

# SUMMARY

FMS MARIST NOTEBOOKS  
Number 21 – Year XVII – April 2005

**Editor-in-chief:**  
International Patrimony Commission

**Publishing Director:**  
Br Onorino Rota

**Contributors to this edition:**  
Brs André Lanfrey, Frederick  
McMahon

**Translators:**  
English: Edward Clisby, Ross Murrin  
French: Jean Rousson  
Portuguese: Virgílio Josué Ballestro,  
Antonio Pereira, Manoel Soares  
Spanish: Antonio Aragón, José María  
Ferre, Jaume Parès, Josep Roura

**Formatting & Photolithography by:**  
TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Rome

**Editing and Administrative Centre:**  
Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2  
C.P. 10250 – 00144 ROMA  
Tel. (39) 06 54 51 71  
Fax (39) 06 54 517 217  
E-mail: publica@fms.it  
Website: www.champagnat.org

**Editing by:**  
Institute of the Marist Brothers  
General House – Rome

**Printing by:**  
C.S.C. GRAFICA S.R.L. – Rome

## PRESENTATION

- **International Patrimony Commission**  
Reflection on its composition and tasks  
Br André LANFREY 3

## STUDIES

- **As Others See Us**  
Br Frederick Mc MAHON 9
- **A New Document**  
Br André LANFREY 73

**Record of the printed version (original in English)**

**FMS MARIST NOTEBOOKS**

Number 21 – Year XVII – April 2005

**Editor-in-chief:**

International Patrimony Commission  
André Lanfrey  
Aureliano Brambila  
Ivo Strobino  
Jaume Parès  
Michael Green  
Paul Sester

**Publishing Director:**

Br Onorino Rota

**Contributors to this edition:**

André Lanfrey  
Frederick McMahon

**Translators:**

English: Edward Clisby, Ross Murrin  
French: Jean Rousson  
Portuguese: Virgílio Josué Ballestro,  
Antonio Pereira, Manoel Soares  
Spanish: Antonio Aragón, José María  
Ferre, Jaume Parès, Josep Roura

**Formatting & Photolithography by:**

TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Rome

**Editing and Administrative Centre:**

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2  
C.P. 10250 – 00144 ROMA  
Tel. (39) 06 54 51 71  
Fax (39) 06 54 517 217  
E-mail: [publica@fms.it](mailto:publica@fms.it)  
Website: [www.champagnat.org](http://www.champagnat.org)

**Editing by:**

Institute of the Marist Brothers  
General House – Rome

**Printing by:**

C.S.C. GRAFICA S.R.L. – Rome

**Marist Notebooks:**

The Marist Notebooks aim to disseminate documents and research on the origins, spirituality, development and expansion of the Marist Institute in the world. It addresses studies on the Society of Mary, historical personalities and themes that characterize the apostolic mission of the Marist Brothers. The production of the content is a collaborative work made by several authors. It is printed in four languages: Spanish, French, English and Portuguese.

**Cataloging in Publication data (CIP)**

---

C12 Marist Notebooks: information, studies, documents. -- no.21 (apr 2005) -- Roma : Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi delle Scuole, 2005.  
96 p. : il. ; 24 cm

Yearly.

Editor: Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi delle Scuole / Onorino Rota

Digital version in Portuguese: <https://champagnat.org/pt/biblioteca/cadernos-maristas/>

ISSN 1122-7125

1. Marist Brothers – History. 2. Spirituality. 3. Cultural heritage. 4. Fratelli Maristi delle Scuole

CDD 200

# *Reflection on the composition and the tasks of the International Patrimony Commission*

**Brother André LANFREY, FMS**

A meeting of the International Patrimony Commission was held at Rome from the 24th until the 28th May 2004. It consists of Brothers Auréliano Brambila (Mexico), Michael Green (Australia), André Lanfrey (France), Jaume Parès (Spain), Paul Sester (France), Ivo Strobino (Brazil). It worked in relation with the Patrimony Committee composed of the following General Councillors: Brothers Antonio Ramalho, Pedro Herreros, Peter Rodney and Théoneste Kalisa. A synthesis of these days of reflection has largely inspired the following pages.

---

## **I. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION**

As we have just seen, this team needs to be international and constituted of members who are undertaking regular work on Marist Patrimony. Obviously, it concerns spiritual and intellectual patrimony with the material patrimony not being included in its scope, except for some historic places like the Hermitage.

For all that, patrimony works can be diverse; some linked more to the study and critique of sources whilst others are more concerned with distribution and formation... The Commission also recognises the important role of correspondents who perform more specialised work, such as translations, computerisation of source material, publication, links with the region where they are situated in order to find collaborators... On this point we note that the liaison between the production and the publica-

tion suffers many difficulties that, in particular, slow or excessively limit the production of Marist Notebooks:

Weak international character of the production, the main contribution still coming too much from the French-speaking world. The remedy for this would be that the members of the Commission find authors in their linguistic area.

Relations between the Commission and the General Administration need to be more specific concerning the tasks of translation and publication. The solution seems to be in a privileged link with the General Secretariat and the Director of Communications at the General House.

Problem of translations. The Commission envisaged organising itself to have work translated whenever possible. Nevertheless, it seems necessary that the General Secretariat take responsibility for some of this work, giving it the priority that it deserves.

Whilst on the subject of translations, one question that needs to be considered concerns the fidelity of the translation to the original document. Sometimes, authors have been surprised to see that their own words have been interpreted in an approximate fashion or a false one. A direct link between translators and authors would be necessary.

### **Co-ordinating networks and central places**

For a long time, the spiritual and intellectual patrimony of the Congregation has been the concern of formators, Superiors and a certain number of individuals working more or less in a network. Obviously, the Rome archives and those in the Provinces served as conservatories of patrimony, but their use remained limited and, it seems to me, insufficiently co-ordinated.

This situation did have advantages as well as disadvantages and it did lead to important advances in the knowledge of our patrimony, particularly in the distribution and computerised publication of unpublished sources.

It seems necessary today to better co-ordinate all these initiatives and especially to situate them in a context that is conceptually credible. Thus, the Patrimony Commission should focus its attention on the clarification of sources and the publication of works of recognised scientific value, such that could constitute a reserve of semi-official documents. This is particularly important for the electronic publications that are very diverse, sometimes founded on unverified sources and in general without apparatus criticus. The Patrimony Commission, thus, is not authorised to provide popular literature but to offer one that has a solid foundation.

Obviously, there is the question of a link between popular writers, formators and the Patrimony Commission. The ideal seems to me that the patrimonial work be largely used to advantage in the Houses of Formation and in the places of Marist publishing. Perhaps this is already the case in some places. But, on the whole, this co-ordination seems to clash with anti-intellectualism, traditional among us, which considers that the works of a scientific kind are null and void for those who “have their feet on the ground” and have little use in the understanding of our spirituality. On the contrary, there does exist in regions of the Institute sources of reflection and publication that would deserve a general distribution for which the Patrimony Commission could take responsibility.

This perspective of global co-ordination poses, in the long run, the question of a central location for the Commission. But the situation does not seem ready for this yet, especially as this comes within the scope of another Commission: that of Marist places.

---

## **2. RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMISSIONS**

It seems that the most practical way to co-ordinate formation, Marist places and spirituality is through direct contact between the various Commissions. This co-ordination seems particularly important in regard to a project of developing a manifesto of Marist spirituality, in order to avoid confusion between Marist spirituality and Champagnat spirituality, the first being much wider and diverse, even if the second is at its very roots. Besides, this question enables the Commission to remember that the patrimony is not only a study of origins but of the entire Marist tradition in all its historical depth, and in its diversity since it also embraces the Marist family. It seems to us thus, that the collaboration in the project of defining Marist spirituality should be situated not only at the level of the members of the Patrimony Commission but in a manner that is more structural.

On a practical level, and in order not to increase the number of meetings, it would perhaps be opportune to take as a principle that every meeting for patrimony, formation or spirituality be held with the participation of one representative from each of the other two Commissions, entrusted with the task of bringing everyone up-to-date concerning their own Commission. This concern for collaboration at this level would also bring about a beneficial co-ordination in the Provinces and Regions, without causing too

much confusion. The patrimony would have the opportunity to escape a kind of ghetto, its members being considered too often as eccentrics launching into theoretical research, the usefulness of which they alone can see.

After all is said and done, the co-ordination between these three Commissions must be founded in the conviction that spirituality, patrimony and formation have one and the same aim: to make Marist tradition, until now more lived than thought, an authentic spiritual movement structured as a school. Throughout the time of Christendom, one can conceive a hierarchical Church at three levels: the clergy thinking, the congregations passing this on and the people obeying. Today, all Christians must think about their faith and so also with all the more reason, all religious. If previously, a brother need not have understood his spirituality rationally, today this incapacity to define oneself seems scandalous, especially in the eyes of laypeople who, quite rightly, are searching for their own spiritual and intellectual reference points.

Our future will depend then on our capacity to strengthen our intellectual and spiritual consistency along the three complementary axes of patrimony-spirituality-formation.

This Marist identity must be all the more cared for as we are integrated in a spiritual “family” whose branches provide us with riches and expect the same from us. This is why we should study the possibility of opening our Commission to people invited from the other branches and to laypeople. This is already occurring to everyone’s advantage in France.

---

### **3. MARIST NOTEBOOKS**

This journal is one of the principal justifications for the existence of the Commission, which, without it, would have no means of sharing its works. Thus, even though it is read by few brothers, the journal must be continued for its justification depends not on the number of its readers, but rather on the quality of its production that needs to evoke the esteem of the brothers, other congregations and external readers. Though various subjects may be covered: theology, history, philosophy, spirituality... the common denominator of the articles is not a limited number of disciplines but a high level of quality of their expression. The Patrimony Commission has the duty of ensuring this quality by accepting, refusing or asking to review all work that is proposed.

The statute of the journal is clear: its contents do not necessarily reflect the official doctrine of the Institute but the state of free reflection on various subjects that concern it. It is thus written under the direct supervision of the Patrimony Commission and of other authors of articles, with the General Council, who appointed the Commission, retaining indirect responsibility. In any case, it is not unusual for an article in Marist Notebooks occasionally to cause a debate for which the journal could be used as its platform.

---

#### **4. “ FONTES HISTORICI ”**

The Marist Fathers have published the “Origines Maristes” and various other works of Marist Patrimony under the title of “Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae”. Brother Paul Sester has published the Letters of the Founder in this collection with the consent of the Marist Fathers. For several years, thanks to Brother Paul Sester and to many retired brothers, a large number of Marist source manuscripts have been computerised, photocopied and made available to researchers and to the curious. Their setout is off-putting as they mostly lack a critical introduction, notes and an index. Besides, a certain number of these sources are from very disorganised collections that are difficult to read.

However, there is no doubt about their importance for having a greater knowledge of the Marist spirituality of the 19th century (from Father Champagnat until the death of Brother François). They allow us to understand how the basic texts of the Congregation were realised, such as the Rule, the Teacher’s Guide, the Life of Father Champagnat and Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions.

The objective would be thus to produce a critical “definitive” reprint of all the sources of the Institute, whether they be in manuscript form or printed form, in order to constitute a reliable canon of Marist writings that could also be available for use on computers through CD or DVD. This work would be officially guaranteed by the Patrimony Commission.

In the first instance, two publications are envisaged within about a year’s time. Brother Paul Sester hopes to publish a volume of all the Champagnat documents that do not appear in the letters and that have already

been published in part in the Marist Notebooks. Brother André Lanfrey hopes to produce a second volume on the instructions, examinations of conscience and meditations found in the books of Brother Jean-Baptiste and the notebooks of Brother François. These have not been previously published. Finally, as numerous texts have only a limited importance, it is possible to envisage an anthology of the more significant sources, of which Marist Notebooks could be the support. We would thus have a scholarly edition and another more adapted to formation.

---

## **5. FORMATION IN PATRIMONY**

The creation of Institutes of Marist Formation at the university level could, in the mean time, promote Marist Patrimony. A more modest object seems to us to be realisable and urgent: to prepare future people for working in the area of patrimony. Even if, in various places, the time of formation has given the opportunity to a large number of people to begin their study of Marist Patrimony, the difficulty remains of passing from an elementary or intermediary initiation to a profound knowledge with trained brothers being employed in other urgent tasks. Let us say, thus, that the Institute should endeavour to further the initiation process by being attentive to encouraging those who display aptitude in this speciality. In this case, the Commission could provide help.

---

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, our conviction is that if the renewal of the Institute is to occur through a renewal of its spirituality and formation, this can only be forged and deepened by an intellectual renewal whose main artisan is the Patrimony Commission.

## *As others see us*

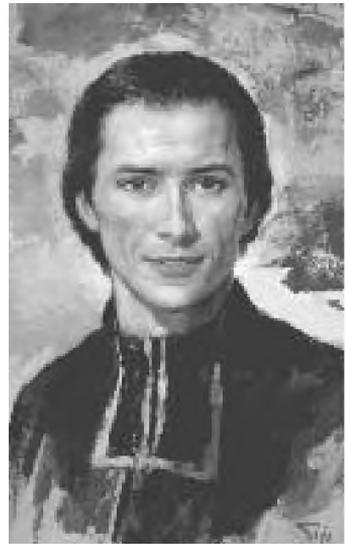
### *Saint Marcellin Champagnat, his story and his character in the writings of his contemporaries*

**Brother Frederick Mc MAHON, FMS**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this booklet we have Champagnat and his story as seen by his priest contemporaries, mostly Marist Fathers. The Champagnat story is presented entirely from original documents; as a consequence, the entire story is not related, but what is presented has the authenticity of original documents and the freshness of viewpoint of different narrators. In many instances the story is presented through the pen of a third party, so, while we must make allowance for the opinions and gaps in knowledge of the story tellers themselves, we must also bear in mind that the third party recorders have their own prejudices and may be prone to error. Despite these limitations, however, we have here new material on Champagnat which should help to bring us to a deeper understanding of the saint and his story.



One of the great advantages of this mode of letting the documents relate the Champagnat story is that readers are not seeing Champagnat through the eyes of a single biographer, and so they may make their own assessment of characters and situations. It is true that commentaries on the documents are provided, but they do not necessarily have to be accepted. Readers are encouraged to form personal conclusions from the documents.

Only those parts of the story of the Society of Mary relevant to Champagnat are recorded here.

The first account, that of Father Bourdin is, in a way, an autobiography of Champagnat. It is the first and the key story in this booklet.

---

## **AN 'AUTOBIOGRAPHY' OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT ?**

### **The first years of the Institute**

The closest we can come to an autobiography of Fr Champagnat would be the recollections of Fr Bourdin, a fellow Marist priest who was Champagnat's assistant at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage from 1828 to 1831. In note form, Bourdin recorded the table conversation of Fr Champagnat concerning the pioneering days of the Marist Brothers at La Valla and Notre Dame de l'Hermitage.



Saint Marcellin  
Champagnat (1789-1840).

### **Father Bourdin's notes on the beginnings of the marist brothers**

The first written notes on any branch of the whole society of Mary seem to be the Death notices of two Marist Brothers who died at the Hermitage. These Notices were prepared in 1830 by Fr Bourdin, who was chaplain at this house.<sup>1</sup>

It was only in 1841 that a general plan of historical research relating to all the branches of the Society came into being. The death of Fr Champagnat in 1840 made a profound impression on the whole Society. With his demise the Society lost, not only one of the first companions of Major Seminary days, but also the Founder of the Brothers. The Institute that he founded set about gathering all it could to preserve his memory. It was Fr Denis Maîtrepierre, one of the priests of the first Profession group of 1836 and a Provincial of the early days, who promoted the historical project among all the branches of the Society. Thus it was that, coming to the Hermitage at the end of 1841, he set in motion the work of collecting documents, a work that continued for 15 years among the Marist Brothers under the direction of Br Jean-Baptiste, who produced 'The Life of Father Champagnat' in 1856.

---

1 O.M. Vol. 2 p. 5.

Begun in poverty and in want of all human resources, the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, in the early days of its existence, could not hope to find in its ranks a competent historian or even an annalist. The intellectual acumen of those first Brothers was very limited. Their Founder, weighed down with administrative and material concerns, had not the leisure time to write down notes for posterity, so it is not surprising that there are no historical accounts of the inner life of the Institute before 1830.



Fr Jean-Antoine  
Bourdin  
(1803-1883).

The first six Brothers to die (their deaths occurred between 1825 and 1828) received no written commentary. Except for a few pages written later on by Br Jean-Baptiste about Br Jean-Pierre, the Institute recalls very little more about them than their names. There thus arose a need to preserve an account of the work and good example of these early Brothers. All that was required, really, was a man with the necessary time and talent to take up the pen.

Towards the end of 1828 there arrived at the Hermitage a young deacon, Jean-Antoine Bourdin, a man endowed with real literary capacity. It was he who gave the Institute its first written souvenirs. Thus it was that the two Brothers who died in 1829 were accorded, during the following year, biographical sketches written in academic style.<sup>2</sup>

A study of Fr Bourdin's notes shows that, in great part, they refer to facts about which only Fr Champagnat could speak, for example, the sharp dialogue between Fr Rebod and Champagnat, his curate. Again, the conversations with Fathers Dervieux, Courbon, and Bochard had no other witnesses that the men concerned. Further, the details of the struggle of the Founder with his ecclesiastical superiors, and especially the threat of interdiction, had certainly not been revealed to the Brothers in all their seriousness. Br Jean-Baptiste himself speaks of these matters very loyally: 'All these contradictions were so much the more painful to him in that they came to him from a man who was his superior, and so he was obliged to keep them strictly to himself. Not to frighten or discourage the Brothers, he did not speak of them, or he made reference to them only in a general way.'<sup>3</sup>

Once the danger passed, it was still very unlikely that Fr Champagnat would have related these incidents to his Brothers. He who had taught them so strongly 'to respect the priesthood and to be submissive to the

<sup>2</sup> O.M. Vol. 2 p. 729.

<sup>3</sup> Life p.116

priests of the Church and not to criticise them in any way'<sup>4</sup>would not have agreed to relate in their presence the very tense scenes of this painful drama. But, of course, before a fellow priest, Fr Champagnat would not have the same reason for being reticent. He would have spoken of these past difficulties and would have been happy to do so, for, until the troubles had passed, he could speak openly and at length on these matters to very few people.

Fr Bourdin's Notes give the Founder's testimony. There is little in the Notes about the Brothers' manner of life or about Fr Champagnat's instruction. There are no terms expressing admiration for the Founder, such as we find in the writings of Br Laurent or Br Jean-Baptiste. The historical value of Bourdin's Notes is considerable. They come down to us in all their abrupt forthrightness. Fr Bourdin is here more a stenographer than a writer. There is not to be excluded, however, the possibility of an error in judgement or a false chronology. It was conversation he jotted down; he did not re-write his Notes in story form. Moreover, it should be remarked that Bourdin did not attempt to relate the whole Champagnat story; he wrote only what he heard from his Hermitage confrère.

#### *Some Points about the Telling of Bourdin's Tale*

Bourdin's method of narration is to take the role of a reporter, relating in Third Person narration what Champagnat told him ( this is shown by use of single inverted commas). The direct words of Fr Champagnat to Bourdin, his words in conversation with people and their words to him (or to others) are shown in double inverted commas. Where, at the end of a paragraph, there is no closure of the single inverted commas, the reader will understand that the passage is continuing into the following paragraph.

The presentation of Bourdin's Notes has been re-arranged into a sharper chronological order. Elliptical phrases have been changed into sentences so that the narrative may run more smoothly. In addition, since Bourdin's Notes do not cover the whole story, separate sentences and paragraphs of explanatory material (not in inverted commas) should help the reader to make the connection between the topics dealt with by Bourdin and the relevant sections of the Champagnat story. The original documents referred to in the Footnotes may be found in the four Volumes of 'Origines Maristes' and in 'The Life of Father Champagnat' by Br Jean-Baptiste Furet.

---

<sup>4</sup> Life p. 356.

Almost all the illustrations in the text of Bourdin's story are photographs of the paintings that are to be found in the 'Cradle of the Institute', the first house occupied by the Brothers and Champagnat at La Valla. They depict, in a quaint and simple way, the poverty of the life of Champagnat and his early followers and the main events of the La Valla years.

---

### FATHER BOURDIN'S NOTES

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 754.)  
'AT LA VALLA'

*"For a long time Fr Champagnat had in mind the Brothers' branch of the Society of Mary.<sup>5</sup> This branch was confided to him at the Major Seminary by the group of aspiring Marists.<sup>6</sup> He began the work in 1817. On the first Sunday of October 1816 he met Jean-Marie Granjon, the first recruit, and found him to be a very good lad. The young man was invited to come to live near the church in order to learn how to read. "Ah, yes! That was a good idea."*

Sunday, 6 October of the year 1816 was the Feast of the Holy Rosary. The fact that this decisive interview took place on a Feast of Our Lady would have remained vividly in Champagnat's memory. This date may be taken as marking the first step of Champagnat in founding the Institute he had in mind. The "Ah, yes" is probably Champagnat's encouragement to Granjon to come to live near the church in order to learn how to read.

*"Came to get me for a sick person at La Rive." The hamlet of La Rive is one and a half kilometres from La Valla, quite close to the place where the first dam was built on the river Gier. Granjon was the one who called Champagnat to this sick-call.*

*"What compelled the hastening of the work was Champagnat's subsequent visit to a sick boy on the far side of Mt Pilat.*

There Champagnat was even further struck by the dire need of finding a means for instructing the young.

*"I went out for a moment to the next house, returned, and found the child dead.*



Attending the dying Montagne boy at Les Palais, in the parish of La Valla.

<sup>5</sup> O.M.Vol. II. Doc. 752, 753, Doc. 755.

<sup>6</sup> O.M.Vol. II. Doc. 416, Sect.1, Doc. 757 Sect.2.

My reflection was, "How many children are not in the way of salvation. If instructed, they will know how to repent." He thereupon put into effect the plan that he had been formulating for a long time.

'Having become acquainted with Granjon' (and, shortly afterwards, with Jean-Baptiste Audras)<sup>7</sup>, 'Champagnat wanted to buy, on behalf of the parish priest, a house in which to place the two recruits.<sup>8</sup> But, not wishing to upset Fr Rebod, Champagnat told his parish priest that the house was to be for a teacher.' The house was bought from a Mr Bonner.

'Being fearful of incurring debts, Fr Rebod did not want the purchase to proceed. This was occasioned by Rebod's fear of being left in the parish for ten years' (to pay of sundry debts). By 1817 Rebod had been parish priest for five years, having been appointed in February, 1812.

'Champagnat, wanting to give his scheme a trial, did not let Rebod know straightway that this house was to be the cradle of his project for an Institute of Brothers. He suggested to the parish priest that he buy the property, but, the parish priest being unwilling to purchase the house, Champagnat decided to buy it in his own right.

'Champagnat made arrangements with Bonner senior about purchasing the property.' There were some complications, however, for the property was in the name of Bonner's son, who did not want to sell. 'It seems that the son was in some financial trouble because of two contracts he had entered into, so the father,' who perhaps had not received payment for the property from his son, 'was able to put pressure on the latter to sell to Champagnat.

'It was at this stage, close to the Feast of All Saints, that Rebod, supposing Champagnat's actions, tried to cancel the arrangements his curate had made', whereupon Champagnat, having experienced the difficulties of arranging the purchase, and feeling under heavy attack, strongly defended his right to acquire property.

'My status as a priest does not prevent me from owning property. You may not want me here as curate, but to live in a house in La Valla is my privilege. I shall enjoy the use



The beginning, 2 January 1817.  
The first two Brothers enter the 'Cradle  
of the Institute' at La Valla.

7 Life p. 60.

8 O.M. Vol. IV, Page 220.



Champagnat's handiwork - table and cupboard in the Brothers' house at La Valla.

*of it and, when I go away, then the house will become yours." After this crisis Fr Rebod changed his attitude, softened towards the project, 'and helped by giving money for it.'*

Naturally, the promise of gaining ownership of the house after his curate's departure would have helped Rebod to change his mind. In part, Rebod's opposition came from his desire to avoid commitments and debt. He had no desire to remain at La Valla

for long and had hopes of being transferred to a more important parish. In point of fact, however, he was at La Valla for 12 years, being relieved of his duties on 24 May 1824. Soon afterwards, he died in St Chamond, 27 January 1825. He was only 46 years of age.

*'During the first year there were three Brothers' ( J-M. Granjon, J-B. Audras, J-C Audras ). Champagnat helped them with their reading; they earned money for their upkeep by making and selling large nails.*

*'On one occasion a small quantity of potatoes was purchased. The poor Brothers ate them; the children too. There was just as much at the end as at the beginning.'*

It is to be noted that several analogous multiplications of food are reported in the beginnings of the Marist Sisters. There is no mention of this episode in the "*Life of Marcellin Champagnat*", written by Br Jean-Baptiste.

*"Poverty is our companion. You come here and, although the house is not ours, you may look on it as ours."* For about a year the deeds of the property were still with the vendor, Mr Bonner. But, obviously, Champagnat's words also refer to the idea that the house belonged to the newly-founded Institute. Hence the house, in one sense, "is not ours", but, in another sense, they "*may look on it as ours*". In point of fact, after the completion of the purchase from Bonner, the property was in the names of Fr Champagnat and Fr Courveille.<sup>9</sup> Champagnat had been able to raise



Learning to read, learning to make nails - education and manual work.

9 O.M. Vol. I. p.241.

loans from friends, and Courveille, the inspirer of the Marist movement, also helped, providing half the money. During the course of 1818 Champagnat moved out of the presbytery and joined the Brothers in their rough abode.

During their period of formation the Brothers went to nearby hamlets, teaching Catechism to the children.

*'About this time Jean-Marie Granjon, who, at this time did not call himself a Brother, brought together two poor little children, whose parents were happy with the teaching and formation that their children were receiving from Champagnat's protégé. Many other parents wished to follow suit. Then Fr Rebod became quite annoyed with this development, because the private teacher of the town, a drunkard and a gambler, was a man who showed a strong attachment of friendship towards the parish priest. Champagnat then intervened, speaking to the Brother, who was an outsider to the town but who, although poorly instructed, was very well behaved. Champagnat forbade him to receive the children and their parents, indicating that everyone had to go to the parish priest,' so that he, the parish priest, could check the enrolments of the schools. Thus, when Rebod attacked Champagnat, "You are the cause of this teacher's being on the street", the curate could reply, "Let us go to the school and, if you find that I have brought any children there without your leave, you can put them out. If you have sanctioned their being there, you cannot go back on your word."*

*'The upshot of this episode was that the teacher quit the field. Champagnat's Brothers were then unchallenged in the small town of La Valla.*

Brothers were subsequently sent to Marlhes for the winter schooling. One could read; the other barely so. The parish priest said, "They are saints."

*'Mr Collon de Gaste of St Sauveur then came to see Fr Champagnat. He said, "Give me two subjects like those of the parish priest of Marlhes. The parish priest (of St Sauveur) asks for them." Champagnat then remarked, "There can be nothing without that," meaning that, for Champagnat, the essential condition for sending Brothers to a commune was that they were asked for by the parish priest.*

*'Mr Collon continued, "Do you still*

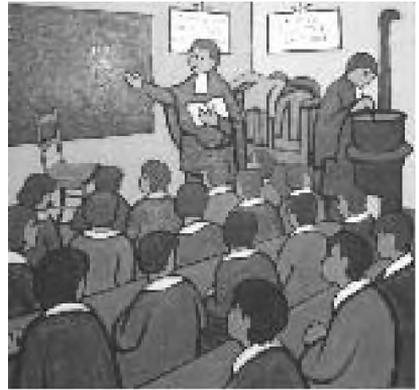


Brother Catechist in the hamlets.

*train these young men? The parish priest of Marthes calls them Brothers.”*  
*“So we promised them that we would take Brothers there at the Feast of All Saints. They were called the Brothers of Marthes and not of La Valla, for the parish priest of La Valla was not a supporter of these Brothers.”*

*Mr Collon, eighty years old, was very satisfied with them. “Father” Collon stated, “You must put it in your Rules that the Brothers never take their meals at the house of the parish priest.”*

There are two interpretations of “Father” Collon. 1. The old man was called “Father” to distinguish him from his son, who was Mayor of St Sauveur. 2. The sudden change from “Mister” to “Father” may perhaps mean that Fr Bourdin is now referring to another son of Mr Collon, a priest who had some connection with the Marist aspirants. An addition, concerning meals, was made to the Notes of Fr Bourdin - ‘nor at private houses’. This article is also to be found in the oldest manuscript Rule that we know of, “The Rule of the Brothers of Mary”, found at St Sauveur monastery. The same injunction, almost identical, is to be found in the Rule of the Little Brothers of Mary printed in 1837.



Initial classes - Brother Teacher and Brother Cook. Boys' attention is somewhat divided.

*Later, an ex-Brother of the Christian Schools formed them to the new method of teaching.* Unless this passage refers to an ex-Christian Brother training Champagnat's men at St Sauveur, it is misplaced. The reference may very well be concerned with the training of the Marist Brothers at La Valla before their entry into the school apostolate some years before. The meaning is not clear. It certainly has no reference to the ex-Christian Brother who brought the eight postulants in 1822. It is also possible that the passage has reference to the teachers whom the Brothers replaced at St Sauveur.

*'Br Jean-Marie, the former soldier, remained at La Valla to train the novices.'* He had been a Grenadier of the Imperial Guard. Instead of being sent to Marthes or St Sauveur, he remained at La Valla as Master of Novices.

In Bourdin's Notes we then find some of the words about a local benefactor: *'Mr Basson, an excellent man and a resident of La Valla, counselled and aided Fr Champagnat.'* There is much evidence of Champagnat's capacity to make and keep friends - his gregariousness, his sincerity, his generosity, his “all things to all men” attitude.

*'At this time there arrived a letter from Vicar General Bochart to parish priest Rebod, who did not venture to show it to Champagnat.'* Rebod made out that there had been discussion about the best manner in which the procedure might be carried out, that is, the intention of suspending Champagnat from exercising his priestly ministry.

Now, Vicar General Bochart would not have been happy about Champagnat's education project because of its clash with Bochart's own efforts in that sphere. But, as we shall see, there were other matters about which Champagnat had been denounced.

One passage from this letter, probably quoted to Champagnat by Rebod, said, *'We know quite well about the unlaful gatherings. Things are going so far that it will lead to an interdiction.'* Such persecution led Champagnat to pray continually, *"My God, if the work be not for you, let it be ended."*

The 'unlawful gatherings' may have reference to groups of parish people recruited by the curate for sorting and distributing clothes and other items to be given to the poor. We hear about these from Bourdin's Notes: *'The successful collection (cf things for the poor) was not sold, but was given out. The poor were fed, clothed, and instructed - and all this for no payment. Poor peuple were sought out. Champagnat went on to say, "Father Bochart's letter, far from disturbing me, pleased me."*

Evidently, a confused story of a collection may have been one of the complaints made against Champagnat. If this were an example of the nature of the complaints against him, Champagnat had not much to fear from the letter which, according to Rebod, threatened the interdiction of Champagnat from his priestly functions.

*"If girls, it would have been a delicate matter. I was calumniated to the Vicar General."* So, in the face of the lack of consistency in the complaints against him, Champagnat is rather reassured. If it had been gatherings of girls and not of boys that he was being reproached for, it would be a more serious complaint. Another interpretation could be, "If he knew we had girls at these gatherings - to mend clothes, to prepare food, to help the sick, to take things to those in need - then the situation might have given cause for further hostile remarks against me."

Finally, Champagnat had the opportunity to peruse the letter: *"While reading the letter, I felt, stronger than ever, an impulse to continue the work I had started. It was time to go to see Father Bochart but, as it was Easter time, I was unable to leave."*

Now, since Bochart was charged with the care of religious societies in the archdiocese, Champagnat felt that the time had come to meet this

Vicar General. This probably occurred in 1821, after the opening of the school at St Sauveur and before Champagnat had stopped teaching Latin at La Valla. His attempts at teaching Latin, as we shall see, brought further trouble, this time from the local Catholic College of nearby St Chamond, where Latin was a precious part of the curriculum. It was the University which controlled the teaching of Latin, and College authorities paid a licence fee to the University for the privilege of teaching the ancient language.

Then another important letter arrived, this time addressed directly to Champagnat. It came from Father Journoux, a curate at St Chamond and a seminary friend of Champagnat. Father Journoux wrote: *“The Board of Charity (including lay men), entrusted with schools and charitable works, held a meeting and decided that you would be denounced to the University - no, that was not to be proceeded with, but there was to be a denunciation to the archdiocese. Please burn my letter.”*

The background to this story is that, since the government Ordinance of 29 February 1816, each canton in France set up a voluntary charitable committee to supervise and encourage primary education. The committee at St Chamond, presided over by the parish priest, Fr Dervieux, consisted of the magistrate, the College Principal (Fr Cathelin), and three or four other members, among whom was Fr Poncet, parish priest of Notre Dame. At a meeting of this committee it was decided that Fr Champagnat's proceedings would be denounced, if not to the University, for which the predominantly clerical town-committees entertained but little esteem, at least to the archdiocese. The crux of the matter was Champagnat's teaching of Latin.

It so happened that Fr Journoux, who had been a seminarian with Fr Champagnat and who, later on, became an aspirant to the Society of Mary, was curate at the parish of Notre Dame. (He had been there since 1 February 1818.) This friend, hearing the decision of the town committee, took it upon himself to warn Champagnat in good time, recommending, however, that, by way of prudence, Champagnat burn the letter which could have compromised Fr Journoux. It is clear that Fr Journoux, later a counsellor of Fr Champagnat, intervened, not to threaten Champagnat, but to prepare him for the worst.

*‘Fr Cathelin, superior of St Chamond College, believed that Champagnat wanted to ruin his nascent College.’* It is possible, then, that it was Fr Cathelin who launched the attack against Fr Champagnat. Having monopoly of the teaching of Latin in the area, Cathelin saw Champagnat as a possible rival.

*'It is true that Fr Champagnat was teaching a little Latin to a few, but he gave up this class.'* This confirms the suspicion that Inspector Guillard had about Champagnat in May 1820 when he was visiting the St Genest-Malifaux region. Champagnat did teach Latin, at least to Br François Rivat. When, however, the Inspector met Champagnat at La Valla in 1822, his report stated, *"He has not, to tell the truth, any Latin students."* So one must suppose that, after the complaints of the town committee, Fr Champagnat gave up the teaching of Latin.

*'Fr Journoux's letter alarmed him. He brought the Brothers together and they were fully informed about an imminent departure. A superior was named among the Brothers, Br Jean-Marie.'* (Br Jean-Baptiste places this nomination earlier.) *'The parish priest cf St Peter's in the town cf St Chamond ( Fr Dervieux ) and Fr Rebod conspired against Champagnat. On the advice cf Fr Journoux and Fr Derbiz, Champagnat wrote to Fr Courbon, first Vicar General cf the archdiocese.'*

The Fr Derbiz mentioned here was, like Fr Journoux, a curate of the church of Notre Dame in St Chamond. Later, in 1823, he became the parish priest of St Martin-en-Coailleux, in which parish Notre Dame de l'Hermitage is situated.

*'Champagnat would use a case cf conscience as a pretext for writing to Vicar General Courbon, since it seemed that Providence was indicating that perhaps he ought to go to the back blocks cf Bugey.'*

Just what Champagnat intended to do with the Brothers we do not know. Perhaps they would remain where they were, perhaps they would come to the Bugey area. Already, the two Colin brothers and Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn (one of the first two Marist Sisters, the other being Therese Jotillon) were in Cerdon, near the Bugey region of France, taking the initial steps to establish the Society of Mary. This Bugey region lay in the foothills of the Jura Mountains, near the Swiss border, at the extreme north-east of the vast archdiocese of Lyon.

It was a delicate matter to appeal to Fr Courbon, for religious communities were the preserve of the easily-offended Fr Bochard. On the other hand, Courbon was the principal priest in regard to placements in parishes. Hence it was legitimate for Champagnat to contact Courbon, because it was a matter of conscience for all those who had taken the Marist pledge to further the foundation of the Society of Mary by being placed in the best location possible for fulfilling the pledge. Of course, such a request would lead Courbon to declare himself in regard to the Marist project. It was a tactic which had already been employed by Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn in her fruitless visit to Courbon.

*'Because of the complaints and the strife associated with his foundation, Champagnat wanted to put his house up for sale, but, the period being the Easter season, he found it quite inconvenient to attend to such matters.'* It seems clear that, in order to come to the Vicar General fully available and completely unencumbered in regard to his request, Champagnat would sell his house.

*'The reply received from Courbon was, "Write to Fr Bochard about that."' Courbon was playing by the book. His advice was the correct procedure to adopt. 'Champagnat had already written to Bochard and had promised to visit him in order to explain himself in person. Before this journey, he went to see Fr Dervieux,'* President of the town committee, the body from which had come the recent complaints about Champagnat.

*"Ah, there you are. We are concerned about you," exclaimed Dervieux. Champagnat, who had decided to put all his cards on the table, began, "I came for...you know what." Dervieux, not wishing to make any decisions, intervened, "You know that I know nothing."*

*'Dervieux was consulted about the house which they intended to put up for sale.' Not wishing to volunteer an opinion about the projected sale of the house, Dervieux continued, "There will be no advice from me." He went on, 'Ah! I am astonished that Fr Courbon has not written to you about that.'*

So, in the face of Champagnat's frankness, Dervieux was sheltering behind a feigned reticence. No doubt, he was counting on the archdiocese to send Fr Champagnat a formal summons to put an end to his activities.

*'Once more in the presence of the First Vicar General, Champagnat stated simply, "Father Courbon, I am here again. My affairs are settled. Do with me what you think best. If I leave La Valla, the town will not be disturbed. Allow me five or six weeks to go to the seminary to revise my theology."' This request for study leave was obviously the desire of Champagnat to prepare himself for another branch of his priestly ministry, possibly in the Bugey district.*

*"I cannot change you," declared Courbon.*

*"I am not asking you for a change, but, if you desired it, it would be opportune now. Oh well, that being the case, I shall return to La Valla."*

Champagnat's complete surrender into the hands of the First Vicar General was the best way to disarm the latter's prejudices. There was sincere detachment in Champagnat's words, but it was also an approach best suited to obtain an outcome favourable to the young curate. Courbon's final words indicated Champagnat's next move.

*"Have you seen Fr Bochard?"*

Then came the meeting with the formidable Vicar in charge of religious congregations. *'Bochard watched the entry of Champagnat, then asked him to be seated. Br Jean-Marie followed at a discreet distance.'* The presence of the Director of the Brothers could prove to be useful at one time or another during the course of the interview. Bochard had done his homework well. Quite clearly, it seems that he produced a map to give "ocular proof" to his assertions.

*"You have Brothers here, and there, and you have not informed us."*

By this time the Brothers had spread into several towns - La Valla, Marlhes, St Sauveur, so evidently the meeting most likely took place at Easter, 1821. Bochard, of course, was quite right in asserting that Champagnat ought to have informed the archdiocese before proceeding with new foundations.

*"That's true," was the curate's reply, "but timidity prevented my coming. On three occasions I made preparations to make the journey to disclose matters to you, but I could not bring myself to dare to make the journey." 'After this interchange, very profitable explanations ensued, ending with Bochard's promise of protection for Champagnat's enterprise.'*

It is clear that the two men were having their first discussion on the matter. Champagnat's statement about deferring the interview on three occasions is interesting. We find this same reluctance to contest matters with authority figures on several other occasions later in his life.

Clearly, far from ending with condemnation or threats, this interview finished with the two men being on good terms. Probably, hoping to make Champagnat enter into his views on the matter, Bochard promised Champagnat his protection. It was not the first occasion on which Bochard used this tactic with Marist aspirants.

*'Bourg-Argental asked for Brothers. Br Jean-Marie was sent. At this stage he was wanting to imitate St Louis Gonzaga in his penances. Br Louis Audras was appointed Master of Novices, replacing Br Jean-Marie. Louis was better instructed, but, at the beginning, he did not have as much influence on the novices as did Jean-Marie.'*

*'Then Father Rouchon and his novices came to see Champagnat's group. They visited the living quarters of the Marists at La Valla. Their elegance served only to increase Champagnat's aversion to a fusion of his work with that of Fr Rouchon.'*

This investigation probably occurred in 1822, shortly after the arrival of the eight postulants at La Valla, the windfall of vocations that came Champagnat's way after his prayers and his processions to the chapel of Our Lady of Pity.

Since Champagnat was engaged in building extensions, the house at La Valla would have the appearance of untidiness and poverty, thus displeasing the well-bred novices of Fr Rouchon.

*'Meanwhile, at Bourg-Argental, the whole parish came to admire Jean-Marie, yet his only occupations beforehand had been those of making nails and digging fields. He was at Bourg-Argental, then, with three Brothers.'* In reality, there were three Brothers in all, including Jean-Marie.

*'At Bourg-Argental the Brothers were supplied with furniture and other presents. Br Jean-Marie gave things away as gifts; he even gave his clothing to the unfortunate. This practice was not forbidden, since the Brothers used to go to visit the sick and help them. That is why he disposed of things with the same liberality as before. He was at the church at daybreak.*

*Jean-Marie then had the idea of going to La Trappe monastery. He informed Father Champagnat. Counselling by his spiritual director, Jean-Marie set out, but he had been cautioned to the effect that he would not stay there.*

*Jean-Marie remained at La Trappe for a month, after which he came back and begged to be received once more. Fr Champagnat said, "With distress I saw you depart; I now receive you with pleasure. You believed that the Society was not holy enough for you. You went to find all the saints elsewhere. Oh, yes..."*

*'After the episode of the Champagnat-Bochard meeting, mentioned earlier, the parish priest of Chavanay arrived with his nephew to ask Fr Champagnat for Brothers. Champagnat would do nothing without having first spoken of it to Fr Bochard. "Nothing without Bochard" was now his stance.'*

A good instance of Champagnat's co-operation may be found in the opening at Chavanay. Now, while it is true that Chavanay was founded only in November 1824, it was on Champagnat's list of school openings earlier in that year. It could quite well be that Fr Gauché, of Chavanay, made his request in 1822 or 1823 and that Fr Bochard, when consulted, deferred the establishment. Champagnat's opening of the school at Chavanay came about only after Bochard's departure from the archdiocese.

So it seems clear that there was a period of understanding and collaboration



Coming of the eight Postulants necessitates building extensions at La Valla, 1822.

between Bochard and Champagnat. It would be best to place this period as beginning in 1822, when teacher Grizard, on whose religious group Bochard had doubtless already set his eyes, “forms novices in the manner of La Valla” (according to visiting Inspector Guillard). Grizard’s group had its novitiate at Chartreux.<sup>10</sup>

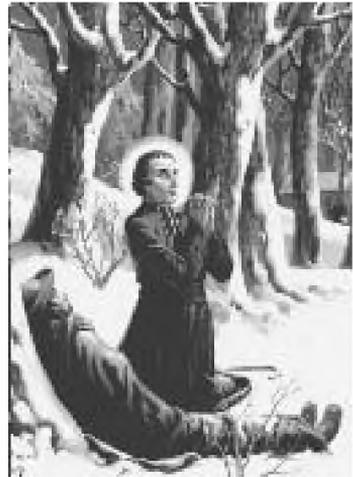
At the beginning of 1823 Fr Champagnat and Brother Stanislas almost lost their lives in a snowstorm. They attributed their preservation to Mary’s intercession.

It was also about the beginning of 1823 that Bochard openly began, with teacher Grizard, a new body of Brothers, of which he was called the Founder. These Brothers took over the school at Feurs, vacated by Courveille’s Brothers after their dispersal. (Courveille’s attempt to found a group of Marist Brothers had come to nothing.) At this time Bochard probably thought that he could soon attach Champagnat’s group, as well as that of Grizard, to his own general project of foundations. Under these conditions equivocation was impossible for Champagnat, so he must either agree to join his Brothers to those of the Vicar General or expect to meet from him a severe hostility.

*‘For a time, however, all worked together marvellously well. The priests’ Retreat of 1823 came along and Champagnat was kindly received by Bochard. It was then that Bochard tried to join Champagnat’s Brothers to his own. The founder of the Marist Brothers immediately sought the advice of both Vicar General Courbon and Fr Gardette, the latter having been Champagnat’s Rector during seminary days. Gardette advised Champagnat to draw things out as long as possible.’*

*“I had my luggage-pack ready and left it there for the time-being. If I were changed and were to become a curate elsewhere, I would be ready for anything. Fortunately, the Brothers were attached to me and were ready to make sacrifices in regard to moving. I was grateful for this.”*

Placed by their Founder in a position of



A near disaster. Champagnat and Brother Stanislas lost in the snow, 1823.

10 O.M. Vol. I. Doc. 86.

possibly having to leave their village to follow him, the Brothers declared that they were ready for this sacrifice. As we shall see, however, Champagnat was saved by the events of history on the wider world scene.

*'The matter went no further, for Archbishop de Pins arrived at Christmas. 'De Pins' nomination was dated 22 December 1823, the public announcement being on 27 December, and so his appointment was known in the archdiocese in the Octave of Christmas. He came to Lyon on 18 February 1824.*

*'When Archbishop De Pins came, Champagnat wrote two letters, one for Archbishop de Pins and one for Father Gardette, who was asked to deal with both. The first letter was addressed in general terms, the second was in particular detail, supplying Gardette with information so that he could explain matters to De Pins. "If you see that my letter to the archbishop does not deserve the attention of His Lordship, burn it," were Champagnat's instructions to Gadette.*

*'Father Gadette did just that. He had his own letter read to the archbishop. In one of the letters' (probably the first, that is, the one to the archbishop) 'Champagnat promised to go and renew into the archbishop's hands his solemn oath of obedience.*

*'Archbishop de Pins wrote to Champagnat,' (perhaps it was on 3 March 1824) 'insisting that Champagnat come in to see him. At the meeting he told La Valla's curate that he wanted to appoint him parish priest of La Valla. Champagnat politely refused, on account of his project concerning the teaching Brothers and also because he did not want the spread of calumnious statements to the effect that he was supplanting the then parish priest.*

There then follows a statement from Champagnat: *'Father Seyve helped the project.'* Seyve was also a Marist aspirant. There is authoritative information that he was working in the La Valla parish in May, 1824, having left his previous parish on 20 October 1823.

*'Requests were made to Archbishop De Pins to buy property at the Hermitage. He gave this permission. The location, a description of it and an outline of the advantages of the position for the work of the Marist priests were points of discussion.'*

From another document<sup>11</sup> we learn that the Hermitage had been thought of as being suitable for the works of the priests of the Society of Mary. Also, before construction began, in an interview between Cham-

11 O.M. Vol. I. Doc.115. 2.

pagnat and Vicar General Barou, the latter remarked, “Eh! Your project for the priests, how is it coming along?” ‘Alas! at that stage all who had taken the Fourvière pledge had been separated. “Ah! Father Courveille? We would give him to you.”

‘Courveille was given to us from Rive de Gier.’ (Correction. It should read “Epercieux”.) ‘There was a delay in Father Courveille’s arrival.’ On 12 May Courveille was authorised to join Father Champagnat. Officially, his term as priest-in -charge of Epercieux ended on 30 June.<sup>12</sup>

‘Then Father Terraillon came. Courveille, however, was the first of these two to arrive on the scene at La Valla. In conjunction with Father Champagnat, he bought the Hermitage property.<sup>13</sup> The archdiocese lent 8,000 francs.’ It would seem, however, that this loan was more likely to have been a gift. In at least one text the sum is mentioned as being 10,000 francs.

‘The building of the Hermitage was commenced. All the Brothers came down to it. A chapel was set up in the woods. All the masons assisted at Mass. While working on the building, one of the workmen fell into the river.’ Evidently, he escaped from the fall unharmed, for the next statement to be found in Bourdin’s Notes is , ‘A Mass of Thanksgiving.’ In Jean Baptiste’s “Life” the story is that the workman seized a tree branch and so broke his fall. Father Bourdin’s mention of a Mass of Thanksgiving highlights the fact that a serious accident was avoided in one way or another.

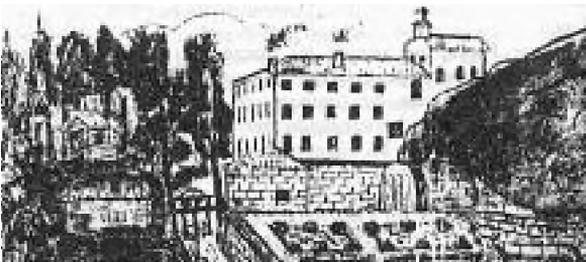
‘In the building (the Hermitage) the chapel for a time was on one side, then on the other, with the Blessed Sacrament reserved. The Office and other orisons were prayed there.’

“I remained nine and a half years as curate at La Valla. All the while

*I worked at the establishment of the Brothers - at Marlbes, St Sauveur, etc. - eight establishments - nine, counting La Valla, before moving to the Hermitage.”*

‘The parish priest’ (i.e., Father Rebod) ‘died young.’<sup>14</sup>

“To replace him there is need of a man such as you have



The need for more accommodation. A drawing of an early stage of the Hermitage building - Fr Bourdin’s sketch.

12 O.M. Vol. IV,p.255.

13 O.M. Vol. IV. Page.91, Vol.I. Doc.102.

14 O.M. Vol. I. Doc.103.

*described to me... There were two...*”

Father Rebod died at the age of forty-six (in 1825). From his knowledge of the parish of La Valla during his nine and a half years as curate there, Champagnat would certainly know the type of parish priest required for this work. The last three words of the quotation may concern a new dialogue concerning a successor to Father Rebod. There may have been two applicants for the position at the time.

*“Father Courveille created confusion at St Symphorien. He wanted to take the Brothers away. I went with a Brother to St Symphorien.”* In all probability, Father Bourdin has mistaken the place. It seems clear that the location is Charlieu.

*“The Brothers of one place were clothed in a blue habit. The reception of the habit took place in the house, the parish priest coming down to have a look. Later, this practice - the blue habit - was discontinued.”* Archbishop de Pins had told Father Champagnat to give the Brothers a religious habit. Until the departure of Courveille this would be the blue coat.

*“I made the best of circumstances, but, a year afterwards, troubles arrived. I fell sick. Father Courveille left the Hermitage and Father Terrailon produced a letter advising Courveille to stay away.”*<sup>15</sup>

Champagnat’s illness was the very serious malady which started in December, 1825. Courveille went off to La Trappe, but, after some weeks, he wrote to the Hermitage seeking permission for a return. Terrailon’s letter, for which he obtained authorisation from both Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin, advised Courveille to stay at la Trappe.

*“Rules were given to the Brothers, to which we used to add each year* An examination of the text of these Rules shows that not a single one of them was written by Courveille, nor do the Rules bear the mark of his characteristic style.

*“The matter of the vow of Chastity came up for consideration. A confessor, not a priest of the Hermitage house, was consulted.”* This priest would have been Father Bedoin, the new parish priest of La Valla. In point of fact, the profession of vows came later, in October 1826.

*“There was this bad young man. The crucifix was thrown at his feet and he was sent away. This action was taken so that the bad influence would be effaced from the children’s minds.”* It would appear that the

---

15 O.M. Vol. IV. Pages 294-295.

fault was generally known and that Champagnat's melodramatic action was an effort to remedy the situation by making a show of revulsion concerning the conduct of the culprit.

*'Some time after his return to the Institute Jean-Marie Granjon set about making a cell, in which he placed a forge.'* When, much later (in August, 1826), *'the Brothers arrived at the Hermitage for the vacations and asked where was Jean-Marie, they were forbidden to visit him, so as not to weary him.'*

By that time Jean-Marie's behaviour had become quite strange.

*Jean-Marie: " Ah! Do not leave me any longer as a teacher, for the Devil..." ...Champagnat: "Oh, well! There's the point I wanted to see you come to. So, then, go to St Symphorien-le-Château ...to Charlieu."* *'But he was unwilling to go. He was sent away.'* (In 1826).<sup>16</sup>

It is difficult to think of the founder dismissing his first disciple, as that last sentence suggests. It is much more likely that, after much attention and patience on the Founder's part, Jean-Marie made his own decision to leave. "Oh, well. There's the point I wanted to see you come to" probably has reference to this. By that time Champagnat believed that Jean-Marie's departure was the best solution to the problem.

*'Rule. Vow Register. Change of habit.'* Another document places the change of habit in 1827, after the withdrawal of Father Courveille from the Hermitage scene. It is only to be expected that, after ten years of existence, the Brothers would become better organised in these matters.

At this point the narration of Father Bourdin terminates. It is a pity that the account is so short and so incomplete, but at least we can say that we have here a document based on the words of Champagnat, a document which, in the main, supports the story related by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, but which also provides additional material and a different viewpoint.

---

## **NARRATIVES OF OTHER CONTEMPORARIES**

Having completed Bourdin's account of the early history of the Marist Brothers, we now come to shorter narratives about Champagnat and Marist affairs given by several contemporaries, the four Marist priests - Fathers

---

16 O.M. Vol. I. Doc. 152, Vol. II. Doc. 750. 145, Vol. IV. Page 255.

Terraillon, Séon, Maitrepierre and Jean-Claude Colin. Commentaries are given after each account, but, apart from a few notes, the narratives themselves are not interrupted.

The few editorial notes are inserted in brackets, the longer ones being introduced by the sign 'N.B.' Inverted commas are not used for the narrative, but are, of course, inserted for the actual words of characters. The sign '...' indicates that parts that have no relevance at all to Champagnat have been omitted.

Illustrations for the following passages are taken from the four volumes of 'Origines Maristes'



Notre Dame de l'Hermitage,  
a recent view.

## **1840-1842. Notes of Father Terrailon on the origins of the Society of Mary**

(Quoted from *Origines Maristes*, Vol. II Doc. 750 p.664 et s.)

Lines 109 ff.

*In another sphere (cf the Society of Mary's affairs), Father Champagnat had commenced to form some Marist Brothers at La Valla, where he was the curate. As his work became more and more important, he bought an estate between La Valla and St Chamond and built a house there, which he called the Hermitage. It was there that he established the Mother House of his small society. To help him, the archdiocesan authorities sent him the parish priest of Epercieux (Father Courveille), who hastened to quit his parish to rush to Champagnat's help and, at the same time, to busy himself with the work of the priests. He even went to the extent of putting money into the purchase and the building of the Hermitage property. As for me, I was then chaplain of the Montbrison Charity. I asked my superiors for permission to go to Belley to join the Fathers Colin, of whom the younger had become the superior of the minor seminary of that town. Instead of obtaining the permission requested, I received in response a letter which appointed me to the Hermitage to join Fathers Courveille and Champagnat. Faithful to the resolution we had taken to show always a perfect obedience to our superiors, I left without delay to reach my destination. We still recognised Father Courveille as our provisional superior.*

*A short time after my arrival, the said Father Courveille had the idea of making a Retreat at La Trappe at Aiguebelle. After remaining there for several days, he wrote to the Hermitage, handing in his resignation as superior, and added his intention of locating himself among these good priests at Aiguebelle. Father Champagnat read this letter to me. My advice was to accept his resignation. Father Champagnat was of a contrary opinion, because Father Courveille had a money interest in his financial affairs. Even so, I insisted, and for my insistence I had grave reasons. Father Champagnat persisted. We left the matter there for the moment. On the next day the younger Father Colin arrived at the Hermitage. Father Champagnat saw him first and convinced him to accept his own viewpoint. As for me, I did not change. I held to my initial opinion. 'You are missing out here,' I told them, 'a great opportunity which will perhaps not come any more -and you will be angry about it, I am sure. Father Courveille has in this area the reputation of being a saint. If we are obliged later on to put him aside, and that could happen, all the odium for it will fall back on us. By taking advantage of this*

opportunity, he will be excluding himself. He will be regarded as an inconstant person and we will be shielded from all blame. Believe me, accept this resignation. Later on you will have cause to applaud yourselves for it, I am certain about that.' They were struck by my words and decided to sign the letter accepting the resignation, which I had taken the care to prepare beforehand.

The next day I left for Lyon in the company of Father Colin and posted the letter while passing through St Chamond. Having arrived at Lyon, I went to find Father Barou, Vicar General, and told him what had just happened. For this he blessed the Divine Providence, which had saved us from a very grave embarrassment known only to us two alone. From that time onward we recognised Father Colin the younger as our provisional superior. The two sections (those in Belley and those in Lyon) continued to act in unison in all things and in all places. Finally, our definitive approbation arrived from Rome in 1836.

We came together at Belley for the appointment of the Superior General on the 24th September, Feast of Our Lady of Mercy. Here a delicate situation came to embarrass us momentarily. Bishop Devie had manifested a desire to attend this appointment of a Superior General. Not to give offence to His Lordship, the Fathers Colin agreed to this. For my part, I was strongly opposed for two main reasons. I told them:

1. We must not set this precedent, which could later on embarrass us and cause us to have disagreements.
2. We have as many men from the Archdiocese of Lyon as from the diocese of Belley. Our diocesan superiors, who protect us equally, could not view this favouritism with a contented eye. We must free ourselves at the first blow. Later on we will congratulate ourselves for having done so. They understood me. They finished up by giving in. We were alone in this election. The appointment fell on Father Colin the younger. Everything went off remarkably well - and we found ourselves constituted as a Society. You can see what followed in the archives of the General House.



Father Courveille.

## **Comment**

The account by Father Terraillon is interesting in what it reveals of the character of Terraillon (evidently, he has more than a slight trace of self-importance), but, more importantly, in what it tells us about his part in the initial rejection of Father Courveille by the would-be Marists. Terraillon is really claiming to be the one responsible for the removal of one who, although the inspiring initiator of the Marist movement, was becoming unpopular with certain members of the Marist group.

From Terraillon's account, it seems that neither Champagnat nor Colin was initially aware of Courveille's fault. In other words, the moral lapse of Courveille was not taken into consideration in their acceptance of his resignation. This perhaps accounts for Champagnat's reluctance to be quit of Courveille, to whom he owed money and whom he then regarded as leader.

It seems very strange, however, that Champagnat would not have known of the fault, since it concerned one of his postulants. On the other hand, there is the possibility that Champagnat was not aware of the scandal because his illness had led to a period of convalescence at the presbytery of Father Dervieux.

Terraillon seems to have carried his tale to Vicar General Barou alone, but, inevitably, the news of Courveille's fault leaked out, perhaps from some of the postulants who knew about the matter.

Terraillon's vigorous action is perhaps an instance of God's use of people to further the work of one of his saints, viz, Father Champagnat. Certainly, Champagnat would have found it very hard to 'cut the painter' with Courveille, so Terraillon's intervention was providential.

### ***April 1846. Father Etienne Séon's account of Marist origins, as recorded by Father Mayet.***

*(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 625 p.438.)*

Some notes on the beginnings of the Society of Mary in the archdiocese of Lyon, given by Father Etienne Séon, missionary priest in France.

Line 25ff.

*Following that, Father Courveille was at the Hermitage with Father Champagnat right at the beginning of the Marist Brothers there. (N.B. In point of fact,*

Father Courveille come to La Valla first; the Hermitage was still being built when he was sent to help Father Champagnat at La Valla - Ed.) *Father Terrailon also came and passed a year there... Father Courveille, however, was particularly preoccupied with the matter of his position as superior. He had taken to wearing the blue cloak which the Marists will one day wear and he wore his blue cloak winter and summer. His mode of conduct was, to some extent, drawing ridicule on the nascent Society. Father Champagnat was in complete charge of the Brothers. Father Courveille said: 'It is necessary, however, to know who is the superior. It was proposed to put matters to a vote. All the votes of the Brothers went to Father Champagnat. Then Father Courveille, hoping, said Father Séon, to be able to be nominated as superior of the priests, went on to say: 'We must also nominate a superior for the priests. But this proposal appeared to be out of place. There being only three priests, they let the matter lapse.*



Fr Séon.

*Soon Father Courveille went to la Trappe at Aiguebelle and wrote to these priests that it was time to establish more binding ties and to recognise an authority, and that, through respect for this authority, if they recognised him as superior, they would come to fetch him from the monastery. That would be the sign by which he would see that they regarded him as superior. These priests were extremely happy with this letter. Father Courveille embarrassed them very much. They*

*talked among themselves, they consulted ecclesiastical authorities and they replied to the effect that he should stay where he was...*

*Father Terrailon, however, while still undertaking to maintain his links with the Marists, accepted the position of a curacy at Ainay in Lyon, then the position of parish priest at St Martin de Fontaine, and, finally, that of parish priest at St Chamond. Father Champagnat was therefore all alone in the diocese of Lyon, busy with his work with the Brothers.*

*At this period Father Séon was following his seminary course at St Irenaeus at Lyon. Then, finding himself at the end of his course (it was in about 1825), he asked Archbishop de Pins for permission to become a Lazarist priest. This was refused. Father de Baudry, his confessor, unknown to Séon, asked permission for him to join the Missionaries of Chartreux. Father Séon, in his turn, refused to enter a congregation to which he had given no thought. Finally, Father Gardette, superior of the major seminary at Lyon, to whom Father Séon was going for spiritual direction, made known to him the project of the new Society (the Society of Mary) and even engaged him to enter it. Father Séon put himself entirely into Gardette's hands. Not yet having reached the proper age*

for ordination to the priesthood, he was placed at the College at St Chamond with Father Brut. From this place he examined the venture of Father Champagnat without letting the latter know his intentions. At last, some time before his ordination, he sought out Father Champagnat and unburdened himself. Poor Father Champagnat, finally recognising a companion who volunteered for the work, received him as an angel from heaven and his joy was full. After ordination, Father Séon came to join him, sharing with him the care of the nascent community of Marist Brothers and throwing himself into the activities of a minister to souls.

Nevertheless, Father Champagnat was fully taken up with the branch of the Society to which he had devoted himself, and, seeing that God was beginning to bless his efforts, he did not give as much attention to the priests' branch, and had thus, so to speak, despaired of it. (N.B. It must have been only the temptation of a moment. In December 1828, Father Champagnat will affirm with vigour the subordination of the society of Marist Brothers to 'the work of Mary', considered as a whole - Ed.) One day, when Father Séon was speaking to him about his hopes concerning the Society of Mary, Champagnat said: 'Ah, my dear friend, you must not think about it. I believe that there will not be any branch of the Society other than that of the Brothers. The remaining branches will not come into being. Think no more about it. You are doing well here and our work is giving glory to God. That must be sufficient for us.' At these words Father Séon woke as if from a dream, and said to Champagnat: 'In that case, Father Champagnat, I have been mistaken. What you are doing here is fine, but, as far as I am concerned, I want to belong to a religious society of priests busy with evangelising. Thus, I shall leave tomorrow for Lyon and I am going to ask for permission to leave the archdiocese to go to join those priests of Belley diocese' (Fathers Colin, Jallon, Déclat). Father Champagnat was very much distressed, but he could not hold the young priest back.

Séon left the next day, arrived at Lyon and went straight to the residence of Father Cattet, the Vicar General, and complained about having been tricked, and said that, in this case, he asked permission to go to Belley to join the priests there. Father Cattet at first spoke with some force, but then he calmed down, tried a softer line with his visitor, and told him that archdiocesan authorities truly had the intention of favouring this project. 'If this intention is real, Father Vicar General, why do you not allow any subjects to enter this group?' 'But, my dear friend, no one has asked. We cannot send any.' 'As for me, I did not ask,' said Father Séon, 'you sent me there. But, Father Vicar General, if someone asks you about it, will you grant it?' The Vicar General said yes.

Father Séon went to the seminary, where were stationed several of his friends, whose intentions he knew. He spoke to Fathers Rouselon, Sarrasin and

Journoux, and came back to speak to Father Cattet: 'Well, there are three who are asking.' Cattet was caught. 'But,' he said, 'that is scarcely possible; we have need of priests. Father Rousselon is designated to be the Director at the Mimins, Father Sarrasin (N.B. shortly to be ordained priest. -Ed.) for a certain post, Father Journoux for a different position. Find, if you can, someone who is only a deacon and we will give him. Father Séon was not distressed and went to the major seminary to find Mr Bourdin, who was a deacon, and who said: 'You are an angel whom God has sent to me. My intentions and my thoughts had been heading in that direction, but I was beginning to forget it; but, nevertheless, now is the decisive moment for me. I owe you my vocation.' Father Séon made known this step to Father Cattet, who promised that he would take measures at the Episcopal Council to have Bourdin given to him.

Father Séon therefore left, reassured about the future of the Society and happy with the result of his mission. But, on arriving at the Hermitage, he found Father Champagnat less enchanted than he was and a little astonished that someone was bringing him a vocation without his own cooperation in the matter. 'You know him very well, this candidate?' asked Champagnat, and Father Séon again had disappointment in thinking that Father Champagnat would perhaps refuse Bourdin. It was necessary that all the forward steps of this poor little Society of Mary would be made in the midst of thorns and that, when crosses from without were lacking, it was the members themselves who would furnish them for their comrades. The Providence of God! God wished to claim for Himself alone the glory of having accomplished all.

After all that, Father Bourdin duly arrived at the Hermitage, then Father Pompallier, then Father Chanut, then Father Forest...

The good Father Séon possessed an admirable devotion to the Society and he proved it, especially on two occasions. He pressed Father Terrailon finally to take his part in the Society and to quit everything in order to come and join the others. He demolished all the reasons, all the pretexts which Father Terrailon presented. At last, the latter having told him that he had a sick brother and that he was obliged to look after him, Father Séon said, 'I promise you I shall give him, during the remainder of his life, a pension of 100 écus. Father Séon's father was still living and, although he did not benefit from his father's money, he knew that his father would refuse him nothing. Nevertheless, Father Terrailon still put things off.

The house of the Marist Brothers at the Hermitage was, in part, in the name of Father Courveille. There was question of its being made over to Father Champagnat and to win Father Courveille over to this plan. Father Séon took charge of this delicate mission. He went to see Father Courveille, showed him much esteem and affection, and made him consent to show

up on a designated day at the home of a notary, there to meet Father Champagnat. There the contract was concluded, and that was the last contact that the Society had with Father Courveille...

When Father Pompallier asked to join the Society, the Vicar General told Father Séon that he could not grant it immediately, but that, as priests were in short supply, he would have to fill a certain appointment for some time. Father Séon replied, 'Reverend Vicar General, if you judge me capable of doing the job, give me the post that you had in mind for Father Pompallier and let him come to our place. I believe that, with God's help, I am sure enough of myself to think that I shall not change my mind; on the other hand, I fear that a young seminarian may come to change his determined decision. Then, as soon as you can replace me, I shall return to rejoin my confreres.' 'The proposal was accepted, and it is thus,' Father Séon told us laughing, 'that I have, so to say, bought Father Pompallier. I took his place as curate at Charlieu for 14 months.'

Then Father Séon came back to the Hermitage. There he was in frequent contact with the priests of Belley, especially with Father Colin the younger. 'The eyes of all of us looked to him,' said Father Séon, 'and we regarded him as the superior of the Society, the one who one day was to be in charge. And it was he who worked hardest for that end. We knew it, and, what is more, we also knew that he had undertaken certain engagements with God in regard to this work. Finally, we could see very well that it was he who, among all of us, had the greatest vision.'

Nevertheless, we had difficulties in maintaining our connections with one another. The administration of Lyon viewed with some alarm the fact that we were travelling to Belley, and it was very uneasy when Father Colin came to Lyon. For these reasons and, at the same time, never to act except only in a spirit of submission to episcopal authority, we asked permission of archdiocesan authorities when we were going to Belley. Apart from that, we wrote to one another very frequently. At that time the Society had many trials to suffer from the archdiocesan people at Lyon, but it suffered less from clergy members than it did in the diocese of Belley.

When Father Champagnat was building at the Hermitage, Father de la Croix, who was then parish priest of Chartreux, and who to-day is the archbishop of Auch, had this message for Champagnat: 'Tell Father Champagnat that he is building in vain.' They mocked Champagnat very much in the archdiocese.

Father Gardette, Superior of the major seminary at Lyon, also exhorted us strongly to think only of a diocesan undertaking, saying that we had to let ourselves be led by diocesan authority and that it was a vain imagination to think of wanting to establish ourselves throughout the world.

*At the Hermitage we lived entirely mixed with the Brothers. We followed a very severe Rule of life; our Chapter of Faults was rigorous, and, after the declaration of faults, each one publicly said to the one who was accusing himself of faults, everything that had been noted about him. Father Pompallier, whom the archdiocesan authorities had nominated as spiritual director, made strict regulations. Then we thought that it was necessary to separate the priests and the Brothers. Father Champagnat proposed this very strongly, but we put it to a vote and the votes were against him. The priests therefore went to establish themselves in the house of Father Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte, who gave his house to the Society on condition that the Society would always provide him with curates. Two of us therefore performed these functions. The others went to give parish missions.*

*Still, we thought that it was necessary to appoint a superior for this new community at Valbenoîte. We asked permission of the archdiocese; we addressed ourselves to prayer - and Father Séon was elected. Those belonging to the diocese of Belley could not be elected, because, in the eyes of the administration, they were entirely separate; and, besides, each bishop kept his subjects under his own hand and authority, wanting to attach the projected Society to himself. Father Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon, came to install the new superior. This was done with solemnity.*

*Then Father Séon, with the permission of ecclesiastical authority, went to visit Father Colin at Belley, accompanied by Father Champagnat. They related to Father Colin what had been done, spoke about their Rules, their way of life, and asked his advice. Father Colin was quite astonished by so many Rules. He said to them: 'You are beginning where you should be finishing.' He then made them acquainted with the manner of doing things in Belley, told them that he had only a short agenda, with some notes that would serve to guide them, and pointed out that it was not necessary to go more quickly than Providence, but simply to follow it.*

*Father Séon was struck by the wisdom of this advice. He returned to Valbenoîte and told his priests that what would be best to do was carefully to put under wraps the huge packet of Rules of their own making and then to await the moment of Providence concerning the Rules, in the meanwhile living together as good priests and practising the religious spirit as well as they could.*

*But Father Pompallier believed that everything was going to perish. He spoke only of the Rule; he saw only the Rule. He wrote about this matter to the archdiocesan authorities, who did not think it appropriate for them to interfere in this matter. But the Vicars General called him to Lyon to confide to him a society of young people who wanted to be led spiritually by a Marist. In this society were Messrs Colard, Delaunay, Dominget, Vienne, Arnaud, Girard and Gabet. Father Pompallier therefore went to Lyon,*

where he became chaplain to the boarding school of Messrs Colard and Delaunay, subsequently transferred to La Favorite. There, with freedom for his zeal, Father Pompallier once again set himself to fashioning a whole host of rules, but this time for this particular group.

Then Father Colin went to Rome. Then they confided Western Oceania to the Society. A probation for the Society came. Bishop Pompallier was named Vicar Apostolic. Vows were taken.

The rest is known.

All these facts have just been related to me by Father Séon.

By this story we must complete what was lacking in the story given by Father Déclas. Thus, through these notes, we would come a little closer to the history of the development of the Society in the archdiocese of Lyon before the probation of the Society (1836).

People could be astonished that I have written everything that has been told to me. Here are my reasons: 1. I have invented nothing; I simply relate. If the history of the Society has not been traced on the lines of those of the other congregations, I am at the end of my tether and can't help that. We must speak the truth. All the glory of this work reverts only to God. It is very necessary for people to know that, of all the first members of the Society, Father Colin is the one who has always been the firmest and the one who has never vacillated.

It therefore seems to me that, from all these stories, it emerges 1. That the Society comes from God, is the work of God. 2. That the human instrument whom God made use of is Father Colin.

## **Comment**

From Father Séon's account, it is clear that his determination and persistence were instrumental in bringing Champagnat back to a belief in the future of a society of Marist priests. After the defection of Courveille and the desertion by Terraillon, Champagnat was weak physically and disheartened spiritually by the breaking-up of the first Marist priests' community in the archdiocese of Lyon. It was Séon's bubbling enthusiasm and his firm determination that took the young man to see his Vicar General, thence to scour the major seminary for recruits for chaplaincy work at the Hermitage. Thus a fertile field of recruiting for the Marists was found at the seminary, and many young priests came to volunteer to go to the Hermitage for the spiritual instruction of the Brothers and for Retreats and other apostolic works in the nearby parishes.

It would seem that God again made use of a human instrument, Father Séon, to further the advance of the Society of Mary, for, thanks to

Séon's strong words to Father Champagnat, the latter stirred himself once more to strive for the priest's branch of the Society, so much so that we find him shortly afterwards (1828) writing to the effect that, for the priests' branch, he would sacrifice everything. The source of vocations tapped by Séon, that is, the major seminary, became a fountain from which flowed a steady stream of Marist aspirants. When the Marists received Papal approbation in 1836, there was almost equality in the numbers coming from the two dioceses of Lyon and Belley. Father Champagnat, appointed by the archbishop as Superior of the intending-Marists within the archdiocese of Lyon, helped in the formation of these young priests, mostly at the Hermitage.

**May-October, 1853.**

**History of Marist Origins, by Father Maîtrepierre S.M.  
Re the foundation of the Marist Brothers.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 752 p 694 ff)

p. 717 Les Petits Frères de Marie

*The idea of their foundation was conceived at the major seminary of Lyon at the same time as that of the Society. Father Champagnat, on joining the original founders, said to them: 'I have always felt in my mind a special attraction for a foundation of Brothers. I unite very willingly with you, and, if you approve, I will undertake this section.' And he was given charge of it. 'My early education,' he said, 'was deficient; I would be happy to contribute towards providing for others the benefits I was deprived of.' He worked at this project with tireless zeal until his edifying death on 6th June, 1840 at 4.30 a.m., while his good pious Brothers were singing the Salve Regina in the chapel - a practice which, for fifteen or twenty years, he enjoined on them to perform each day at the same time.*

*The history of the beginnings of this foundation are most interesting and edifying. Poverty, simplicity, 'the base things of the world' stand forth clearly on every side. Their trials and afflictions have been concealed fairly generally, but they were not the less numerous nor less censurable for all that. The Founder was afraid of nothing. In the early attacks made on him by a Vicar*



Fr Maîtrepierre.

General (himself a founder of a similar work), he said, 'Until now I used to wonder if I was working according to God's designs; the attacks I have just received begin to give me hope.'<sup>17</sup>

In the beginning he received with great ease the blind, the lame, the deaf, those disfigured in appearance, learned and ignorant, polite or impolite; and with these he founded establishments. He said: 'For my needs I use whatever I have at hand. When I need a superior, a director or a teacher, if I don't find one with two eyes, I use a blind man. When I don't find one who walks straight, I put in a lame one, and I say, "if the Blessed Virgin wants that work to go ahead, she certainly must take a hand in it, for she sees quite well that, otherwise, it certainly cannot prosper."' "

His language was often enough of a somewhat characteristic originality. For example, some months before his death, I had the consolation of spending a week with him<sup>18</sup>. One day Brother Jean-Marie, the bursar, brought him a letter. He read it during his interview with me, and suddenly he said, 'Look, Brother Jean-Marie, that's your affair. It is Father X offering us a young man. That is very kind of him, but it won't cost him anything<sup>19</sup>. Still, if he has any go in him<sup>20</sup>, we'll make him work. But he is only fifteen; that could cost you food and good money; and then he will just clear off and leave us<sup>21</sup>.'

During the general Retreat at the minor seminary of Meximieux in 1837 he gave us an example of detachment which greatly edified us. Up till then, by force of circumstances, he had worked at his project in a somewhat independent manner. It was deemed fitting to ask him to resign from his position as Superior of the Brothers. Everyone knows how founders and former superiors cling to their work and strive to direct it according to their viewpoint. Ah, well, as soon as Father Champagnat understood what was being asked of him with all due discretion, he replied: 'Yes, certainly, I will give my resignation, and I should do so. The only thing that offends me is that you take such trouble to tell me. I had the grace of state to begin; I have not the grace of state to continue.' And he gave his resignation in writing. Father General re-appointed him at once. His dependence became thereby more regular, more effective and more fruitful for himself and his congregation.

---

17 Father Bourdin records a similar reaction by Father Champagnat when he received a letter from Father Bochart V.G. Probably, it concerned the same incident.

18 Father Maitrepierre to Fr Lagnier, 5th March (read April) 1840. 'I spent a week at the Hermitage in the middle of the month of March. Good Father Champagnat was not well. I left him a little better. There again I was edified.'

19 'That will not extract any of his teeth.'

20 'If he has some elbow.'

21 'He will show us a clean pair of heels.'

*It is the duty of the Little Brothers of Mary to produce his story. I know that they are collecting interesting notes which they will publish in due time.*

### Comment

Father Maîtrepierre's story is a commentary on the early stages of the Brothers' branch of the Society of Mary. It also contains interesting vignettes of Champagnat, some scenes in which we are made aware of aspects of Champagnat's character that are refreshingly new - and perhaps surprising.

What strikes us are Champagnat's humility concerning his lack of initial education, his rough, picturesque words concerning the young aspirant, the bluntness of his words of resignation, the hardening of his determination when he is faced with opposition, and an attitude to Mary where he is so much at home with her that he can speak to her (and of her) in a challenging, almost expostulatory way. We also see the admiration of a visitor for Champagnat's patient acceptance of approaching death.

### **1869-1870. Memoirs on the origin of the Society of Mary and diverse statements of Father Colin, as recorded by Father Jeantin.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. III Doc. 819 pp 215ff.)

Line 75 ff Line 75 ff

*Seminarian Courveille and his companions, having finished their course of Theology towards the end of 1816, were called to the priesthood and were sent from one part of the archdiocese to another to serve as curates in sundry parishes. Father Courveille was placed at Rive-de-Gier, then he became parish priest of Epercieux, near Feurs in Le Forêt, Department of the Loire, where he remained until 1824, the year in which he came to join Father Champagnat, who was engaged in founding the community of Marist teaching Brothers at La Valla.*

*Father Colin was sent as curate to Cerdon, where his older brother was the parish priest. This appointment disturbed his conscience; he believed that the natural affection that united him to this excellent brother would become an obstacle to his religious vocation. Father*



Fr Colin,  
Superior General.

*Cholleton, consulted on this difficulty, said to the young curate: 'Go, your brother will be your first companion in religion.'*

*Later on, the good Father understood the ways of Divine Providence. Had he been curate elsewhere, he would not have had sufficient freedom to work for the realisation of his project, especially for the journeys and the necessary absences.*

*This same delicacy of conscience had already manifested itself at St Jodard at the period of military conscription. When Father Gardette, who was then superior of this minor seminary, wanted to inscribe the young Colin among the number of students claimed for the Church, the latter at first refused. The superior, astonished at this refusal, asked the reason for it. 'I feared,' said the young student, 'that this claim would later on influence my priestly vocation.' 'Be calm', replied the good superior, 'You are always free to leave whenever you wish.'*

*But, let us return to our young priests. Since they were dispersed, some within in the archdiocese of Lyon, others in the parishes which in 1823 came to belong to the diocese of Belley, it became necessary to carry out the formation of the Society of Mary in the two dioceses.*

*During the whole time which elapsed since coming out of the seminary Father Courveille did nothing towards the end of realising his project, and his young companions, situated in the same archdiocese, separated from one another, soon forgot their promise of contributing to the said Society; it was no longer a matter for them.*

*Nevertheless, Father Champagnat, curate at La Valla, had devoted himself to the foundation of the Institute of Marist Brothers. The idea of this Institute belonged to him alone. It was he who, influenced by the difficulty which he had experienced in becoming educated, said to his companions, 'It will also be necessary to found teaching Brothers.'*

*Father Courveille left his parish of Epercieux and joined Father Champagnat at La Valla in the month of July 1824. Although he had done nothing for the Brothers, and although, until then, they had never heard him spoken of, he took the title of Founder and Superior General of the Brothers and the priests. He was so named in a Prospectus of the Institute of Brothers which was printed at that time (August 1824), Father Champagnat having only the title of Director. Father Courveille liked to recall that he had been the first to have had the thought of founding the Society of Mary. It was under this title that he established himself as Superior General of the Brothers. Dressed up in a wide and long blue cloak, he put on all the airs of the abbot of a monastery, and he posed as such wherever he went.*

*He brought out a Rule which, he said, he had drawn up himself and he had it read out. But this Rule not suiting the Brothers, they continued*

to follow the regulations of the house, and nothing remains of this Rule, which was only a lot of fine theory.

Father Champagnat, who at first had a high opinion of Father Courveille and a very low opinion of himself, did not make the slightest difficulty, allowing Courveille to take the title of Superior General. Father Champagnat advised the Brothers to regard Courveille as such.

The Brothers accepted Father Courveille in principle, but in practice they continued to resort to Father Champagnat, whether for spiritual or temporal affairs. Concealing the chagrin that he was experiencing, Father Courveille strove to gain the confidence of the Brothers and, believing he had succeeded in this, he conceived the idea of having himself appointed - especially, exclusively, and above all other things - for the direction of the Brothers.

He therefore caused elections to be held, but all the votes went, a first time, then a second time, to Father Champagnat. Deeply wounded by the preference they had given to Father Champagnat, Father Courveille became discontent. He took exception to everything, he blamed everything, and even carried his complaints to the archdiocesan authorities.

During a sickness of Father Champagnat, Courveille's management, severe, hard, and lacking in intelligence, weakened the morale of all the Brothers. Nobody could put up with him. It was about this time that he compromised himself with a young postulant. To put his conscience in order he went to make a Retreat at Aiguebelle in April, 1826.

But, far from opening his eyes to the abyss to which his pride had precipitated him, and persisting in his foolish intention to rule everything, he wrote a letter in which he complained that they did not render him the honours which were his due and he protested that he would come back to the Hermitage (where the Brothers had established their Mother House) only after they had given him the formal promise that, in the future, they would leave all authority to him and treat him as the Superior.

In this period, knowledge of Courveille's fault having been noised abroad, Father Champagnat and Father Terrillon, on the advice of the archbishop, jointly wrote to him. They advised Father Courveille that, if he found the place suited him well, to remain in Aiguebelle, and they declared that, in any case, he must no longer think of returning to the Hermitage.

Courveille did not remain at Aiguebelle. After receiving his exeat, he went to live at St Clair, near Roches de Condrieu in the Department of Isère, and there he served as chaplain to some religious Sisters. He convinced them to buy the abbey of St Antoine near the town of St Marcellin, and, with the agreement of Bishop Bruillard of Grenoble, he set up the Sisters there and established a novitiate for Brothers. But his work had no success

at all. In fewer than two years the baneful of trainees whom he had gathered together dispersed. The Sisters were the victims of the expenses which this foundation had cost. ( N.B. The Sisters themselves remained at St Antoine until the French government's Laws of 1903 -Ed.)

... Later on, we learnt that he was a religious of the Benedictine Order at Solesmes, where he died two years ago.

Father Courveille was weak in the head. He boasted of having visions and spoke of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. (N.B. Father Colin said that Father Courveille spoke only of heavenly communications and revelations, not of visions and apparitions. Fr Jeantin has not reported Colin accurately -Ed.) This is known by all who were associated with him. He was always pious and had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Father Colin asserts that at the major seminary Courveille was pleasing to God and that he received extraordinary graces: 'One day,' he said, 'he fell into an ecstasy at the feet of his confessor; they had to carry him away.'

Father Terrailon came to the Hermitage in 1825, in October, and left about the same month in the year 1826, under the pretext of preaching the Jubilee, but, in reality, because he was not happy with the Brothers. At Easter 1827 he was appointed parish priest of St Martin de Fontaines, in the canton of Neuville. He remained there only six months. The parish of Notre Dame de St Chamond having become vacant, Father Champagnat, who maintained the hope of bringing Father Terrailon back, earnestly besought the archbishop to appoint Terrailon to Notre Dame, which was done. Father Séon, a teacher at the St Chamond College, came to the Hermitage in the month of April, 1827.

Father Bourdin came there in 1828, being then still only a deacon. Father Pompallier came some months afterwards.

In 1829 there was the project of a new house for the would-be Marist priests. Father Thérél, parish priest of Charlieu, offered for that purpose the vast abbey of the Benedictines which is in that town. Father Séon went to take possession of it and passed a year there, but the Revolution of 1830 and the death of the parish priest caused this project to fall through.

Father Champagnat then offered the La Grange-Payre property in order to accommodate the priests there, but, when Father Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte, offered his house, the ancient monastery of the Benedictines, his proposition was accepted.

Father Chanut entered in 1830.

Fathers Servant and Forest came in 1831.

Such are the beginnings of the Society of Mary in the archdiocese of Lyon. In this account, we see confrères who are seeking to unite, but we see

*no steps taken, whether to the archdiocesan administration or, especially, to the Holy See, with the object of canonically setting up a religious society. Only one person worked with ardour and success: Father Champagnat. He founded and developed the work of the Marist teaching Brothers. As for the Society of priests, there were, I repeat, some attempts, often fruitless efforts, sometimes mixed up with scandal, as we have seen. But there were no steps at all taken in regard to the ecclesiastical authorities.*

### **Comment**

The account by Father Jeantin, based on his interviews with Father Colin (who was then almost eighty years old) seems to be strongly biased against Father Courveille, who, in the period before he came to the Hermitage did, in point of fact, make efforts to establish a branch of the Third Order, to set up some teaching Brothers and, more successfully, to recruit young women for the Sisters' branch. It is interesting to note that Jeantin omits any mention of Colin's part in the acceptance of Courveille's withdrawal from the Society of Mary.

There are also some minor omissions and errors that show that Jeantin (or Colin) is not fully aware of all aspects of the story related here. One must bear in mind that these notes were taken many decades after the events dealt with and also that Colin, at eighty years, would probably not have total recall.

Father Champagnat's humility is once more strongly asserted and his energy and his zeal for the development of the Marist priests' branch are attested to. The last sentence, however, 'But there were no steps at all taken in regard to the ecclesiastical authorities' shows forgetfulness of positive steps made in regard to the priests' branch of the Society of Mary: the establishments at The Hermitage and Valbenoite, the recognition by the archdiocese of the existence of the Marist priests, and the role-call of nine priests and Pompallier among the twenty-one who arrived at Belley for official beginning of the Society of Mary (priests).

A further point of omission is that it was through Father Champagnat's influence and work that the archdiocese authorities recognised the Society of Mary (priests) within the archdiocese; it was he whom they appointed (following a vote among the priests concerned) as archdiocesan leader.

---

## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

---

We now move on to a section where we pass from reflective stories to short extracts and letters that are relevant to Champagnat's story and character. Placed in chronological order, they show us the opinions of some of his contemporaries.

### **24 May 1830. Letter of Father Cattet to Father Champagnat. The ordinance of approbation of the Institute has been given by Archbishop De Pin's archdiocesan authorities.**

---

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. I Doc. 218.)



Fr Coindre. Showing good common sense, he resisted Fr Cattet's attempt to join Champagnat's congregation to his.

Lyon, 24 May 1830.

Father,

We are touched by the sentiments which have caused you to write. They do honour to your modesty and prove to us even more clearly that you are the man whom the good Lord would very much wish to use to carry on His work and to make it succeed. Continue, my good friend, to form in the archdiocese good subjects who will cause religion to flower in the country regions.

I have received a letter from Paris which tells me that the ordinance for your congregation has been made out, and that it awaits only its turn to be signed by the King.

A thousand friendly greetings,

Cattet, Vicar General.

### **Comment**

It is very regrettable that Champagnat's correspondence, to which allusion is made in this letter, has not been preserved. It seems that the superior of the Hermitage protested his unworthiness in his letter and offered his resignation, which the Vicar here rejects without discussion. Would it have been the prospect of seeing his congregation approved by the government which would have incited the Founder to make this act of humility? It is difficult to say. In any case, the revolution of July 1830 soon buried, with the government ordinance of which Father Cattet speaks

still unsigned, any projects based on an approbation of the Institute.

This letter reveals a Father Cattet very different from the man we met in 1826. At that time Cattet gave a harsh and discouraging inspector's report on the Hermitage and was intent on joining Champagnat's work to that of Father Coindre. Obviously, Cattet has come to a warm appreciation of Champagnat and his work.

**18 December 1830. Letter of Father Cattet to Father Champagnat, announcing his nomination as superior of the Society of Mary (by Archbishop De Pins, Apostolic Administrator of the archdiocese of Lyon).**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes Vol. I Doc. 226.)

Lyon, 18 December 1830.

Dear Father Champagnat,

*His Lordship the apostolic Administrator, wanting to witness to the intense interest which he has in the Society of Mary, had already put you at the head of the priests and Brothers under the title of Director of the Hermitage. You were, as a consequence, the superior in fact.*

*But to-day, when the Society is becoming more important and when Providence seems to want to make use of your zeal to further this work and to carry out good works in this vast archdiocese, His Lordship charges me to announce to you, as well as to all your confrères, that his plan is to give you the title of Superior of the Society of Mary. Although it will put some strain on your modesty, you will regard yourself as being charged by Almighty God with the direction of the members who compose it, having always care, nevertheless, to maintain contact with the head of the archdiocese, according to Law, about the principal matters which arise, and to inform us from time to time of the state of your Society. You are therefore established as Superior.*

*All the priests and Brothers of Mary will obey you as their father. Without publicly taking the name of paternal leader (in order not to give umbrage to our enemies, who would make of it a pretext for persecuting a religious congregation), you will really have the sentiments of a father for all those who are, or will be, members, present and future, of*



Archbishop De Pins.

*this Society. We ask cf God that He may continue to bless you and that He may long to make use cf you to console the Church for so many losses which it has just undergone. In view cf the calamities which menace France, the Lord will fortify your hearts and will give them, along with a sincere humility, a strong apostolic vigour.*

*I beg you, Father, to read this letter to your cor.frères gathered together. Count on my devotion and believe me to be, in the heart cf the Good Mother,  
Your very affectionate*

*Cattet (Vicar General)*

### **Comment**

This letter, naming Father Champagnat as the leader of the Society of Mary (priests and Brothers) in the archdiocese of Lyon, is very significant in the fact that the Society is thus recognised by archdiocesan authorities, who now confirm the recent election (to which no reference is made) of Champagnat as leader of his Marist priest peers in the archdiocese. Obviously, the archdiocese, in making this appointment, wanted to emphasise that the archdiocese made the appointment, and also that these Marist priests know that they still belong to the archdiocese. Nevertheless, both the Society of Mary and Father Marcellin Champagnat are recognised and honoured by this letter.

### **23 September, 1834. Letter of Father Jean-Claude Colin to Father Champagnat, encouraging him and counselling prudence in the Grange-Payre episode.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. I Doc. 324.)

*J.M.J. Belley, 23 September 1834.*

*My very dear cor.frère,*

*The good dispositions which I see that the Lord has put into your heart fills us with joy and stirs us to emulation. We pray more and more to the Father cf all perfect gifts to strengthen you in the spirit cf Faith and impartiality which animates you. When you have received the response cf Father Cholleton, I pray you to let us know about it, and, whether*



La Grange-Payre, a property donated to Fr Champagnat, who offered it for the accommodation of the group of Marist-priest aspirants of Valbenoîte.

*it be affirmative or negative, will you please tell us what is suitable to be done and at what time it will be necessary for my brother to depart? I would be very pleased if he could be spared at least until after our Retreat, which will probably take place towards the end of October.*

*Nevertheless, it is necessary that I pass on to you my little fears in regard to your excellent project of transferring the cradle of the Society of Mary in Lyon to your house near St Chamond. I fear that Father Séon will grow weary of the matter and will take the opportunity to withdraw, which would be a very grave inconvenience. Dispose of all things with peace and suavity. Your views are good, but if they cannot be carried out without disturbing the peace and the union of hearts, it would then be necessary to temporise and to take the necessary time to know more and more the sacred will of Jesus and Mary.*

*I hope that you will send me a Brother-cook immediately after your Retreat. I await his arrival in order to organise our house on a different basis. My humble respects to Father Terraillon and to all our dear confrères and Brothers. I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and I am, with sincere affection,*

*Your very humble servant,  
Colin ( Superior).*

### **Comment**

Father Champagnat informed Father Colin of his second letter to Cholleton, in which he offered a grand property to the Marist priests working in Valbenoîte. Champagnat was very concerned that these Marists would lose their religious spirit in their current location and work. Colin was delighted with the generosity and fine religious spirit of Champagnat and gave expression to his delight in this letter.

Nevertheless, Colin, while commending his colleague's move and the reasons for it, sounds a note of caution in his reply, for he is aware that feelings can be hurt. In particular is he sensitive to the position of Séon, who had replaced Champagnat as the new Marist Superior in the archdiocese, and who had been confirmed in that position by archdiocesan authorities. 'Arrange everything with peace and sweetness. Your ideas are good, but, if they cannot be carried out without disturbing the peace and the union of hearts, it would then be necessary to temporise.' Colin is here exercising those qualities of prudence, caution, and consideration of consequences that mark his leadership. In this instance the emotionally-stirred Champagnat is in need of caution and restraint.

To allay Champagnat's worries, Colin decided to send his brother Pierre to Valbenoîte, where, as a Marist priest of experience and standing, he was capable of assuring the stability of the community.

Colin's request for a Brother-cook gives us some idea of Colin's concept, so different from that of Champagnat, of the role of the Marist Brother. Although Champagnat approved of some of his Brothers being engaged in the apostolate of full-time manual tasks, his main concept was for Brothers as religious educators. In this he differed from Colin. This difference of viewpoint became the principal point of conflict between the two leaders.

### **20-24 September, 1836.**

#### ***The Official report, drawn up by the two secretaries.***

---

*(Quoted from 'Origines Marists' Vol. I Doc. 403, Sect 19.)*

The following passage is to be read in conjunction with the passages of 1845 and May-October, 1853, which passages have been brought out of chronological sequence to be grouped with the following account. This extract is the bare bones of the Minutes of the historic meeting in which the Marists professed their vows and elected a Superior General. Champagnat's speech was very sobering for the newly elected Superior General.

*Shortly afterwards, on the invitation of the Master of Ceremonies, Father Champagnat<sup>22</sup>, addressing himself to the newly elected, said what a burden had been imposed on him (Colin) and promised, in the name of all his confreres, that he would strive to lighten the weight of it for him.*



Chapel of La Capucinière, Belley,  
where the first Marist priests professed  
their vows.

---

<sup>22</sup> He was invited to speak as he was the oldest.

**1848. The Election of Father Jean-Claude Colin,  
24th September, 1836, as reported by Father Maîtrepierre  
and recorded by Father Mayet.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II, Doc. 684 p. 523)

*Father Champagnat, speaking with apostolic simplicity, said to Father Colin: 'Reverend Father Superior, we have just given you a very bad present. When your children pass before the great Judge, you will remain in the seat of the accused and, if a single one is condemned through your fault, you will answer for it ... At the terse, strong and firmly accentuated words of Father Champagnat, we could say, in the full meaning of this expression, that Father Colin dissolved in tears; his face was flooded with them.*

**Comment**

Champagnat's words certainly do not appear to be encouraging for the weeping Father Colin. Perhaps the Founder of the Marist Brothers wanted to exaggerate the responsibilities of the new Superior General to give more emphasis to the fact that he has the full backing of his followers and that he will be assisted in his responsibilities by their prayers and other forms of support.



Inner courtyard of la Capucinière, Belley.

**May-October, 1853. Champagnat and the Election of Fr Colin  
as Superior General, as recorded by Father Maîtrepierre**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 752, p.715 ff)

*As often as his name was called Father Colin's tears redoubled, but they veritably flowed from his face when Bishop Pompallier took him by the hand and led him to the armchair provided. Nor could he prevent sobbing when Father Champagnat came before him and, in a tone of voice clearly and harshly stressed, began his speech thus: 'Reverend Superior, we have just given you a very bad present. How many distresses await you in your*

*administration! Your position cf dignity raises you up only to expose you to the winds and storms, and, on the last day, you will answer for each cf us.' Oh, with what fervour cf heart we undertook the promise Champagnat made, in his own name and in the name cf his colleagues, to do everything to lighten the burden, the very thought cf which is alone sufficient to overwhelm.*



A view of the Capuchinière from the garden. The election of the Superior general was held in this building.

### Comment

The above is a longer account of Colin's election as Superior General; it clearly shows the emotional nature of Colin. It also appears that Champagnat is in a rather grim and sombre mood.

### **18th September 1837. Father Champagnat's Resignation.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. I Doc. 416 p.951.)



Saint Marcellin  
Champagnat

*Mary, my tender Mother, I remit purely and simply into the hands cf the Reverend Father Superior General cf the Society cf Mary the branch cf the Marist Brothers which was confided to me in 1816. Be pleased, I beg cf you, O Mother cf Mercy, to obtain for me the pardon cf all the faults by which I may have rendered myself guilty in neglecting my obligation in regard to this work, or by not acquitting myself as I should have done in regard to it.*

*By this concession, which I make fully and entirely, I do not wish to jeopardise in any way those rights which our very illustrious Prelate could possibly have over this work which he cherishes and which he has helped at times by his generosity.*

*Made at the minor seminary cf Meximieux after an eight-day retreat, 18th September, 1837.*

*Joseph Marcellin Champagnat.*

*I remit therefore (my resignation) into the very hands of Father Jean Claude Colin, Superior General of the Society of Mary, in presence of Father Terraillon (Etienne), Father Assistant, and of the other members of the Council. I conjure them all not to forget me in their Holy Sacrifices, so that I may find pardon for my numerous omissions, and that I may accomplish the two resolutions I have taken at this Retreat.*

*I should be very happy if they would sign this promise for me; it would appear to me that I have obtained what I desire.*

*Chanut, Convers, Jacob, Colin (Pierre), Terraillon, Forest, Chavas.*

### **Comment**

The document containing Champagnat's resignation holds much that is of interest. First of all, Champagnat talks of putting into the hands of the Superior General of the Society of Mary 'the branch of the Marist Brothers which had been confided to me in 1816'. This is clear evidence of Champagnat's conviction that that he received a commission from his fellows. It also attests to the plurality of branches which the original Marist project encompassed. Secondly, the document was witnessed by six of the Marists present. Jean-Claude Colin's name does not appear. There is no evidence to indicate that Colin came within the scope of Maître-pierre's expression 'It was deemed fitting to ask him to resign.' (See Maître-pierre above) Still, it appears that the request to Champagnat was a test that Colin saw fit to impose or to allow to be imposed.

Several reasons for the trial suggest themselves. Perhaps Colin's use of this test to the leader of the most numerous group of the Marist religious branches emanated from his desire to consolidate the unity of the member groups. It is also possible that Colin wanted to try out Champagnat's spirit of obedience in regard to a reshaping of the Brothers' congregation, of which Colin speaks in a letter one month later (27 October 1837). There is just a possibility that another factor may have entered. Those who signed the request may have been an enthusiastic bunch of neophytes to religious life, calling for such a 'spill' to allow the new superior to exercise his power to make allocation of offices. If that were so, Champagnat certainly rose to the occasion in giving a fine demonstration of religious obedience.

---

## CHAMPAGNAT AND SIMPLICITY

### July 1838. Father Colin's words to Bishop Frayssinous, recorded by Father Dupuy

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 428 p. 149ff, Lines 31-39)

*(Father Colin, after speaking about his own simplicity of bearing and conduct while in Rome, went on to say): 'A priest who is interested in us<sup>23</sup> said that what had spoilt Father Champagnat's efforts in Paris was his great simplicity. After interviewing him, officials used to say of him: 'He is indeed a fine man, but you tend to regard him as a country man without formal manners; and for this sort of work this priest seemed to wish to have men who were more socially cultivated.'*

*Father Colin related all this, saying that the things of God are very much apart from the things of the world and that we must judge them very differently. He spoke very much about simplicity, exalting it.*



Bishop Frayssinous.,  
education leader, to whom  
Inspector de Regel intended  
to apply for the legal  
authorisation  
of the Marist Brothers (1822).

### Comment

Here the word 'simplicity' seems to have overtones of 'unsophisticated, rough, unpolished'. We prefer to think of Champagnat's simplicity as being in the sense of 'direct, enthusiastic, energetic, wholehearted, single-minded', almost like a child in pursuit of the object of its desires.

---

23 In all probability, Father Chanut.

**3rd February, 1839.**

**Letter of Father Terraillon to Father Chanut.**

(Cf. 'Origines Maristes', Vol. IV p. 357.)

*St Chamond, 3rd February 1839.*

*My very dear friend,*

*... I have seen Father Champagnat several times and I have spoken to him of your affair with keen interest. I see that our superior (Father Colin) has himself recommended it to him, but it would appear that we get nowhere - neither you nor he. Father Champagnat becomes more and more touchy on all that concerns his Brothers. He seems to fear the influence of the priests of the Society on them. What is certain, my dear friend, is that there are only negative responses for us to all we ask of him, under the pretext that it is impossible for him. What I have the honour to tell you will go no farther; I do not fear to confide to your discretion what is known to me.*

*I forgot to tell you that Father Champagnat has just bought the property of Patouillard, his neighbour. He was forced to do so by circumstances. If he had not made this acquisition, a merchant would have built a factory there for making laces and braids.*

*Terraillon, Parish Priest of Notre Dame.*



Fr Chanut.

## Comment

Father Terraillon left the Hermitage at All Saints, 1826 to preach the Jubilee. Then he was appointed curate and, later, parish priest. In April 1828 he became parish priest of Notre Dame in St Chamond (perhaps, says Father Coste, at the request of Father Champagnat, to bring him to the Hermitage). Like the others, he was a Marist aspirant and made profession with them in 1836. He remained in his parish until 1939. He would have a good knowledge of the affairs of the Hermitage; this makes his letter so valuable.

As a deacon, Father Chanut spent two years with Father Champagnat at the Hermitage, 1831-32, and became a Marist aspirant. He made his vows in 1836 and was again at the Hermitage in 1838. In July of this latter year he was appointed to the shrine of Our Lady at Verdelaix, near Bordeaux. There he felt the need for three Brothers to help him and wrote, asking for them. Subsequently, he was removed from this post by Father Colin and eventually withdrew from the Society.

Terraillon's letter indicates that there is trouble on the horizon concerning the functions of the Marist Brothers. Fathers Colin and Champagnat had different ideas on this matter. Some resolution of the problem was found later in 1939, with the separation of the Joseph Brothers, co -adjutors to the priests in the Marist Fathers' branch, from the Marist Brothers, who worked in apostolates indicated by Champagnat.

**28 August-3 September, 1839. Champagnat's Humility. Father Champagnat's comments on Marist Origins, as recorded by Father Mayet.**  
*(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 440.)*

---

*Nothing marvellous in the origins of the Society except in the choice of the first members.*

*'There are some (I am speaking of those who were not present at the beginning) who are determined to find something marvellous in the origin and first activities of the Society. The marvellous thing is that, for this work, God wanted to make use of such instruments.'*

*I report these words in order to make known the humility of Father Champagnat, but it is sufficient to cast a eye over these recollections in order to see that they have no foundation other than the modesty of this saintly confrère.*



The dining-room at La Valla.

**Comment**

Mayet admires the humility of Champagnat, but he does not agree with Champagnat's assessment of the situation. Champagnat obviously feels that the human and material resources on which the Society of Mary was built were anything but marvellous.

**15th October, 1839.**

**Father Servant writes to Father Champagnat from New Zealand.**

(cf. 'Origines Maristes', Vol. IV p. 353.)

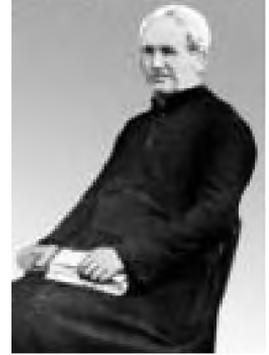
15th October 1839.

*Reverend Superior and dear Father,*

*I have just received your two letters at once, December 1836 and March 1838. The edifying account you give me and the success of your establishments afford me intense joy. How dear it is to me to recall your memory and that of your good Brothers! How far I am from forgetting a house which was for me a haven of peace, where I had before my eyes more than one example of edification! How greatly I love to return in spirit to that house of seclusion, where, I confidently believe, you pray to God sincerely for me!... (Paragraphs then follow about his work in the Mission)*

*To finish, dear Father, I beg your leave to express to our dear Brothers the feelings of my heart and, as the memory of them has not faded...*

*Servant, Missionary.*



Fr Servant.

### **Comment**

Father Servant: Ordained, December 1832; Vallbenoite; Chaplain at the Hermitage 1833-1836; a member of the first group to leave for Oceania; New Zealand 4 years; Futuna 14 years; Samoa 3 years. Died in Futuna in January 1860, aged 52.

Servant's letter gives a very warm description of the spirit of fervour and peace at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage under the leadership of Father Champagnat.

**Spring, 1842.**

**The First Four Members of the Society, as recorded by Father Mayet.**

---

(Quoted from 'Origines Marists' Vol. II Doc. 537 p.290 ff.)



Fr Mayet.

*Father Champagnat said, 'What is marvelous about the Society of Mary is that for this work God wanted to make use of such human instruments.' Father Maîtreperre, on reading these words, said to me, 'Father Champagnat had indeed all that was humanly necessary to prevent the success of his enterprise.'*

*He added: 'It was Father Champagnat himself who told me this, and it would be vital to be able to note here the rough tone of voice - harsh, to speak the truth, and also to record the somewhat wild way in which he was speaking.'* In the margin of

*Mayet's writing there is an addition: 'Someone said to Father Champagnat, "How do you expect your Brothers to be approved? You are their teacher, and therefore are deemed to be better instructed than they are, but your letters are not French!"'*

**Comment**

It is evident that, in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, Champagnat did not have the wherewithal to be a success as a Founder of a congregation involved in education. In a way, it is a Petrine case - the rough Galilean fisherman became a preacher whose words converted 3,000 in the one day! It is not amiss to say, too, that Father Mayet, grand recorder that he undoubtedly was, was also prone to be somewhat snobbish. He did not give a 'good press' to Mother St Joseph Chavoine, whom he considered to be in the uneducated, 'fish-wife' category!

**1845. Two aspects of Father Champagnat. Recorded by Father Mayet**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II Doc. 611 p.422)

**A. Champagnat and the suitcase.**

*One day Father Champagnat was coming back from a journey with another priest.<sup>24</sup> They stopped at the major seminary at Lyon, which was quite close to the disembarkation wharf of the steam boat. His companion wanted to leave his small travel bag so that he would not have to traverse the town with it. He would then send a Brother*



Wharf at Lyon.

*to fetch it for him. 'Give it here, give it to me,' said Father Champagnat, who already had a large travel bag. 'I am a country man and that is no trouble to me.' He then took the bag and carried both it and his own.*

**Comment**

The two priests were probably on their way back from the Retreat at Belley and would be wanting to renew acquaintance with the seminary priests and then visit Notre Dame de Fourvière before returning to St Chamond.

Croix-Paquet, the Square where the seminary of St Irenaeus was situated at that time, is indeed quite close to the Saint Clair wharf. Fathers Terrailon and Champagnat would have arrived on one of the steamers of the Steamboat Company of Upper Rhône, which ran the daily service between Lyon and Aix-les-Bains. As this steamboat company was not listed before 1839, we may safely place the event in 1839, after the Marist Fathers' Retreat at Belley. There were steamboat branch lines to Seyssel, Belley, Ambérieu... This detail presupposes that the Marist Brothers were in Lyon, which was indeed the case, because the Brothers came to staff an orphanage in Lyon after the autumn of 1835.

**B. Father Champagnat at the Marist Fathers' Retreat.**

*In a General Retreat of the Society made at the minor seminary of Belley, Father Champagnat was called upon to give us some words of advice.*

<sup>24</sup> Probably Father Terrailon.

*He did so with profound humility and appeared to be extremely embarrassed. Finally, he dismissed us before the end of the session, saying that he did not want to waste our time in listening to him.*

### **Comment**

This is a most interesting picture of Champagnat - a humble man, yes, but also a man who, before people in high authority or before intellectuals, seems to be hesitant and lacking in confidence. This is much



Retreat House. Minor seminary, Belley.

the same Champagnat - diffident, deferential, anxious - that we find in his relationship with Bochard, with Archbishop de Pins, with Salvandy and other high government authorities, and in episodes like the forced amalgamation with Coindre, with Querbes (the tear-stained draft letter). The Champagnat of the above-mentioned episodes is not the vigorous, purposeful leader of the young; the pick-wielding, lead-from-the-front Founder; the enthusiastic, buoyant Marist priest among his Marist priest confrères and his Marist Brothers in social gatherings. There seems to be a strange, thought-provoking dichotomy in this aspect of the character of Saint Marcellin Champagnat.

### **25 November 1850. The Astonishing Mission of Father Champagnat. Witnessed by a parish priest and by Father Terrillon and recorded by Father Mayet**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II, Doc. 701 p.543)

*a. About twenty-five years after the commencement of the Marist Brothers, a parish priest of the archdiocese of Lyon, co-student with Father Champagnat in the major seminary, said in his astonishment, 'God chose him and said to him: "Champagnat, do that!" And Champagnat did it.' He could not otherwise explain Champagnat's astounding success.*

b. *On the 25 November 1850, Father Terrailon, reminiscing with another Marist priest<sup>25</sup> and admiring the hand of God in the origins of the Society, said, 'Father Champagnat brought some Brothers together to form them and he did not know what he was teaching them; he taught them to read and yet he did not know how to read; to write and he did not know how to apply the rules of Grammar in his writing.'*

### **Comment**

Both these testimonies, of a somewhat hyperbolic nature, point to what seems to be the astonishing intervention of God to support the apostolic work of Father Champagnat. They also attest to the determination and vigour of Champagnat and his confidence in God.

### **18 June 1853. Words of Father Mazelier.**

*(Quoted from 'Letters of Marcellin J. B. Champagnat Vol. II. References (English Edition) p. 393.)*

*'The well-respected Father Champagnat was a saintly priest. He crowned a very generous, very priestly life with a saintly death, but there are sometimes imperfections in the saints. As for Champagnat, he was considered as one who did not not keep strictly enough to his word. Father Douillet, superior of the boarding school at La Côte St André, made this complaint to him about this matter. Father Colin also told me that this reproach had been made to Father Champagnat. I had occasion to complain about it when he was not exact in fulfilling the conditions which I had placed concerning his Brothers, in that the Brothers whom he sent to me for gaining exemption from conscription should live at St Paul-Trois-Châteaux until they obtained their Brevet. One day Father Champagnat himself said to me, "They reproach me for not always keeping to my word. I promise and then, if I cannot manage it..." I understood by these words that he intended no malice, but that perhaps he did not trouble himself sufficiently about the matter.'*

---

25 No doubt, Father Mayet himself.

## Comment

Here we have a cause of complaint about Champagnat emanating from the priest who helped the Founder by accepting those Marist Brothers who were threatened with conscription because they belonged to a congregation unauthorised by the government. Mazelier's congregation, being authorised, accepted Champagnat's men until such time as they could gain exemption from military service. At the time he wrote he had a grievance against the Marist congregation, a grievance which was later settled amicably. His choice of Father Douillet to support his statement was not felicitous; Champagnat had much difficulty with this good but prickly priest on the same score - he did not keep his word!

**5 August 1854. Father Colin. A brief look at the origins of the Society of Mary, the place therein of Father Pompallier and the circumstances surrounding the acceptance of the Mission of Oceania - an extract from a note sent by Father Colin to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. The note is in the hand of Father Yardin, who acted in a secretarial capacity to Colin.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. II. Doc. 753 p.723.)

*Re-establishing the truth concerning certain facts relative to the Mission of Western Oceania, presented up till now in a manner more or less inexact.*

*The project of the Society of Mary, conceived of and meditated on beforehand, had undergone a trial-run in Lyon in 1815 and 1816 by the choice of several young priests devoted to the enterprise; but they could not obtain from their ecclesiastical superiors permission to live together in community. In 1823 they were even more than ever separated from one another by the establishment of the diocese of Belley, taken from that of Lyon, a step which placed them under the jurisdiction of two bishops.*

*Father Colin, retained in the diocese of Belley, with the permission of Bishop Devie, Ordinary of the place, succeeded in forming a corps of Marist missionaries, of whom he became the superior.*

*During this time Father Champagnat, one of the first priests of the budding Society, busied himself in the archdiocese of Lyon, with the permission of Archbishop de Pins, in forming a group of non-clerical*



Bishop Pompallier.

*Brothers for the Primary education of children, a group which to-day numbers more than 1,200 members. To help him in this enterprise, he gradually received into his house some young priests after their departure from the seminary. Among others, in 1828 or 1829, was Father Pompallier who, a little time afterwards, was the most enthusiastic in advocating the separation of the three or four young priests from the Brothers' house. But, not having been elected as superior of his confrères, Father Pompallier abandoned them and became chaplain of a little non-clerical boarding house in Lyon. He was in this simple chaplaincy when, in 1836, the Apostolic Administration of Lyon designated him to Pro-paganda as the Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania; it was in this capacity that he was consecrated in Rome on the 30 June of the same year.*

*Father Colin, in the diocese of Belley, had only very limited relationships with his former superiors in Lyon, who, moreover, did not in any way regard him as superior of the Marist priests of their diocese. He had no part at all, nor did his confrères of Lyon, in the choice of Father Pompallier for the episcopacy, and co-operated with the acceptance of the Mission of Oceania only to the extent of inducing Bishop Devie to cede for this Mission two Marist confrères - Father Brett, who died during the voyage, and Father Chanel who was martyred on the island of Futuna.*

*After this simple exposé, Father Colin believed that he could conclude:*

- 1. That it would be very gratuitous for anyone to accuse him of having viewpoints tending to the acceptance of this mission.*
- 2. That he had been able to say with truth, in his memoir of 15 May, printed at Pro-paganda in 1847, that Bishop Pompallier did not belong to the newly-established Society, either by nomination to the episcopacy or by profession of vows.*

*At last, the two ordinaries of Lyon and Belley consented to a general meeting of the confrères of the two dioceses who wanted to be part of the newly-born Society. This meeting took place in the episcopal town of Belley in the month of September 1836 and, on the 24th of the same month, Father Colin was elected Superior General and recognised as such by the two ordinaries of Lyon and Belley.*

## **Comment**

By 1854 Father Colin was very much disenchanted with Bishop Pompallier's management of the Mission in Western Oceania, both in regard to Mission expenditure, which Pompallier expected Colin to meet, and, especially, to manpower, where the demands of a non-Marist bishop clashed with the religious-life expectations of Marist religious and those of their Superior General. Colin's exasperation with Pompallier is not far below the surface of this document.

**24 October 1864. Cardinal Donnet's words about Father Champagnat  
Quoted from his letter to Br Louis-Marie, Superior General**

---

(In 'Origines Maristes' Vol. III Doc. 888.)

*Bourdeaux, 24 October 1864.*

*I have read, my very dear Brother, with immense edification, the Life of your excellent and ever-lamented Founder. We were almost compatriots, and he did almost the whole of his seminary with me. He was always placed alongside me, both in the Theology classes and in the corridor where our cells were. He was, as the author of the Life says, one of the worthiest of men from every point of view. He often confided to me his inmost thoughts. Nothing, therefore, in the story of his life astonishes me. I will have this Life read in the refectory of my major seminary at the next clergy Retreat; much good will come of it.*

*I think it would be good to delete, not what concerns Father Courveille, but to give only the initials of his name. Father Champagnat did not enter the seminary in 1812 but on 1 September 1813. M. de Trivier was not important in the foundation of the Brothers at St Sauveur; the honour of that is due entirely to the family Colomb de Gaste. M de Trivier did much for the school at Bourg-Argental, in concert with M. de Pleyné, grandson of M. de Sablon, who was then the Mayor of my native town. You will not take it amiss if I claim my share in these two foundations. Having preserved links of friendship with Father Champagnat in the various positions Providence assigned me, I entreated him, along with the local authorities, that he agree to give his first Brothers to St Sauveur and Bourg-Argental; and also to send, in concert with Father Colin (himself also my fellow-student at the seminary in 1813-1816), a community of Marist Fathers to my diocese in 1838. (N.B. We do not think that Father Champagnat intervened in any way in the foundation of Verdélais, which did not concern him, and to which he did not wish to send his Brothers. The good Cardinal is straining things somewhat in order to find connections with the Institute of Brothers - Ed.) Father Chanut was the first superior of the mission to Verdélais, an establishment which has become one of the most important of the Society.*

*I have entered into all these details, my very dear Brother, so that you won't have the heart to refuse me some Brothers for the parish of Gironde.*

*I am not only one of the best friends of your Order, but almost one of its founders. I had warned Father Champagnat of the bad tricks Father Courveille would play on him. (N.B. Father Donnet was out of the archdiocese of Lyon from November 1822 to August 1827. Courveille had already caused the trouble. Donnet's prediction was very likely made before 1822 and perhaps*

even at the seminary - Ed.) I pacified Father Bochard more than once. (N.B. Father Donnet was with Bochard's Fathers of the Cross from 1819 to 1821, so a certain influence on Father Bochard at this time is very probable - Ed.) I made Bishop de Pins favourable to you (N.B. This is questionable - Ed.), and, warned by Father Cholleton, I foiled some of the schemes of Father Cattet and removed some of the prejudices that had been inspired in Father Dervieux, parish priest of St Peter's, against the whole Order, of which at a certain stage, he did not wish to hear anyone speak, nor did Father Alliot of Marlihes. (N.B. The position to Champagnat was possibly at its worst towards Easter-time 1821. It was just about at this time that Father Donnet, acclaimed for the success of the great Mission he preached at St Etienne, could quite well have taken the opportunity of speaking a few effective words to Father Dervieux in the next town, St Chamond - Ed.)



Brother Louis-Marie,  
second Brother Superior General  
of the Marist Brothers.

I still have the letter which his successor, Father Dutreuil, wrote to me (he was my curate at Villefranche in 1828) about the last moments of Father Champagnat. Father Dutreuil considers as one his most touching memories the last moments of your Founder. 'The scene which I have just witnessed in a cell of the Mother-house of the Hermitage', he said to me, 'will remain graven on my heart in ineffaceable characters.'

Please, then, my dear brother, in virtue of all these memories, some Brothers for Gironde without delay, and, in 1866, you will give me some for Teste-de-Buch.

Entirely yours,

Ferdinand Cardinal Donnet,  
Archbishop of Bordeaux.

### Comment

Cardinal Donnet was Bishop of Bordeaux 1836-1882 and Cardinal from 1852. Born at Bourg-Argental in 1795, he was at the major seminary with Father Champagnat. The three years he had to wait for ordination in 1819 were spent in teaching in the Belley seminary. He was interested in joining the Society of the Cross of Jesus under Father Bochard, but, though he remained friendly, he did not join. Instead, he became an inland missionary. In 1864, when he wants Brothers for a foundation near Bordeaux, he

writes to Brother Louis-Marie, Superior General. He has just read Brother Jean-Baptiste's 'Life of Father Champagnat'.

Cardinal Donnet's letter is one of praise for the Founder of the Marist Brothers, but it is clear that his motives are not wholly altruistic, for the letter also contains a strong request for Brothers to help the Cardinal in his archdiocese. He seems to be using his acquaintance with Champagnat (even suggesting that, in a sense, he himself was part-founder!) to influence the Superior General to grant his request.

The Cardinal's letter gives a picture of some of the behind-the-scenes activities in support of Champagnat, and, even though the Cardinal may be 'drawing the long bow' about the effectiveness of his own intervention, we have a fuller picture of the Champagnat story. Oh, by the way, Br Louis-Marie did send him Brothers!

### **13 August 1870. Letter of Father Colin to Father Jeantin: A response to three questions concerning the history of the Society of Mary.**

(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. III Doc. 844 p.621.)

*My dear and well-beloved Father,*

*A few hasty words of reply to your letter of the eleventh of this month. If memory does not deceive me, it was not at the Hermitage but at Belley, to which Father Terraillon made a journey, that the question of the sending away of Father Courveille arose. The word 'resignation' which Father Terraillon uses does not appear to me to be the correct word. Father Courveille, never having been appointed and approved by the ecclesiastical authorities nor canonically chosen by his confrères as superior, had no resignation to give. The notes of Brother Jean-Baptiste, of which you have a copy, appear to me to be clearer and more accurate.*

*The four branches presented to Rome forming a single Society under the authority of the single superior, and rightly rejected by Cardinal Castracane, are the branches of the priests, including the co-adjutor Brothers, the teaching Brothers, the reli-*



Cardinal Castracane, the man who blocked the approval of the four-branched Society of Mary, but who approved the priests' branch.

*gious Sisters, and the Third Order.*

*The teaching Brothers never found a place before God in my original plan for the Society. If, later on, they were admitted, it was in courtesy towards, and in recognition of, the services which they rendered us, and, especially, in response to the request of Father Champagnat and his Brothers. The priests, the Sisters, and the Third Order entered into the original plan, as did also the co-adjutor Brothers, under the name of Joseph Brothers.*

*This combination, which, in the designs of God, was destined to be only provisional, was the outcome of a special providence. Those different branches in the beginning had need of one another, and such an organisation preserved among them unity, union, and a holy harmony.*

### **Comment**

Five years before his death (aged 85 years), Jean-Claude Colin wrote to Father Jeantin, answering some question which the latter posed. Father Jeantin was working within the Constitutions Commission of the Marist Fathers and wanted replies to queries concerning the history of the Society. It is to be noted that Colin's account does not correspond to that of Terrailon in regard to the circumstances of the 'resignation' of Father Courveille. In 'my original plan for the Society' Colin puts forward the idea that the Society is his foundation, thus omitting Courveille's part, and, perhaps more significantly, omitting the part played in the fashioning of the nature of the Society by the Marist aspirants at the major seminary of St Irenaeus.

In regard to the Marist Brothers, Colin has forgotten that, in seminary days, Champagnat proposed the inclusion of a group of teaching Brothers in the Society and received the group's approbation for it there and then.

### **1889-1890. The Champagnat-Courveille agreement and the role of Father Gauché. Document probably written by Father Detours, Marist.**

*(Quoted from 'Origines Maristes' Vol. III Doc. 865 p.841.)*

*At Chavanay Father Courveille issued a document before a notary, by which, save for 5,000 francs and a room at the Hermitage, he withdrew and left Father Champagnat the absolute master of the Hermitage and its properties.*

*Now, the parish priest of L'Horme told me there was at that time a parish priest named Gauché (this Father Gauché has a niece at Chavanay). Father*

*Gauché was a very saintly priest and a very fine man. Father Champagnat had sent Brothers to his parish and they were close friends. Learning that Courveille was at St Clair (and, without doubt, Courveille would have seen him (ften) Father Gauché, in a very delicate way, would have guided the negotiations between Champagnat and Courveille. In view of his skill, Father Gauché would have made Courveille receptive to the conditions of the agreement, which was subsequently confirmed by a notary. Father Champagnat thus found himself at liberty and at peace.*

*Courveille, who had a foundation at St Clair and who wanted to go to St Antoine, would have been quite happy with his five thousand francs and, especially, he would have been flattered with the bedroom accorded him at the Hermitage. It indicated that he had not been completely rejected; they regarded him as a friend of the house. That rehabilitated him a little in the eyes of all, but it was also a clever gesture of charity and of appeasement.*

*Did Courveille make use of this accommodation? Perhaps. I do not find any traces of his appearance at the Hermitage in this period or later on. He did, however, draw to St Antoine some Brothers from the Hermitage. Therefore, he still had connections with this House and with the Brothers. As for the rest, his fault had not perhaps been much noised abroad, thanks to the prudence of Father Champagnat. The Brothers could not have well known what had happened and they believed that the withdrawal of Courveille was due to the friction that had existed. In a special way, this friction was caused by the fact that Courveille expected to be regarded as superior of the house and to be honoured as such, but they did not grant him what he wanted. In view of this he had withdrawn. That was the reason that he gave to the parish priest of St Antoine when he took possession of the abbey there. That is the reason that he doubtlessly gave everywhere, when his failing was not well known, and especially at the time when his future faults had not yet occurred and when he still enjoyed a reputation for austerity and for sanctity.*

*A characteristic which will give a picture of Father Gauché. During a social occasion a certain Voltarian was present, and, since people were singing, the Voltarian sang a song that was far from suitable. The host of the evening, laughing, asked, 'Heb, Reverend Father, what do you think of this song.?' 'Oh, yes, said Father Gauché mischievously, 'I accept the tune ('le son' means 'the tune', but also 'the bran'), but I leave the words ('la farine' here may be taken to mean 'the contents', and also 'the flour') to others.'*



Fr Delours.

**Comment**

Father Detours was a Marist researcher. His account of the Champagnat-Courveille agreement shows the negotiating skills of Father Gauché, but it also points to the discretion of Champagnat in the Courveille affair and to his capacity to make friends with people of sound quality, like Father Gauché.

**28 October 1837. Father Colin wrote to Father Champagnat from Lyon regarding Father Douillet and la Côte-St-André.**

---

*'I would not see any great difficulty about there soon being a novitiate at La Côte, provided that it was directed in the same spirit as that at the Hermitage, and that it remained under your control.'*

**Comment**

This short extract shows Colin's esteem for, and reliance on, Father Champagnat.

**9 June 1840. Letter of Father Jacques Bellier to Father Mazelier at St Paul-Trois-Châteaux.**

---



Saint-Paul-trois-Châteaux.

*The Hermitage of St Chamond,  
9 June 1840.*

*My dear friend,*

*Yesterday we conducted the funeral of the worthy Father Champagnat. He died on Saturday at about 4.15 in the morning after an hour's agony. He had received Communion for the third time by way of Viaticum on the previous Thursday. He edified us continually by his admirable*

*patience and by his union with God, the Blessed Virgin and with St Joseph, his patron. To them he constantly had recourse to obtain the strength to support his long and intense sufferings....*

*J. Bellier, Priest*

### **Comment**

Here is a fine, genuine account of, and reflection on, the death of Father Champagnat. Father Bellier, a friend of Bishop Devie of Belley, was the founder of a group of priest missionaries within France. At the Hermitage, to which he came each summer holidays from 1835 to 1840, he would have come to an understanding of the character and spirit of Father Champagnat and his manner of treating the Brothers and managing affairs. His conclusion was to recommend to Father Mazelier, his friend, to effect the union of his small congregation of Brothers to that of Father Champagnat. He adhered to this idea despite Father Mazelier's own doubts and preferences.

Bellier's letter, written two days after the death of Champagnat, constitutes another valuable, independent witness to the life and spirit of Champagnat at the Hermitage of Our Lady.

'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us  
To see oursel's as others see us.'

We have just come from viewing Saint Marcellin Champagnat in the light of comments from his contemporaries - as others saw him. From the sundry spotlights thrown on him by men of his time, the image that emerges is that of a man who, despite human frailties common to us all, fully deserves to stand out bold in the limelight reserved for, and shed on, the saints.

### **14th April, 1999. The ultimate viewpoint on Champagnat.**

*Formula of canonisation, given by Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square.*

*'To the honour of the Most Holy Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and for the development of Christian life, with the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, with that of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and with*

*Our own authority, after having reflected for a long time, having invoked the Divine assistance many times and having listened to the advice of many of our brothers in the Episcopate, We declare and We define as Saint the Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat, We inscribe him in the Album of the saints and We establish that in the whole church he may be devotedly honoured among the saints. In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen.*'



## *A new document*

Brother André LANFREY, FMS

### **Statutes of the Society of Mary**

This document was sent to me by the archivist of the Brothers of the Holy Family of Belley, Brother Theodoro Berzal. It features in their archives with another document less important, but signed by Champagnat. Both were probably sent by Champagnat to Mgr Devie in December 1836 (letter 75). The text is on a double sheet of format 21, 5 x 27, 5 a page, written on the two inside pages. The paper is relatively coarse. The sloping handwriting is fine, unaffected, though easily readable. A border in pencil around the text leaves the numbers of the articles outside, as if they were added later. There is no mention of date or signature. After comparing it with various handwritings, I think that this document is from Father Pompallier and that it was produced in 1830. Of the sixteen articles that it contains, numbers 5-8 are completely original and form the heart of a Society of Mary project quite different from J.C. Colin's one. It is truly a manifesto of the Society of Mary of the Hermitage such as it had been lived since 1825, with the project of making it last by means of a decentralised structuring that seems to me to bear the mark of Father Pompallier.

---

## **STATUTES OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY**

- Art.1 The Brothers of Mary have as their principal aim primary instruction; they teach catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, the principles of grammar, Church chant and sacred history. In their teaching they follow the methods of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- Art. 2 Their aim is also to direct orphanages or houses of refuge, for young people removed from a life of disorder or exposed to losing their morals.
- Art. 3 After a Novitiate of three years, they make, if they have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> year, the simple vows of Religion, from which they can be dispensed.
- Art. 4 If a brother leaves the Society, or if he is dismissed, which is the case only for bad conduct, the Society will return to him what he has brought, less the Novitiate fees, and any extraordinary expenses he may have incurred.
- Art. 5 The Society of Mary is governed by a Superior General, who is one of the priest chaplains to the brothers; he is nominated for life, and by the majority of votes, by the leading members of the Society. The convocation is called by the deputy of the deceased Superior, and he presides over the election.
- Art. 6 Before the assembly disperses, it also nominates the number of deputies or assistants of the Superior General, according to his requirements.
- Art. 7 The priest chaplains form part of the Society; they follow its constitutions, and provide the brothers with the spiritual aids of the Faith.
- Art. 8 If the number of priests reaches a point where it is more than sufficient for the needs of the brothers, they will offer their services to the respective bishops of the dioceses where they are, to be employed in whatever priestly ministries they wish to confide to them. However, these priests will not cease for that reason to be part of the Society; they will always be ready to return to it, when need requires it, and if the Superior General asks them.
- Art. 9 Mother Houses are established to serve as Novitiates and retreat houses for the brothers during their holidays. Each is governed by a Brother Superior in what concerns the temporal administration. This brother can be recalled by the Superior General, who will however take the advice of his Council on the matter.
- Art. 10 Each establishment or parish school is governed by a brother called rector who is dependent on the Superior of the Mother House in whose jurisdiction he lives, and who is appointed by the Superior assisted by his Council.

- Art. 11 No brother will be named Superior of a Mother House unless he is aged at least twenty-five and unless he has been professed five
- Art. 12 Every three, four, or five parish establishments, according to the convenience or proximity of place, will have a brother called the grand rector, who will be appointed by the Superior of the Mother House, will supervise the good order of the schools assigned to him, and will report to him on the state of things every month.
- Art. 13 The Brothers of Mary ordinarily go in threes or twos into the communes where they are required to conduct school; but they never go alone.
- Art. 14 They are not permitted to teach Latin, or to give private lessons either inside or outside the school building.
- Art. 15 The authorities and the clergy are the only ones permitted to visit classes. The brothers' residence is absolutely forbidden to females
- Art. 16 The Superior of the Mother House ordinarily arranges with the communes that request brothers, a reasonable and moderate sum to provide for their living expenses; but he rarely consents to making known to the parents of the students the sum sufficient for their upkeep.
- These articles have been signed in the good faith of all

### Commentary

This document is strongly linked to sources practically all dating from 1824-1830. If the author is really Pompallier it would be necessary to date it before the election of J.C. Colin in October 1830 (cf OM doc. 221). After this date, it does not make sense, for the Marist project has been transformed and the vision of a Society of Mary centred on the brothers no longer has reality. Another argument for the dating is the revolution of 1830, the end of July, which ruins the last attempt for authorisation of the Congregation that allowed everything to be taken for granted. It would be necessary then to date it rather in June-July 1830, in a climate of optimism created by the promise of authorisation and the concern of passing to another step: establishing the Constitutions.

The project seems to consecrate the Marist tradition since the origins, namely the fact that one belongs to the Society, even in diocesan posts, which invites us to conceive the SM of Lyon as a nebula with a visible centre and scattered adherents.<sup>1</sup> One can see clearly the ambiguity of relations with the

<sup>1</sup> See OM doc. 625: Rousselon, Sarrasin, Journoux; doc. 248, Perra; doc. 334, Decultieux. *Annales du F. Avit*: 1835, Matricon (cf. Avit).

diocese that the text scarcely evokes, but which in fact holds the keys for the whole organisation by nominating the chaplains and by authorising or not the gathering of members of the SM. Moreover, it is from the diocese that Champagnat holds his legitimacy<sup>2</sup> and it is with its endorsement that he has organised the Hermitage where the priests are as much the servants of the brothers as their superiors.

Without the revolution of 1830 that prevents the Society of the brothers from becoming officially constituted, it is probably this theory that would have prevailed in the diocese and the position of Séon (see document 625 in the appendix) would have been considerably weakened. Paradoxically, the Revolution of 1830 reinforces the position of the Belley group and those in Lyon in sympathy with it, by weakening the position of Champagnat and especially that of Mgr. De Pins involved in the project of a SM founded on the brothers and authorised by a government with which he has become compromised. The Revolution of 1830, very anticlerical, allows it to be foreseen that the position of the brothers is blocked for a long time. This situation prompts the project of affiliating them to the Clercs of Saint Viateur in 1832 and Father Pompallier seems to be the kingpin in this.<sup>3</sup> Circumstances then appear to favour a SM project composed of priests independent of the brothers.

Pompallier seems to have been the man of the diocese before the Revolution of 1830, exercising in its name the spiritual direction of the Hermitage and constituting a sort of tandem with Champagnat, this one successful (while the Champagnat-Courveille tandem in 1823-1826 had failed and so had the one with Séon in 1827-1829), and having, probably with the endorsement of the diocese, the mission of giving structure to a work which Champagnat, perhaps, in the eyes of the authorities, managed too much on a day-to-day basis.

In this regard, Séon's judgement is also precious (refer doc. 625 in the appendix), for he regards Pompallier as obsessed with rules.<sup>4</sup> Besides this text, in contrast with Champagnat's concern for centralisation that envisaged an abbreviated hierarchy: Superior – chaplains – brothers around a single Mother House, seems to bear his mark. In effect, to envisage Mother Houses and grand rectors is to agree to a wide and decentralised vision of the Society, which Champagnat will not really admit and still less so his successors. They will make sure that the Superior and his assistants govern from a central point, the Superiors of the Provincial Houses playing rather

---

2 Letter of Father Cattet 18 December 1830, OM, doc. 226.

3 OM 1, docs. 258-260; OM 4 p. 338.

4 See also OM doc. 208, letter of Cattet to Pompallier 2/12/1829.

the role of grand provincial rectors responsible for information and supervision but without real autonomy.

The meeting of the Marist aspirants of the two dioceses of Lyon and Belley in October 1830, which established Colin as provisional Superior, is thus a defeat for Champagnat, the diocese of Lyon, and Pompallier. This is so true for the latter that he will not be able to get on with the group at Valbenoîte and will stay closely linked with Champagnat, making him the executor of his will.<sup>5</sup> There is also the letter of Champagnat to Pompallier of 27 May 1838 (no. 194) where there is not one word about the SM in general, and detailed news about the Hermitage and the Society of the brothers (mentioning his three auxiliaries: Fathers Matricon and Besson and Brother François).

Summing up, Champagnat and Pompallier, but Matricon and Besson too from 1835, have maintained the tradition of the Hermitage which seems to find its purest expression in the statutes of Belley. Champagnat's utopia has been rationalised in a text sufficiently open for him to allow an expansion that moreover is going to be realised largely according to his ideas.

This vision of the SM, upset in 1830-1836 by the meeting of the groups of Belley and Lyon and the emancipation of the Marists of Valbenoîte, becomes viable again when, Rome recognising only the priests' branch, Champagnat finds himself alone again with the brothers and two priests (Matricon and Besson). And if these statutes were sent to Mgr Devie, as is almost certain, it is because they correspond well to the situation of the Marist Brothers at this period. Champagnat, who has just personally committed himself to the SM, has need of time to see how to affiliate his brothers to it without betraying the direction of a work that he does not consider simply his own. The situation will be clarified only in 1837 when Champagnat renounces his superiorship of the brothers and continues to govern them only as delegate of the Superior General.

The Society of Mary as a single entity would therefore have suffered two major crises: in 1827-1830 with Séon and the Belley group against Champagnat, Pompallier and the diocese of Lyon; in 1836-1837 when Champagnat gives allegiance to the SM of the priests without his brothers being clearly included in the project.

But 1827-1830 would only be the second identity crisis for a first had taken place in 1825 between Courveille, Champagnat and Terrailon. One knows that the latter, with links to Belley, caused the SM to fail, according to Courveille, and compromised the SM, according to Champagnat. But the episode of the election of the Superior of the brothers recounted by

<sup>5</sup> Circulars, vol. 1 p 210.

Brother Jean-Baptiste in the *Life of Champagnat* (pp 134-135) catches our attention since it appears to have been carried out according to an idea of the SM that is found again in the text attributed to Pompallier:

“Father Courveille claimed to have originated the idea of founding the Marist Society, and on this score he set himself up as the Superior General of the Brothers. Father Champagnat [...] readily acceded to his assuming the role of Superior. He likewise required the Brothers to look upon him as their Superior.

General opinion at the time regarded the Society of Marist Fathers and that of the Brothers as one, believing that there was to be a single foundation under a single leader. The Brothers therefore accepted the new arrangement without any difficulty. Moreover, they expected that Father Champagnat would always be in charge of them and that Father Courveille would exercise only a general control of them, being especially concerned with the priests...

During the holidays of 1825, believing that he had sufficiently prepared their minds to adopt his views, he assembled the Brothers. To conceal the trap he was setting, he gave a long discourse on the good the Society was called to accomplish and the different apostolates that it embraced. He concluded with the words: ‘Since, then, the priests who are here may at any time be called to other ministries, you must choose the one you want as leader, though you are free to choose any one of us.’...”

Brother Jean-Baptiste explains all this as Courveille’s ambition. This is not wrong but incomplete, for he, in fact Superior, had good reasons for proceeding with an election since the Congregation was now recognised by the diocese. The prospectus printed in 1824 presented it as a Society for education. In January a request for official authorisation had been sent which had a good chance of success. Finally, Champagnat had given the brothers in 1824 a “Little Summary” (*Life* p 128) on the aim of the Institute and on zeal for the education of children. To go on to elections appeared therefore necessary to complete the work.

As for the brothers assembled, Brother Jean-Baptiste does not give any details, but they were certainly the “leading members of the Society”, that is to say, the school directors and the main brothers at the Mother House, so between ten and fifteen members. The statutes of 1825 probably served as model (in 1824 there were twenty brothers and ten novices at the Hermitage and twenty-two in the houses). The Superior had to be elected for life; Father Champagnat had not felt any need to having himself re-elected and article 5 of the Belley statutes envisage only one reason for an election: the death of the preceding Superior. Besides, election for life was traditional both in the monastic milieu and in the Society of Jesus, the

two main models of the time. As well, the election of J.C. Colin in 1836 and that of Brother François in 1839 were both for life. It is to be noted also that Courveille's discourse foresees the contents of article 8: the possibility of surplus chaplains filling diocesan posts.

In sum, these elections are already being arranged according to the 1830 statutes, the whole question being whether it is according to a constitutional text taken up again in 1830 or simply after a spoken agreement among the persons involved. In any case, these elections established a precedent, and especially, by electing Champagnat, the brothers created a critical situation, the authority of election contradicting the charismatic one. Each of the priests at the Hermitage experienced this crisis in his own way: Courveille by intensifying his project before withdrawing; Champagnat, by falling ill and then by drawing a line over the priests' Society which he thinks will not see the light of day until others take over; Terraillon by going away.

In 1827-1830, the situation is scarcely any different but with other actors: Champagnat who now plays the part of charismatic leader and Superior is rejected by Séon and the other Marist Fathers, except for Pompallier who withdraws. In trying to have la Grange Payre accepted as a residence of the Marist Fathers in 1834, he shows he has not abandoned a certain idea of the SM close to the conventual life of the brothers.

In 1836-1837, with regard to the fathers, Champagnat has neither a recognised charismatic role nor institutional power, whereas, on the brothers' side these two prerogatives have never been stronger. It appears then natural that for a time he would have considered reactivating a conception of the SM that seemed to him perfectly legitimate and under threat from the secession occasioned by having recognition limited to the Fathers.

## **Conclusion**

In fact, these three episodes illustrate the difficulty for a utopian and charismatic group in passing from inspiration to institution, which compels authority to become secularised and roles to be reversed, with the inspired giving way to the institutionalised or transforming themselves into the institutionalised. More destabilising: there are the new disciples who force those who believed themselves inspired to question the reality of their gift, and those who thought themselves disciples to accept being reclothed with a charism. The astonishing thing is that the Marist group, between 1830 and 1840, succeeded in becoming an institution without any major rupture apart from the elimination of Courveille. That says much about the quality of the men, but it does not dispense us from seeing that there were strong temptations towards a definite split. The statutes of Belley seem to offer evidence of this.

## APPENDIX I

---

### OM 2, Doc. 625, account of Father Séon (April 1846)

Father Séon, ordained 9 June 1827, joined Father Champagnat at the Hermitage on the 13 June.

*...However, Father Champagnat was fully absorbed in the branch to which he had devoted himself and, seeing that God was beginning to bless his efforts, he did not give much thought to that of the priests, and had, so to speak, given up on it. One day, when Father Séon was speaking to him about his desires on the subject, Father Champagnat said to him, "Ah, my friend, one must not think about it; there will not be, I believe, any other Society of Mary than that of the brothers; the rest will not happen; don't think about it any more. You are doing good here, and our work gives God glory; that should be enough for us." At these words, Father Séon woke as if from sleep, and he said, "In that case, Father Champagnat, I have been deceived. What you are doing here is good, but as for me, I want to be part of a religious Society of priests engaged in evangelisation..."*

Séon then took steps to relaunch the priests' branch and obtained M. Bourdin, a deacon, who arrived at the Hermitage in December 1827.

In a letter of 18 December 1828 to Father Cattet (OM 1 doc. 185) Champagnat affirms his faith in the fathers' branch, the Society of the brothers not being able to be regarded as the work of Mary. Having then curiously taken up Séon's line of argument (cf. doc. 625), he asks for the appointment of a priest economer, recalling to the Vicar General his promise to give him all those who were suitable for the work, that is, those content with "food and lodging". And he makes clear the actual functions of each of the chaplains:

*Father Séon, as you know, is occupied with the spiritual affairs of the house, our ribbon manufacture, and for supplying from time to time in the nearby parishes that we have, as you know, so much interest in getting on well with. Father Bourdin is responsible for the novices' classes, writing, arithmetic, singing, catechism, the library for the schools, and for the little chapel.*

*As for me, I am responsible for visiting the establishments, for examining the children confided to our schools, for the correspondence, arrangements to be made with the communes, transfers of the brothers, receiving the*

novices who apply, in a word, the running of all the establishments, generally and individually. I can give only very insufficient time to the temporal affairs of the house, without being able to do anything for the establishments whose expenses are scarcely well looked after.

**Father Séon (doc. 625), after mentioning the arrival of Pompallier in September 1829 gives an idea of the life of the Fathers at the Hermitage:**

*At the Hermitage we lived entirely at one with the brothers. We followed a very severe rule; our chapter of faults was carried out exactly and, afterwards, each told in public the one who had accused himself everything he had observed about him. Father Pompallier, who was recognised by the archbishop as spiritual director, made plenty of rules. So we felt it was necessary to separate the priests from the brothers. Father Champagnat was strongly opposed but the vote was taken and it went against him. The priests went then to set themselves up in the house of Father Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte, who gave his house to the Society on condition it provide him with curates...*

**APPENDIX 2**

Letter 75: from Champagnat to Mgr. Devie, December 1836

*...To obtain our authorisation **we have drafted the attached statutes** that we sent to Paris on 28 February 1834 with a letter to the king containing a note on the history of the foundation of our Institute. In the month of May 1835 we wrote again to the Queen who replied that our documents were in the minister's hands. The main cause of the delay we experience comes, I think, from the fact that Mr Guizot, being protestant, has no pleasure in seeing an association totally consecrated to Mary. Here is the reply we have received: "As for the request for authorisation of your house as an association, it does not appear possible for us at present to accept it."*

*I know<sup>6</sup> that you have spoken to me of the statutes of the brothers of St Paul-trois-Châteaux. I don't remember having received them. We have the rule of Father de Lamennais which a respectable priest of the diocese of Grenoble has sent us. **The statutes of the association are in their beginnings, we will make haste to send them to you.** My lord, I continue to pursue this affair...*

6 Father Champagnat does not make a new paragraph.

### CHRONOLOGY

#### **1. Relaunching of the Society of the Fathers at the Hermitage: June 1827 – October 1830**

- June 1827: Father Séon at the Hermitage.
- Between June and All Saints? Disagreement between Séon and Champagnat and Séon's intervention to relaunch the Fathers.
- December 1827: arrival of M. Bourdin, deacon.
- 18 December 1828: Champagnat's letter to V.G. Cattet: faith in the Society of the Fathers.
- September 1829: Pompallier at the Hermitage.

#### **2. Official existence of the SM. Champagnat Superior of priests and brothers.**

- October 1830: Election of J.C. Colin as provisional Superior of the SM.
- 3-8 December 1830: the confreres at the Hermitage elect Champagnat as Provincial Rector.
- 18 December 1830: the archbishop names Champagnat Superior of the Society of Mary of Lyon.
- January 1831: Séon named curate at Valbenoîte (on his return from Charlieu from Nov. 29 to Dec. 30).
- September 1831: Father Fontbonne at Valbenoîte.
- 31 December 1831: J.C. Colin's letter to Champagnat inviting the election of a Superior distinct from the brothers' one.
- 3 February 1832: The election is postponed but the principle of separation is reaffirmed.
- December 1831- autumn 1832, discussions on the principle of separation (docs 241, 242, 246).

#### **3. The Marist Fathers at Valbenoîte. Séon Superior.**

- Autumn 1832: Decision to separate and nomination of Séon as Superior of the priests (doc. 255, 1).
- Father Forest lives provisionally at the Hermitage (doc. 262) while waiting for Father Servant to take up residence. The latter will remain until 1836. (cf. letter of Champagnat to De Pins, Lent 1835 [Doc. 334]: "Father Servant who is with me and well worthy of praise, is busy from morning to evening, in his room, preparing sermons and preaching for missions". So Champagnat

is requesting as econome Father Decultieux, curate at Pélussin.)

- Autumn 1832: Pompallier chaplain at La Favorite in Lyon.
- December 1832: Father Chanut at Valbenoîte.
- February 1833: Father Forest at Valbenoîte.

#### **4. Request for authorisation from Rome**

- 24 June 1833: J.C. Colin's letter to Champagnat asking him to prepare a rough outline of the rule for his brothers.
- August-September 1834: letters of Champagnat offering la Grange-Payre for the Marist Fathers.
- 1835, Father Matricon, of Marlhes, becomes chaplain to the brothers. He will stay for forty years.
- 11 April 1836, J.C. Colin informs Champagnat of Roman approbation.

#### **5. The consequences of approval from Rome**

- 24 September 1836: election of J.C. Colin as Superior General. Vows of the first Marists.
- December 1836: Letter 75 of Champagnat to Mgr. Devie: sending of statutes.
- 18 September 1837: Champagnat places the Society of the brothers in the hands of J.C. Colin (doc. 416).

---

### **APPENDIX 4**

#### **Comparison of the Statutes of the SM with the prospectus and various statutes**

Principles for setting out the table:

I have not attempted to gather extracts from all the documents which correspond to the articles of the statutes of the SM discovered at Belley but to place in evidence the documents which, for the first time, offer a parallel. This is why the documents of 1824-1825 are chosen, that is, the project of a prospectus, the prospectus itself, the statutes of 1825 drafted in view of obtaining legal authorisation, slightly modified in 1828 by the addition of an article. There remains another important document, from Father Champagnat's hand, dated summer 1830, which seems close to the document found at Belley.

| STATUTES OF BELLEY  | OTHER DOCUMENTS  |
|---|--|
| <p>Article 1<br/>The brothers of Mary have for their main aim primary instruction; they teach catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, the principles of grammar, Church chant, and sacred history. In their teaching they follow the method of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.</p> <p><i>Commentary: This article is clearly inspired by the prospectus and statutes cf 1825.</i></p> | <p><b>Project of prospectus, June 1824, 2:</b><br/>In teaching we follow the method of the F.E.C. We teach firstly catechism and prayer; secondly, reading, writing; thirdly arithmetic and the basic principles of grammar; fourthly the chant of the Church and sacred history’</p> <p><b>Prospectus, July 1824, 10:</b> They teach catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, the principals of French grammar, the chant of the Church and sacred history.</p> <p><b>11:</b> They follow, in teaching, the method of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.</p> <p><b>Statutes of PFM of diocese of Lyon, 15 June 1825:</b><br/>Article 1. The Little Brothers of Mary have as their aim primary instruction. They teach reading, writing, arithmetic, the Principles of French grammar, the chant of the Church, sacred history. They follow in teaching the method of the FEC.</p> |
| <p>Art.2<br/>Their object is also to direct orphanages and houses of refuge, for young people removed from a life of disorder or exposed to losing their morals.</p> <p><i>Commentary: The article repeats nearly word for word the article added to the statutes cf 1828, which seems to be a cod.fication cf the prcject cf 1824.</i></p>   | <p><b>Project of prospectus, June 1824, 10:</b><br/>The instruction of children in general and, in particular poor orphans, is the object of our establishment. As soon as we have finished the house of the Hermitage and our means allow us to use a good supply of water to cover the costs of the work, we will take in children from houses of charity; we will give them a trade in giving them a Christian education. Those who have a disposition for virtue and knowledge will be employed in the house.</p>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><b>Prospectus of 15 January 1828, art. 7, 9:</b><br/>The object of the Congregation is also to direct orphanages or houses of refuge for young people removed from a life of disorder or exposed to losing their morals.</p>   |
| <p>Art. 3...<br/>After a Novitiate of three years, if they have turned eighteen years, they make the simple vows of Religion, from which they can be dispensed.</p> <p><i>Commentary: This is the repeat of the 1825 statutes with a modification of length: 3 years of Novitiate instead of 2.</i></p>  | <p><b>Project of prospectus, June 1824, 6:</b><br/>... We would wish to bind them by the vows in use in religious communities.</p> <p><b>Prospectus, 19 July 1824, 4:</b> They will make a Novitiate of two years.</p> <p><b>Statutes of PFM, 15 January 1825, art. 2, 3:</b> After a Novitiate of two years, if they have turned eighteen years, they make the simple vows of Religion, from which they can be dispensed.</p>  |
| <p>Art. 4...<br/>If a brother leaves the Society, or if he is dismissed, which is only done in the case of bad conduct, the Society returns him what he has brought, minus the fees for Novitiate, and any extraordinary expenses he may have incurred.</p> <p><i>Commentary: This article 4 is very close to that of the statutes of 1825 which inspired the one in the 1833 statutes, themselves identical to the article above. The reason for the evolution is clear to see: in 1825 Champagnat and the diocese wish to have a congregation authorised, which the government cannot allow since there is no law allow-</i></p> | <p><b>Prospectus, 19 July 1824, 7:</b><br/>Those who have an estate will bring it to the house, which will provide assurance of reimbursement, in case the novice comes to leave the Society; then a deduction will be made for costs of the Novitiate.</p> <p><b>Statutes of 15 January 1825, art. 3, 4:</b><br/>If a brother leaves the Congregation or if he is sent away, which can happen only for bad conduct, the Congregation will return to him what he has brought, deduction made for any extraordinary expenses he may have incurred. The brothers of the Congregation will be unable to make disposition, whether by donation between living persons, or by will, except in conformity with the laws of the state relating to religious congregations.</p> |

*ing for the authorisation of congregations of men. As well, from 1830, Father Cattet modifies the request for authorisation in the terms required by the authorities. This is the text which will be part of the statutes submitted for authorisation in 1830 and which is lacking only Charles X's signature. In 1834, the new statutes of the Society will not include this article which is not necessary because the congregationalist form is definitively sidelined. The usefulness of this article is only internal and so it does not matter whether the word "Congregation" or the word "Society" is used. The above article is inspired by the statutes of 1825 and 1830. It might be that the text dated summer of 1833 was used as a model, unless it was the other way round.*

**Draft statutes of the Brothers of Mary, from V. G. Cattet's hand, March 1830,**

**art. 3:** If a brother leaves the Society, or if he is sent away because of bad conduct, he will be returned what he has brought, deduction being made for any extraordinary expenses he may have incurred. The brothers of the Society will dispose of their goods in accordance with the laws of the state.

**Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, in a secretary's hand, summer 1830?**

**Article 3:**

If a brother leaves the Congregation, or if he is sent away, which will happen only for bad conduct, the Congregation will return him what he has brought, deduction being made for the Novitiate fees and any other extraordinary costs he may have caused the house.

**Statutes of the Society of the Brothers of Mary, pages in Champagnat's handwriting, exercise book 7, summer 1833:**

If a brother leaves the Society, or if he is sent away, which can only happen for bad conduct, the Society will return him what he has brought, deduction being made for the Novitiate fees and any other extraordinary costs he may have caused the house.

Art. 5...

The Society of Mary is governed by a Superior General, who is one of the chaplains to the brothers; he is appointed for life, and in the plurality of voices, by the main leaders of the work. The convocation is made by the substitute of the deceased Superior, and he presides also over the election.

*Commentary: Concerning the election of the Superior General, there is a strong link with the document of summer 1830, notably in the formula "for life in the plurality of voices". But the big question is the limitation of candidates to the chaplains of the brothers, which supposes a group of priests, not too restricted, conforming to the situation that prevailed on 1829-30.*

**Statutes of 15 January 1825, article 4, § 5:**

The Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary will be governed by a Superior General, who will be appointed for three years only, but at the end of this term he will be able to continue. He will be appointed by an absolute majority of suffrages of the Superiors of individual houses, who will be called together for this and of whom at least six will meet in the Motherhouse. The professed brothers who are living in the said house will also have deliberative voice. The Ordinary, or a delegate on his behalf, will preside at this election.

**Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, in a secretary's hand, summer 1830?**

**Article 4:** The Congregation of the Brothers of Mary is governed by a Superior General who is appointed for life in the plurality of voices, by the Brother Rectors of the establishments who are called together for this, of whom at least seven meet at the Motherhouse. The professed brothers who are living in the said house also have deliberative voice. The Ordinary or his delegate will preside at this election.

Art. 6...

before the assembly disperses, it appoints substitutes or assistants to the Superior General, according to his needs.

*The two articles differ greatly: one concerns a Society that is already developed; the other, a basic hierarchy, tied to one Motherhouse only. The role of the Superior is different there*

**Statutes of 15 January 1825, article 5, § 6:**

The Superior General will choose a Director and a Master of Novices, whom he will have accepted by the assembly before it disperses.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Art. 7...</p> <p>The priests who are chaplains are part of the Society; they follow the Constitutions and give spiritual assistance to the brothers.</p>  | <p><i>This article sanctions a situation wanted by Champagnat and the diocese. (nutritum et vestitum ...)</i></p>  |
| <p>Art. 8...</p> <p>If the number of priests becomes greater than that needed by the brothers, they offer their services to the respective bishops of the dioceses where they are situated, to be employed in their priestly office, as the bishops see fit. Nevertheless, these priests do not cease being part of the Society; they will always be ready to return when the needs demand it and when the Superior General asks them.</p>   | <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, Preamble number 2:</b> The Motherhouse ... always has the right to dispose of its subjects in whatever region it wishes, as the general good of the Society demands.</p> <p><i>We find there a fundamental trait of the SM whose members believed that no matter what they were doing, they remained part of the Society. This would be the case with Terrailon and even with Courveille. But here there is some ambiguity: do they combine in order to serve the brothers or to constitute a work that is more vast?</i></p> |
| <p>Art. 9...</p> <p>Motherhouses are established to serve as a Novitiate or for the brothers' retreat during their holidays. Each one is administered by a Brother Superior whose concern is the temporal goods. This brother may be removed from this position by the Superior General, who, however, will take the advice of his Council for this. (2<sup>nd</sup> page)</p> <p><i>The document of Belley introduces here a hierarchical echelon that is only suggested in the 1825 document (appointment of a Director). By employing the plural form, it establishes itself in terms of a long-term project by taking account perhaps of</i></p> | <p><b>Statutes of 15 January 1825, article 6 § 7:</b> Each house of the Congregation will be governed by an individual Superior, subordinate to the Superior General who will be able to appoint him or remove him at will, after, however, having taken the advice of his Council.</p> <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 6:</b> Each establishment of the Institute is governed by a Brother Rector who is subordinate to the Superior General who can appoint him or remove him at will, after, however, having taken the advice of his Council.</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>a reality: the Society in several dioceses (the first brothers in Isère in 1831).</i></p>  |  |
| <p>Art. 10.<br/>Each establishment or parish school is governed by a brother called the Rector, who is subordinate to the Superior of the Motherhouse under whose jurisdiction he finds himself, and who is appointed by him assisted by his Council.</p> <p><i>This article does not appear in its logical place. It is an adaptation of the statutes of 1825 and 1830. "Superior General" has simply been replaced by "Superior of the Motherhouse".</i></p> | <p><b>Statutes of 15 January 1825, article 6 § 7:</b><br/>Each house of the Congregation will be governed by an individual Superior, subordinate to the Superior General, who will be able to appoint him or remove him at will, after, however, having taken the advice of his Council.</p> <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 6:</b> Each establishment of the Institute is governed by a Brother Rector who is subordinate to the Superior General who can appoint him or remove him at will, after, however, having taken the advice of his Council.</p> |
| <p>Art. 11.<br/>No brother will be appointed Superior of the Motherhouse if he is less than twenty-five years of age, and if he does not have five years of profession.</p> <p><i>The same adaptation of the articles of 1825 and 1830. They have logically increased the time of profession for a post that is more important. The young age envisaged indicates a recent Congregation.</i></p>   | <p><b>Statutes of 15 January 1825, article 7, § 8:</b> No brother will be able to be appointed Superior if he is not at least twenty-five years of age and if he does not have three years of profession.</p> <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 7:</b><br/>No brother can be appointed Rector if he is not at least twenty years of age with three years of profession.</p>   |
| <p>Art. 12.<br/>Every three, four or five parish establishments, according to the convenience or proximity of the places, will have a brother called the Grand Rector, who will be appointed by</p>  | <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 8:</b><br/>In each establishment the Superior General will appoint a Grand Rector who will super-</p>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>the Superior of the Motherhouse, who will supervise the good order of the schools assigned to him and who will inform him every month of the state of things.</p> <p><i>This article only makes sense if the Society already has a greater number of establishments that are fairly spread out (in 1828, 14 schools and 19 in 1832) or if it is expecting a rapid growth, which seems to be the case in this instance.</i></p>  | <p>vise the good order of the houses subordinate to him and who will inform the Superior every month of the state of things.</p>  |
| <p>Art. 13.<br/>The Brothers of Mary usually go to the communes in threes or twos, where they are asked to run a school, but they never go alone.</p> <p><i>Inspired by the years around 1824. This has been made more precise by insisting on the refusal of sending brothers on their own through the use of a curious French phrase, “seul à seul” which is generally used to indicate two parties alone or in private.</i></p> | <p><b>Project of prospectus, June 1824, § 1:</b><br/>In order to remedy so great an evil (the “profane teachings”) these pious teachers devoted to Mary under the name of the unknown little Brothers, go two by two, even to the poor country areas where the De La Salle Brothers cannot go by default of means.</p> <p><b>Prospectus, 19 July 1824, §9:</b> The Little Brothers of Mary go to the parishes that ask for them, in the number of three or even of two.</p> |
| <p>Art. 14.<br/>It is not permitted to teach Latin, or to give individual classes inside or outside of the schoolhouse.</p>  | <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat’s exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 9:</b><br/>Marist Brothers are not allowed to teach Latin, or to give individual classes, neither inside nor outside the schoolhouse, no matter the reason.</p>  |
| <p>Art. 15.<br/>The authorities and the clergy are admitted on their own for the visits to the classes.</p>  | <p><b>Champagnat’s autograph, exercise book 9, 1824? (Herrerros doc. 26 p. 330), observation number 17:</b> No person of the oppo-</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>The brothers' dwelling is absolutely forbidden to persons of the opposite sex.</p>  | <p>site sex may enter the interior of the houses.</p> <p><b>Conditions and statutes of the Brothers of Mary, Champagnat's exercise book 8, summer 1830?, article 10:</b></p> <p>The authorities and clergy are admitted on their own in the classes. Women do not enter the brothers' dwelling.</p>  |
| <p>Art. 16.</p> <p>The Superior of the Motherhouse usually agrees with the communes that request brothers about a reasonable and moderate sum to provide for their keep; he rarely consents to have the sum sufficient for their stipend to be collected distributively from the parents.</p> <p><i>There is there the concern to dissociate the function of the Superior General from that of the Administrator of schools. Even if the ideas of the modesty of the remuneration and school fees are already formulated, there is the impression that this article does not copy the previous statutes. In particular, it is surprising to find such a complicated expression in article 16</i></p> | <p><b>Prospectus, July 1824 § 9:</b></p> <p>... The communes will be able to collect from the parents who are a little well-off some payments that would cover a part of the costs of the establishment.</p> <p><b>Statutes of the Little Brothers of Mary, 15 January, § 2:</b> ... They teach without charge, and agree with the communes about the means for their procuring an honest and not very costly existence.</p> |
| <p>In witness whereof all have signed these articles</p> <p><i>It does seem to be an act of commitment in the Society. And as the brothers committed themselves by different forms, this seems to be addressed to the priests.</i></p>   |  |

## Statuts de la Société de Kham?

2257a 107

Les frères de Kham ont pour objet principal l'instruction primaire; ils enseignent le catéchisme, la lecture, l'écriture, le calcul, les principes de la grammaire, le chant des hymnes et l'histoire sainte. Dans leur enseignement ils suivent la méthode des frères des écoles chrétiennes.

art. 7. .... Leur objet est encore de diriger des oratoires de perfection ou de refuge, pour les jeunes gens victimes du désordre, en vue de les rendre plus utiles.

art. 8. .... Après un noviciat de trois ans ils font, s'ils ont travaillé avec zèle, les vœux simples de Religion, dont ils peuvent être dispensés.

art. 4. .... Si un frère quitte la société, ou s'il est renvoyé, ce qui ne peut être que pour une cause évidente, la société lui rend ce qui lui appartient, y compris les frais de noviciat, et des dépenses ultérieures, qu'il aurait occasionnées.

art. 9. .... La Société de Kham est gouvernée par un Supérieur général, lequel est un des prêtres annuels des frères; il est nommé à vie, et à la pluralité des voix par les principaux chefs de l'œuvre. Sa consécration l'a fait que

art 6. .... le Suppléant du Supérieur défunt, et l'Electeur est possédés aussi par lui avant que l'assemblée le répète elle-même, ou que le nombre des Suppléants ou assistants du Supérieur général, selon les besoins.

art. 7. .... Les prêtres annuels font partie de la société; ils ont l'entretien des écoles, et donnent aux frères les secours spirituels de la Religion.

art. 8. .... Si le nombre de prêtres vient à s'accroître plus que suffisant pour les besoins des frères, ceux-ci offrent leurs services aux églises voisines des environs où ils sont, pour être employés aux offices de sacrement, qui ils voudront leur confier. Néanmoins les prêtres ne cessent point pour cela de faire partie de la société; ils sont toujours dispensés à y rentrer, quand les besoins l'exigent, et que le Supérieur général les demandera.

art 9. .... Les maisons mises sont établies pour servir de noviciat ou de retraite aux frères, pendant leur vie. Chaque année elles sont régies par un frère Supérieur, pour lequel on a vu le cas où la vie peut être renvoyé par le Supérieur général, qui cependant promettra pour cela l'avis de son conseil.

*Suite des mêmes Statuts.*

- art. 10. Chaque établissement ou école paroissiale est gouvernée par un frere aperi public Notant, lequel est sous la dependance du Superior de la maison ou de l'endroit de laquelle il se trouve, et qui est tenu par celui-ci assisté de son conseil.
- art. 11. Au cas frere ou sœur ou sœur Superior de maison morte, il n'est âgé au moins de vingt-cinq ans, et il n'en a pas plus de cinquante ans de profellion.
- art. 12. Tous les trois, quatre ou cinq établissements de paroisse, selon la convenance ou proximité des lieux, auront un frere appela grand vicar, qui sera nommé par le Superior de la maison morte, verra au bon ordre des écoles à lui assignés, et l'informer tous les mois de l'état des écoles.
- art. 13. Les freres de chaque communauté résident ordinairement par trois ou quatre dans les communes, ou ils sont demandés pour tenir l'école, mais ils n'y vont jamais seul à seul.
- art. 14. Il n'est pas permis à eux d'enseigner le latin, ou de faire des classes ou profellion d'aucun art ou science en hors de la maison de l'école.
- art. 15. Les autorités et les ecclésiastiques sont admis seuls à la visite des écoles. L'habitation des freres est absolument interdite aux personnes de la commune.
- art. 16. Le Superior de la maison morte résident ordinairement dans les communes qui ont plusieurs écoles, il sera le plus raisonnable et modeste pour pourvoir à leur subsistance, mais seulement et consist à faire pourvoir de distributions des pains des écoles par la commune suffisante pour leur traitement.
- En foi de tout ces articles ont signés





Editore : Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi – Casa generalizia – Roma, April 2005

® Institute of Marist Brothers  
C.P. 10250 – Roma. Italia.  
Tel. (39) 06545171  
Fax (39) 0654517217  
E-mail: [publica@fms.it](mailto:publica@fms.it)  
Web: [www.champagnat.org](http://www.champagnat.org)

Fotolito : TIPOCROM S.r.l. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 24 - Roma - Italia.  
Stampa : C.S.C. GRAFICA, s.r.l. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 40 – Roma - Italia.