 à mon retour je ferai encore  
 une autre visite pour remercier  
 Dieu des grâces qu'il m'eura accordées  
 et pour demander pardon des fautes  
 que je pourrai avoir commises.  
 2<sup>de</sup> je lirai une fois toutes les  
 années les rubriques du missel  
 3<sup>de</sup> mon oratoire qui sera de même  
 heure le fera toujours autant que  
 je pourrai autant de sortir de mes  
 chambres  
 4<sup>de</sup> je ne dirai jamais la messe que  
 je n'ai fait auparavant un quart d'heure  
 de préparation ou environ de préparation  
 et autant d'action de grâces. 3



1° L'après diné sera consacré à / visiter les malades de la paroisse / s'il y en a. Mais avant de / partir je ferai toujours une / [5] visite au très Saint Sacrement, / ce que je ferai encore toutes les / fois que je sortirai pour aller / rendre quelque visite, soit hors / de la paroisse, soit de dans. / [10] A mon retour je ferai encore / une autre visite pour remercier / Dieu des grâces qu'il m'aura accordées / et pour demander pardon des fautes / que je pourrai avoir commis. / [15] 2° Je lirai une fois toutes les / années les rubriques du missel. / 3° Mon oraison qui sera de demie / heure, se fera toujours, autant que / je pourrai, avant de sortir de ma / [20] chambre. / 4° Je ne dirai jamais la messe que / je n'ai fait auparavant un quart d'heure / de préparation ou environ de préparation / et autant d'action de grâce

- 1° - I will devote my afternoons to  
visiting the sick of the parish,  
if there be any. But before  
leaving, I will always make a  
visit to the Blessed Sacrament,  
as I will also do every time I leave  
for any visit, outside  
the parish or within it.  
On my return, I will make  
another visit to thank  
God for the graces He has granted me  
and to ask pardon for the faults  
I may have committed.
- 2° - Once every year I will  
read over the rubrics of the missal.
- 3° As far as possible, I will always  
make my meditation, which will last  
a half-hour, before leaving my  
room.
- 4° - I will never say Mass without  
first having made a quarter-hour  
or so of preparation  
and as much time in thanksgiving.



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