

# 26

MARCH 2009

# fms

## MARIST NOTEBOOKS

### INFORMATION

- **Five-Month Course on Patrimony in Rome**  
Br Michael GREEN, fms
- **Essay on the History of Patrimony Studies in the Institute**  
Br André LANFREY, fms
- **Fr. Champagnat and Mission ad Gentes**  
Br Aureliano BRAMBILA, fms
- **Jean-Claude Courveille "The Lost Leader" (2<sup>nd</sup> and final part)**  
Br Frederick McMAHON, fms

### STUDIES

- **And New Tents, Too**  
Br Michael GREEN, fms
- **The Allibert Letter**  
Br André LANFREY, fms
- **The Letter to M. Fond**  
Br Paul SESTER, fms

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## SUMMARY

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# INFORMATION

## *The Patrimony Course 2008*

**Br Michael GREEN, FMS**

From 11 February to 20 June 2008, an intensive course in Marist historical and spiritual patrimony was conducted at the General House in Rome. This was the first such course held since 1993. It was a project of the International Patrimony Commission, and was led by two of its members, Brother Aureliano Brambila (as Programme Director) and Brother Michael Green (as Superior). The General Council, through its Patrimony Advisory Committee, took the decision to offer the course as one of its initiatives for the International Year of Marist Spirituality. Twenty-two Brothers took part: nineteen participants, a chaplain, and the two programme leaders. They came from eighteen countries, using English as their common language.



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## **PURPOSES**

The goals of the course were:

- (a) to educate a new group of Marists (Brothers and Lay) into the patrimony of the Institute, so that they would be able to help others to deepen their knowledge of Marist history and Marist spirituality, in different parts of the Marist world;
- (b) to undertake some new research which would add to the body of historical research that already exists; and
- (c) to identify some emerging Marist scholars who may be able to succeed the passing generation of Marist writers, researchers and animators.

Each of these aims was successfully achieved.

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## **Structure and Content**

The programme ran for five months. Its emphases were unambiguously academic and required the participants to engage in a considerable amount of reading, research, critical analysis, writing, and presenting. The major phases of the course were:

- (a) Orientation and context-setting (the historical, geographical, social and cultural context of France)
- (b) Champagnat revealed in his letters (both active and passive)
- (c) The origins of the Marist Project and the first generation of Brothers (including two weeks in France)
- (d) The historical roots of present-day Marist initiatives (e.g. the two key documents, *Water from the Rock* and *In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*; solidarity; and vocations ministry)
- (e) Champagnat revealed by the writings of other (major and minor witnesses; biographies)
- (f) The evolution of Marist spirituality and mission
- (g) Official documents and legislation of the Institute
- (h) Individual research projects by each of the participants

The programme was divided into course-work and research. Each morning, two or three sessions were held, with presentations and seminars, while the afternoons, evenings and weekends were used for research. Some of morning sessions were prepared by the participants themselves,

while others were led by Brother Aureliano, Brother Michael, and a number of visiting presenters. The other presenters were:

- Brother Kieran Fenn (Scripture),
- Brother Neville Solomon (the French context),
- Brother Edward Clisby (the passive letters of Champagnat and the minor witnesses),
- Father Alois Greiler (the Society of Mary)
- Sister Vivienne Golstein (the Marist Sisters)
- Sister Margaret Ryan (the Marist Missionary Sisters)
- Brother Pau Fornells (Marist Laity)
- Brother Alain Delorme (the first Brothers)
- Brother Peter Rodney (Water from the Rock)
- Brother Carlos Martinez Lavin (In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat)
- Brother Dominick Pujia (Marist solidarity)
- Brother Giovanni Bigotto (Marist saints)
- Brother Ernesto Sánchez (Vocations ministry)
- Brother Pedro Herreros (The Rule of 1837)
- Brother André Lanfrey (The birth and evolution of Marist spirituality)

### **Research projects**

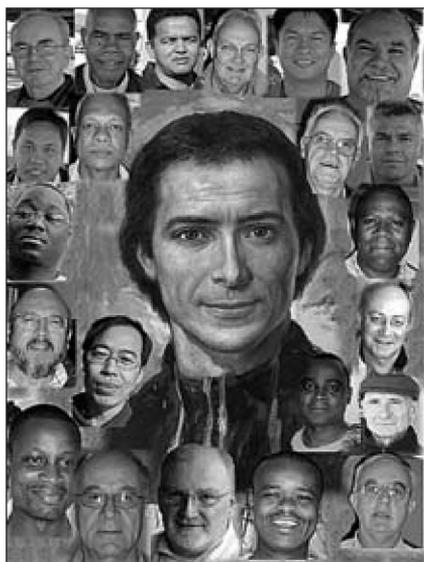
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A major component of the course was the individual research project (“IRP”) undertaken by each participant, under the academic supervision of Brother Aureliano or Brother Michael. This became a major focus of the group. Some quite rich and original research was the result. Each Brother completed a dissertation of between 15,000 and 50,000 words, and led a seminar on his work. The IRPs from the course will be the subject of the next edition of Marist Notebooks, which will be a special issue dedicated to the 2008 Patrimony Course. To whet the appetite of readers for Marist Notebooks No.27, there follows a list of the titles of the IRPs.

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Fr Henri Bashizi | <i>L'Impact des Frères Maristes sur l'Enseignement en République Democratique du Congo.</i> |
| Br Herman Boyek  | <i>Marist and Melanesian Spirituality at the Crossroads</i>                                 |

Hno Juan F. Castro Lenero	<i>The Foundation and Beginning of the Marist Brothers in South Korea (1971-2007)</i>
Br Colin Chalmers	<i>Scripture and the Search for Identity : finding the Institute's story hidden in biblical narrative.</i>
Br Ben Consigli	<i>The Social/Emotional Intelligence of Saint Marcellin Champagnat.</i>
Fr Jean Pierre Destombes	<i>Disciples de Marcellin, Compagnons en Chemin</i>
Br Auxensio Dickson	<i>Biography of Brother Jonas Anaclet Kanyumba Phiri, 1932-1993.</i>
Br Augustin Hendlmeier	<i>The Beginnings of the German Marist Province</i>
Br Elias Iwu	<i>A Brother you need to know: Rev. Brother John Samuel Metub, 1926-2007.</i>
Fr Vincent de Paul Kouassi	<i>Le Charisme et la Mission des Frères Maristes en Côte d'Ivoire, Une Reflexion Personnelle</i>
Br Christopher Maney	<i>'Une Tendre Affection'. A Question about Interpretation, Inspiration and Motivation.</i>
Fr Georges Palandre	<i>La Pastorale des Vocations en Centrafrique de 1958 à 2008.</i>
Br Godfrey Perera	<i>Father Champagnat, the Counsellor and the Spiritual Master.</i>
Br Niño Pizarro and Br Demosthenes Calabria	<i>Marist Brothers of the Schools: Sixty Years in the Philippines</i>

- Fr Pierre Joseph Rasolomanana *Special Novitiate of French-Speaking Brothers of Africa, 1994-1996.*
- Br Robert Teoh *The Tentative Fusion of the Congregation of the Mother of God with the Marist Brothers, in China, between 1909 and 1912.*
- Br Benedict Umoh *Option for the Poor in the Marist Province of Nigeria.*
- Br Peter A Walsh *The Relationship between Marcellin Champagnat and Brother François, as shown by Champagnat's letters from Paris, Brother François's Circulars, and other Marist documents.*



### **Community Life**

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The participants lived as a separate community within the Genera House, and had exclusive use of “La Foresteria”, the wing of the House that was used for the International College until two years ago. The Patrimony course community had its own schedule for each day, and also its own dining room. The presence of the Chaplain, Father Willy Weemaes SM, allowed the community to celebrate the Eucharist each day. The participants highly valued the quality of community life, both in its internationality and its fraternity.

### **Conclusion and Evaluation**

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The programme finished with a graduation ceremony which was held during a Presentation Mass attended by all the General Council, the Gen-

eral Administration community, and the members of the course. Certificates were presented by the Superior General. The course evaluations which were completed by the participants revealed that each Brother found the programme to be beneficial, challenging and enjoyable. All the Brothers have developed ideas and proposals which they hope to realise in their own Provinces and regions.

# *Essay on the History of Patrimony Studies in the Institute*

**Br André LANFREY, FMS**

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 1909 the *Bulletin of the Institute* served as a link document within the Institute. It furnished news about the projects, about research in spirituality and education... Its table of contents in January 1960 (supplement to Volume XXIII) listed the following main titles:

- Religion and spiritual life
- Religious life and vocations
- Education and teaching
- History of the Institute (many statistics)
- Commemoration of the Founder

Although this Bulletin was a gold mine of important information on the Institute, up until about 1955 its aim was mainly that of informing, of commemorating, of inspiring, and not of researching in the scientific sense of that word.

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## **I. THE PIONEERS**

Brother Pierre Zind (Louis Laurent) seems to have been the first to work along strictly scientific lines and not with a commemorative or pastoral focus. In Volume XXI of the Bulletin (1954-1956) on the occasion of the cen-

tenary of the publication biography of Father Champagnat, he published an article entitled "Contribution to the renewed research on the origins of the Little Brothers of Mary". The work was divided into three parts (pages 451, 531, 593)<sup>1</sup>. With these articles he began a systematic research which would result in his monumental thesis: *Les Nouvelles congrégations de Frères enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*, published in 1969.

The revamping of the *Bulletin* format begun in January 1964 with Volume XXVI seems to mark the beginning of an evolution towards a more scientific approach to the patrimony. In that volume is found a series of articles by Brother Gabriel Michel on "The Hidden Years" of Champagnat (p. 466, 570, 675). From then on the magazine was noted for his articles, as well as those of Brother Balko and Brother Sester. The *Bulletin* stopped appearing with n°222 in December 1984.

The "FMS" Bulletin which was simply mimeographed and only some ten pages long, began to appear in 1973 (n°2 January - February 1973). It contained many articles by Brother Balko and stopped appearing in May-June 1985 with n° 60 that comprised pages 896-909 of that collection. In some ways it completed the earlier Bulletin.

The fact that these two magazines ceased publication about the same time reveals certain hesitations within the Institute about the manner of publishing as well as what policies should be adopted concerning the patrimony.

The appearance of the first *Marist Notebooks* in June 1990 seems to have ended this phase of hesitation. In a presentation dated June 6, 1990 (CM n° 1 p. II) the General Council commissioned the magazine with the task of "making known where we stood in the research of our origins and of what distinguishes us as Marist Brothers". It is a well-defined and clear indication of the new spirit concerning our past history and identity which had had begun to emerge in 1955.

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<sup>1</sup> The first and second parts are commentaries on Inspector Guillard's report during his 1820 and 1822 visits. The third part refers to the situation of the Marist Society around 1824.

## 2. BEGINNING OF COORDINATED RESEARCH

It appears that the pioneers in the field of Marist research worked alone in the early years and without any particular mandate. In the administration of Brother Basilio, Superior General, when Brother Gabriel-Michel was Secretary General, Brother Alexander Balko was officially nominated as researcher<sup>2</sup>. At the end of the summer of 1971 he was invited by the General Council to prepare a thesis with the help of Father Coste, S.M. He prepared for this by earning a Degree in Theology at the Faculty of Lyon and in the autumn of 1972 presented his dissertation: "Blessed Marcellin Champagnat in his unedited instructions and sermons"<sup>3</sup>. He was able to use this time profitably to define a clear project: "to extract 'the very substance' from the writings of Father Champagnat in order to establish a faithful and original doctrine on the charism and person of the Founder"<sup>4</sup>.

Another important event was the creation of a research team at *l'Hermitage*. Brother Aureliano Brambila recalls the development of this team: The Provincial of *l'Hermitage* having revealed to the conference of Provincials in 1974 the difficulties of maintaining the Provincial house, Brother Basilio decided that the General Administration should take on the management of that house with the intention of converting it into a location for the study of Marist patrimony and a place of pilgrimage. A team was formed in 1976 with Brother Bruno Cortez Ramirez of the Western Mexican Province as first Director. Brother Owen Kavanagah from Australia was especially named for the study of the patrimony. Brother Aureliano was sent to the *Hermitage* from 1982 to 1984 where he met Brothers Gabriel Michel, Juan Maria (S. Merino), Alexandre Balko, and Jordan from New Zealand. Brother Aureliano had been asked by the General Council to work on the spiritual and intellectual patrimony of the Institute. It seems, however, that duties of welcoming as well as of translating became too cumbersome and it was soon difficult to coordinate any serious research.

The setting up of this structure did not impede other ongoing Provincial or individual efforts from being more or less recognized and made

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<sup>2</sup> It seems that earlier contacts between Brother Gabriel-Michel and Brother Pierre Zind did not succeed.

<sup>3</sup> A.Balko : « *Ma vocation de chercheur* », a short text sent to Brother Henri Réocreux in September 2008

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

known. Also, at that time in Rome, a great number of student Brothers produced theses which have unfortunately been largely forgotten despite their value as important writings on our patrimony, for example *La Regla del Fundador* by Brother Pedro Herreros. Researchers working in various Provinces such as Brothers Anibal Canon Presa<sup>5</sup>, Stephen Farrell<sup>6</sup>, André Lanfrey<sup>7</sup>, and others, produced works which have been mostly forgotten, and sometimes completely so.

One result growing out of this new mood and these scattered efforts was the creation of CEPAM [an acronym from the Spanish for *Centre for Studies in Marist Spiritual Patrimony*], thanks to Brother Aureliano Brambila who had returned to Mexico in 1988. On the request of his Provincial, Brother José G. Romero, Brother Brambila began to set up this organisation and to publish Marist sources. Beginning in June 1989, CEPAM organized courses which lasted several weeks and have aided more than 250 Brothers up to this very day. Shorter courses were given by Brother Brambila almost everywhere in the world except in Oceania, and were attended by Brothers, formators, lay teachers, parents of Marist students, members of Marist Fraternity. Since 1995, CEPAM has also operated a website<sup>8</sup> containing a surprising number of documents, especially in French and Spanish.

Therefore, and probably by simplifying a great deal, we can say that, since 1990, research into our patrimony has been secured by a few Brothers who have acted in an official or semi-official capacity within three main chronological phases:

The first, comprising of the General Secretariat and General Archives, has been directed by:

- Brother Gabriel Michel (RIP), former Secretary General, author of many articles and books, and a noted gatherer of archival material
- Brother Paul Sester, former General Councilor and Secretary General; creator and first editor-in-chief of *Marist Notebooks* (n°1 June 1990); assuring publication of sources (*Lettres de Champagnat, 1985 and 1987*); director of a relatively informal but very capable group of collaborators who computerize our Marist sources.

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<sup>5</sup> *Cronicas Maristas, I El Fundador*, II Biografias, Editorial Luis Vivès, Madrid, 1979

<sup>6</sup> Keith B. Farrell (Brother Stephen F.M.S.) *Achievements from the Depths*, 1984

<sup>7</sup> *Une congrégation enseignante : les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*, Lyon, 1979

<sup>8</sup> [www.geocities.com/athens/oracle/3630](http://www.geocities.com/athens/oracle/3630)

The second area is apparently more linked to the patrimonial policy of the congregation. Among the main actors is Brother Alexandre Balko who often leads discussions at the many Marist renewal sessions in different languages and works at renewing our Founder's image first introduced by Brother Jean-Baptiste. He resided in Rome until 1983 but has since continued his work in research and animation at the *Hermitage*. His conferences have been collected published in compendium form in Brasil and in Spain. Due to health problems, however, he will be unable to finish the thesis planned in 1972.

CEPAM organised by Brother Aureliano Brambila and based in Mexico is focussed more on encouraging and initiating research rather than on basic research itself.

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### **3. AFFIRMING THE POLICY REGARDING THE PATRIMONY**

A six-month long session on Marist Patrimony held from January to June 1993 and directed by Brother Aureliano Brambila was beneficial to some thirty Brothers at that time and seems to have marked an important step in the history of our patrimony despite the fact that few Marist researchers were participants at that session.

At the beginning of Brother Benito Arbuès' administration as Superior General, interest in the patrimony did not falter. Brother André Lanfrey<sup>9</sup> was appointed to work in research by the General Council. A seminar organised by Brothers Henri Vignau and Gaston Robert held November 20 – 27, 1997 in Rome, was essentially a reflection upon educational practices of Champagnat and the first Brothers. Eleven Brothers participated in that seminar and reports on the event can be found in *Marist Notebooks*, n° 13, (July 1998).

A second seminar on Marist apostolic spirituality was held again in Rome August 24 to September 2, 2000, this time on sources up to then quite unknown in Marist spirituality: i.e. manuscripts of Brother François and Brother Jean-Baptiste. This second seminar was organized by Brother Henri Vi-

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<sup>9</sup> He had been named by the previous General Administration

gnau and directed by Brother André Lanfrey. Among the participants were ten Brothers from America, seven from Europe, one each from Africa and Oceania and one Marist priest.

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#### **4. COMPUTERIZING OF PRIMARY SOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS**

Over this period an especially important work of editing and re-editing was carried out under the direction of Brother Henri Vignau in collaboration with Brother Henri Réocreux, to make primary sources and various studies available in digital format.

##### **By Brother Gabriel-Michel:**

- *Pour mieux connaître Marcellin Champagnat*, April 2001, 292 pages, A4 format, prefaced by Brother Henri Vignau. Comprises three parts: The socio-political context of Marcellin Champagnat; the religious context of Marcellin Champagnat; a compendium of eight earlier articles.
- *Champagnat au jour le jour*, April 2001, 370 pages, preface by Brother Henri Vignau, an extended chronology covering the years 1789 to 1840.
- *Les années obscures de Marcellin Champagnat ou la Révolution à Marlbes, Loire, 1789-1800*, 2000, 180 pages.

##### **By Brother Pierre Zind:**

- *Sur les traces de Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol. 1, Feb. 2001, 265 pages, preface by Brother Henri Vignau, with a note that this compendium comprises articles by Brother Zind edited between 1955 and 1988.
- *Sur les traces de Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol 2, Feb. 2001, 236 pages, extracts from *Les nouvelles congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*.

##### **By Brother Alexandre Balko:**

- *Repensons à nos origines*, a collection of 43 articles, 249 pages.

##### **By Brother André Lanfrey:**

- *Une congrégation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*, 1997, 210 pages + XXV annexes.

- *Elaboration de la pensée éducative mariste, ses sources, son influence (1824-1868)* 2000, 61 pages serving as introduction to *L Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste*, an educational treatise written by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet after 1850 based on instructions by the Founder and various educational authors (Rome, 2000, 259 pages).

**Other publications:**

This editorial effort seems to have concurred with other initiatives at the Generalate. Other publications include:

- *Miscellanées Champagnat, recueil de textes de F. Louis-Laurent (Zind Pierre)*, 278 pages under the direction of the Publications Commission, January 1996.
- Two works by Brother Gabriel Michel: *Marcellin Champagnat et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes*, 269 pages, followed by *Frère François et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes (1840-1851)*, (112 pages)<sup>10</sup> *L Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste*, no date, introduced by Brother Paul Sester (268 pages + appendix) was published before a later edition produced by Brother Vignau. There is also a third version of this work which includes the introduction of Brother André Lanfrey (Rome, February 1998, 285 pages).
- Brother Agustin Carazo, former Postulator General, published in Rome, 1991, *Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat* drawn from the Diocesan Enquiry at the beatification process of Marcellin Champagnat (271 pages + 140pages).

**New works:**

Besides these re-edited works, which made it easier to consult writings sometimes scattered over many years or within not easily accessible publications, new works have since been published such as these by Brother Andre Lanfrey:

- *Introduction à la Vie de M.J.B. Champagnat*, published in A4 size notebook in 1998, 176 pages and published a second time in book format in 2000, Rome, 246 pages.
- *Un chaînon manquant de la spiritualité mariste. Les manuscrits d'instructions des FF. François et Jean-Baptiste*, Rome, 2000, 158 pages.
- *Essai sur les origines de la spiritualité mariste*, Rome, September 2001, 188 pages English translation by Brother Jeffrey Crowe.

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<sup>10</sup> No mention is made of date or editor though these seem to have been published somewhat earlier.

### **Early works in digital format:**

The work of computerizing primary sources begun by Brother Paul Sester was also instrumental in the publication of a great number of early writings which were in exercise books or were out-of-print.

### ***By Brother François:***

Three Handbooks of Instructions many of which go back to Father Champagnat:

- No. 1 (AFM [i.e. Marist Brothers Archives] 5101.307) 204 pages, foreword probably written by Brother Paul Sester, no date given.
- No. 2 (AFM 5101.308) 342 pages with no introduction or date.
- No. 3 (AFM 5101.309), 165 pages, introduction by Brother Paul Sester, March 1998.

Personal letters of Brother François:

- Volume 1: *Lettres personnelles 1841-1852*, Rome 1996, 308 pages + table of contents. Introduction by Brother Paul Sester.
- Volume 2: *Lettres personnelles*, Rome 1996, 369 pages + table of contents, with an introduction by Brother Paul Sester.

*Lettres administratives volume 1 (1837-1843)*, 263 pages, no date, table of contents or introduction.

*Carnets de retraite*, in fact spiritual notes taken by Brother François.

- No. 1 (AFM 5101.302) (1819-1831), 90 pages with an index; no introduction or publication date.
- No. 2 (AFM 5101.303) (1832-1850), 158 pages with table of contents but no introduction or date of publication.
- FM. 5101.304 (1850-1871), 282 pages with tables of contents but no introduction or publishing date.

*Notes*

- No. 1 (AFM 5101.310), (1852-1880) 243 pages introduction by Brother Paul Sester, January 1998. (Brother François had given the title *Comparaisons* to these notebooks.)
- No. 2 (AFM.5101.311), (1860-1880) 101 pages, with table of contents and index; introduction by Brother Paul Sester with no date.

Other Notebooks:

- *Projets d'instructions*, (AFM 5101.306), 172 pages, with table of contents, with no introduction or date of publishing.
- *Citations* (AFM 5101.312), 97 pages with table of contents, introduction by Brother Paul Sester, Rome, May 1998.
- *Ecrits divers. Règles de bienséance et catéchisme marial*(AFM 5101.313), 85 pages Introduced by Brother Paul Sester.

**By Brother Jean-Baptiste:**

We have already mentioned *L'Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste* . Other publications besides this are:

- *Ecrits 3, recueil d'instructions* (AFM 5201.23) 152 pages, introduction by Brother Paul Sester, April 1998.
- *Ecrits 4, second recueil d'instructions* (AFM 5201.24), 185 pages, introduction by Brother Paul Sester, Rome, January 28, 1998.
- *Sujets d'examen [de conscience]* (AFM 5201.22), 94 pages introduction by Brother Paul Sester, Rome, January 28, 1998.
- *Méditations sur les grandes vérités* (AFM. 5201.21), 207 pages, no introduction or date.

**By Brother Avit:**

In 1993 three volumes of Brother Avit's *Annales de l'institut* were published in Rome. His longer work, *Annales des maisons*, has since been published in 12 volumes, thanks to Brother Paul Sester and his team of editors.

**Other sources:**

- *Guide des écoles*, Rome June 2001, introduction by Brother Henri Vignau.
- *Deuxième Chapitre Général des Petits Frères de Marie (1852-1854)*, Rome, September 2001, introduction by Brother Henri Vignau.
- *Constitutions et règles du gouvernement*, Rome, October 2001, with no introduction.
- *Manuel des Frères Directeurs*, anonymous collection of retreat conferences given by Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie, 83 pages.

Other sources have been published elsewhere than Rome. Among these it is important to mention the excellent edition of the Rules of 1837 and 1852 in French and Spanish by *Edition Edelvives*, the *Cronicas Maristas*

(Life of the Founder and biographies of the first Brothers) in Spanish by Brother Anibal Canon Presa (1979) as well as the *Cartas recibidas* (Letters received by Champagnat) published in Brazil under the auspices of Brother Ivo Strobino<sup>11</sup>.

Mention must also be made of *Espiritualidad de San Marcellino Champagnat a partir del estudio critico de su biografia* by Brother Manuel Mesonero Sánchez (Madrid, June 2003) edited in collaboration with Brother Alexandre Balko.<sup>12</sup>

These publications in paper format give only a rudimentary idea of the work of computerisation of primary sources. Brother Paul Sester has given an account of the work in Number 20 of *Marist Notebooks* (June 2004) under the title *Informatisation des sources* and which recalls the work of Brs. Jean-Marie Girard, Jean Rousson, Louis Richard, whom we can thank for the existence of an enormous and indeed ever growing body of documents. Today we possess the computerised version of *Origines Maristes* by Fathers Coste and Lessard, scanned by Brother Louis Richard, the circular letters of various superiors, General Chapter reports, statistics of the Institute. Lastly, in 2007, the Secretary General with the aid of Brother Joseph de Meyer produced a CD of “Marist Documents” for the purpose of giving a general idea of all the sources and writings in the Institute. Most of the above sources are on this CD in digital format.

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## **5. PATRIMONY COMMISSION AND TEAM**

Because of all this work on the patrimony, better coordination was deemed necessary. For this reason, at its January 8, 2004 session, the General Council approved the creation of a 6-member international team on the Patrimony, and set out its duties:

- Organize the work on the patrimony: coordination, directors, researchers, resources
- Be an advisory group for the General Council regarding decisions concerning patrimony

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<sup>11</sup> Bilingual edition in French and Portuguese

<sup>12</sup> « Ma vocation de chercheur », op.cit.

- Produce the *Marist Notebooks*
- Promote and coordinate work on research
- Publish the complete works of Champagnat and sources emanating from Brothers François and Jean-Baptiste
- Coordinate translation work
- Produce a computerised edition of our sources
- Update Marist history and chronology

Since 2004 the Patrimony team, assisted by a secretary from 2006, organises a yearly session of 5-6 days in June in conjunction with the General Council. Since 2006 one half-day is set aside mid-way through the session for a Marist *inter-branch* discussion on the patrimony. From February to June 2008 Brothers Brambila and Michael Green conducted a programme in which 19 Brothers benefited from formation in the patrimony.

After more than fifty years of research on Marist Patrimony, the results are quite significant: the Institute now possesses abundant and easily accessible source material; a number of important works have been published; and a policy on the Patrimony is now in place. Issue No. 25 of *Marist Notebooks* recently appeared in June 2008.

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## **6. CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS**

Nevertheless difficulties still exist. First on the conceptual level:

### **Spiritual Patrimony**

The term “patrimony” meaning research of our identity lends itself to confusion unless accompanied by the adjective “spiritual” meaning all that refers to things of the spirit such as: teaching methods, psychology, theology, even economics. The work accomplished since 1955 is in fact indicative of the contents of this mission: i.e. to make known the sources of the Institute and give these a renewed significance within their various disciplinary areas.

### **Sources and origins**

The work on patrimony often stumbles when it confuses the terms *sources* and *origins*. There is a tendency to consider the only worthwhile

sources to be documents originating with Champagnat and the first Brothers, when, in fact, **anything produced within the Institute no matter at what period is a source.** For example *Water from the Rock* and the Circulars written by Brother Seán Sammon are sources.

Although the study of older sources is far from complete, we often neglect more recent valuable sources. The Institute may have 1817 as a definite date of origin in France; however, the arrival of Brothers in other countries is a topic dealing with “origins” and no less worthy of study *per se*. We therefore need to leave aside a somewhat archaeological or geocentric vision of the Institute and see it as a living reality which throughout time and history expands according to diverse cultures. In fact, a good number of histories of the Institute in various countries as well as histories of Provinces are moving in that direction.

### **Bibliography**

Any document whose subject pertains to the Institute is not a source but rather belongs in a bibliography, which can be quite diverse. Firstly such a collection is made up of all the works that can shed light on our sources no matter who is the author: dictionaries, atlases, history books in general, but also books on spirituality or devotion used in nourishing the Institute: e.g. “*La perfection chrétienne*” by the Jesuit Rodriguez which was basic to the formation of Brothers in Champagnat’s time and long after. These books are “working tools” for the researcher.

As for the more specifically Marist bibliography, it comprises first of all the more scholarly works such as *Les Origines Maristes* or *The Letters* of the Founder which do more than just set order within these sources since they have enhanced them with a critical apparatus (introductions, indexes, footnotes, tables of contents, etc.) and thus help researchers find their bearings in the labyrinth of documents and interpret them correctly.

This work, however, is not sufficient: one then needs to exploit the data through scientific means by making use of rational procedures based on the sources of whatever discipline they happen to concern: history, theology, sociology and so on. Much of the Marist writing today corresponds to this definition and therefore constitutes an academic bibliography.

Besides this we find a corpus of works of diverse interests: literary, commemorative, inspiring, artistic. These are of secondary but not negligible importance. For example, almost all the many biographies of Father Champagnat written in different languages at different times would be within this category. There are also many Province magazines, pedagogical magazines, devotional ones, etc.

### **Classifying in order to know**

An effort still needs to be made on the work of patrimony to help us to know how to classify Marist documents. When beginning a task, every research worker worthy of that name must (1) carefully examine what has been written on the subject in question by previous authors, so as not to repeat a job already done (it has happened) and (2) consider the achievements of predecessors.

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## **7. COMPUTERIZING AND PUBLISHING**

Computerizing sources brings up new problems because the relative ease involved in transcribing and diffusing collections of sources may result in our being faced with faulty editions or different versions of the one same source with the added problem often of not knowing either the transcriber, or the date of the transcription or even its degree of faithfulness to the original.

The practice of data processing can produce a sort of “grey literature” of doubtful accuracy. Besides, the life span of a photocopied notebook is short since not much attention is given to it; at best it may be a working document. This fact as regards computer media and printouts obtained from them is similar to the old problem of medieval manuscripts which require patient comparative study to determine which is the closest to the original. And so if source CDs are used, generally they cannot entirely substitute for hardcopies because only a book can be deemed accurate after it has been scrupulously compared to the original and, in the case of sources, is accompanied by a critical analysis.

The end result of computerising is therefore not “grey literature” but printed publication of sources and of the main works of bibliography. This

work is already underway: volumes of Champagnat's *Lettres* have been incorporated into the collection entitled "*Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae*". A collection of Champagnat documents is in the process of publication in that same collection under the title of "*Origines des Frères Maristes*". The *Annales de l'Institut* by Brother Avit and the *Mémoires du F. Sylvestre* have even been published... What is missing is a collection of intermediate books situated between the *Cahiers Maristes* and the *Fontes Historici* similar to the collection "Maristica" of the Marist Fathers which publishes the important works of their own researchers.

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## **8. COORDINATING RESEARCH WITH THE OTHER MARIST BRANCHES**

Let us not forget all that the research of Marist Brothers owes to pioneer works of Fathers Coste and Lessard, authors of *Origines Maristes*. However, we can have an overly narrow vision of our origins which prevents us from grasping the fact that we cannot seriously study the first fifty years of our Institute nor of our spirituality without a thorough knowledge of the history of the entire Society. We also need to consider the clear *rap-prochement* that exists between our diverse traditional branches of the Society of Mary which leads to a rediscovery of a common spirit. For this reason it is important to be attentive to regular meetings with the other Marist branches, as these lead to mutual enlightenment concerning the Marist spirit with all its divergent and convergent elements.

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## **9. THE LINGUISTIC PROBLEM**

Practically all the Institute's sources from the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century ones are in French.

A good number of these have been translated into Spanish, especially by CEPAM. The English translations seem less advanced but are progressing rapidly. Less is known about works in Portuguese or other languages. In any case, the rapid diminution of French as an international language and the domination of English for communication on a univer-

sal level pose serious problems, since a Marist researcher who is not French speaking will find it very difficult to study many of our sources.

Translations only partially solve the problem because they are often of doubtful quality and in addition, everything cannot be translated. The least harmful solution is evidently that of a bilingual format adopted by CEPAM since it allows immediate comparison of the original text with the translation.

Because of the great number of young Brothers there who are bilingual (English-French), Africa might have a vocation of serving as a link between the original language of the Institute and English, if the formation centres do not neglect the French language.

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## **10. FORMATION CENTRES BECOME SCHOOLS OF SPIRITUALITY**

Not every Brother is called to become a researcher in Marist patrimony, but every Brother should possess a clearly structured idea of Marist identity. This implies that sufficient knowledge of the Marist patrimony and a method of interpreting it with discernment should be incorporated into initial formation.

In fact, this formation can no longer be the assimilation of ready made conclusions as too often it was in the past, but rather must rest on conscious participation in an ever evolving tradition: a school of spirituality.

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## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, up until around 1955 the Institute basically functioned on a *memory mode*: everything had been expressed in the beginning, and so what remained was the task of constantly remembering and illustrating the “spirit of the Institute”. It is not an exaggeration to affirm that since 1955 up to the present, 2008, the Institute is engaged in a cultural revolution: no longer to reiterate but to reinterpret its heritage.

In a circular letter of December 25, 1975 on the Spirit of the Institute, Brother Basilio set down enlightening distinctions for this long range task:

“...we need to distinguish between two notions which can be mistaken for one another: *spirit* and *charism*. The spirit is rather a manner of being, a family feeling, an atmosphere which builds up affinity of soul between persons. Charism, however, speaks at one and the same time of being and doing<sup>13</sup>. [...] It is possible to extricate from it the basic outline and with that construct a certain doctrinal entity. Spirit is transmitted through living; spirituality can be clarified, it can even be taught”.

Brother Charles Raphaël introduced the notion of spirituality into our vocabulary. Since his time, important efforts have been made, especially in developing a conceptual framework for our spirit, particularly by Brothers working on patrimony and formation. Nonetheless, does the Institute not still operate strongly according to its spirit and charism? Does operating in such a way leave spirituality not the *foundation* of the edifice but merely an architectural ornament? We can ask the following: To what extent has the now fashionable word “spirituality” not substituted for the terms “spirit” or “charism,” as though it were only a question of new format for old ideas? And also, does not our tradition, which is more emotional and pragmatic than intellectual, balk at recognizing that spirituality can be “conceptual framework for of our spirit”, i.e. an intellectual construction that can be deemed atrophying.

As we see it, the distinctions proposed by Brother Basilio, define instead a programme of comprehensive action. Indeed, serious Marist formation, even initial formation, is not possible without a clear distinction among the three considerations of *spirit*, *charism* and *spirituality*. The role of our commission “on spiritual patrimony” is to deal more precisely with *spirituality* in its wider sense, by revealing its sources and by making effective and reasoned use of them.

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<sup>13</sup> In education, particularly

# *And new tents, too*

**Br Michael GREEN, FMS**

The upcoming General Chapter is taking as its theme “new hearts for a new world”. That’s healthy. The vitality and the efficacy of our Marist way for almost two centuries has been sourced in its perennial, but discerning, openness to the “new”. So, also, the words “heart” and “world”, both of which are profoundly incarnational in their allusions, call us compellingly to the spirituality and mission that we have inherited from Saint Marcellin. But just how “new” are we ready to be? How radically are we prepared to let our hearts change the nature of the Institute so it can take its place in this new world? This paper proposes that, to embrace the slogan of the XXI Chapter in a way that is most creatively faithful to Marcellin’s charismatic intuitions and authentically responsive to the needs of today, we may need to re-image quite fundamentally just what the “tent” of the Institute of the Marist Brothers could and should look like.

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## **A NEW TENT**

The imagery of tents in Scripture is a rich one, culminating in the Johannine metaphor for the incarnation: Jesus pitching his tent in our midst. Tents are symbolic of the presence of God among us, places of grace and holiness, where people assemble to encounter God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the tent is at once the place of meeting, of gathering, of praying, of hospitality, of refuge and safety in desert journeying, and the house of the sym-

bol of the covenant between God and humanity. For generations of Marist Brothers, our beloved Institute has also been all these things for us: our tent.

Over the last twenty years and especially since last Chapter, the Institute has been challenged, with fitting biblical allusion, “to widen the space of our tent.”<sup>14</sup> The call has come in response to the increasing desire of lay people to be accommodated into the mission, spirituality, and even somehow into the structure, of the Marist Brothers, and in the context of the post-Conciliar call of the Church for all the baptised to assume their full and rightful role in its mission.<sup>15</sup> The lived reality in different parts of the Marist world is that many people other than brothers are now seeking to identify themselves as “Marist” in the Champagnat tradition. They are attracted by this distinctive way of the Gospel; they have encountered God in it. They are seeking to develop their own spirituality within it, and shape their own professional practice as educators and apostles to youth around it. In some Provinces, the Marist mission is almost entirely in the hands of people who are not Marist brothers. Schools, universities, welfare services and other ministries are self-identifying as *Marist* without a Marist brother in sight. While there has been much written, and promised, about the emerging vocation of such “lay Marists”, what is the relationship of these people, and the ministries they conduct, with the Institute in day-to-day practice? What guarantees their connection to the corporate and deliberative mission of the Institute? What are the lines of accountability and responsibility? How are the family bonds maintained and strengthened? How is the Marist spirituality of these people enriched? What are their means for sharing ownership for the future development of the Marist way in the world? How do they participate in shaping this future and taking part in discernment and decision-making about it? How might they

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Isaiah 54:2 and the *Message of the XX General Chapter*, 2001 #15. In the years before the XIX Chapter, the *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family* took shape in response to the same imperative. When introducing the *Champagnat Movement* in his paradigm-setting Circular of 15 October 1991 (Volume XXIX), Brother Charles Howard SG gave a comprehensive rationale for the increased participation of lay people in the spirituality and mission of the Institute, and of the Church more generally.

<sup>15</sup> Twenty-two years after the end of the Council, the Synod on the Laity (1987) gave further definition to this call, and Pope John Paul II wrote powerfully of it in his apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, the following year. The moves within the Institute in the subsequent decade fell very much in tune with this will of the Magisterium of the Church. By the time of the issue of *Vita Consecrata* in 1996, the Church was explicitly supporting the integration of the mission and spirituality of lay people with religious institutes. See VC, #54.

formalise their membership in some way? In this new world where there is a deeper appreciation of the Church as *communio*, what are the structures that will shape, protect and enhance such ecclesiology among Marcellin's disciples?

Despite much goodwill and even considerable progress, the Institute continues to search earnestly for satisfying and adequate answers to these and similar questions that are being asked of it. There have been, and are, many worthy initiatives around the Institute since at least the time of Brother Charles Howard's generalate. Today these are mostly overseen by the hard-working and creatively-thinking Bureau of the Laity as it works actively in defining, shaping and nurturing lay Marists. But the questions and the unease remain. It is well that they do, for they drive us deeper into the essence of what is being sought. Perhaps it is becoming clearer that the essential issue is not that the tent-space is too small, but that it is the wrong tent. Perhaps we need to design, all of us together, a new tent. Perhaps, several tents, some pitched together.

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### **WHO ARE TODAY'S MARISTS?**

Who is it who wants to be in the Marist tent?<sup>16</sup> Marist Brothers, obviously. Who else? Prominent among the others are, of course, those who are involved professionally or directly in the Marist mission: teachers, youth workers, catechists, administrators, and others working in various capacities in Marist schools and ministries. They are people who have been attracted by the opportunities that have been offered to them, especially during the last fifteen years or so, to be formed in Marist spirituality and mission. It is not everyone in Marist ministries who has felt this attraction to the underpinning spirituality of our mission: there will always be those who will only ever want to be employees or fellow-travellers. It would be an empty claim to pretend otherwise. So, also, in some Provinces where there has been no strategic promotion of Marcellin's spirituality among lay

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<sup>16</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the term "Marist" refers to the Champagnat tradition of the Marist way. This is done for economy of expression. It does not mean to imply that it is the only expression of Marist spirituality and mission. On the contrary, as should be evident from the later argument of this paper, there are several authentic traditions of "Marist spirituality" which have aspects in common as well as others that are distinctive.

people, there is today little explicit expression of it or ownership of it beyond the Brothers themselves, and little or no sense that a school or other institution might be *Marist* if no brothers are present. Yet, experience suggests that, in those Provinces where there has been opportunity and freedom to recruit staff members who are likely to be open to the Marist way, and strategies offered to them which foster their own development of Marist spirituality and professional practice, then it has flowered within them and among them.

It is of the very nature of Marcellin's spirituality that the hook which has caught such people is *mission*. The Marist spirituality of Marcellin cannot be understood or lived apart from a context of mission, specifically the Christian education of the young. People who embrace the particular strand of Marist spirituality that was introduced into the life of the Church by Marcellin and the first Brothers need to connect themselves, either directly or vicariously, to this mission. For Marcellin, as for all those who seek to be his disciples, first comes mission. Ours is not a spiritual way that would work for the members of a private prayer group or an individual whose principal concerns do not include the work of evangelisation of youth. It is only natural, then, that there is so much interest in Marcellin's spirituality from those people who collaborate in and support the Institute's mission of Christian education of youth, in all its many forms.

Beyond the current staff in Marist ministries there are others who seek to identify as Marist in their spirituality, if not also in their mission. Among this group are the many fraternities of the *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family* which has flowered in some but not all Provinces. There are also people such as retired or former faculty, parents, former students, and friends, all of whom may see themselves supporting the mission in some way or other, but who may not be formally connected to a Marist ministry or group.

It needs also to be pointed out that all of these people are not "lay"; there are those who fall outside the dichotomous categorising of the Marist world into "brothers" and "lay". Too often we forget the priests and the female religious. What of our chaplains and priest colleagues? Can they also have a place in our Marist tent, even though they are neither lay nor brother, just like Jean-Marie Vianney who was a pre-eminent member of

the Third Order of Mary in the founding time? And how could female religious be accommodated? Must they belong to another religious institute because there is no way to live the consecrated life as a woman in the Champagnat tent?<sup>17</sup> It all starts to become a little complex.

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## ANOTHER TENT

As a way to open up a consideration of this matter, let us turn to a provocative article that has been recently published by Marist scholar and historian, Brother André Lanfrey.<sup>18</sup> The idea proposed by Lanfrey is that, in reality, there were two centres for the development of the Society of Mary in the 1820s and 1830s – one at Belley and the other at The Hermitage – and that two distinct expressions of the Society began to emerge, right from the start. Despite the protestations of Marcellin to the contrary, the unity – or at least the *uniformity* – of these two expressions of *le projet Mariste* was more in name than in practice. Both in **structure** and in **spirit** they were qualitatively different.<sup>19</sup> Colin was probably more alert to this than was Champagnat, and eventually had the wisdom to encourage Champagnat's brothers to follow their own path.<sup>20</sup> Although each place, Belley and The Hermitage, was involved in the formation and min-

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<sup>17</sup> One example of how this has happened has been the foundation of the small group of *Hermanitas* in Central America, as female religious who see themselves sharing in the charism of St Marcellin, but different from the two existing Marist institutes of sisters. Yet their connection to the Marist Brothers is only by informal association and personal relationship.

<sup>18</sup> Lanfrey, A. (2008) *Unity and Diversity in the Society of Mary: mysticism, history and canon law*. Marist Notebooks, #24, pp27-34

<sup>19</sup> In the cause for his canonisation Marcellin was promoted as “co-founder” of the Society of Mary, and subsequently formally recognised as such. His recruitment of priests for the Society in the diocese of Lyon, his formation of half of the first generation of Marist priests, at The Hermitage and in the same house as the brothers, and his diocesan appointment as superior of both the priests and the brothers in Lyon gave him a role that was not matched in influence by anyone other than Colin.

<sup>20</sup> It was Colin's initiative that precipitated the election of Brother François as Director General in 1839, Colin who encouraged Cholleton – as priest-in-charge of the Brothers in the early 1840s – to exercise a hands-off approach to his responsibilities, and Colin who spoke definitively at the General Chapter in 1852 (4 June, *Chronologie d'Institut*) on the question of formal separation. His visit to the Brothers' Chapter was quite brief – just a couple of days. Two months, later, however, he ensured that he took the presiding role for the duration of the Marist Sisters' General Chapter, something that was indicative of a quite different relationship and understanding.

istry of both priests and brothers, the understanding of the respective roles of priests and brothers in the broader Marist project took different paths in each place, shaped by the different intuitions of Colin and Champagnat.<sup>21</sup> Most readers would be familiar enough with the disagreement between the two Founders concerning the place of the brothers: Colin saw them as auxiliary to the main branch of the priests who were the principal agents of the Society, whereas for Champagnat the brothers had an important role in their own right – that of teaching – and this was a ministry equivalent in worth to that of the priests.<sup>22</sup> Eventually, at the urging mainly of the younger priests in 1839, it was agreed that there would be two groups of brothers.

That disagreement and its final outcome are well known. What is less well understood is that there were also different practices between The Hermitage and Belley concerning the role and status of the priests. Whereas Belley was principally focussed on the mission of the priests – both in structure and purpose – with the coadjutor brothers in support of them, at The Hermitage it was the priests who were in support of the brothers, as their chaplains and spiritual directors. Just as there were those priests who took one side or the other in the debate about the proper place of the brothers, so also were there priests who took alternate sides regarding the place of the priests in the Society. Already in 1826, Etienne Ter-

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<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most telling evidence of the different conception of the Society of Mary that was developing at The Hermitage in the second half of the 1820s, and exposition of it, is the recently discovered “Statutes of the Society of Mary” that were sent by Champagnat to Bishop Devie in December 1836, and written probably before July 1830. Brother André Lanfrey received this document from the archivist of the Brothers of the Holy Family in Belley, and has prepared a commentary on it – see Lanfrey, (2005) A, *A New Document, the Statutes of Mary of the Hermitage*, in *Marist Notebooks* #20, pp.76-93. The statutes envisage a Society consisting of a small number of priest-chaplains living with a larger number of brother-teachers, with the priests having the role of spiritual authority and chaplaincy, and the brothers having the role of temporal authority and an external school apostolate. Lanfrey sees the document to be consistent with other documents of the period 1825-1830, and reflective of a difference of opinion between the Marist priests, represented by Champagnat (and Pompallier) on the one hand, and Colin on the other. Colin’s view was to prevail as early as 1830 with his election as central Superior, then the move of the Lyon priests to Valbenoîte. It is, therefore, quite significant that Champagnat is sending these Statutes to Devie as late as 1836.

<sup>22</sup> See *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, Chapter 41 ; Circular of 1837, line 20. In taking this view, it seems that Marcellin was influenced by the views of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle who had advocated that the function of teaching was worthy of being described as a “ministry” of the Church.

raillon had declared his views: he deserted Champagnat to go off on a preaching assignment because Terrailon's vision for being a Marist priest was not living in a brothers' community as chaplain: he had signed on to be an inland missionary, as a priest. In the early 1830s, there was again disquiet among the chaplains at The Hermitage, initiated by Colin<sup>23</sup> and supported by Séon who urged his fellow-priests to leave a situation where they lived totally intermeshed in the brothers' community, and in a minority, to form a priests-only community at Valbenoîte. On the other side of the debate, priests such as Servant and Forest, who were formed by Champagnat, highly valued the kind of community experience that The Hermitage provided, and the model of priesthood that Champagnat personified.<sup>24</sup> Another, Matricon, was to be a long-term chaplain at The Hermitage, without having any role of authority or direction. Lanfrey argues, therefore, that it may be more legitimate to describe two Societies of Mary in development, two authentic but different realisations of the vision of Fourvière.

In Father Colin's view, Father Champagnat "never understood" the place of the brothers in the Society of Mary.<sup>25</sup> They are strong words, and no doubt based in truth. What it says, however, is that Marcellin never understood the place of the brothers in the Society of Mary that was founded in Belley – Colin's foundation. It is equally true to say that Colin never understood the role of the brothers in the Society of Mary as it was

<sup>23</sup> See Letters of Colin to Champagnat of November and December 1831, O.M., Docs 239, 241, 242, 246

<sup>24</sup> See Letters of Servant to Champagnat, 15 Dec 1836 (AFM, Letters OCE 622.51, p.236); 29 May 1841 (APM Z203)

<sup>25</sup> This is stated explicitly in his letter to Champagnat of 22 February 1839 concerning Colin's instruction to Champagnat to send brothers to Bordeaux to be sacristans at the Marian shrine. Champagnat's disagreement with the Bordeaux proposal is evident from what Colin writes in the letter, as is Colin's views on the essentially auxiliary role of the brothers in the Society. See, also, the *Memoir cf Brother Sylvestre* (end of Chapter 6) where he describes Colin's view that the fathers and the brothers had "completely different aims", needed a "different Rule" and "different Superiors", and that Colin said to Champagnat in the mid-1830s that the brothers may not stay included within the Society after Marcellin's death. From Mayet (*Origines Maristes* #844) we learn that Colin later claimed that the teaching brothers were never part of his plans "*The teaching brothers never existed before God in my original plan cf the Society; if they were admitted later, it was through kindness and in gratitude for the services they rendered us, and especially at the request cf Fr Champagnat and cf his brothers. The priests, the sisters and the third order were part cf the original plan, as also were the servant brothers under the name cf Joseph brothers.*"

founded at The Hermitage. And the two Founders would have also disagreed about the place of the priests.<sup>26</sup>

The attitudes towards the brothers that eventually prevailed in the Society of Mary were quite understandable. While most of the priests and brothers did come from similar backgrounds, in those early days the priests were considerably more educated and, usually, more intellectually capable. Until the 1850s at the earliest, the brothers had little academic training, and were even actively discouraged from mastering anything beyond the minimum they needed to teach young children.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, their theological education was primitive and, in most cases, so was their higher secular learning lacking. It is not surprising, therefore, that something of a social divide existed between the priests and brothers. Inevitably, a clerical culture emerged in the Society of Mary that, by the time of the second generation of Marist priests, was firmly established.<sup>28</sup>

In describing these differences of intuition and vision between Champagnat and Colin, it needs to be said in the same breath that each of the two Founders, as also Jean-Marie Chavoïn, and indeed Jean-Claude Courveille before his exit from the scene after 1826, never imagined the Marist project without all its branches. Each of them was vitally interested in, actively contributed to, and meaningfully participated in the work of the other branches.<sup>29</sup> If we include the several foundations made by Courveille, there were a number of Marist seeds sown in the first fifteen years. By 1840, three had taken root and were flowering – those of Colin, Cham-

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<sup>26</sup> Current Marist historian, Alois Greiler SM, is of the view that each of Colin and Champagnat had his own idea for a religious congregation before the time they fell in with Courveille's Marist project, and that these ideas were essentially different. It was only after the eclipse of Courveille, and also the maturing of their respective ideas that the passage of time provided, that the differences between Colin's and Champagnat's models became clear. Father Greiler's hypothesis is certainly supported by the opinions that Colin expressed regarding the brothers in the 1840s and 1850s, after Champagnat's death. It is an interesting conjecture to ponder what Marcellin may have chosen to do with his brothers had he been alive during these decades.

<sup>27</sup> Even the well-read and scholarly Br Jean-Baptiste, whom Marcellin described as being "obsessed" by learning, was active in his discouragement of brothers' further study. In this he was of similar mind with François and Louis-Marie.

<sup>28</sup> This is evident as early as the debate over the place of the brothers at the priests' retreat of 1839. The following two decades only cemented it.

<sup>29</sup> Brother Frederick McMahon's 1993 book, *Travellers in Hcpe*, chronicles well just how interwoven was the story of Marist founding, especially between about 1820 and 1850.

pagnat and Chavoin – while the Third Order was also showing signs of growth in Lyon. Until at least Champagnat’s death, all of the Founders saw themselves mutually engaged in a broad common purpose. Even though they were to all eventually disagree to varying extents on the roles and the interplay of the branches, they all remained committed in those first decades to a Marist vision that involved them all, in every diocese of the world. “All the world Marist.” The Marist project was bigger than the sum of its parts. It would have been inconceivable for Champagnat, for example, to imagine a community such as that of The Hermitage without the presence of ordained chaplains as an integral part of it,<sup>30</sup> or without the work of the sisters being complementary to that of the brothers. It is also not possible to understand the nuances of distinctiveness among the different branches without understanding the commonalities of their “Marist-ness”.

As the cards of history fell, the Marists were to develop into separate institutes and take their own courses. There has been some degree of association and collaboration in the time since, most especially between the Marist Fathers and Marist Sisters, but there has been much more independence than interdependence. Since the 1960s, the concept of the “Marist Family”, so much favoured by Brother Basilio Rueda,<sup>31</sup> has seen a greater coming together and even some joint attempts at sharing community, formation and ministry. It has to be admitted, however, that even though mutual relationships among the branches are today more cordial than ever, and most of the past hurts and misunderstandings well healed, there has never been since the 1840s any complete realisation of the Marist dream that has involved all the branches in a sustained or genuinely collaborative way. Even as far back as the missions of Oceania between 1836 and the 1870s, there were problems of misunderstanding, misjudgement and exclusion among the branches.

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<sup>30</sup> Champagnat’s letters to Cattet, Gardette, Barou and de Pins in 1827 and 1828, pleading for priests to be appointed to The Hermitage, exemplify this forcefully. It was not unreasonable for the Founder to have some expectation that priests would be assigned. In that year, 1828, there were over 3,000 ordinands in France: the shortage of priests of the post-Revolutionary period had passed. The more pressing need that Marcellin was addressing was the shortage of committed Christian teachers.

<sup>31</sup> Yet Brother Basilio was careful to point out the distinctive differences between the charismatic intuitions of Colin and Champagnat. See, for example, his distinction between Colin’s emphasis on the “apostolic intentions” of Mary in contrast to Champagnat’s attraction to the “person of Mary”: Circular Vol XXVI, #3, “The Spirit of the Institute”, 25.12.1975.

There has been a hope expressed in different quarters that some kind of structural unity or more formal juridical association could be revisited. The best response to that was perhaps made by Craig Larkin SM in 2001 when he commented to a combined assembly of the General Chapters of the four Marist institutes that the different branches may have been born of same family, but now they were more like adult children, each with its own family.<sup>32</sup> While they would always share a common heritage and a warm enough familial bond, each branch now had its own spirit, its own people, and its own well-developed expression of Marist spirituality.

This present situation is the logical and inevitable development of the past. From the very beginning, there was no monochromatic version of the Society of Mary. Even the use of the same language and phrases, for example “the work of Mary”, or indeed the very word “Marist” itself, did not always carry exactly the same meaning.<sup>33</sup> There is self-evident weight to the argument that, in reality, there was always more than one Marist “tent”.

We have nothing to fear from such a pluralistic expression of Marist spirituality, or even a multiple ownership of its name. Many groups claim the mantle of “Franciscan” or “Benedictine” or “Ignatian”, for example, without presuming that it is theirs alone, or that theirs is the most authentic version. Different times, cultures and states of life have created various expressions of the great spiritualities of the Church. Neither the name nor the lived experience of the spiritual tradition is the property of any single group, but shared by many, in ways that suit particular circumstances, and always for the mission of the one Gospel.

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## **REDESIGNING THE FMS TENT**

So much for Marist history, and for those first intuitive moves of Marcellin that resulted in a distinctive expression of the Society of Mary at the Hermitage. How might his charismatic intuitions in the 1820s and 1830s in-

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<sup>32</sup> Larkin, C. *Mary in the Church, a Marist Insight: How can the intuitions of the first Marists be a source of inspiration for us today?* Unpublished address to an assembly of the General Chapters of the Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers, Marist Sisters, and Marist Missionary Sisters. Rome, 12 September 2001, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> Again, Brother Basilio's Circular (*cp.cit.*) is instructive on this point.

form our decision-making now, as we attempt to be creative faithful to his charism and to respond to the needs of the contemporary world? Let us turn again to the thoughts of Brother André. On the basis of his historical analysis and his reading of the situation of today, Lanfrey proposes the intriguing idea that perhaps the time is ripe for the ‘Society of Mary of the Hermitage’ to grow beyond its current parameters and to include within its juridical orbit all the states of life in the church – men and women, religious and lay, clerical and secular.

Lanfrey’s proposal is profound and it is timely. First, it is profound because it calls us back to the original Marist vision: a tree of different branches. To be a legitimate expression of the founding intuition of the Society of Mary, it may be argued, a group must have a place for priests, sisters, brothers and lay people. We have long passed the time – if, indeed it ever existed in reality much beyond 1825 – when we could justifiably describe the Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters, Marist Brothers, Marist Missionary Sisters, and the various Lay Marist groups as all branches of the one tree. They are branches of different trees. Same *genus*, perhaps, but different *species*. The trees are different because almost two hundred years and many thousands of people have led to their evolving into identifiably distinct spiritualities. Like the many and varied expressions of Benedictine spirituality, or Dominican, or Augustinian, or Franciscan, there are now different schools of Marist spirituality. Although there are obvious commonalities, there are, at the same time, subtle but real differences. Not everyone who identifies himself or herself as “Marist” would feel at home in each of the Marist institutes or in each of the various lay movements associated with them. And a person’s spirituality, a person’s spiritual tent, is very much about where one feels *at home*.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to revisit the intervention of Marcellin to his fellow seminarians at the seminary of St Irenée: “We must have brothers!” Marcellin expressed this view in the context of a broader project; he assumed the inclusion of priests, sisters and lay people. The reason for his intervention was primarily missionary: that rural and neglected children needed good Christian teachers. Now that Champagnat’s foundation – and his specific mission of Christian education of young people – has developed its own Marist spirituality, we need to add to Champagnat’s words of 1814, “... but not brothers alone!” Indeed, to have brothers alone would not be faithful to the broader Marist view that Marcellin carried to his deathbed.<sup>34</sup> In this, Marcellin’s intuitions were not only

aligned with the original Marist dream, but consistent with most of the major spiritual traditions of the Church which for centuries have typically had structural as well as spiritual ways to include women and men, lay and religious, secular and clerical. Without such structures, it is impossible for them to exercise their functions in the institutional life of the Church as fully as they might otherwise do. Charism alone is not enough to sustain a movement; juridical structures must be built around a charismatic intuition to safeguard it, and to regulate its canonical interconnection with other ecclesial entities. An example of the importance of this point can be seen in the problematic or ambiguous relationship that exists between dioceses and the Marist Brothers in some countries when the presence of professed members of the Institute becomes small or ceases altogether in a particular ministry: a particular diocese may recognise the right of the Institute to appoint a brother as principal of a diocesan school entrusted to the Institute, but it would not recognise our right to appoint a lay Marist because such a person, it may argue, has no status in Canon Law, and the Institute no juridical right of appointment of a lay person. Similarly, the Institute has no right of appointment of a priest who may self-identify with Marcellin's spirituality. This raises questions concerning limitations in the Institute's Constitutions and Statutes, and more fundamentally about the possible need for new categories of membership or association.

A second response to Lanfrey's proposal is that it is timely. It is timely because it opens a new and genuinely radical way to engage the calls of Vatican II for all the baptised to be on mission. For our Institute, this is being felt through the ways in which lay people are seeking increasing identification with the Marist mission to young people. Yet, even when these lay people are in quite responsible positions in directing Marist ministries, and perhaps quite committed to the Marist cause, the fact of their being "lay" means, in the present canonical structures of the Institute, they can only ever have "associate" status. Such a situation presents itself in-

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<sup>34</sup> The disproportionate amount of attention in Marcellin's *Spiritual Testament* that is given to unity of the Little Brothers of Mary with the larger Society of Mary attests to his views on this matter. Already, however, Colin and other priests of the Society were hardening in the view that the 'Marist Brothers of the Hermitage' were a dispensable arm of their future plans for the Society of Mary. Colin had encouraged Marcellin to consider making arrangements for his Brothers to pass over to diocesan control on Marcellin's death. The Marist priests' retreat of 1839 when, against the wishes of Marcellin, a formal separation was made between the coadjutor brothers and the teaching brothers, can be seen in hindsight as a watershed moment in the development of Marist mission and spirituality.

creasingly as a rather skewed and anachronistic expression of Church. It is worthy of highlight that the great majority of the new ecclesial movements that are currently experiencing growth and momentum are largely lay. But rarely are they exclusively lay. This is a key point. They are more inclusive in their membership: (a) welcoming a broad embrace of lay people, but (b) usually having some means for deeper and permanent commitment for a few, and (c) being served sacramentally and pastorally by priests. This is the contemporary spirit of *communio*: not one state of life, but all together, each living out its appropriate role in service of the spiritual life and evangelising mission of the Church, in interconnection with one with another.

The last point – that the new growth in the church is largely but not exclusively lay – is an important aspect of the timeliness of Lanfrey’s proposal. The possibility of inclusion of priests, in some way or other, addresses a major need of this present time, at least in many of the countries where the Marist mission is being undertaken. The need, simply put, is this: there aren’t any priests! Or, there aren’t enough who are available or who are suitable for effective chaplaincy to Marist communities and to Marist ministries. An authentically Catholic community is Sacramental in its prayer and worship, and these Sacraments are celebrated through the ministration of an ordained priest. The reality for many Marist Brothers’ communities is that daily or even weekly Eucharist has disappeared from community timetables, while the presence of priests in schools and the celebrations of the Sacraments with students in our schools is increasingly rare in many countries, not only those in western developed countries where clerical vocations are scarce. There is a need for priests, a need that is often far more an urgent reality than that for professional, committed Marist teachers who are present in greater numbers.

The priesthood has been a thorny issue for the Marist Brothers. The question of ordination was much discussed in the Institute for a considerable part of the last century, so much so that it became a topic for debate at several successive General Chapters. In 1946, 1958 and again in 1967<sup>35</sup> it was raised, but put in the “too-hard basket”, and referred on to the following

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<sup>35</sup> The deliberations on this matter by the 1967 Chapter were given greater significance because of an explicit statement within *Perfectae Caritas* (The highly influential *Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*, promulgated at the end of the third session of the

Chapter, before its being rejected by the Chapter of 1976.<sup>36</sup> In finally deciding against ordained members, even in a limited number of Provinces, the capitulants freed the Institute from the canonical complications that such a move might have created, not to mention the clerical culture it risked introducing, at least in some parts of the world. Many capitulants, however, had a more important reason for their decision not to proceed with ordination in the Institute: the opinion of many that the Church's understandings of priesthood and ordained ministry had to change. Among the issues that capitulants had with the current doctrine were the "ontological change" that ordination effects in a man, its permanency, and its being hierarchically placed in the order of the Church. For each of those reasons, it was judged to be inconsistent with the nature of life of the Marist brothers or at least the wrong time to make a change. Since then there has been the hope expressed in some quarters of the Church that a new paradigm of priesthood may emerge, or at least a recognition that the shortage of priests and the scandal of denial of the Eucharist to God's people, may lead the Church to give episcopally-selected lay people temporary license to preside at the

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Second Vatican Council on October 28, 1965.) It read: *The sacred synod declares that there is nothing to prevent some members of religious communities of brothers being admitted to holy orders by provision of their general chapter in order to meet the need for priestly ministrations in their own houses, provided that the lay character of the community is not altered.* (Paragraph 10) To a number of capitulants, this paragraph seemed tailor-made to describe the situation of the Marist Brothers and offered them a clear way forward that answered needs they were experiencing without changing the essential character of the Institute.<sup>36</sup> In *Séance 9* of the XIV Chapter (1946), the commission studying the matter rejected it as contrary to the Constitutions. The XV General Chapter (1958) received a number of submissions in favour of the introduction of the priesthood or other models such as the establishment of a separate institute whose goal would be chaplaincy of the Marist Brothers. In *Séance 29* of the Chapter, the matter was more extensively discussed, then referred to the new General Council for further study. During the mandate of that General Council, of course, Vatican II took place. At the XVI Chapter (1967-68) the matter was taken up in the *6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session* (14 September 1967), again with various options considered, and referred to a sub-commission. In quite extended and serious debate during several *Plenary Sessions* in November 1968 (see especially the 49<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 67-68<sup>th</sup>, 71<sup>st</sup>) there was a qualitatively deeper analysis of the issues, dealing with such topics as the nature of baptism, the identity of the brother, and the concept of priesthood itself. It was resolved that the General Council should study it further and bring it to the next Chapter. Such study was done and was presented to the XVII Chapter in 1976, where again exhaustive debate ensued, over some weeks, concerning the nature of priesthood, the lay character and the charism of the Institute, whether the time was right, the needs of the mission, and other possible positive and negative implications that the introduction of the priesthood may generate (see especially the report to the General Assembly of 29 September and the discussion and decisions of 15 October). The final resolutions left open the opportunity for a later Chapter to take up the issue again, but this has not so far occurred.

Sacrament of the Eucharist in the absence of a priest, in the same way as a lay person can administer the Sacrament of Baptism or a man and woman can be Sacramentally married to each other when no ordained priest can be present. The chance of any such change is, however, looking less and less likely. Half a century after the Council, as the afterglow of the volcanic reforming eruptions has dimmed, it is clearer that the cold reality is that there is a model of priesthood that has taken the eastern and western Churches over nineteen centuries to develop, and it is not going to change dramatically any time soon. Nothing short of schism or reformation is going to bring quick change, and it is inconceivable that Marcellin would be smiling in heaven at his disciples advocating such an option!

More realistically, and consistent with the loyalty to the Church which was also part of our founding charism, it is incumbent upon the Marist movement to accept that the ordained priesthood is the ordained priesthood, and to look, rather, for ways in which priests could be included in our Marist tent as chaplains and spiritual guides to Marist communities and ministries. Taking into consideration the legitimate reservations about not wanting to destroy the nature of lay brotherhood, can we look for other canonical or structural ways of addressing this question? The reason attempting to do so is sourced primarily in the fact that it is a pressing need in the Marist mission of evangelisation and Christian education of youth, and for the communities of Marists who undertake this mission.

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### **BUT, HOW COULD IT BE POSSIBLE?**

A Marist institute that somehow includes brothers, priests, sisters and lay people, in a non-hierarchical, interdependent, complementary relationship with one another? How could that possibly work? The instinctive reaction of some people may be to recoil in a “Castracane response”. In rejecting Father Colin’s proposal in 1833, Cardinal Castracane laughed at the idea that all these states of life – priests, male and female religious, and lay people – could be governed together in what he saw as a multi-wheeled cart. Not workable, he said.<sup>37</sup> The Marists, however, knew oth-

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<sup>37</sup> See *Rapport du Cardinal Castracane sur le projet de Société de Marie*, 31 January 1834. *Origines Maristes*, Doc.304.

erwise because they had a different intuition about Church, one that was fundamentally Marian: non-hierarchical, inclusive, unpretentious, complementary, simple, and shaped by a family spirit.<sup>38</sup> So, again today, the challenge presents itself.

Would there be significant issues and hurdles to be addressed? Of course. But that should not preclude our trying to wrestle with them and to think creatively and innovatively about ways to bring this vision to reality. Are there the same degrees of readiness or need in all parts of the Marist world? No, there are not. For example, the exercise of priesthood – its status and its culture – varies enormously among the different cultures in which the mission of Champagnat is carried out today. So, also, do the levels and styles of engagement of lay people in the Marist mission, especially in the range of ways in which lay people identify with the spiritual core of Marcellin's mission, and their sense of shared ownership of it. In another example, female religious life has all but died out in some places, but in others there is a relative plenitude of vocations. Indeed, in this present age there are, also, quite different roles for religious, both female and male, depending on which part of the Church they are situated. The ways in which religious are needed to contribute in some of the younger churches, for instance, are not the same needs and openings they have in the older ones.

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## **IDENTITY, INTEGRITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY**

In whichever part of the Church it occurs, nonetheless, the question of structurally including different states of life within the Marist tent, in some

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<sup>38</sup> The original nineteenth century Marist intuition aligns remarkably with the late twentieth century concept of the "Marian Church" developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar— a notion so much favoured by the late Pope, John Paul II. Mary is proposed as archetype of the Church. Craig Larkin SM has developed von Balthasar's ideas by considering them in a modern Marist context, taking as his motif the traditional icon of The Ascension with its Patristic ecclesiology. It is important to point out, as does Father Larkin, that the "Marian Church" is not conceptually opposed to the institutional/hierarchical "Petrine Church" but, indeed, points to it. Nor is it exclusive from the evangelising "Pauline" dimension of the Church, or the mystical "Johannine" dimension. These four poles of the Church that are represented in the Ascension icon are all indispensable for a complete ecclesiology. The Marist contribution, argues Larkin, is to play the role of Mary.

way, would bring into focus another question that has been niggling for a settled answer in our Institute for some time now: that of the identity of the *brother* within the broader Marist mission. With the advent of lay people in large numbers into Marist ministries, and more especially since they have been empowered after the Circular of 1991 and the General Chapter of 1993 to consider themselves as fully “Marist”, the old *identity* conundrum has taken on a new twist for many brothers. The issue has been further opened up by the initiatives of some Provinces in which lay people and brothers have undertaken not only to share in ministry together, but to live in community together. In such situations, some are asking, “Where is the integrity of a brother’s life?” and “Where is his distinctive identity in mission?” Many gallons of ink have been spent in answer to such questions in recent decades.

One point of view is that the concept of a “mixed community” (of lay and religious living together) is an oxymoron. It is neither fish nor fowl. Either the lay people will be expected to be quasi-religious, or the religious will acquiesce so much of their normal religious lifestyle and timetable that they became indistinguishable from the lay people with whom they live – other than in their private, individual lives. But religious life, at least for Marist Brothers, is lived in a community context, not privately or individually. Questions can emerge in such so-called mixed communities concerning the frequency and format of daily community prayer, of Eucharist, of sharing of meals and recreation, of presence to each other, of accommodation requirements and styles of living, and of the ways that the each of the vows is lived out in community. If the lay people in such a community are married or in a close personal relationship, issues arise concerning time and space apart, exclusive time and space. Lay people have not vowed chastity, or poverty, or obedience; do they have the freedom to live a genuinely lay life in such situations? Some key components about their lay status as *Marist* include its not being the only orientation of their life or even the primary one (something that would usually be their own spouses or families), and its not being essentially permanent. In contrast, those in the consecrated life do make a commitment that is entire of their will, of their goods, and of their sexuality, as well as its being made for life and lived out in community.

It is perhaps instructive in this consideration to recall that the distinctive identity of the brothers, being both ‘lay’ and ‘religious’, was also a

question that occupied the mind of Marcellin and, after him, the leadership group of François, Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste. For Marcellin, the issue came into focus in the second half of the 1820s when he began his efforts to seek legal recognition for the brothers. One critical factor in his early failure to obtain this, argued Marist scholar Brother Stephen Farrell, was his insistence on the brothers' taking formal vows.<sup>39</sup> Had he been content with their only making promises or another kind of commitment of association, then the proposed legal recognition may not have been as unacceptable as it seemed to have been to the libertarian sensibilities of the French politicians of the time. But Marcellin was insistent on his brothers not only being committed lay catechists but taking on a full religious life. His introduction of the religious costume at the same time – and his insistence on the brothers' wearing it through the troubles of 1830-1831 – amplifies this principle of Marcellin. Even as the consummate pragmatist that he was, he was not willing to compromise this idea for the sake of gaining his much treasured recognition. In a similar vein, a key aim of Jean-Baptiste in writing *The Life* in 1856 was to show that the brothers were a full religious order, situated in the great monastic tradition of the Church.<sup>40</sup> This was done primarily in reaction to moves in the 1840s and 1850s from Colin, among others, to propose that the brothers be considered as a lay confraternity of religious teachers, a kind of third order of laymen attached the Society of Mary and conducting schools. No, retaliated the brothers: they considered themselves to have been founded as fully-fledged religious, as a religious order in the classical sense. The lay character of the institute was not to be confused with being secular and living 'in the world', to use the customary expression of the time. In the post-Vatican II period, people may well be justified in asking to what degree the distinctive characteristics and expectations of the consecrated life, as it is expounded in *Vita Consecrata* for example, have become invisible to the extent that they have been lost or forgotten.

The logical conclusion of the above line of argument is that brothers' communities should be just that: brothers' communities, lived in accordance with the ideals and requirements of the Marist Brothers' Constitutions and Statutes. Neither more nor less. And lay people should be lay

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<sup>39</sup> See Farrell, S. (1984) *Achievement from the Depths*. Sydney: Marist Brothers, p.106

<sup>40</sup> This idea is extensively developed by Brother André Lanfrey in a number of articles, but principally in his book which is a critical commentary on Jean-Baptiste's *Life*: Lanfrey, A. (2000) *Introduction a la Vie de M.J.B. Champagnat*. Rome: Frères Maristes.

people. They could be guests, even long-term guests, of a brothers' community, but that is a different thing altogether, one where the ground-rules and the mutual expectations are easier to determine. Perhaps there needs to be a reclaiming of the integrity of the religious community. This is not to imply that brothers' communities should not be open, welcoming and hospitable, but only that that should be places that have the expectation that religious life is being lived within them, and that structures and obligations are in place to support this. Nor does such a view preclude an arrangement wherein a number of people – a religious community, a married couple, and some single people, for example – may live in a loosely-coupled arrangement that could still be called a “community”, broadly speaking. But this is not community in the sense that it is described in our Constitutions.

The same would be true for communities of religious sisters. For priests, the question is different depending on their status as religious or as secular, but it is worth reminding ourselves that, from the time of The Hermitage, the inclusion of a religious priest as a full member of a brothers' community, but in the role of chaplain, is well established. And so, also, for lay people: their vocation as lay Marists should have its own integrity, and not be seen as an adjunct or paler imitation of that of the religious or priestly Marist vocation.

For each of the Marist states of life, *communio* does not imply amorphous uniformity of lifestyle. *Communio* is a theological and ecclesiological concept, not a sociological one.<sup>41</sup> For each state of life there needs to be a honouring of its distinctiveness.<sup>42</sup> Only then can its real contribution to the whole occur with greatest effect and witness. For lay, religious and ordained Marists to be working together in mission is one thing;

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<sup>41</sup> An instructive synopsis of this view was provided by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his keynote address on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of *Communio*, the international theology digest he help to found with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac in 1972. See Ratzinger, J. *Communio: A Program*, in *Communio*, Fall 1992 (American edition).

<sup>42</sup> The final statement of the Marist Mission Assembly held in Mendes, Brazil (12 September 2007) identifies this shared but distinctive call: *We wish to promote forms of association and ways of belonging to the Marist charism, so lay and brothers may bear the call to live their identity* (#2.3). This Assembly, arguably a defining moment in the history of the Institute, inextricably linked brothers and laity in the future of the Marist Mission. Its call leaves the Institute with the challenge of how to bring these new “forms of association” to effect and, in the context of this paper, also to include female religious and clergy.

for them to attempt also to have the same patterns of life, and to live in community with the same level of mutual expectation on each other, is something else entirely. The great American poet Robert Frost in *Mending Wall* insightfully explored ironic relationship between “good fences” and “good neighbours”. The poem recognises the good will, and even the forces, that would “have a wall down”, that would want to demolish the things that divide.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, however, he observes that people re-erect the fences, re-insert boundaries, almost by instinct. Although there are downsides to doing so, there are also issues of self-preservation and integrity that come into play. Frost leaves us with the irony: “good fences make good neighbours.” In imagining how a new tent might be designed, the Marists of St Marcellin would do well to take heed.

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## **CONCLUSION**

In the Institute’s timely and necessary discernment for how it should take its place in the ever-new world and ever-new Church, it is called to look creatively and comprehensively at who should have a place in the Marist tent today. In some parts of the world, vocations to the consecrated life are few and many people question if it will continue at all. Part of the answer to that is, “Not on its own, it won’t.” In other places, the lay Marist movement is fragile, its growth furtive and inconsistent. People question whether it has the substance and roots to grow. Again, the answer is, “Not on its own.” And for both groups, the absence of ordained priests diminishes their capacity to be authentically and sacramentally a Catholic ecclesial community.

The particular strand of the Marist dream that Marcellin began to realise at Lavalla, and then to develop at The Hermitage, has moved through various incarnations. The present time calls for another. The mission remains as urgent and as important: the Christian education of the young. All of the people who are answering the call to take part in that mission today need both charismatic and structural ways to live out their Marist spirituality as Marcellin has inspired them to do, and to do it together. Their

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<sup>43</sup> Frost, R. *Mending Wall*, in Untermeyer, L (Ed.) (1919) *Modern American Poetry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

“tent”, as it was for the ancient Israelites, must be a place of grace and holiness for them, a place of gathering and security, where all of them can encounter the God dwells among them, and with which they can journey on together. A new tent. The twist in the modern tale is that, of all of the groups under the canvas, the largest will be the lay group. How will Marcellin’s Marists deal with that?

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# *Marcellin Champagnat, from the Society of Mary to the Mission “Ad Gentes”*

**Br Aureliano BRAMBILA, FMS**

When Jean Claude Colin presented the petition to Rome for the approbation of the Society of Mary in all its branches, he expressed the missionary dimension of *ad gentes* as its apostolic objective,

**August 23, 1833. PETITION OF THE MARIST ASPIRANTS<sup>44</sup>  
to Pope Gregory XVI.**

**To the most holy Father in Christ and Lord, Gregory XVI,  
Sovereign Pontiff.**

Beatissime Pater

Most holy Father,

[1] Novæ Societatis Religiosorum sub nomine B. Mariæ instituendæ initia et progressus, jam breviter per litteras die decima quinta Aprilis anni currentis datas, Sanctitati Vestræ exponere ausi sumus. Nunc per divinam misericordiam ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ feliciter adducti, illius judicio humiliter submittimus has quidem adhuc inconditas regulas, ejusdem Societatis: cujus finis est fiduciam in Mariam

[1] Already in a letter dated April 15 of this year, we took the liberty of telling your Holiness about the beginning and the development of the new society of religious which is to be established under the name of Blessed Mary. Now that through the mercy of God we have been happily brought to the feet of your Holiness, we humbly submit to your judgment the rules of that Society, unpolished as they are. Its aim is to foster trust in the Virgin Mary among the faithful, to

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<sup>44</sup> OM, 282

<p>Virginem inter fideles fovere, ejusdem Dei Genitricis cultum undique propagare, et pro viribus concurrere, ut homines cognoscant et diligant hanc augustissimam Cœlorum Reginam, per quam, ut ait B. Bernardus, Deus totum nos habere voluit: ille est scopus, quo tendit minima illa institutio, de qua loquimur. Sub auspiciis B. Mariæ auxiliantis cupimus nos et omnia nostra impendere modis omnibus in salutem animarum ad majorem Dei gloriam.</p>	<p>spread everywhere the cult of the Mother of God and to do together everything possible so that men will know and love the very august Queen of heaven, through whom, as Saint Bernard says, God willed us to have everything. Such is the goal sought by the very small institute to which we refer. Under the protection of blessed Mary, our help, we wish to spend ourselves and all we have in every way to save souls for the greater glory of God.</p>
<p>[2] Ut hunc finem assequi possimus, nos peccatores, omni humano auxilio destitutos, eodem animi consilio conjunxit misericors Deus, et jam in diœcesibus Lugdunensi et Bellicensi, faventibus locorum Ordinariis, divina miseratione coadunavit consocios, ut huic operi incumbere incipiamus, modo societatem benigne aspiciat et approbet Sedes Apostolica, cui in perpetuum totis visceribus adhæremus, obedientiamque promittimus, et sine cujus beneplacito ultra progredi nolumus.</p>	<p>[2] That we might achieve this goal, the merciful God brought us sinners together, deprived of any human help, into the same project, and already in the dioceses of Lyon and Belley, with the encouragement of the ordinaries, out of divine mercy, he has brought together companions so that we could begin to pursue this work, provided that the Apostolic See regard kindly and approve the society. To this Holy See we adhere forever with our whole being and we promise obedience and without its approval we will not proceed further.</p>
<p>[3] Ideo, Beatissime Pater, ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ humiliter provoluti, supplices deprecamur, ut in nos licet indignos et in hanc societatem omnium ejusmodi institutorum minimum, oculos benevolos inclinare dignetur Sanctitas Vestra, et nobis paterno affectu indicare, an illud</p>	<p>[3] Therefore, Most Holy Father, humbly prostrate at our Holiness' feet, we suppliantly entreat you to turn the benevolent eyes of your Holiness upon us, who are clearly unworthy, and upon this society, the smallest of the institutes of its kind, and to indicate to us with fatherly affection whether this project of ours is</p>

<p>animi nostri propositum placeat, ut sic auctoritate Apostolica roborati, possimus in voto tutius permanere.</p>	<p>acceptable, so that, thus strengthened with apostolic authority, we might more safely persevere in our desire.</p>
<p>[4] Non quidem existimamus nos pares aliis Religiosis, qui virtute et scientia præfulgent, et tam fauste et laudabiliter se impendunt in animarum utilitatem: nos vero minimi operarii rogamus tantum, ut nobis liceat matri nostræ Sanctæ Ecclesiæ Romanæ inservire in novissimis locis, et nostra studia primum transferre per Missiones ad pauperes ruris incolas, usquedum divina Providentia ad alia officia præparati, aucto sociorum numero, juvenilem ætatem in collegiis ad scientias et virtutes informare possimus, et salutis evangelium prædicare in quavis mundi plaga, ad quam voluerit nos mittere Sedes Apostolica. Nam ad omnia Apostolorum ministeria paratus esse debet religiosorum sacerdotum ordo, aliorum ejusdem Societatis ordinum Caput, a quo pendent alii inferiores religiosorum ordines, quasi varii rami a suo stipite, ut in regulis indicatum est.</p>	<p>[4] Of course, we do not consider ourselves on an equal footing with other religious, who shine by their virtue and learning, and who spend themselves so successfully and laudably for the good of souls. For us, the least of workers, we ask only to be allowed to serve our mother the Holy Roman Church in the most remote places, and at first to exert our zeal through missions to the poor country people, until, once with the help of divine providence we are ready for other ministries and our number has increased, we can work in schools to train the young in virtue and we can preach the gospel of salvation in whichever part of the world the Apostolic See may wish to send us. For the order of religious priests must be ready for all the ministries of the apostles, since it is the head of the other orders of the same society and from it hang the other, lower, orders of religious, like the various branches from their trunk, as is indicated in the rules.</p>
<p>[5] Duplicem enim alium religiosorum ordinem amplectitur eadem B. Mariæ Societas: ordinem scilicet Fratrum, qui in regula alii nuncupantur fratres Sancti Josephi, ad illius Patriarchæ officia implenda, nempe opera manualia; alii Fratres Maristæ, qui bini vel tres aut plures in parochias mittuntur ad infantes</p>	<p>[5] The same Society of Blessed Mary includes two other orders of religious, namely an order of Brothers, some of whom are called the Brothers of Saint Joseph in the rule, who are to perform the duties of that patriarch, that is manual labour, and others called Marist Brothers, who are sent into parishes in twos or threes or more to teach children, especially the</p>

<p>præsertim pauperes prima sacræ doctrinæ et scientiæ elementa edocendos; et ordinem Sororum religiosarum, quæ intra septa pariter se devovent ad eadem pia officia erga sexum fæmineum. Varii illi tres Religiosorum ordines jam ab annis plurimis existere inceperunt, et proximorum utilitati incumbunt in diœcesibus Bellicensi, Lugdunensi, Gratianopolitano et Vivariensi, faventibus locorum Episcopis.</p>	<p>poor, the first basics of sacred doctrine and knowledge; the second order is that of religious sisters who likewise dedicate themselves within their enclosure to the same pious works toward the feminine sex. These three different orders of religious began to exist many years ago and to pursue the service of neighbor in the dioceses of Belley, Lyon, Grenoble, and Viviers, with the encouragement of the local bishops.</p>
<p>[6] Nec etiam laicis in seculo viventibus intercluditur societatis janua: nam non tantum, quas in usu habent aliæ societates in honorem B. Mariæ, pias exercitationes studiose servavimus; sed etiam addidimus Tertii Ordinis exercitia in favorem laicorum utriusque sexus: ut sicut Maria omnium mater est, sic etiam, si favent tempora, illius societatis gratiarum participes evadere, et augmentum pietatis in B. Mariam percipere possint.</p>	<p>[6] Nor are the gates of the Society closed to the lay people who live in the world; for not only have we diligently retained those pious practices which other societies perform in honour of the blessed Virgin, but we also added the exercises of the third order to suit lay people of both sexes; in this way, just as Mary is the mother of all, so also, if the times permit, all might become sharers in the graces of this society and experience a growth in the love of blessed Mary.</p>
<p>[7] Summum Pastorem Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum obsecramus, ut per infinitam misericordiam suam benedictionis suæ rorem effundat super hanc societatem sub nomine et auspiciis Virginis Immaculatæ nascentem; illamque foveat, augeat, spiritu suo roboret, ut societas non solum fidelibus prosit, sed etiam in ovile reducere valeat tot oves a via salutis miserabiliter errantes.</p>	<p>[7] We beseech the supreme pastor, our Lord Jesus Christ, that by his infinite mercy he may pour the dew of his blessing upon this Society which is being born under the name and protection of the immaculate Virgin, and that he may protect it, increase it, strengthen it with his spirit, so that the society may not only be of use to the faithful but that it may also bring back to the fold many sheep who are wandering pitiably from the path of salvation.</p>

<p>[8] Post tot tempestates et temporum difficultates jam <i>messis quidem multa est</i>; et calamitatibus fatigatae, in <i>via perditionis</i> lassatae, <i>regiones albæ</i> videntur <i>jam ad messem</i>; quapropter enixe rogamus <i>Domini</i> <i>messis ut mittat operarios</i> virtute et Apostolorum spiritu repletos, qui a semetipsis omnino vacui, auspice Maria, has regiones Christo metant, et aliqua consolatione Ecclesiam Romanam post tot procellas recreent.</p>	<p>[8] After so many storms and the difficulties of the times, the harvest is indeed great; beaten down by setbacks, weary on the road to perdition, the fields already seem ripe for the harvest. Thus, we earnestly beg the Lord of the harvest to send laborers, laborers filled with the power and spirit of the apostles and completely empty of themselves, under Mary's protection, to harvest those fields for Christ and to restore the Roman Church with some consolation after so many storms.</p>
<p>[9] O nos felices! si per misericordiam divinam et Dei Genitricis auxilium, illa minima Mariæ Societas ad hoc aliqua ex parte concurrere possit; si Cælorum Regina nos peccatores in servorum devotissimorum numero adscribere velit, et omnipotenti suo apud Deum suffragio corda nostra caritate et studio accendere ad peccatorum conversionem, et puerilem ætatem a communi vitiorum gurgite avertendam. In Domino unice confidentes, hanc gratiam speramus a summa Dei misericordia: nam Deus <i>esurientes implevit bonis</i>, et gratis dantibus gratis abundanter concedit</p>	<p>[9] Oh! fortunate are we if by the divine mercy and the help of the Mother of God this tiny Society of Mary can contribute to this to some extent, if the Queen of heaven wills to add us sinners to the number of her most devoted servants and, by her all-powerful intercession before God, to fire up our hearts with love and zeal for the conversion of sinners and for preventing youth from being sucked into the usual whirlpool of vices. Trusting only in the Lord, we hope for this grace from God's highest mercy, for God fills the hungry with good things, and to those who give freely he gives freely in abundance.</p>
<p>[10] Nihil erroris timendum putamus, dum populorum pietatem in B. Mariam excitamus; sanctorum enim omnium vestigiis insistimus, cum illam privilegiis cumulatam, inter electos primogenitam laudibus extollamus quam ipse Dei filius Matrem habe-</p>	<p>[10] We do not think that there is any error to fear while we arouse the love of the people toward Blessed Mary, for we stand in the footprints of all the saints when we extoll and praise the firstborn among the elect, filled with privileges, whom the Son of God himself chose as</p>

<p>re voluit, et unanimi consensu omnes Patres certatim collaudarunt, et cujus potestatem apud Deum omnipotentiam supplicem prædicarunt. Palam igitur dicimus B. Mariam esse Dei Genitricem, omnium creaturarum excellentissimam, gratiis et virtutibus ornatissimam, Cæli scalam, peccatorum refugium, spem fidelium, Christianorum auxilium, omnium advocatam et adjutricem apud dilectum filium suum Jesum Christum, a quo tenet quidquid habet, et in quem refunditur quidquid in laudibus Matris proferimus, et qui illam thesaurariam et gratiarum dispensatricem constituit. Hæc sancti Patres dixerunt; hæc proclamat sancta Dei Ecclesia, <i>columna et firmamentum veritatis</i>.</p>	<p>his mother and whom, by unanimous agreement, all the Fathers eagerly praised and whose power before God they called all-powerful intercession. Thus, we openly declare that Blessed Mary is the Mother of God, excelling all creatures, adorned above all with graces and virtues, the ladder to heaven, the refuge of sinners, the hope of the faithful, the help of Christians, the advocate and helper of all before her beloved Son Jesus Christ, from whom she received whatever she has and to whom is repaid whatever we bring in praise of his Mother, and who made her the treasurer and dispenser of graces. The holy fathers said these things; the holy Church of God proclaims them, and she is the pillar and support of truth.</p>
<p>[11] Tandem, Beatissime Pater, summe omnium pastor, per Orbem vices gereas Christi, a quo Virgo virginum repulsam nunquam sustinuit, supplices deprecamur per eandem Virginem Dei Genitricem, ut nos, non ponderatis meritis, ad exauditionis gratiam admittat Sanctitas Vestra, divinam voluntatem nobis ostendat, Benedictionemque Apostolicam impertiri dignetur.</p>	<p>[11] Finally, Most Holy Father, supreme pastor of all, universal Vicar of Christ (he who never refused the Virgin of virgins), we humbly beg your Holiness, through the same Virgin Mother of God, without weighing our merits, to grant us a hearing, to show us the divine will, and to deign to grant your apostolic blessing.</p>
<p>Bellicii, Die 23a Augusti 1833.</p>	<p>Belley, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1833.</p>
<p>Sanctitatis Vestræ Humillimi et obsequentissimi servi, J(oannes) Cl(audius) Colin, Sacerdos; E(tienne) Séon, Sacerdos; Colin, Sacerdos; Bret, Sacerdos; Déclas, Sacerdos; Maitrepierre, Sacerdos; Forest, Sacerdos; Jallon, Sa-</p>	<p>Most humble and obedient servants of your Holiness, J.C. Colin, priest; E. Séon, priest; Colin, priest; Bret, priest; Déclas, priest; Maitrepierre, priest; Forest, priest; Jallon, priest; Deschamps, priest; J. Humbert, priest; A. Séon, priest; Convers, priest;</p>

<p>cerdos; Deschamps, Sacerdos; J(oannes)Humbert, Sacerdos; A(ntonius)Séon, Sacerdos; Convers, Sacerdos; J(oannes) A(ntonius) Bourdin, Sacerdos; Terrail- lon, Sacerdos; Chanel, Sacerdos; J(oan- nes)B(aptis)ta Fr(ancisc)us Pompallier, Sacerdos; Champagnat, Sacerdos.</p>	<p>J.A. Bourdin, priest; Terrail- lon, priest; Chanel, priest; J.B.Fr. Pompallier, priest; Champagnat, priest.</p>
	<p>[12] We attest that all those signed above are priests and belong to the Society of blessed Mary.                  Belley, 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1833.                   Depery, Vic. Gen.                   [Embossed seal of Bishop Devie]</p>

28<sup>th</sup> January 1836. - LETTER FROM CARD<sup>45</sup>. SALA to Archbishop de Pins: the efforts of Father Colin to achieve the approbation of his Society have failed because four branches were included. Reduced to the single group of priests, the Society of Mary could be approved, and it is necessary to encourage the superior to accept the projected mission. *Expediitio non autografa in AAL, column 12, dossier on the approbation of the Marists; minute in ACPF, Scrittura originali, t. 950 (1835). ff. 660 - 661; copy of the expediitio ibid., Congressi, Oceania, t. 1 (1816-1841), ff. 306-307 (text B).*

<p>D(omino) Archiepiscopo Amaseno                  Administratori Apostolico Eccle-                  siae Lugdunensis. Lugdunum.</p>	<p>To the Lord Archbishop of Amasia, Apos-                  tolic Administrator of the Church of Lyon.                  Lyon.</p>
<p>Ill(ustrissi)me et R(everendissi)me                  D(omi)ne,</p>	<p>Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord Arch-                  bishop,</p>

<sup>45</sup> OM, 365

[1] Quae datis die 20. Novembris anni proxime elapsi litteris ad E(minentissimum) Sacrae Congregationis Propagandae Fidei Praefectum nunciavit Amplitudo Tua, grata admodum extitere, cum inde certa spes effulserit de Missionibus pro Occidentali Polynesiae regione apprime accurandis. Ad eas enim designari utiliter posse arbitraris non-nullos ex Sacerdotibus, qui titulo Coetus Marialium coaluere, operamque isthic impendunt in Populis erudiendis, conformandisque plane salutarem. Iudicium quidem pendet adhuc de illius Coetus legibus, quae per Sacram hanc meam Congregationem Negotiis, et Consultationibus Episcoporum, et Regularium praepositam examinandae sunt. Verum Te latere haud arbitror, Presbyterum Collinium qua potuit maxima contentione adnissum fuisse, ut Coetus ille titulo, iuribusque Congregationis ab Apostolica Sede donaretur, sed ejus vota in irritum cessere, quod minime opportunum visum fuerit, quatuor diversos, et in diversa officia excogitatos Coetus ea in Societate uno sub Moderatore coalescere. Quod si Societas ab Apostolica Sede adprobanda proponatur ex Ecclesiasticis tantum Viris, qui ad praestitutam per regulas disciplinam in Sacris Missionibus, in Spiritualibus Exercitiis, in Concionibus, et in ceteris Divini Ministerii muneribus obeundis rite collaborent, sententiam Sacrae Congregationis postulatis eorumdem favere nullus dubito.

[1] The news that Your Grace communicated in the letter of 20 November of the year recently past to the Most Eminent Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide was very pleasing, since from it shone forth a definite hope of taking special care of the Missions of Western Polynesia. Indeed, it would be possible to profitably designate some of the Priests who are congregated under the name of the Society of Mary and who are devoted to instructing people and clearly preparing them for salvation. A resolution is still pending on the rules of this Society which must be scrutinised by this my Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in charge of these matters. I have no wish to hide from you that Father Colin strived with all his might that the Holy See of the Sacred Congregation be favourable to extending to the Society the title and the rights of a Congregation; but his efforts had no effect because it was not seen in any way opportune that four different societies visualised for different works should unite in that Society under the authority of one single Superior. If it is proposed that the Holy See should approve the single Society of Priests which properly takes part in the sacred missions, spiritual exercises, assemblies and other tasks of the sacred ministry, I do not doubt that the resolution of the Sacred Congregation will favour his petition.

<p>[2] Ceterum SS. mus Dominus Noster perlubenter adprobavit propositum a Te consilium de memoratis Sacerdotibus in eas plagas mittendis, tuæque in tantam Catholicæ rei utilitatem curæ, et sollicitudini vehementer commendatum voluit, ut licet Pontificium de Cœtus illius legibus placitum nondum editum fuerit, eos tamen pro incenso, quo flagrant Christiani nominis ubique propagandi studio, ad saluberrimam illam expeditionem inflammes, remque, e qua æterna tot Populorum salus properatur, cum Cœtus Moderatore rite conciliare connitaris.</p>	<p>[2] Moreover, Our Holy Father willingly approved the idea which you proposed for sending the aforementioned Priests to those places, although the papal decision on the rules of the Society has not yet been published; and in view of their ardent zeal so beneficial for the wellbeing of the Church he wishes to commend earnestly to your care and application, that you encourage them in their enterprise to spread Christ's name everywhere, and that you encourage the Superior of the Society so that this idea prospers, and with it the eternal salvation of all nations.</p>
<p>[3] Hæc habui, quæ pro delato mihi munere Tibi significarem, meamque erga Amplitudinem Tuam singularem observantiam testatus fausta omnia, ac felicia Tibi adprecor ex animo.</p>	<p>[3] This is the message I had to communicate to you, and to request of Your Grace that you fulfil it with particular fidelity; with all my heart I pray for every success and happiness for you.</p>
<p>Amplitudinis Tuæ Romæ 28. Januarii 1836 Addictis(sim)us Servus J(osephus) A(ntonius) Card(inal)is Sala Præfectus S(acræ) Cong(regatio)nis Episcoporum et Regularium.</p>	<p>Rome, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1836 Your Grace's most devoted servant, Giuseppe Antonio, Cardinal Sala, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.</p>

29<sup>th</sup> April 1836. - BRIEF "OMNIUM GENTIUM"<sup>46</sup>: approbation "in perpetuum" of the priests of the Society of Mary, with the facility to choose a Superior General and to make simple vows which the Superior will be able to accept. *Cjfficial expeditio in parchment in APM 411.1; minute in arch. vat., Brevi., 1836, XVI Gregorii, Aprilis pars 1<sup>a</sup>, t. 4907, n. 8.*

<sup>46</sup> OM, 384

GREGORIUS PP. XVI	GREGORY PP. XVI
<p>[1] Omnium gentium salus, cujus causam a Principe Pastorum, et Episcopo animarum accepimus, nos continenter vigilare esse compellit, ut nihil inexpectum relinquamus, quo a solis ortu usque ad occasum laudetur nomen Domini, ac S(anctissima) Catholica Fides, sine qua impossibile est placere Deo, ubique terrarum vigeat, atque refulgeat. Quocirca singulari sane paterni Nostri animi benevolentia eos potissimum ecclesiasticos viros prosequimur, qui in societatem coacti memores institutionis, et vocationis eorum divini verbi præconio, et multiformis gratiæ Dei dispensatione, non desinunt populos exhortari in doctrina sana, atque omni cura, et contentione uberes in vinea Domini fructus virtutis, et honestatis afferre conantur.</p>	<p>[1] The salvation of all nations whose charge we have received from the prince of shepherds and bishop of souls, compels us to be constantly vigilant so that we do not miss any opportunity, from the rising of the sun to its setting, for the name of the Lord to be praised and for the Holy Catholic Faith to shine with vigour throughout the world, without which it is impossible to please God. Which is why, we cherish with truly special benevolence from our paternal heart those ecclesiastics who, gathered in a Society, and mindful of their state and vocation, do not cease to exhort the people in sound doctrine with the preaching of the divine word and with the dispensation of God's manifold graces, and with supreme care and effort try to harvest abundant fruits of virtue and honesty in the Lord's vineyard.</p>
<p>[2] Non mediocri certe voluptate affecti fuimus, ubi accepimus, dilectum filium Claudium Collin, et aliquot Presbyteros Diœcesis Bellicen(sis) in Gallia multis ab hinc annis novæ religiosorum hominum societatis fundamenta posuisse titulo Societatis Mariæ. Quæ quidem societas eo potissimum spectat, ut Dei gloria, ac S(anctissimæ) illius Genitricis honor augeatur, ac Romana Ecclesia propagetur tum christiana puerorum institutione, tum etiam Missionibus usque in ultimas terrarum Orbis oras.</p>	<p>[2] We are very happy knowing that our dear son Claude Colin and some priests of the diocese of Belley in France had already many years ago laid the foundations of the new religious Society of Mary. Indeed this Society is concerned above all that the glory of God and the honour of his most holy Mother be increased and that the Roman Church be propagated, whether by the Christian education of the children or by missions even to the utmost ends of the earth.</p>

<p>[3] Jam vero cum ejusmodi Societas in Diocesisibus præsertim Bellicensi, Lugdunensi, et Gratianopolitana divino favente numine fuerit propagata, et aliquot ipsius Societatis Presbyteri ad Catholicam religionem in Insulas Indiæ Australes promovendam a Congregatione de Propaganda Fide missi fuerint, iccirco ejusdem Societatis Presbyteri, quo ilia magis, magisque vigeat, et floreat, supplicum prece a Nobis efflagitarunt, ut non solum Societatem ipsam Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica confirmare velimus, verum etiam veniam tribuamus, qua ejusdem Societatis presbyteri Supremum Moderatorem, seu Præsidem Generalem, a quo regantur, adlegere, et simplicia vota emittere possint.</p>	<p>[3] And since this Society has under divine auspices been propagated, especially in the dioceses of Belley, of Lyon and of Grenoble; and since some priests of that same Society have been sent by the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith to promote the Catholic religion in the islands of the southern Indies, the priests of that same Society, in order that it might flourish and thrive ever more, have humbly requested us, not only to approve them with Our Apostolic Authority, but also to grant to the priests permission to elect a Superior General and to take simple VOWS.</p>
<p>[4] nos igitur, quibus nihil potius, nihilque optabilius quam Dei gloriam amplificare, et spirituali omnium populorum bono summopere prospicere, gravissimis Venerabilium Fratrum Archiepiscopi Administratoris Ecclesiæ Lugdunensis, et Episcoporum Bellicensis, et Gratianopolitan(i) acceptis testimoniis, ex quibus perspeximus ex hac Societate plurima bona, et comoda in christianam rempublicam posse redundare, de V(enerabilium) F(ratrum) N(ostorum) S(anctæ) R(omanæ) E(cclesiæ) Cardinalium negotiis, et consultationibus Episcoporum, et Regularium Præpositorum consilio, hujusmodi supplicationibus alacri, libentique animo annuendum censuimus.</p>	<p>[4] We, therefore, to whom nothing is more important or desirable than to increase the glory of God and to provide to the utmost for the spiritual good of all peoples, having received the most weighty testimonies of our venerable brethren the Archbishop Administrator of the Church of Lyon and the Bishops of Belley and Grenoble, from whose testimonies we have perceived that through this Society many benefits and advantages can accrue to Christendom, with the counsel of our most venerable brethren the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church of the congregation of Bishops and Regulars, have resolved to give ready and eager assent to the above supplication.</p>

<p>[5] Quare omnes, et singulos, quibus hæ Litteræ favent, peculiari beneficentia prosequi volentes, et a quibusvis excommunicationis, suspensionis, et interdicti, aliisque ecclesiasticis sententiis, censuris, ac pœnis quovis modo, vel quavis de causa latis, si quas forte incurrerint, hujus tantum rei gratia, absolventes, ac absolutos fore censentes, Societatem, seu Congregationem Presbyterorum Societatis, de qua habita mentio est, Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica hisce Litteris approbamus, et confirmamus, eademque Auctoritate ejusdem Societatis Presbyteris potestatem facimus, cujus vi Supremum moderatorem, seu Præsidem Generalem eligere, et simplicia vota emittere libere, ac licite possint, et valeant. Eidem vero Supremo Moderatori facultatem tribuimus, cujus ope, illius Societatis Presbyteros a commemoratis simplicibus votis solvere queat. Denique eidem Congregationi negotiis, et consultationibus Episcoporum, et Regularium præpositæ examen regularum ejusdem Societatis reservamus.</p>	<p>[5] Wherefore, wishing to show a particular benevolence to all and each whom this letter favours, and to this effect alone absolving them and counting them absolved from any censures of excommunication, suspension, interdict and from other ecclesiastical sentences, censures and penalties howsoever and for whatever reason imposed, if perchance they have incurred such, do by our apostolic authority and by this letter approve and confirm the Society or Congregation of priests of the said Society the right whereby they may elect a moderator or superior general, and freely and licitly pronounce simple vows. Indeed to the same supreme moderator we grant the power whereby he may loose the priests of that Society from these simple vows. Finally, to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars we reserve the examination of the Rules of the said Society.</p>
<p>[6] Hæc volumus, concedimus, statuimus, atque mandamus, decernentes, has præsentis Litteras firmas, validas, et efficaces existere, et fore, suosque plenarios, et integros effectus sortiri, et obtinere, et omnibus, ac singulis ad quos spectat, et spectabit in posterum hoc, futurisque temporibus plenissime suffragari, sicque in præmissis per</p>	<p>[6] This we will, we grant, we establish and we command; declaring that the present document is and will remain in force, valid and effective to receive and maintain its whole and entire execution, to favour completely in all things and in all respects each and every person whom it concerns or shall hereafter concern, at this time or in the future. Thus shall judgement and definition be given in the fore-</p>

<p>quoscumque Judices Ordinarios, et Delegatos etiam Causarum Palatii Apostolici Auditores, ac S(anctæ) R(omanæ) E(cclesie) Cardinales, sublata eis, et eorum cuilibet quavis aliter judicandi, et interpretandi facultate, et auctoritate judicari, et definiri debere, irritumque, et inane, si secus super his a quoquam quavis auctoritate scienter, vel ignoranter contigerit attentari. Non obstantibus, quoties opus fuerit, fel(icis) rec(ordationis) Benedicti XIV., Prædecessoris nostri super Divisione Materiarum, aliisque Apostolicis, ac in Universalibus, Provincialibusque, et Synodalibus Conciliis editis generalibus, vel specialibus Constitutionibus, et Ordinationibus, ceterisque contrariis quibuscumque.</p>	<p>going by all judges whatsoever, even by auditors in cases of the apostolic palace and by cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, from whom, together and severally, all power and authority to judge and interpret otherwise is withdrawn. Should an attempt be made by anyone, whatever his authority and whether wittingly or unwittingly, to decide otherwise in these matters, the same shall be null and void. These things we decree notwithstanding, wherever necessary the general and special constitutions and ordinances of our predecessor of happy memory Benedict XIV, upon the division of matters and other general and special constitutions and ordinances, whether apostolic or promulgated in universal, provincial and synodal councils, and all other things whatsoever to the contrary.</p>
<p>[7] Datum Romæ apud S. Petrum sub Annulo Piscatoris die XXIX Aprilis MDCCCXXXVI. Pontificatus Nostri Anno Sexto. Pro Domino Card(inal)i De Gregorio. A(ngelus) Picchioni Substitutus.</p>	<p>[7] Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, under the seal of the fisherman, on the 29th day of April 1836, in the sixth year of Our Pontificate. For the Lord Cardinal De Gregorio. A, Picchioni, Substitute.</p>
	<p>[Following minute]</p>
<p>[8] Pro Societate Mariana in Gallia. Approbatio in perpetuum Societatis Marianæ in Gallia cum facultate Presbyteris ejusdem Societatis adlegendi Moderatorem Generalem, emittendi vota simplicia cum potestate eidem Moderatori solvendi vota. Est ex decreto Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium. Placet M(auro).</p>	<p>[8] For the Society of Mary in France. Approbation in perpetuity of the Society of Mary in France with the facility for the priests of the same Society to choose a Superior General and to make simple vows, and the facility for the Superior General to dispense the vows. From the decree of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Placet, Mauro.</p>

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## CHRONOLOGY OF DEPARTURES OF THE FIRST MARIST MISSIONARIES TO OCEANIA

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**1836**

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December 24: The missionaries set out from Le Havre on the “Delphine”. They are: Bishop Pompallier<sup>47</sup>, Fathers Chanel<sup>48</sup>, Bataillon<sup>49</sup>, Bret<sup>50</sup> and Ser-

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<sup>47</sup> POMPALLIER, JEAN BAPTISTE FRANCOIS: First Bishop of Auckland, New Zealand. Born in Lyon December 11, 1801. His father died in 1802. His mother married Jean Marie Solichon. From 1816 to 1826 his family lives in Vourles. In 1826 he enters the Major Seminary of St. Irénée, in Lyon. He is ordained priest on 13 June 1829. In September of that year we find him at the Hermitage. He is a very active man. He is dedicated to many other things as well as the help he offers Fr. Champagnat in the Hermitage. In 1833 he is appointed by Fr. Colin as chaplain of the Marist tertiaries in Lyon. In the diocese, he acts as representative of the Society of Mary. Fr. Cholleton proposes to the diocese that Pompallier be appointed as leader of the mission in Western Oceania instead of Fr. Pastre, as requested by the Holy See. This proposition is accepted. In 1836, in Rome, Pompallier is consecrated bishop. He is appointed as titular Bishop of Maronée. On his return to France, he prepares for the mission entrusted to him. He visits The Hermitage and blesses the new chapel. Accompanied by four Marist Fathers and three Marist Brothers he sets out for Oceania on December 24, 1836 and arrives there January 10, 1838. After being Vicar Apostolic, he is appointed as the first Bishop of Auckland in 1860. He returns to France in 1868. He goes to Rome and resigns as bishop. He again returns to France and dies December 21, 1871. His dealings with Fr. Colin were rather tense, due to their different points of view concerning the mission and its personnel. (RB 432), (Note Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>48</sup> CHANEL, PIERRE: Born July 12, 1803, in La Potière (Montrevel), Ain. He entered the minor seminary of Meximieux in 1819. He commences his studies at the major seminary of Brou in 1824. He receives holy orders at the hands of Mons. Devie, his bishop, July 15, 1827. He is sent to the parish of Crozet. In 1831 he becomes a Marist aspirant. He is appointed spiritual director of the School in Belley. September 24, 1836 he makes his religious profession as a Marist priest. He sails for Oceania accompanied by four Marist Fathers and three Brothers on December 24 of that same year. He arrives at Futuna with Brother Marie Nizier November 12, 1837. He is martyred April 28, 1841. In 1888 he is officially recognized as a martyr by Pope Leo XIII; in 1889 he is declared blessed. June 12, 1954 he is canonized in Rome. His life was one of extraordinary Marian goodness. A humble sower of the Gospel, dying so that others could harvest in great abundance. (Cf. RB 122), (Note Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>49</sup> BATAILLON, PIERRE: sm (1810-1877). Vicar Apostolic of Central Oceania. Born January 6, 1810 in Saint-Cyr-les-Vignes. He studied in the minor seminary of Saint-Polycarpe in Lyon. He entered L'Argentière on All Saints Day 1827. He entered the seminary of St. Irénée in the autumn of 1832. He was ordained December 19, 1835. He was appointed as curate to Saint-Laurent-de-Chamousset. He spoke to Fr. Cholleton of his desire to go to the foreign missions and on March 10, 1838 he received a letter from the archbishop's office summoning him for the missions of Western Oceania. His acceptance implied entrance to the Society of May, which was approved soon afterwards. He soon established contact with the Marist aspirants, particularly with the superior of the Marists of Lyon, Fr. Seón, in Val-

vant<sup>51</sup>, Brothers Marie-Nizier (Delorme),<sup>52</sup> Michel (Colombon)<sup>53</sup> and Joseph-Xavier (Luzy)<sup>54</sup> follow them.

benoîte. However he continued exercising his ministry in Saint-Laurent until the end of June and then he moved to Valbenoîte, where his appointment appears on July 24 and August 3, 1836. At that time he was already considered to be a member of the first missionary group. He made his Marist profession with the first twenty on September 24, 1836, leaving for Western Oceania on the following December 24. He arrived at the Island Wallis on the first of November 1837. He was successful in converting it within a few years and, on December 3, 1843 he is consecrated bishop by his coadjutor, Bishop. Douarre, by virtue of the brief of August 23, 1842 and is appointed Bishop of Enos and vicar apostolic of the vicariate of Central Oceania, on the same day. A great missionary figure. He encountered serious difficulties with Fr. Colin, Then with his successor, Father Favre. He still lived in the time of the historic controversy on the origins of the Society of Mary, but he did not take sides. He died in Wallis on April 11, 1877. (Coste and Lessard, sm. 1967:194-195.) On the other hand Fr. Claude Rozier, sm. (1997:114) in his book *Marie-Françoise Perroton, une figure de proue de la Mission Mariste en Océanie* describes Bishop Bataillon as follows: Bishop Bataillon is authoritarian and rarely inclined to consultation. He had a precise understanding of the role of the sisters: their activities should be limited to decorating the churches, laundering the corporals and purifiers from the sacristy and the missionaries' underwear, and above all, they should cultivate the earth and rear the pigs. The beginning and the end of his consideration is that the sisters cost nothing. He brutally requested, in Wallis, of the two young ladies whom he himself had recruited in France that they should not concern themselves with what was current in Lyon. He never planned anything, and he never consulted. (Notes: Brother Hugo E. Jiménez Solar fms)

<sup>50</sup> BRET, CLAUDE: Marist priest. Born in Lyon in 1808, the only son in the family. He was ordained December 22, 1832, in Belley. He goes to Valbenoîte as curate, with other priests, also curates, aspirants to the Marist life. He takes his vows with the first 19 Marist Fathers September 24, 1836. He accepted the invitation of Bishop Pompallier to go to the missions in Oceania, in spite of his mother's disagreement and tears. He sailed on "Le Delphine" heading for New Zealand, December 24, 1836. He will die scarcely two months into the trip. After 19 days of illness, he dies March 20, 1837. When the news reaches Lyon, the Society of Mary looks after the parents of Fr. Bret. His mother will be received later into the house of the Marist Sisters at La Boucle (Lyon), where she will die on August 1, 1850. His father will be looked after by the Marist Fathers in Puylata (Lyon) where he will die October 31, 1851. (Cf. RB 105), (Notes Brother Aureliano Brambila)

<sup>51</sup> SERVANT, CATHÉLIN Marist priest. Born October 2, 1808 in Grézieu-le-Marché, Rhône. He entered the Major Seminary of St. Irénée, Lyon in 1829. He is ordained on December 22, 1832. He aspires to the Marist life. He will live in the Hermitage from 1833 to 1836. He makes his religious profession September 24, 1836. He sets out with the other missionary Marists for Polynesia December 24th of that same year. In 1842 he will replace Fr. Chanel in Futuna. He dies January 8, 1860. (RB 471), (Notes: Brother Aureliano Brambila)

<sup>52</sup> BROTHER MARIE-NIZIER: He is the Brother who writes the letter which Fr. Champagnat includes in a Circular. Name: Jean Marie Delorme. Birth: July 19, 1817, in St. Laurent d'Agny. Entered: August 26, 1833. Novitiate: December 8, 1833. Temporary vows: December 10, 1834. Perpetual vows: October 10, 1836. Death: February 3, 1874. Features: One week after his perpetual vows, he sails from Le Havre (chrono p. 71) forming a team with, among others, Fathers Chanel and Bataillon and Brother Michel. 24 December weighs anchor. November 8, 1837 Fr. Chanel and Brother Marie Nizier land in Futuna (cf. C I p. 298-300). In the writings of Brother Filogonio, Nov. 1890 he pays homage to Brother Marie Nizier say-

## Arrival in Valparaíso: June 29, 1837

ing that he had providentially completed his mission. He was seconded to the missionary fathers as coadjutor. Brother Marie Nizier participates in pastoral work. Father Chanel has such faith in him that he sometimes sends him to accompany those dying people who have refused his ministry. During the time spent with him, Father Chanel administers baptism to adults and children. On April 26, 1841, Bro. Marie Nizier prepares to set out for the Valleys of Sigave, where he was meant to stay for 2 days. Father Chanel sends him to visit the sick and baptize the dying children. He is happy to take part in the ministry that Father entrusts to him, and also he understands and speaks the people's language well. The trust that Father shows in him encourages him to take his role as missionary catechist very seriously. On April 28, Father Chanel's martyrdom, "Matala" saves Brother Marie Nizier by standing in front of him. On May 10<sup>th</sup> he reaches Wallis and on June 9<sup>th</sup> he re-establishes the Mission of Futuna with Fathers Servant and Roulleaux and Brother Marie Nizier. On 2 occasions, May '43 and January '45 he is stricken by illness. He helps in the formation of cantors for the church. At the age of 46, after having passed 26 years in Futuna, he will go later to Samoa and for 2 years, 1865 to Sydney where he spent the last 2 years of his life before going to London, arriving January 26, 1874 and dies there on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. "The sacrifice of his life which he had given with all his heart. His death has been that of a saint." (Words of Father Rocher, Marist, announcing the news of his death.) (RB 369), (Notes Brother Carlos Hidalgo).

<sup>53</sup> BROTHER Michel: Antoine Colombon, born January 31, 1812, in Mottier, near Vienne (Isère). He entered the Hermitage August 30, 1831. He took the habit on October 2, 1831; He made his first vows on January 1, 1832. He made his perpetual profession on April 7, 1834. He was sent to the missions of Oceania. He sailed from Le Havre on December 24, 1836. He was selected as companion to Fr. Servant. They arrived at the designated place (Kororareka) at the end of 1839. Brother Michel devoted all of his energy to manual work, mainly building. However, just as he was handing it over to a Protestant missionary, he suffered a heart attack. He then decided to devote himself to catechizing and evangelizing instead of manual work. During the forties he leaves the Institute and continues to live in New Zealand. He will remain single all of his life. He will end up being a magnificent gardener and fruit farmer, well-known in the region. He will be known as "Jimmy the Gardener". He dies on March 14, 1880 Reefton, New Zealand. (RB 400), (Notes: Bro. Aureliano Brambila)

<sup>54</sup> BROTHER JOSEPH XAVIER: Luzy Jean Marie, born March 2 1807. Native of Marboz (Ain). He was with the Fathers in Belley from 1831 or 1833. Possibly he received the habit in the Hermitage and made his profession on the same day of September 26, 1836 (we say possibly, because in a letter to Brother François, March 12 1859, he looks back on the happy days spent in the Hermitage). Then he left for Oceania on December 24, 1836 with the first group of Fathers and Brothers. During the voyage he became seriously ill, just like Father Servant and Father Bret. These first two recovered but Fr. Bret died just before crossing the equator. When they reached Wallis Fr. Bataillon and Brother Luzy stayed behind to start the first Marist foundation in Oceania. Bro. Joseph-Xavier spent many years there. In 1872 he is in the Fathers' house in Villa María of Sydney already gravely ill, looked after by Bro. Marie Nizier as a male nurse who himself suffered from serious ailments. On February 16, 1873 Bro. Joseph-Xavier died in Villa María. One year later Bro. Marie-Nizier died in London. (February 3 1874). REF: "Frère Marie-Nizier", by Bro. Joseph Ronzon; "Frères et Pères de la Société de Marie sous le généralat de Frère François 1840-1860", by Bernard Bourtot. (Notes Bro. Luigi di Giusto).

Set out in another ship bound for Polynesia: August 10, 1837.  
September 13: Arrival at the islands of the Gambier archipelago.  
September 22: arrival at Tahiti.  
October 23: arrival at Vavau (Tongan Islands).

Bishop Pompallier discovers that the Wallis Islands have not yet been "missioned" and he decides to found a mission, arriving November 1. He stays here with Fr. Bataillon and Bro. Joseph-Xavier.

November 8, their schooner arrives at the Island of Futuna, where Fr. Chanel and Bro. Marie-Nizier disembark. From here Bishop Pompallier, Fr. Servant and Bro. Michel leave for Sydney, to drop off a part of their luggage and to establish a deposit for the needs of the missionaries. In 1837 they celebrate Christmas in Sydney, leaving later for New-Zealand, where they arrive January 10, 1838, at the outlet of the Hokianga River, to the northeast of New Zealand. They receive the hospitality of an Irish settler who had waited for them. In his house, in Totara, the first mass in this country took place: January 13, 1838. (Biography of Bishop Pompallier).

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## **1838**

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2 September: A new group of missionaries is planned for New Zealand. Those involved are Frs. Epalle,<sup>55</sup> Petit, and three Brothers from the Her-

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<sup>55</sup> EPALLE, JEAN BAPTISTE: Marist Father, Bishop, martyred in Oceania. In the life of the Founder by Bro. Jean Baptiste. Furet, page 73, referring to the catechesis of the then seminarian Champagnat, there is a note that refers to the catechism lesson (the red apple). The apple represents the globe of the world. With this teaching aid Marcellin showed a group of children the antipodes from France, where the native peoples needed to be converted. Taking part in this catechism lesson was a boy called Epalle who would have felt the call starting from these catechetical classes. He was a Marist priest, bishop and martyr in Oceania. The anecdote is not included in the first edition (Lyon-Paris, 1856-A). In the edition of 1897 it is mentioned in a note on page 24. The anecdote comes from the Annals of Bro. Avit. In the translation by Bro. Jaime Juaristi M. p. 15 says: "We have the testimony of one of the pious catechist's listeners who will later end up being a Marist priest, bishop "in partibus" and who was slaughtered by the cannibals from Oceania: Bishop Epalle liked to point out that he owed the early idea of his vocation to Father Champagnat. It was like this: During the holidays, Father Champagnat, then a seminarian, gathered the children of his village to teach them the catechism. One day, to make the lesson more interesting, he had the idea of giving them a class in geography. He showed them a big red apple that attracted everyone's attention. Imagine, children, he told them, that the earth is a big ball similar to the shape of this apple. People live on the surface of the earth, like small insects,

mitage: Bros. Elie-Régis,<sup>56</sup> Marie-Augustin<sup>57</sup> and Florentin.<sup>58</sup> (APF I, 558).

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## 1839

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15 June: Bro. Attale<sup>59</sup> sets out for Oceania, via London, accompanied by Frs. Petit-Jean, Viard, J.B. Comte and Chevron. (XI APF, 464).

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## 1840

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12 February: Leaving for Oceania: Bros. Claude Marie<sup>60</sup> and Ammon<sup>61</sup> (who

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hardly visible, surrounding this apple. If we could cross the earth from its centre, just as we can cross this apple, we would find on the opposite side from where we live, men just like us, but much more unfortunate. They do not know our good God; they live like beasts; they eat each other. We talk about missionaries who love our good God so much that they leave their parents and their country, go to teach the catechism to these poor people and to make them good Christians. To make them understand the lesson better and to engrave it in the memory of his listeners, Fr. Champagnat passed round the apple and he gave each one a piece. Monsignor Epalle was then about 6 or 7 years old. This catechism class and his piece of the apple inspired in him the idea of being a missionary, and this idea never left him." Annals of Bro. Avit. Jaime Juaristi M. Primera first part 1879-1840. (Note Bro. Joaquín Baron)

<sup>56</sup> BROTHER ELÍAS REGIS: Etienne Marin. He was born September 20, 1809. He entered November 1, 1835; He received the habit on March 25, 1836; He made his temporary profession on October 10, 1836; He made his perpetual profession on October 9, 1837; L'Hermitage (studies): 1837. He sails for Oceania in the company of Bros. Marie Augustin and Florentine, and Fathers Epalle and Petit, September 9, 1838. Wangaroa (New Zealand): 1839. He died in Wangaroa, New Zealand, April 24, 1872; (References: RB 211), (Notes Bro. Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>57</sup>See note 9

<sup>58</sup> BROTHER FLORENTIN: He narrates some incidents of an imposed missionary vocation: "What makes me suffer, and will always make me do so, is being deprived of wearing the Marist habit, even on Sundays. As luck would have it, on leaving France, I left it behind forever. Here I had planned to teach the catechism, helping the missionary priests. But my work is reduced to that of a servant. Yet I am able to follow the exercises prescribed by the Rules. Such is my position and that of the other Brothers. I would not mind if I had understood the situation perfectly on leaving France, which, you know, I left unwillingly, more from obedience than from free choice. If it were the will of God that I return to the Hermitage, only death or obedience would keep me here". (Note Bro. Sebastian A. Ferrarini)

<sup>59</sup> BROTHER ATTALE: Jean Baptiste Grimaud, born August 11, 1809, in St. Cassien, Isère. He entered the Institute on May 30, 1838. He took the habit on August 15, 1838. He made his perpetual profession on May 15, 1839. He died on August 7, 1847

<sup>60</sup> BROTHER CLAUDE MARIE: Jean Claude Bertrand. A missionary of great self-denial and intense moral suffering. He was born in St. Sauveur-en-Rue (Loire) in 1814. He entered on

left on the journey), accompanied by Frs. Tripe and Pezant. (XII APF, 267).

A letter is sent to the missionary Brothers of Oceania signed by Bros. François,<sup>62</sup> Louis-Marie<sup>63</sup> and Jean-Marie<sup>64</sup> giving them news of the Society

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11 May 1835; He took the habit 27 July 1835; He made his temporary profession 24 September 1835; He made his perpetual profession 10 October 1836; St. Chamond (orphanage): 1839; He embarked for Oceania, with Bro. Ammon and Fathers Tripe and Pezant, 12 February 1840; Hokianga: 1840; Opotiki: 1845; Hokianga: 1849; Nelson: 1850. He died in Nelson, New Zealand 5 November 1893; Documents: ch110 (281, 318) References: RB. Writing to Fr. Colin he said, referring to Fr. Servant: I have just experienced something that caused me a great deal of sadness. I had about ten books of piety, various small notebooks which I had brought from France and some other things belonging to me. I took advantage of my free time to read them occasionally. But I do not know if Fr. Servant was afraid that I would waste my time, he confiscated all my books and notebooks and he does not allow me to use them except on a Sunday, and with his express permission. Bro. Nizier did a lot to explain that the Brothers could do much good in the missions of Oceania, with houses organized as they are in France rather than remaining in the service of the Fathers, as if they were assistants. (J. Ronzon, *Delorme* J. M. 196 121). Bro. Claude-Marie tells how he was not accustomed to using the tools of manual work. His dream was to catechize the natives teaching them to love Jesus and Mary. (RB 137), (Notes Bro. Sebastian Ferrarini)

<sup>61</sup> BROTHER AMMON: Claudio Duperron, born in 1811 in Chauffailles (Saône-et-Loire). September 22, 1837 entered the novitiate in the Hermitage. He took the habit January 1, 1838. He made his perpetual profession October 10, 1838. In the list of destinations of 1839 he is located in Lyon. It is very possible that he is getting ready to be sent to the missions. February 12, 1840 he sets sail for Oceania. He will not reach his destination, as he will leave the Institute disembarking at one of the ports on the way. (RB 041), (Notes Bro. Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>62</sup> BROTHER FRANÇOIS: Gabriel Rivat. He is born in the village of Maisonnettes March 12, 1808 and dies January 22, 1881 in L'Hermitage. His parents were Jean-Baptiste Rivat and Françoise Boiron, married in La Valla May 12, 1789. A Marist Brother, he is the first Superior General of the Institute and successor of Marcellin Champagnat. Little Gabriel arrives at La Valla accompanied by his mother, as he points out in his personal diary: "Dedicated by my mother to Mary, at the foot of the altar of the chapel of the rosary in the parish of La Valla, I left the world on Wednesday May 6, 1818". He was then 10 years old; he had just made his First Communion on April 19. On September 8, 1819 he will receive the Marist habit. M. Champagnat will introduce him to the study of Latin and will then encourage him to study some rudimentary medicine and herbalism. Apart from these details, there is very little that we know about his first eight years of religious life. He gives classes in La Valla, and then he is appointed as cook in Marlihes (1820). He will be put in charge of the "primary class" in Vanosc, then in Boulieu until the holidays of 1826. On October 11 of this same year (1826) he makes perpetual profession and embarks on a new stage of his life, beginning with direct service to Fr. Champagnat. He will never again leave the work of dealing with government and administration. In 1831 he is officially appointed secretary to Fr. Champagnat, which was equivalent to being Secretary of the burgeoning Institute. On 12 October 1839 he is elected "General Director" by the Brothers gathered in assembly, under the direction of Fathers Colin and Champagnat. He will occupy the generalship for the next 20 years. He will be in this position until 1860 when he resigns. He will be replaced by Brother Louis Marie. He is attributed with the saying: "I had 20 years of preparation, I have had 20 of government, and will I have another 20 to rectify my faults and mistakes?"

of Mary and details about the death of our venerable Founder. (Avit, 233-234 - C 1, 333-337).

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He is usually characterized as “the living image of the founder. He was the man providential for the time of consolidation of the Institute after the founder’s death. (RB 224), (Notes Bro. Enrique Alfaro)

<sup>63</sup> BROTHER LOUIS MARIE: Pierre-Alexis Labrosse, 2nd Superior General. Born 2 June 1810, in the village of Labrosse, commune of Ranchal, in the northwest of the Department of Rhône, cap. Lyon. It is a mountainous, cold and quite impoverished area. His parents, farmers, have 13 children. Pierre-Alexis being the 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6 of his siblings die young (Cf. RB Répert. P.344). His older brother will go to the seminary and he will become a priest. He follows him 2 years later: he enters Verrières in Nov.1824; in November 1827 he goes to L’Argentière for Rhetoric and Philosophy and, in Nov. 1829, he enters St.Irénée in Lyon for his Theology. Two years earlier and a little before preparing to receive Holy Orders, he has a vocational crisis: “Priestly responsibility terrifies him” (Avit, p.106) Fr Gardette, Superior of the Seminary deals with his case and directs him towards the Brothers of Mary. “He is attracted to the religious life” (Cf. ch210, Introd., Letter p. 40). In August 1831, during the holidays, he goes to live with his family, in Ranchal. There is a letter from Mr. Gardette advising him: “You can do no better than write yourself to Fr. Champagnat who is the Founder... “and tells him specifically: “Send your letters to the priest Fr. Champagnat, Superior of the Brothers of La Valla, near Saint-Chamond”. (Cf. AAA, pág.107)... Surely there are some letters from the young seminarian to Champagnat, but there is no trace of them... and here is the letter of the Fr. Founder, from The Hermitage, in the date indicated. (29-08-1831)... - There is a difficulty to solve: Alexis is within the age range of possible military conscription: 20-21. This is solved for him by Gardette, Cholleton and Pompallier, together with some influential lay people. But this could be only in 1833 (Cf. Note.4, ch210 Letter 043 / of 1833) – His master of novices will be Bro. Bonaventure and his companions, simple peasants, very far away from his intellectual and spiritual preparation... The young man must set out on the way to simplicity and humility... - On 1-01-1832: He takes the Marist habit and receives the name of Bro. Louis Marie and does his Novitiate... - 7-10-1832: He makes his Profession for 3 years, and the following day, accompanied by the Founder, he leaves on foot for La Côte-St-André (a school founded in 1831). Bro. Louis Marie will teach the 1<sup>st</sup> Class (= the adults)... apart from a brief interruption when he is called to the Hermitage, he will be Director of La Côte-St-André until 1839... Next, we see the most important time in his life and mission, until his sudden death, on 9 December 1879. 12-10-1839: Elected Assistant General, together with the Bro. Jean Baptiste (absent), of Bro. François, SG. 18-05-1840: Requested by the dying Founder, to “edit” his Spiritual Testament to the Brothers. Chapter 1860: following the resignation of Brother François, he is elected “Vicar General” and in fact he is the one who governs... (1stCirc.). Chapter 1863: Elected Superior General... - Great support for the new Mother House in St. Genis-Laval; to the approbation of the Institute by the Holy See (January 9, 1863) - 5 trips to Rome (1858 - with Brother François 1862 F, 1862 MJ, 1869 and 1875) His Circulars: no fewer than 32 occupying Volumes III, IV, V and part VI, of CSG - Great formative contribution... Three biographies: 1st) Vie du Fr. Louise-Marie (1810-1879) / by a Brother of the Institute. (Emmanuel Vitte, Lyon - Paris, 1907) 299 pages. 2nd) Nos Supérieurs / Author anonymous - (St.Genis-Laval, 1953) - p. 73 at 140. 3rd) La vie d’un grand réalisateur - le R. Fr. Louis-Marie / by Frère Ignace, Mariste, (Editions Marie-Médiatrice - Genval, Belgique - 1955) 135 pages. (Cf. RB Répertoires p. 344-48). (Notes Bro. Agustín Carazo)

<sup>64</sup> BROTHER JEAN MARIE: Jean Claude Bonnet. Born September 14, 1807 in St. Sauveur-en-Rue (Loire). Orphaned at the age of five, he entered l’Hermitage September 2, 1826. On

8 December: Brothers Pierre-Marie<sup>65</sup>, Justi<sup>66</sup>, Basile<sup>67</sup>, Emery<sup>68</sup>, Colomb<sup>69</sup> and Euloge<sup>70</sup> of the Hermitage set out from London bound for New Zealand accompanied by the Marist Fathers. (APF XIII, 88 – C I, 50).

December 2, he received the Marist habit. He made his first profession at the end of the retreat of 1827. Sent to teach in Charlieu. He made his perpetual profession September 8, 1828. In 1829 is appointed director of Boulieu. In 1832 we find him in the Hermitage as master of scholastics. He obtained his teaching diploma in 1833. In 1836 Fr. Champagnat appoints him as director of the Hermitage and econome for the Institute. Thanks to his personality: judicious, constant, understanding, kind; he will take over the difficult task of governing the sector of St. Paul-trois-Châteaux immediately after the coalition: 1842. It will be a position, however, that will make him suffer a great deal. The centralism of the nascent Marist Institute will help him in some ways but will hinder him in many more. He has little room to make decisions. This will bother Mazelier who preferred an autonomous regime, although not independent provinces. In 1849 he is called to the Hermitage. In 1852 he is made director of Gonfaron. It is the beginning of the third stage of his life. The school was small and in a socially hostile area. Due to laicisation he had to declare the school to be deprived in 1871. The intake, especially starting from 1878 was very poor. The community, together with their director, lived in great poverty, but they did not close the school. Jean Marie's spiritual advancement was enormous: "he gained in kindness what he was losing in health", the Bro. Visitor said of him in 1886. He died on November 23 of that year. His burial was an apotheosis. The whole population of Gonfaron was present. The people built a mausoleum on his tomb as an example of their affection and admiration. A true Marist Brother had died among them. How well had been returned to good standing the name of "Jean Marie" in view of the fact that the first Jean Marie (i.e. Jean married Granjon) did not know to accept his status as the first chronological Brother of the Institute founded by Marcellin. (RB 292), (Notes Bro. Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>65</sup> BROTHER PIERRE MARIE: Pierre Pérénon. He was born in Virville (Isère) October 3, 1804. He is registered in the Novitiate of L'Hermitage October 27, 1832. He receives the habit on December 2, 1832 and makes his First Profession May 12, 1833 in Bourg Argental, which indicates that he had been sent to this town. In 1834 he makes his perpetual vows and is named Director of the new foundation in Saint Genest Malifaux. Bro. Avit said of him: "The first Director of Saint Genest was Bro Pierre Marie who had completed a good part of his ecclesiastical studies. More zealous than wise in the recruitment of vocations, he sent 6 out of 6 postulants, but almost all of them returned to their mountains. Six years later there were 12 from Saint Genest who gave up the religious habit at the same time. The Brothers who persevered were Euthyme, Bassus, Jean and Bazin. The quality made up for the quantity, but the deserters caused a lot of damage which could have been avoided by leaving them at home." (AA p. 96). This letter is written in April 1838, that is to say, he had already had 4 years in the community. During the holidays of 1839, he goes to Saint Genest waiting to go to Oceania and he is sent to Lyon to the Hospice of Saint Nizier from March to November 1840. On December 8, 1840 embarks in London with his companions for the fifth expedition to Oceania, heading for New Zealand. From 1840 to 1845 he remains on Bay Island before returning once again to France because of his poor health. He is appointed Director of the orphanage of Lyon (Chemin Neuf). Then to Nantua, where he stays from 1846 until 1850, and later appointed as Director of the orphanage of Bois-Saint Marie, until 1860. From 1860 until 1862 will be Director of Neronde. From 1862 until 1868 he is sent to Noyant. He goes to Decize in 1869, and in 1869 to Valbenoite where he remains until 1873. In this year he goes to the Hermitage where he dies August 25, 1873. References: ch110 306 and RB 424. (Notes Jorge Muñoz).

**Mentality, attitudes and decisions of Marcellin in relation to the missions, as reflected in letters he wrote and received.**

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**MISSIONARY MENTALITY AND ATTITUDES**

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***His universal, ecclesial mentality***

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*“I can assure you that I belong to all dioceses and that the universal Church is the scope of our society. The bishops who wish to employ us, will find us ready to make the greatest sacrifices, whether in manpower or even financial resources.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Ferréol Douillet<sup>71</sup>, No. 70, in October 1836).*

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<sup>66</sup> BROTHER JUSTIN (PERRET Étienne), born January 29, 1814 at Chamelet, Rhône. Entered the Institute December 7, 1837; received the habit August 15, 1838. First profession October 11, 1838; final profession October 13, 1839. Died in France, May 8, 1871 after spending many years in the Missions of Oceania. (Note of BROTHER Aureliano Brambila)

<sup>67</sup> BROTHER BASILE (MONCHALIN Michel), born December 3, 1814 at Saint-Hostien, Haute-Loire. Entered the Institute June 26, 1835. First profession October 10, 1836; final profession October 9, 1837. Died April 23, 1898.

<sup>68</sup> BROTHER ÉMERY (ROUDET Pierre), born January 28, 1819 at Bevenais, Isère. Entered at *l’Hermitage* June 2, 1839; received the habit August 15, 1839. Died November 27, 1882.

<sup>69</sup> BROTHER COLOMB (PONCET Pierre), born April 12, 1816 at St-Ddier-sur-Chalaronne, Ain. Entered the Institute January 28, 1839; received the habit May 9, 1839 and pronounced first vows October 13, 1839. Left the Institute April 3, 1845.

<sup>70</sup> BROTHER EULOGIE (CHABANY Antoine), born April 24, 1812 at St-Jean-Soleymieux, Loire. Entered at *l’Hermitage* November 24, 1839 and began his novitiate February 2, 1840. Died May 14, 1864.

<sup>71</sup> DOUILLET FERRÉOL, born August 25, 1786 at Belmont, Isère. Ordained to the priesthood June 13, 1813. Shortly after this he was named director at the minor seminary of La-Côte-Saint-André, Isère. In 1820 he opened a school offering Christian education to children and hoping to attract candidates to the seminary. In 1824, he purchased a house to set up his school with boarding facilities. A Miss Marthe Cusin was hired as bursar to look after the administration of the complex. Seminarians helped her by taking on supervision duties and some of the courses. Constrained by the demands of the local Education Committee, Father Douillet accepted to have his foundation transformed into a Normal School for the purpose of forming religious educators. On April 24, 1830, the Royal Education Council gave the authorization for this Normal School under Father Douillet’s direction and within his home. Everything was just about to start when the Revolution broke out in July 1830. Father Douillet then contrived an agreement with Father Champagnat: he would send his aspirants to *l’Hermitage*, and in exchange Father Champagnat would send him Marist brothers to take on the responsibility of this work. Four brothers arrived at the end

*"Our plans include all the dioceses in the world. When the respective bishops wish to call us there, we will eagerly rush to help them and to consider ourselves always to be their very humble and very submissive servants."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bishop Philibert de Bruillard<sup>72</sup>, No. 93, February 15, 1837).

*"Our plans include all the dioceses in the world; we will make it our duty to rush to the help of the bishops who will do us the honor of calling us."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bishop Benign Troussset d' Hericourt<sup>73</sup>, No. 112, in May of 1837).

### **His personal enthusiasm for mission ad gentes**

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*"We have just received our authorization from the Sovereign Pontiff and we are taking over the mission in the northern part of Polynesia, where we*

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of October 1831 and shortly after Brother Louise-Marie was personally accompanied by Father Champagnat. At this point began the long and difficult association of Douillet with the Marist Institute. Champagnat was obliged to be patient, to threaten and to insist... Douillet was certainly well intentioned, but he wanted things his way. He had called on Marcellin for help, but in practice the game was to be played only according to his rules. Despite all the good will that prompted him, Douillet tested our founder's goodness and that of all who later followed at the head of the Institute. After having settled all his affairs, this priest, certainly endowed with great faith and sincere zeal, who loved the brothers but possessed an intractable and somewhat narrow-minded personality, died at the age of 69 on January 13, 1815 (RB 190). (Note by Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>72</sup> DE BROUILLARD PHILIBERT. Bishop of Grenoble. Born at Dijon in 1765, he entered Saint Sulpice at age 16 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1789. During the Reign of Terror he secretly absolved all who were led to the guillotine. In 1810 he has named parish-priest at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet then later in 1821, at Saint-Etienne-du-Mont. He was named Bishop of Grenoble, December 28, 1825. His apostolic zeal was outstanding and he truly transformed the diocese providing it with an efficient organisation. Numerous religious congregations were invited into his diocese. The Marist Brothers arrived there in 1831. The apparitions at La Salette occurred in 1846 and in 1852 he set the first stone of that great Marian Sanctuary. In 1853 quite aware of his advanced age, he retired from the governance of his diocese and died December 15, 1860. His episcopate was exemplary and he was greatly loved by the people of his diocese. His heart rests in the sanctuary at La Salette. (Cf. RB 101). (Note by Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>73</sup> TROUSSET D'HÉRICOURT, BÉNIGNE URBAIN, Bishop of Autun, Saône-et-Loire. He was born July 15, 1797, at Questember, Morbihan. He devoted himself entirely to the restoration of his diocese. He worked very closely with his priests and reinforced the presence of religious communities in his diocese. His relationship with Father Champagnat and the Marist brothers was very friendly. He died at Autun, July 8, 1851 and was sadly grieved by all. (RB 501), (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

*are sending five of our priests and two of our Brothers. We certainly recommend this mission to your prayers.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. François Mazelier<sup>74</sup>, No. 65, May 8, 1836).*

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<sup>74</sup> MAZELIER, FRANCOIS. Born January 13, 1795 at Bourg-de-Péage, Drôme, and ordained to the priesthood May 11, 1817. From October 1819 to the 1822 school holidays, judging from a small account notebook indicating all his expenses, he must have been in Paris following classical Literature courses. On his return he was appointed teacher of Rhetoric at the Seminary. In 1824, Msgr. de la Tourette, advised by Father Fièrè his Vicar general, asked Mazelier to take on the congregation of Brothers of Christian Schools which was a bit shaky at the time. As parish priest of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Mazelier then purchased a former Dominican convent for the diocese. This property had been divided into several plots each of which had a different proprietor. By the end of 1824 he had bought almost the entire domain and in November he was able to welcome very cordially into the former convent, a small group of fifteen young men. From the outset he was totally devoted to this work and set his heart on organizing, directing and developing it for the diocese. Father Mazelier unreservedly set to work despite the fact that he felt he was not ready. Besides, he did not have the charism of founding a religious congregation. He inquired about the Rules of similar groups and soon realized that all was in keeping with the work of a certain Lamennais who had founded by that time the congregation of Brothers of Christian Schools in Brittany. He then adopted that same name for his Brothers. On the other hand, because of the close relationship that existed between the dioceses of Valence and Viviers, Father Mazelier soon met the Brothers of Viviers, directed by Fathers Vernet and Gery. As for the Brothers at *l'Hermitage*, it would seem he only met them some time later. In any case, there is nothing to indicate that he knew of their rules. He thus directed his Brothers according to his own inspiration, relying on prayer and on much reflection. What remains of his correspondence does show some of his main spiritual principles. On March 26, 1828 he wrote to Fr. Lamennais : “Thank God, our Brothers’ establishment is doing quite well, although I would love to see an increased spirit of faith in the various studies which they seem to be overly enamoured of, or at least that these should be esteemed at their rightful place and not below piety. I’m afraid the brothers do not fully appreciate the saying: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all the rest will be given you”. However they are very good and I am confident that they will accept my observations on these points some of which, indeed, I have already begun to dispense...” (Cf. Lettre 2, Répertoires, p. 382). Around 1835, Fr. Champagnat, encouraged by Fr. Colin began discussions with Fr. Mazelier in view of moving towards the amalgamation of their two Congregations and intent on helping his brothers who were of military age avoid entering into active service. Mazelier accepted several Marist Brothers among his own Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. Problems and differences of opinion were ironed out and the merger was planned during Marcellin Champagnat’s lifetime, though it was only realized after his death on March 31, 1842. Mazelier would become Vicar general at Valence and Honorary Canon in 1847. Later on June 18, 1853 he sent a letter to the Marist superiors indicating his annoyance over the fact that some of the points agreed upon at the time of the merger had not been respected. Mazelier was then invited to the General Chapter of 1854 and spoke directly to the assembly, with the result that everything was settled satisfactorily. He died at Valence June 26, 1856. His remains are in the school chapel of the Marist brothers at Bourg-de-Péage. (RB 380). Note by Fr. Jorge Quiròs Rivas).

### **His admiration for the missionaries in general**

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*"We are staying at the seminary of the Society of the Foreign Missions. The worthy superior of this house received us with admirable kindness. We have adjoining rooms."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. François<sup>75</sup>, No. 67, August 28, 1836).

*"The good clergy of the Foreign Missions who are giving us hospitality edify us a great deal by their virtue and their dedication to spreading the Church among the pagans."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. François<sup>76</sup>, No. 172, February 4, 1838).

*"I am feeling fine in Paris. I am staying at the seminary of Foreign Missions, where I am very satisfied. I assure you that if I did not know that I would be missed a little at the Hermitage, I would ask to end my days here. I follow the schedule of the house as much as my business allows. I get up at the bell, go to meditation and the other religious exercises, to meals and to recreation. I am extremely edified by the generous dedication of these men who are destined for the far-off missions. What thoughtful charity prevails among them; they are cheerful, but not frivolous or dissipated. Whatever delays their departure upsets them, but does not discourage them."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Antoine<sup>77</sup>, No. 183, March 24, 1838).

*"During my stay, I have seen six [of them] leave from the seminary of the Foreign Missions and others who are getting ready. How much edification I find in this house! Religion will not die out in France just yet; it has too many resources. There are new developments here every day in the work of Propagation of the Faith."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>78</sup>, No. 194, May 27, 1838).

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<sup>75</sup> See note 62

<sup>76</sup> See note 62

<sup>77</sup> BROTHER ANTOINE (COUTURIER Antoine). Born at La Valla (Loire) June 18, 1800, entered the Institute January 1, 1818, received the habit in 1818. With Brother Louis, he founded the school at Marlihes (1818). He was at St-Symphorien-sur-Coise (1823). He became Director of that school in 1824. Later Director at Millery (1829), Bourg-Argental (1831), Millery (1832) and Ampuis (1840). It is quite probable that he accompanied Brother Dominique in his "escape" to Saint-Antoine with Father Courveille in 1827. He died at Ampuis on March 7, 1851. Documents: Letters 16, 17, 20, 32, 33, 53, 74, 183, 238. References: RB 45.(Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>78</sup> See note 47

## **God's ways for the assignment of the mission ad gentes to the Marists**

*“The Prefect of the Propaganda Fide has answered our apostolic administrator, September 27 last; but the letter has been opened only in the past days. God has permitted that the letter remained ignored in the piles of paper of the secretary; at last we have had knowledge of it. In summary, it says the following: the Prefect of Propaganda Fide takes into great consideration the matter proposed, he is very grateful to the bishop for having favored so greatly the offering of laborers for the intended mission; he says that he will not delay in proposing the name of those workers to the Sacred Congregation and finishes desiring much happiness to the worthy prelate of the diocese of Lyon.” (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>79</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 79, November 13, 1835).*

*“It is to be noticed that this answer has the date of September 27<sup>b</sup>, which shows with what quickness the Prefect of Propaganda Fide has received the offering, since his letter arrived in Lyon three weeks after the letter addressed to him. But in that answer nothing is said of the Society of Mary, in spite of Fr. Pastre's express references. You certainly do not ignore my deep purpose in all this important matter, as I have been saying very clearly to Fr. Colin; the mission in itself is, if I can speak thus, the accessory thing in my spirit; and the obtaining a pontifical brief of authorization, or at least of centralization for our recent Society of Mary, is really the main thing. In order to get it, I would travel to the extremes of the world, to those islands of the Pacific Ocean, where those poor native people do not know our Lord; but that offer, so it is said, is a good disposition to assume our faith. We must ask Jesus, the Good Shepherd, that everything be done according to his holy will! It is necessary that my superiors present me to the hierarchy as one of those who are willing to go to missions in order to that I calm down; it costs me very much to understand how the Lord can grant me a such a huge grace.” (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>80</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 79, November 13, 1835).*

*“The bishop just received another letter from Rome, a most soothing and stimulating one. It is from the Cardinal Salas, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Regulars. This cardinal does not doubt at all that we will ob-*

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<sup>79</sup> See note 47

<sup>80</sup> See note 47

tain from His Holiness the brief so desired, but only for the priests' branch. Besides, it assures us that the Holy Father exhorts us to continue in the work of the mission of Oceania. How happy I am before God for having accepted to work there, in a special way, from the very beginning, and having induced the whole Society [of Mary] to consecrate itself to this work. I always thought it would be very important to press, and perhaps to insure the pontifical approval, the object of our common yearnings. Very soon you will be able to know that interesting letter." (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>81</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 87, February 17, 1836).

"Surely you are not unaware that the pontifical brief has been sent of France according to the information I received arriving in Rome. The motive of such a quick expedition was the great desire they have to see the missionaries leaving Europe as soon as possible. What a wonderful favor granted to Our Society [of Mary]! What eternal gratitude should we not have towards Our Lady and her divine Son!" (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>82</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 90, June 10, 1836).

### **His participation in the ad gentes mission of the Society of Mary**

"I beg Fr. Servant to write to Fr. Cholleton thanking him for letting him go [to the missions], fulfilling that way his personal desires of self-sacrifice. Tell him, I soundly count on him. And, please, respectful and beloved confrere, be as good as to appoint three or four of our Brothers so that, we would be able to choose finally two, with your acceptance. The bishop will give you the due permission in dialogue with Fr. Colin, superior of Belley, through Fr. Cholleton. I ask Our Lady of Fourvière to obtain from her divine Son abundant blessings on us, our intentions and undertakings, and on the whole Society [of Mary]. On my behalf, please of the one in charge of the mission, that I may be a Superior 'in resurrectionem multorum', and not 'in ruinam'." (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>83</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 87, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1836).

In choosing the Brothers that you are going to give us for Polynesia, please, be careful. We must be certain that they be good subjects, sure in

<sup>81</sup> See note 47

<sup>82</sup> See note 47

<sup>83</sup> See note 47

*virtue, sufficiently educated in religion and capable in all types of works. I suppose that our departure will take place quicker than we think. Therefore have them ready.*" (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>84</sup>, No. 089, April 11th, 1836).

*"Send to me as soon as possible the two missing Brothers; it is imperative that we leave Lyon by the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month at the latest, in order to be in le Havre in time to take our ship."* (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>85</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 096, October 9, 1836).

### **Animation of his missionary Confrères**

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*"Our new chapel was blessed by Bishop Pompallier before his departure for Polynesia. He also confirmed those of our Brothers who had not received the sacrament. You cannot imagine what emulation the mission of Polynesia has aroused among the people. Every one envies the good fortune of those who were chosen to be the first of our association to go to those islands. Our Brothers said goodbye to them in hopes of going to join them soon".* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Jacques Fontbonne<sup>86</sup>, No. 109, May 16, 1837).

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<sup>84</sup> COLIN, JEAN-CLAUDE. Marist priest. Founder of the Society of Mary. Born at Barberies, Rhône, August 7, 1790. Orphaned at the age of four he was raised by his uncle Sébastien and was of delicate health. He entered the minor seminary at Saint-Jodard in 1804; in 1809 he moved to that of Alix and to that of Verrières in 1812. He went on to the Major seminary of Saint-Irénée (Lyon) in 1813. He was ordained to the priesthood July 22, 1816 and appointed curate at Cerdon where his brother Pierre was parish priest (1816). January 25, 1825, with his brother and Fr. Jean-Claude Courveille, he wrote a letter to Pope Pius VII. On receiving the response from Rome that same year he visited the Nuncio Macchi in Paris. He taught at the Minor seminary of Belley (1825) and became superior of that same institute in 1829. He traveled to Rome hoping to begin procedures in view of obtaining approbation of the Society of Mary with all its branches (1833). He was elected Superior General of the Society of Mary September 24, 1836. He gave in his resignation May 9, 1854 and retired to La Neylière. He had serious difficulties with his successor Fr. Favre (1863) and with the branch of Marist sisters. He participated in the Chapters of 1866 and 1870 and settled some of the conflicting views which put him in a position opposed to that of the major superiors of the Marist Fathers. He died at La Neylière November 15, 1875. The cause to recognize his heroic virtues was introduced at Rome December 9, 1908. (Cf. RB 141). (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>85</sup> See note 4

<sup>86</sup> FONTBONNE, JACQUES. Born at Bas-en-Basset, Haute-Loire, April 24, 1803. Nephew of Jeanne Fontbonne (Mère Saint-Jean) who organized the Sisters of Saint-Joseph of Lyon. He entered the Major seminary of Saint-Irénée in 1825 and was ordained priest April 5, 1828.

### **He possesses a realistic idea of the missions**

*"We have received a letter from our missionaries en route to Oceania. We will send you a copy of it in a few days. Father Bret died during the crossing to Vaiparaiso. The others are well and very happy in their vocation [cf missionaries]." (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Silvestre<sup>87</sup>, No. 158, November 25, 1837).*

*"Our mission in Polynesia is requesting more workers, and we are going to have them leave immediately. Several of our establishments have need of reinforcements and we have also to open a new novitiate house, so all our available subjects will be taken up. Therefore we could not increase the number of our establishments without putting ourselves in the unfortunate necessity of having to let them languish." (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Abel Xavier Mege<sup>88</sup>, No. 188, May 11, 1838).*

*"Our chapel is finished. It is very pretty; it is infinitely dear to us for having been blessed by the first missionary and the first bishop of the society. I hope that a third title be added to the others as a natural consequence: the*

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He was named curate at Saint-Laurent-d'Agnay and received authorisation to go to *l'Hermitage* December 1. On September 29, 1831 he was curate at Valbenoite. On July 31, 1833, he was appointed curate at Alières by the Archdiocesan office and soon after curate at Saint-Martin d'Estreaux on January 22, 1834; he then returned to *l'Hermitage* in December 1834. The Bishop of Saint Louis, Missouri (USA), Msgr. Rosati, called the sisters of Saint Joseph to his Diocese and Fr. Fontbonne was appointed to accompany them. This was in 1835. From his new residence, in New Orleans he wrote requesting the presence of Marist Brothers but seeing this request could not be satisfied and advised by Fr. Cholleton, he called on the Clerics of Saint-Viateur. He served as parish priest in Saint-Martin, Diocese of New Orleans from 1848 to 1851. Poor health obliged him to return to France but after a rest period he was named parish priest at Lérigneux (1852), then Chassagne (1857) and later Parigny (1867). He then retired to Chagny where he died April 12, 1886. (RB 221). (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>87</sup> BROTHER SYLVESTRE (TAMET Jean-Félix). A rather mischievous brother whom Father Champagnat especially loved. Born at Valbenoite, Saint-Etienne (Loire), January 12, 1819. Entered the Institute March 12, 1831. He received the habit August 15, 1831 and pronounced first vows on September 8, 1832. Ampuis (cook), 1833; Marlhes, 1834; Vienne, 1836; La Côte-Saint-André, 1837. He made his perpetual profession September 13, 1843; *l'Hermitage*, 1843; Grange-Payre, 1848; St. Genis-Laval, 1855. Golden jubilee of religious life: 1881. He died at Saint-Genis-Laval, Rhône, December 16, 1887. Documents: ch110 (61, 158, 249). References: RB 476; Mémoires; AA 109 (Note of Fr. Aureliano Brambila)..

<sup>88</sup> MEGE ABEL-XAVIER, priest. Born in 1789 and appointed Archpriest at Morestel in 1837, Tullins in 1847. He died in 1887. When he was in Morestel he asked Fr. Champagnat for brothers but his request was never met, not even later with Brother François. (RB 393). (Note by Brother Aureliano Brambila).

first... who... " (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>89</sup>, No. 194, May 27, 1838).

"We are very upset that we find it impossible to give a favorable answer to your attractive letter. Illnesses and the departure of several of our Brothers for the mission of Oceania, prevent us from opening other establishments next All Saints, besides those which we had already promised last year " (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Abel Xavier Mege<sup>90</sup>, No. 254, June 4, 1839).

"Fifty establishments have been set up and continue to prosper in the nine departments of the Rhone, the Loire, Isère, Ardèche, Haute-Loire, Saône-et-Loire, Drôme and Pas-de-Calais, besides the mission of Eastern Oceania, to which eleven of our Brothers have gone during these last three years." (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Hugo J.C. Latour d' Auvergne<sup>91</sup>, No. 319, February 11, 1840).

### **He dreams of opening his own missions ad gentes with his Brothers**

"We have the consolation of seeing our establishments improving. Right now there are 33 of them. Several are scheduled for the coming year and we cannot protect ourselves from the repeated requests we get from all over to send Brothers. We would gladly send some to America to cooperate in the zeal of the good missionaries if it were possible. We hope that the divine Providence will smooth out the difficulties for us and confer us the means to

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<sup>89</sup> See note 47

<sup>90</sup> See note 88

<sup>91</sup> DE LA TOUR D'AUVERGNE Hugues-Robert-Jean-Charles. Born in Toulouse August 14, 1768 in the County of Lauraguais at the Châteaux d'Auzeville, he was of a noble family. He was ordained to the priesthood June 24, 1792 and went through very difficult years during the Revolution. He was obliged to live in hiding, and had not any kind of pastoral activity. Nonetheless he accepted the responsibility of the new Diocese of Arras and on June 5, 1802, he became Bishop of Arras. Due to his Sulpician training he organized the life of his diocese according to essential elements. Some of the practices he introduced were : perpetual adoration, the month of Mary, Saint Vincent-de-Paul Conferences, etc. Many religious congregations were invited into his diocese. Rome wished to call on him to improve other dioceses but he never accepted any other position. He refused the Sees of Avignon (1830), of Lyon (1839), of Paris (1840) and of Cambrai (1841). He received numberless official decorations. He distinguished himself by living his ecclesiastical rank with noble elegance. Napoleon I said of him that he was "the King of Bishops". He died at Arras July 20, 1851, aged 82. Cf. RB 314). (Note by Brother Aureliano Brambila.

come to you, when the times and the moments the Father has set in his sovereign power have arrived." (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Jacques Fontbonne<sup>92</sup>, No. 109, May 16, 1837).

### **He receives direct invitations to send his Brothers to mission lands**

"Your letter, dated May 16th, has arrived at St. Louis the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, our good Mother, and to given to me the following day in the afternoon. Reading in the moonlight, and having discerned the image of Our Lady in your seal, my heart jumped for happiness. 'Mary,' I said in my heart, for sinners you are the moon helping them find their way in the night of their iniquities; come here to illumine them.' I enter hastily in the room of one of my confreres, and reading your letter up to the place where you declare the desire of coming here, I was not able to moderate my enthusiasm. I ran into the garden where the bishop takes some fresh air, after bearing the heat of the day. I put your letter into his hands. It is important that I tell you that, just a few days before the events I relate, I had written to Fr. Cholleton, begging him to ask you to send four of your good teaching Brothers; the bishop had signed the letter also. The night passes in an agitation of happiness, but restless on the reflections of the bishop, whom I had never told of my having been in the Society [of Mary], and that I still have that in mind. In the morning, as early as it was convenient, I entered his apartment. Looking at me, he said these words: "My dear friend, I am also a religious, tell your Fathers to come here to guide their Brothers, there is a lot of work to do here. I will give them a beautiful, large mission, and difficulties, as you well know, they will not lack". (Letter from Fr. Jacques Fontbonne<sup>93</sup>, No. 127, August 19, 1837).

### **He judges inopportune the departure to missionary zone in some moments**

"As for promises regarding new establishments: we have already made too many; let us first get our authorization and then we will see what we can promise. I fear that if we succeed, we will have to send several subjects to Africa; that is what one of the members of the Council of State wants us

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<sup>92</sup> See note 43

<sup>93</sup> See note 87

to do. I do not need to tell you what answer I give him every time.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. François<sup>94</sup>, No. 175, March 7, 1838).

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## **HE SHARES THE MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY**

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### **He shares his mentality on mission ad gentes**

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“A recent letter from Vaiparaiso, dated on the first days of August, tells us that Bishop Pompallier, other Co-freres and our Brothers were still there; but on the eve of taking the boat ready to continue to their trip. We can, therefore, reasonably suppose that at this moment they are already among the people they are going to take care of. They are putting their feet on that uncultured land, the object of their most ardent desires; that land, which in the plans of the Providence, has become the inheritance of the Children of Mary.” (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>95</sup>, No. 152, January 10, 1838).

“For all of us deprived of the happiness which those missionaries are enjoying, our duty is to think about providing them with new workers who, full of God’s spirit in such a measure and under the protection of the most tender and powerful Mother, would be most willing to go in their help.” (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>96</sup>, No. 152, January 10, 1838).

“This is the moment in which, more than in any other, I experience all the tremendous weight of my charge as Superior. I feel the need that all the members of the Society join me in asking fervently that Jesus and Mary come to my aid, illuminating me and letting me know who are the ones they have chosen as destined to the sublime vocation of missionary apostolate. That vocation comes from on high. In regard to all these issues, I am asking all the members of the Society - it does not matter the branch to which they belong - to increase in fervor, and to offer God for my intentions, from today up to the feast of the Purification of Mary: 1<sup>o</sup> An hour of adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament. 2<sup>o</sup> Each priest, at least, a Mass; each Broth-

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<sup>94</sup> See note 52

<sup>95</sup> See note 84

<sup>96</sup> See note 84

er and Sister, three communions. 3<sup>o</sup> All, three Hail Mary every day. Each one can add to this what his zeal inspires him to do; for example, the offering of the Office and of the Rosary. You may also invite pious souls, with whom you are related in everyday life, to unite their prayers to ours for this same intention. With the feelings of the most tender affection, I dare to sign myself, beloved Confreres and Brothers, your most humble and obedient servant," (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>97</sup>, No. 152, January 10, 1838).

"I do not think that Brother Regis has a vocation to go to the missions of Oceania. I think it would be wise to find a replacement for him as soon as possible and to command cassocks and shoes for the Brothers that are departing. Try to have all things ready so as to let them go when the moment come." (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>98</sup>, No. 161, July 14, 1838).

"I have said to Bro. Jean François Regis that I would not decide anything on his vocation towards priesthood, and that if he leaves the Brothers, he would be dispensed from his vows. But that, in all events, the whole responsibility is his, only." (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>99</sup>, No. 161, July 14, 1838).

### **Marist missionary spirituality sees God everywhere**

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"Providence accompanies us all over: in Paris we have been received in the seminar of Foreign Missions; in the Major Seminary of Rouen we were received with open arms; and at last, in le Havre we have found lodging with a modern Tabita. Would I not like to meditate on that Providence that feeds the birds of the sky and that takes care of lilies of the field? It does not matter where we go, the hand of the Lord is always helping us. When will I belong completely to that God of kindness?" (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>100</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

"I have the impression that we will leave soon. A breeze of the northeast is announcing to us that we should be prepared to set sail. When that happy moment arrives, I will invoke from deep down in my heart the sweet

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<sup>97</sup> See note 84

<sup>98</sup> See note 84

<sup>99</sup> See note 84

<sup>100</sup> See note 51

name of Mary. This Star of the Sea, this hope of the sailor will guide us, thus I believe, and will protect us" (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>101</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

"I am taking advantage of this opportunity to give you reason to bless Divine Providence which is watching over us with very special goodness. Here we have been roaming the seas for six months, while three or four are usually enough for the crossing from Le Havre to Valparaiso. You knew about our stop in Santa Cruz (Tenerife Island). Contrary winds held us back a very long time at Cape Horn, but we are finally getting closer to the islands we so much desire, and therefore we are joyful. We long for these islands, which God's will should make us consider as our true homeland." (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>102</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

"To tell the truth, from time to time we encounter various tribulations, some of us fall ill, the elements oppose our crossing, we are apprehensive about storms and accidents, but it is God's will that these evils are light and easy. The annoying elements, whatever they may be, are beautiful if seen in the light of Providence." (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>103</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

"Among the crosses I am speaking about, there is one which required of us a very costly sacrifice. Father Bret, who began to feel ill towards the end of our stay in Santa Cruz, was feverish when we weighed anchor. We redoubled our care and concern for him, and his illness seemed to diminish for a few days, but it soon became more serious than ever. During the morning of Monday in Holy Week, he got up briefly as usual, and said to Father Chanel, "I'm sure this is the end for me". He was not mistaken. That evening he slipped into a gentle death struggle and at seven o'clock he fell asleep in the peace of the Lord. How admirably patient he was during his sufferings! He preferred to say nothing of his discomfort and was so grateful for everything we could do for him, and how exact he was about taking his medicines, even those which were foul-tasting! However, God sends us blessings in our trials, and knows how to console us and lessen our pain. From time to time, fortunately, we can celebrate the holy mysteries and receive the Holy Eucharist, the bread of the strong. How happy

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<sup>101</sup> See note 51

<sup>102</sup> See note 51

<sup>103</sup> See note 51

*I am in my vocation! How consoling it is to dedicate oneself to the conversion of souls which are worth more than all the world's wealth. I can almost see, dear Superior, the good Brothers of the Hermitage, who by their prayers and their actions done under obedience, put holy pressure on Mary and thus contribute to the work of the mission."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>104</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

*"While awaiting our departure from Vaiparaiso, which will come when God wills, we are living at the supply center of the missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It reminds me of the secluded house of those good Brothers whom I love so much; and of my name, written on a list which bears the representation of the heart of the best of mothers; and of those feasts of the great protectress of our dear Society of Mary."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>105</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

*"We were the privileged children of Divine Providence all during our crossing from Le Havre to Vaiparaiso and we continued to be so blessed when we entered this city. Did the Bishop of Maronea need information about our different islands? The vicar general of the Bishop of Nilcopolis arrived from Tahiti. Did he need someone to help him right away with preparations for the departure? Brother Colomban of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who is experienced in that sort of negotiations and can be very useful, arrived from California."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>106</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

*"What I have to say about our loving Mother is beyond all telling. Please take note of just one thing: Saturday was always a special day; the wind almost always became favorable..."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>107</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

*"Each of the Brothers with us has had his minor problems during the crossing: Bro. Michel suffered a lot from toothaches; Bro. Marie-Nizier had headaches, but on the score of illness, he was one of the best of. Now they are all in excellent health; they asked me to tell you that they are happier than they could possibly put into words. They send you their most humble*

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<sup>104</sup> See note 51

<sup>105</sup> See note 51

<sup>106</sup> See note 51

<sup>107</sup> See note 51

respect, and their regards to each of the Brothers.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>108</sup>, No. 123, June 14, 1837).

### **The Marist missionary spirituality does not create inordinate self-esteem**

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“Before embracing my new vocation, I thought that all would foster my spiritual life when leaving behind my native country, but unfortunately that has not been the case. I must really regret, while examining myself. I ask the Lord to assist me in entering into a resurrection dynamic. The prayers of our small Society [of Mary] give me much hope.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>109</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

“Although the native peoples, thanks to their relationship with white people, begin to lose their out-of-date style, they show nevertheless signs of a wonderful simplicity. One of the leaders told me on a certain day to convince me of his need for consulting me frequently: ‘When I pray I do nothing else than to say to the Lord: “Oh my God, I do not have anything to tell you but I love you, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!”’” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>110</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).

### **The Marist missionary spirituality is born of self-denial, not of evasion**

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“Cordial greetings to Fr. Matricon and Fr. Besson. To bring to mind the Brothers is for me always pleasing. I entrust myself to your prayers. Please, give my greetings to the parish priest of St. Martin and to La Valla and Izieux. Be so kind as to pass on my friendly feelings and my respect to the Fathers of Valbenoîte, whom I love with all my heart. All for the greater glory of God.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>111</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

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<sup>108</sup> See note 51

<sup>109</sup> See note 51

<sup>110</sup> See note 51

<sup>111</sup> See note 51

### **The Marist missionary spirituality and its fruits in the apostolic work**

*"I am still in "Baie-des-Iles", just as I was telling you some months ago. I am in no way idle. Besides the work I must undertake putting on paper various writings in the native tongue, that the bishop entrusts me; each day I prepare the oral instruction I give to the natives; on Sundays I usually I preach in English. "* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>112</sup>, No. 208, May 14, 1840).

*"Among the neophytes and the catechumens of this center, there are some who lead a most edifying life, marked by simplicity in faith and innocence in customs. Some days ago a neophyte told me that she fell sick, she passed the whole night in fervent prayer, and that the next day she was totally recovered."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>113</sup>, No. 208, May 14, 1840).

### **Marist missionary spirituality does not forget community belonging. On the contrary, it refers to it constantly**

*"Members of Mary's family as we are, we love each other without seeing one another and even before knowing one another. Duties, time, distances do not represent an obstacle to the charity that unites us: 'How beautiful is to live you united as brothers'."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>114</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).

*"I remember most gladly that my name is registered in the heart of Our Lady of the Hermitage. That fact will help me to be united wholeheartedly in the good works that we used to practice so as to support one another by means of reciprocal good feelings. I like to contemplate, occasionally, in my spirit, the heart of our Good Mother."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>115</sup>, No. 103, December 15th, 1836).

*"I am not telling you good-bye forever. My very beloved Superior we will see each other in heaven. In the meantime, we will meet one another frequently in the heart of Jesus. In the infinite ocean of that heart we will seek*

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<sup>112</sup> See note 51

<sup>113</sup> See note 51

<sup>114</sup> See note 51

<sup>115</sup> See note 51

each other, and there we shall find each other.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>116</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

### **In Marist missionary spirituality, those who evangelize are themselves evangelized:**

“Our native peoples, at least the majority, have already heard several explanations of the commandments of the Law of God. The first time explained to them those divine laws, some of them said that they found them very harmonious to our human reason.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>117</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).

“The following fact is quite enlightening. A European, pleaded with a neophyte to convince one of his sisters to sin with him. Then the neophyte went to seek his small book of prayers and showed it to the European, saying: ‘I believe in God and although you gave me all the goods of the world, I would not consent to offend him’.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>118</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).

“Some months ago, various natives were reflecting together on their frailty, and not being fully instructed on the sacrament of reconciliation they asked me if there was no way of coming out of a sinful state after their baptism. I responded by saying that Our Lord Jesus Christ had instituted the sacrament of reconciliation to forgive the sins after the baptism; they received my answer with great satisfaction. To confess themselves does not seem to be a problem for them. They easily declare their faults, in public or in private. Many neophytes approach to the sacrament of reconciliation.” (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>119</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).

“The objects of worship please the natives. The crosses charm them, the medals and the rosaries; frequently they urge us to provide them with them. Once, a woman asked me for my rosary, and, in face of my negative answer, she said: “You preach me detachment from material things, will you

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<sup>116</sup> See note 51

<sup>117</sup> See note 51

<sup>118</sup> See note 51

<sup>119</sup> See note 51

*not be perhaps attached to your rosary?" (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>120</sup>, No. 215, May 29, 1841).*

*"They also have all sorts of inquiries for us concerning the minutest things; some of them ask us if in case of war will they be able to take with them the remains of their relatives; the others if they can cook their meals on Sunday (heresy accuses them of grave sin if they prepare their food on this day); some others want to open up a space in the cemetery where there the remains of their ancestors rest and invite us to go to the to the place to say some prayers to drive out their ancient gods that they call Satan." (Letter from Fr. Servant Catherin<sup>121</sup>, n° 215, 29 May 1841).*

### **Difficulties of the missionary life**

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*"My trip has been a wonderful one, thanks to the protection of the Holy Virgin, and to the kindness of God. Nevertheless, during our trip from Marseilles to Genoa, in the Mediterranean, we had a very furious storm, from eleven at night until three in the morning. The Lord maintained always my heart in calm. The thought that I was in danger of death because of his Holy Name, filled my soul with consolation and strength." (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>122</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 90, June 10, 1836).*

*"My respectful objections in relation to my episcopal consecration did not have any effect either on His Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide, or on His Holiness. Their answer was always that it was something necessary. Already I offered to God all the works, all the dangers, all the troubles that are waiting for us in those far distant regions. Those thoughts, far from disconcerting me, have caused me pleasure. Under the pressing weight of the dignities that approach me, I thank the Lord for having deigned to cast his eyes on this poor servant to suffer all those troubles because of His holy name." (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>123</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 90, June 10, 1836).*

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<sup>120</sup> See note 51

<sup>121</sup> See note 47

<sup>122</sup> See note 47

<sup>123</sup> See note 56

*Entering into the waters of the Pacific, we had two days of a horrible storm. Huge waves, as high as mountains, occasionally crashed against our ship and as they came they covered it. One of them dragged away a lifeboat; lots of water entered our rooms. We could not maintain a vertical position on the bridge without the aid of some support. Such moments are frightening, but when one has placed himself in the hands of the Creator, fears disappear because you only consider the fulfillment of his holy will. But they must be terrible for people who are attached to this life because they do not believe in any other one.” (Letter from Bro. Elie-Régis<sup>124</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 179, January 12, 1839)*

*“While Fr. Chanel<sup>125</sup> went to Wallis to visit Fr Bataillon, a young English man, born on the Islands Vavas, and myself, remained alone, completely lonely, in the that valley...” (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>126</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 188, September 30, 1839).*

*“We were in great anxiety on the subject of P. Chanel<sup>127</sup>, because the days set for his return had long passed and his arrival seemed ominous; finally after more than two weeks of waiting, we learned that the little sea swallow had returned and we went to embrace him.” (Letter from Bro. Maire-Nizier<sup>128</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, September 30, 1839).*

*“After having spent a few days in the king’s house, in a small corner that he gave us to retire, along with our belongings, we built one of bamboo placed vertically and secured with some strings; it was unquestionably the wonder of the island, but a few months afterwards, a storm, an awful storm! which was predicted for several days by a hazy sky and a strong wind from the east; finally broke from the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February (1839) accompanied by lightning, thunder, continual rain and a horrifying noise from the sea joined by the cries of the islanders offering some Kava (a plant from whose root, after having been chewed up, is used to make a drink. They also offer it to their gods before a ceremony and on other occasions) to their gods to calm the storm. Some hours before daylight the wind changed to the northwest with the speed of lightning but triple, quadruple the force;*

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<sup>124</sup> See note 48

<sup>125</sup> See note 52

<sup>126</sup> See note 48

<sup>127</sup> See note 52

<sup>128</sup> See note 52

*up to then we had patiently waited but then it was necessary to change. We were only half dressed and we had already battled the hurricane for the preservation of our poor little house but alas! useless efforts! we only had the dubious pleasure of seeing it tossed, shaken in every sense, its roof torn to pieces finally succumbing to the weight of the wind and leaving us without cover. The majority of the houses suffered the same fate."* (Letter from Bro. Maire-Nizier<sup>129</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, September 30, 1839).

*"The palm trees, banana trees, breadfruit trees, the yams and in general all the produce of the island, have suffered very much from this storm; and famine threatened to join all these troubles, but to remedy them the islanders worked with an extraordinary courage to repair the damage."* Letter from Bro. Maire-Nizier<sup>130</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, September 30, 1839).

*"After that storm, we reconstructed our house. We believe that it is, at least, four times more solid than the first one; nevertheless, we await with some expectation another storm to see if our little hut is really strong enough."* (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>131</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 188, September 30, 1839).

*"Father Chanel<sup>132</sup> neglected nothing that was depending on him to divert this new scourge and to ward it off entirely. Some steps had been taken by him toward the two kings, but without any real success."* (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>133</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, September 30, 1839).

*"At the end of the combat they came to beg us to return to the scene of the war to take care of the wounded... alas! we had ignored up to then all these sad experiences of the day. We went with great haste to where they awaited us. On the way, we learned that our good King was wounded. The first one for whom we cared was terribly wounded by a blow of a rock to the left eye; another had his skull half opened by a blow of an instrument of war called an "isiroir" (this is a lance about ten feet long, at least. Only the elders make use of it and it's for striking and piercing; its unique pur-*

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<sup>129</sup> See note 52

<sup>130</sup> See note 52

<sup>131</sup> See note 48

<sup>132</sup> See note 52

<sup>133</sup> See note 52

pose is to be thrown.). But what a frightening spectacle came into our view on the actual battlefield! The strand of sand presented only the wounded, dead or dying surrounded by devastated relatives. How distressing it was to see the bodies, the ones with the heads chopped, others pierced by lances or battered with blows!" (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>134</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, 30 September 1839).

"It was virtually impossible for us to take a step without coming into contact with blood. The night was approaching. The operations were finished, in part, but not the cries of the relatives of the dead! Oh! what echoes were being heard from all parts in the valley!" (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>135</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 188, September 30, 1839).

"Fr. Chanel<sup>136</sup> and I spend the night at the foot of a coconut palm, on the sand. Only a board gave us some shelter to defend us from the wind and the rain. Exhaustion, more than the desire to sleep, dominated us some hours before the dawn; and we rested a little; if we can call rest the little time that we passed dozing." (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>137</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 188, September 30, 1839).

Almost all of the islanders seem well disposed, in spite of the fact that there are many of them that fear the rage of their gods if they were to become Christians." (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>138</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 188, September 30, 1839).

"I had the honor of writing you from Brest on January 25th, believing that we were about to set sail soon, but contrary winds left us there until February 19th. All those days in between we really got bored, in a strange city, knowing nobody, without knowing where to go. Finally the 19th, towards eight in the morning we set sail. We, all Marists, got together and prayed to the Lord, through the intercession of the best of all the mothers, for a happy and good trip; we prayed for France, our beautiful country; for all the beloved people we were leaving behind; and, finally for the crew and all the passengers of the ship. After finishing our prayers we went to bridge

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<sup>134</sup> See note 52

<sup>135</sup> See note 48

<sup>136</sup> See note 52

<sup>137</sup> See note 52

<sup>138</sup> See note 60

*with the intention of seeing for the last time beautiful land of France; but, how terrible! Instead of the beloved land, we only saw some bare rocks, the sky and the sea. A feeling of sadness invaded us; tears clouded our eyes; all this helped us to renew our sacrifice to the Lord." (Letter from Bro. Claude-Marie<sup>139</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 204, March 25, 1840).*

*"From the very start, we fell victims of seasickness. The second day we raised ourselves for a while, extremely weak. On the third day honestly I did not even try to get up. The Fathers and the other Brother raised themselves a while; but they were trembling, without appetite and with a lot of vomiting. Next day I began to feel myself better, I got up at 7.30, and could provide some relief to my companions." (Letter from Bro. Claude-Marie<sup>140</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 204, March 25, 1840).*

### **Missionaries very sensitive to the favors received**

*"Sunday we leave for Paris at 7 o'clock. We were very well received by the Superior of the Seminar of Foreign Missions. We have to congratulate ourselves for the wonderfully good reception the missionaries offered us." (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>141</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 099, November 8, 1836).*

*"On October 25th Fr. Chanel<sup>142</sup> and Fr. Bataillon left for le Havre in order to buy provisions; I accompanied them. The bishop will arrive November 10th with the other missionaries. Between November 12<sup>th</sup> and 15th we will embark, if the weather is favorable. Our trip is continually being postponed because of lack of favorable time and also because not all the merchandise asked by the Captain has arrived. In the meantime we lodge in the house of a widow who is pleased to accommodate missionaries who leave the country. She does not accept any type of gratitude, she does it only for pleasing the Lord. We are not the first to benefit; she has been doing this for more than 16 years. She thinks it is her apostolic and missionary activity. Among the passengers, there are some members of the Order called Picpus, they are going to East Oceania. Perhaps some of them will remain*

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<sup>139</sup> See note 98

<sup>140</sup> See note 52

<sup>141</sup> See note 48

<sup>142</sup> See note 52

in Vaiparaiso where they have a house.” (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>143</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 099, November 8, 1836).

### **Clean eyes that contemplate with admiration**

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“The most beautiful ships that we have seen in Le Havre are Americans. I was studying particularly the structure of the ship that will carry us to Vaiparaiso. Certainly it is not one of the largest, but is clean and pretty; they call it “Good sailboat”. Everything is new for me: the three large masts that are elevated to a great height, the rope ladders strongly hold my attention.” (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>144</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 099, November 8, 1836).

“We do intents with a view to calculate the immense space that separates us from the land of our destination. But at a little distance from us the sky seems to join the sea. This impedes us from seeing the country that so much we long for in order to make known among its inhabitants.” (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>145</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 099, November 8, 1836).

### **Gratitude for having received the missionary vocation**

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“I bless the Lord for having chosen me to be among the Brothers accompanying those Marists missionaries so filled with apostolic zeal to bring the light of the Gospel to those far away peoples. And also you, my beloved Father, it is impossible for me to express the huge feelings of deep gratitude that fill my heart for having seconded the plans of God for me.” (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>146</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 099, November 8, 1836).

“I feel very happy, my beloved Father, for having been elected by you, in spite of my unworthiness, among the Brothers of Mary, to be among the first to go carrying the light of the Gospel to the far away countries. Blessed be God for that special vocation he gave me and helps me to follow. I am so pleased with it that I would not change it for a throne. I am afraid of noth-

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<sup>143</sup> See note 52

<sup>144</sup> See note 52

<sup>145</sup> See note 52

<sup>146</sup> See note 52

*ing because Mary, my good Mother, will be my guide in all my actions and a sure refuge in my grief.*" (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>147</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 104, December 22, 1836).

*"Dear Father, before finishing this letter, allow me to thank you sincerely for having given me that very wise lesson through the letter of beloved Bro. François. Please, do not forget me and keep on giving me your personal teachings that I need so much. Good-bye, dear Father. And, if it is permitted to a religious man to have preferences, I would tell you that I would like a lot more to be able to write you from Le Havre than from here. But above all, that the will of God be done."* (Letter from Bro. De la Croix<sup>148</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 122, May 26th, 1837).

*"Reverend Father, the more I see the moment is arriving when you are going to choose the Brothers going to Oceania, the more I multiply my prayers and sacrifices to obtain from God and from you, beloved Father, that grace which I desire with all my soul. I would be very happy if our good God would grant me this favor. I do not know what will happen, but I keep on praying to our Good Lord and Mary, our Good Mother, with great confidence. My sacrifice is done: I am willing to leave as soon as God decides it. I expect daily my successor here because I am convinced that you will think of me. These are, my Reverend Father, the feelings of your humble and submissive son in Jesus and Mary,"* (Letter from Bro. Pierre-Marie<sup>149</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 157, April 25, 1838).

### **Generosity of total self-giving at a very young age**

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*"I would have liked having written you from Paris, but it was impossible, as our stay there was a rather short one. After leaving Hermitage, we remained in Lyons up to the next Sunday. I took advantage of those days to go to St. Laurent-d'Agnay, and have the Mayor certify the consent that my father gave me; and he also gave me a request addressed to the Prefect in*

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<sup>147</sup> See note 52

<sup>148</sup> BROTHER DE LA CROIX (BEAUVOIR Charles-François). Born at Vienne, Isère, in 1811. Entered the Institute November 12, 1835 and received the habit March 25, 1836. First profession May 22, 1836 and perpetual profession October 10, 1836. Director of Semur-en-Brionnais, 1836. Left the Institute in 1838. Documents: ch1 10 093 ; AFM 121.7; (References: RB 153). (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>149</sup> See note 65

order to get my passport for Oceania. On Saturday I attended a ceremony that took place at Fourvière; they hung a precious red heart on the statue of Our Lady; the most beautiful one of those given to her. The label read: "Missionaries of Polynesia". Inside of that heart was a list with the names of the missionaries departing for Polynesia. The same ceremony will be repeated for all subsequent groups destined there. Surely our Blessed Mother desires that plenty of names of her beloved children be put in that heart of hers. (Núm.099, Letter of the Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>150</sup>, November 8, 1836).

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## **FORMATOR OF MISSIONARIES**

### **Marcellin's specific formative apostolate is recognized as something of great importance for the missions**

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"I have several things to communicate you. But before beginning, I beg you to receive my congratulations for the approaching new year. May you be filled with the abundant blessings you deserve in the eyes of the Lord for your having formed so many pious Brothers, and for so many children having received the life of salvation through their zeal by means of a solid catholic education!" (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>151</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 080, December 29, 1835).

### **He receives expression of gratitude from the Brothers whom he prepares and sends to the missions**

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"I am very pleased, Rev. Father, for your beloved Brothers whom you sent us. We have every confidence that they will cooperate efficiently to the success of the mission. I count on many more like them whom you will have the [missionary] zeal to prepare for us. (Bishop Pompallier's<sup>152</sup> post-scriptum added to the Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>153</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

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<sup>150</sup> See note 52

<sup>151</sup> See note 47

<sup>152</sup> See note 47

<sup>153</sup> See note 51

### **He carries the mission and its missionaries in his mind and heart**

*"For my part, I never go to the holy altar without thinking of our beloved mission and those who are sent there. Please show yourself a father to those we are sending you just as you do for the first ones."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>154</sup>, No. 194, May 27, 1838).

*"Pray for the prosperity of the mission in Polynesia and unite yourself with those who pray for the same intention."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Anaclet<sup>155</sup>, No. 248, March 23, 1839).

*"We are also praying for the mission of Oceania, for the members of the society who are there now and for those we are preparing to send there."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Marie-Laurent<sup>156</sup>, No. 249, April 8, 1839).

*"Let us continue, very dear Brothers, to pray the Lord in a special way for our exciting mission of Polynesia, so that God may cause the true faith to triumph and put down heresy in the midst of these vast areas entrusted to the Society of Mary."* (Circular from Fr. Champagnat to all the Brothers, No. 318, February 4, 1840).

*"We recommend to you particularly Fathers Pezant and Tripe and Brothers Claude-Marie and Ammon,<sup>157</sup> who are leaving the port of Brest at the beginning of this month to go to New Zealand. This latest departure is due to the goodwill of the government, which offered our missionaries four free berths aboard the corvette 'L Aube'."* (Circular from Fr. Champagnat to all the Brothers, No. 318, February 4th, 1840).

<sup>154</sup> See note 47

<sup>155</sup> BROTHER ANACLET (CHAUVERONNIER Étienne). Born at Jarnosse, Loire, November 2, 1810. Entered the Institute September 9, 1837. He did not pronounce temporary vows, but took final vows October 10, 1838. He was at Saint-Didier-sur-Rochefort (1838), La-Côte-Saint-André, (1839), Carvin (1840), Quesnoy-sur-Deule (1846), Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise (1851) and Beaucamps (1859) as doorkeeper. He died there January 17, 1883. Documents: ch 110 248 References: RB 041. (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>156</sup> BROTHER MARIE LAURENT (MORIAT Laurent). Born in Neuville-sur-Saône, Rhône, in 1819. Entered the Institute on December 10, 1834. Took the habit on 6 January 1835. Temporary profession on March 25, 1835. Perpetual profession on October 10, 1838. Saint-Paul-sur-Ternoise: 1838. He left the Institute in 1839. Documents: ch10 249. References: RB 364. (Note of Brother Aureliano Brambila).

<sup>157</sup> See note 61

## **He fosters missionary vocations**

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*“I think you will be pleased if I share with you part of a letter written from Le Havre on the eve of their departure. (Circular from Fr. Champagnat to all the Brothers, No. 079, January 1, 1837).*

*“Our Fathers and Brothers assigned to Polynesia embarked the 24th of last month. What a vast field the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, has entrusted to our zeal. Let us accompany those to whom this vast field has personally fallen, with our good wishes and our fervent prayers.” (Circular from Fr. Champagnat to all the Brothers, No. 079, January 1, 1837).*

*“Our missionaries embarked on 23<sup>rd</sup> December. I have received a very beautiful letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier. I will share it with you a little later.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Louis Marie<sup>158</sup>, No. 080, January 2, 1837).*

*“If you think it appropriate to send me the conditions under which subjects who are to go to the foreign missions are admitted to your excellent seminary, I will be delighted to receive them. In my travels, I may come across some vocations for this excellent ministry.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Fr. Jean Antonio Dubois<sup>159</sup>, No. 083, January 12, 1837).*

## **Discernment in the acceptance of the Brothers who request to go to the missions**

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*“Most likely you desire to know the outcome of my trip, in relation to our confreres at Valbenoite. Well, they have taken this matter with all seriousness and in a supernatural spirit. All of them are very conscious of the profitable consequences for our incipient Society, consequences that will derive from this mission graciously conferred to us by the Holy See. They all pray and*

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<sup>158</sup> See note 63

<sup>159</sup> DUBOIS JEAN-ANTOINE. Born January 10, 1866 at Saint-Remèze, Ardèche. He studied at the Foreign Missions Seminary in Paris and was ordained to the priesthood in 1791. Sent to India in 1792, he carried out tremendous apostolic works there among the people. He published a book on the customs of India which proved very useful for Christian teaching in that country. He lived in England from 1830 to 1832. In 1836 he was appointed in charge of the Seminary of Missions in Paris and died there February 17, 1848. (RB 200). (Note by Brother Aureliano Brambila).

*reflect to implore the light of the Holy Spirit and to listen to Him in each one's interior in the acceptance of the mission, and in discovering a possible vocation for it. Very soon Fr. Colin or Fr. Séon will write to make known the name of those who, full of confidence in the protection of Jesus and Mary, feel the desire to consecrate themselves to the conversion of the infidels who have been entrusted us."* (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>160</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 087, February 17, 1836).

*"You speak about your desire to go to the mission of Polynesia. My dear friend, cultivate that desire, for I believe it comes from God; I believe you also have graces and talents suitable for that work. God doubtless has plans for you; we have evident proof of that in the cure he granted you; never forget it. So try, dear friend, to put your accounts in good order, so that if you are called to go, you will be all ready"* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Denis<sup>161</sup>, No. 168, January 5, 1838).

*"Without any doubt, it is not for me a small consolation to see the zeal of many among you, who have requested vehemently to be incorporated into this second apostolic colony. And certainly this generosity and pure zeal is not for me a small sign of protection from High in this matter. The difficulty is not in finding laborers, but in doing the due selection. This is my worry: that, taking into consideration the number of members – still small*

<sup>160</sup> See note 47

<sup>161</sup> BROTHER DENIS (BRON Joseph). Born at Saint-Jean-de-Bourney, Isère, in 1812. Entered the Institute August 26, 1832. Received the habit October 7, 1832. Made temporary vows December 8, 1832 and perpetual vows August 15, 1834. Sorbiers (1834); Principal at Saint-Didier-sur-Rochefort (1835); Principal at Boulieu (1838); Millery (1840); Bougè-Chambalud (1842); Principal at Sorbiers with Brother Cassien: the latter, for personal and probably more objective reasons as well, soon became angry with him and asked Father Champagnat to have him transferred to another community. In November, 1835 he headed the Foundation team of Saint-Didier. He was principal of that school for three years. He wrote three letters to Father Champagnat who answered him each time. The second letter already reveals personal problems which even time was unable to resolve. In 1838 Father Champagnat named him to Boulieu to replace Brother Hilarion, newly appointed principal of the Bourg-Argental school. Motivated by an urgent personal need, although he was principal, and probably seizing on the right moment, he decided to prepare for a further diploma in November. (Fr. Champagnat did praise him in his third letter). However, he remained only two years at Boulieu and had to be replaced and transferred to Millery. Brother Avit wrote in the Annals: "... this newcomer, of an inflexible character, could get along neither with the children nor the parents nor with Fr. Mathon (the parish priest), and only remained one year." In 1843 he was back at Sorbiers then left the Institute at the end of that year. Shortly afterwards, he died of an illness from which he had been suffering for four or five years. (References: RB 171). (Note of Brother Juan Ramón Alegre).

– cf our Congregation, we cannot grant the departure to all those who have put forward their request.” (Letter from Fr. Jean Claude Colin<sup>162</sup>, No. 152, January 10, 1838).

“I have good reasons for listing Bro. François Regis for the next departure [to the missions]. Bro. Marie Augustin will go some other time.” (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. François<sup>163</sup>, No. 197, June 23, 1838).

### **Qualities expected of a Marist missionary**

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“Father General Superior will choose in combination with you apt subjects for the missions. People are needed who know a little about all types of manual tasks, or at least, that within the team there are some who do, as was the case with the three first whom we now have among us. Later we will ask you for Brothers for the schools. How much work, how many good things to do out here immediately! Those Brothers you will send, please ensure that they have already made perpetual vows, if possible. That they be proven in their chastity and have great love for hidden work and have a rich interior life, like St. Joseph and our Blessed Mother, Mary. They are not the ones who will appear in first line in the eyes of the people in the missions, but by their humble works, by means of catechesis, schools, prayer and contemplative spirit they are meant to be of paramount importance. (Bishop Pompallier’s<sup>164</sup> post-scriptum added to the Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>165</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

“Personal holiness, is it not the best weapon in working for the salvation of souls? But for that it is necessary they be well formed in obedience. One must frequently leave one apostolate to undertake another, to leave one place in order to go to another, to do things that are pleasing and to do others that perhaps are not so pleasing. How important it is that the missionary be totally familiar with word of Jesus: “My food is to do the will of my Father.” Dear Fr. Champagnat may God pour his graces out abundantly upon you and yours. And may He fill with his spirit those you will send us. May Mary, our good Mother, also protect you and us, too. (Bishop Pom-

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<sup>162</sup> See note 84

<sup>163</sup> See note 62

<sup>164</sup> See note 47

<sup>165</sup> See note 51

*pallier's*<sup>166</sup> post-scriptum added to the Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>167</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836)

*"Here quite a number of struggles go on with the enemy of the salvation of men. We are in a never ending battle; we have great hope to win it; we expect one day to obtain the crown of victory. But for that we need the weapons of patience, distrust of oneself, confidence in God and deep humility."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>168</sup>, No. 191, October 15, 1839).

### **Underlining motivation should be altruism, not of selfishness**

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*"They are very eager to reach their destination. Zeal for the salvation of the people of those islands is one of their most outstanding qualities. Let us pray for their salvation and that of those who are entrusted to us. The souls of Frenchmen are just as much the price of the blood of God as those of pagans."* (Letter from Fr. Champagnat to Bro. Sylvestre<sup>169</sup>, No. 158, November 25, 1837).

### **Affectionate remembrances of those who lived with Champagnat at l'Hermitage**

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*"How is my most beloved community of l'Hermitage getting along? Does its superior still experience the heavy burden of his charge? Do the sorrows, the disgusts continue? Are those good Brothers every day increasing in number? New establishments are made? And the new chapel, is well adorned? These are the questions that cross my mind, often. I cannot forget l'Hermitage; when I left it, I was deeply touched. I ask God to accept that sacrifice that was so painful for me. Now I do not feel that separation as a sacrifice but like a grace, that smoothly prepared me for many things."* (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>170</sup>, No. 103, December 15, 1836).

*"I have just received at the same time two of your letters: December 23, 1836, and March 31, 1838. The news you give me there fills my heart with*

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<sup>166</sup> See note 47

<sup>167</sup> See note 51

<sup>168</sup> See note 51

<sup>169</sup> See note 89

<sup>170</sup> See note 51

great happiness. How sweet is for me to remember you and your good Brothers! How can I forget a house that was for me a shrine of peace, and where I had before my eyes more than one example of holiness! How much I like to return frequently in spirit to that house of retreat where I have the assurance that people are sincerely praying to God on my behalf!" (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>171</sup>, No. 191, October 15, 1839).

"In finishing, very dear Father, I beg you to permit me to express to our dear Brothers, a feeling from my heart, and since I am not yet erased from their memory, that they please receive this witness of my most sincere affection. I finish, Reverend Father, please accept, etc." (Letter from Fr. SERVANT Catherin,<sup>172</sup> n° 191, October 15, 1839).

"A French ship will set sail tomorrow for France. I seize this opportunity to write you some lines." (Letter from Fr. Catherin Servant<sup>173</sup>, No. 208, May 14, 1840)

### **Love of the first Marist Missionaries for Champagnat**

"As the remedy for your stomach, I have sent you the small flask which I told you about. Accept it as a token of my friendship. I desire that the divine doctor from on High will totally heal you by its means." (Letter from Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier<sup>174</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 080, December 29, 1835)

"I am very grateful to you, very dear Father, for the gift that you have given me obtained through you; also to Brother Mathieu, who has been very accommodating in my travel preparations to Lyon." (Letter from Mgr POMFALLIER Jean-Baptiste-François<sup>175</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 90, June 10, 1836).

"Pray intensely for me and always pray that way for me. You see the position in which the Lord has placed me." (Letter from Mgr POMFALLIER Jean-Baptiste-François<sup>176</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 90, June 10, 1836).

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<sup>171</sup> See note 51

<sup>172</sup> See note 51

<sup>173</sup> See note 51

<sup>174</sup> See note 47

<sup>175</sup> See note 47

<sup>176</sup> See note 47

*"I would like personally, my beloved Father, to wish you a most happy New Year, and the same thing for my beloved Brothers in Jesus and Mary; but the circumstances impede me to satisfy such a lively desire." (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>177</sup>, No. 104, December 22, 1836)*

*"It is indeed very pleasing to me to be able to renew my feelings of respect and gratitude for all your kindness towards me. And I want also to express to you the great sorrow I experienced of leaving for the last time you and all my confreres whom I will never forget. I will not hear again your exhortations, nor see your good example. But if it is not possible for me to be among you in person, I will try to transfer myself occasionally in spirit, in order to join with all of you in worship of our heavenly Father, who always contemplates us wherever we are. How sublime is the thought of His majesty, when I remember that I could go from one extreme of the world to another without taking myself from His presence!" (Letter from Bro. Elías Regis<sup>178</sup>, No. 179, January 12, 1839)*

*"The memory of l'Hermitage is for me always a very pleasing one. The distance prompts me to adhere to it much strongly. How much I was desiring some news from there. What a happy moment was that one of the arrival of the second shipment of Missionaries, when they brought us news from l'Hermitage. Then I could satisfy my desires! Your letter, above all, my beloved Father, was and still is for me a great source of consolation, and at the same time I find in it the expression of your tender and fatherly care for all of us, your Brothers." (Letter from Bro. Marie-Nizier<sup>179</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 188, September 30, 1839)*

*"Allow one of your children in Christ to address two words to you before he takes leave of France and starts on his way to Polynesia. I did not want to continue the trip without expressing to you my deep gratitude for having appointed me among the first to leave towards New Zealand. Sincerely, many thanks." (Letter from Bro. Claude-Marie<sup>180</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 200, January 25, 1840)*

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<sup>177</sup> See note 52

<sup>178</sup> See note 56

<sup>179</sup> See note 52

<sup>180</sup> See note 61

*“For a very long time I have been desiring to write to you; if I did not decide to do it before, it was not due to indifference. The affection I have for you and for my beloved confreres is totally undiminished in my heart. It is more for lack of ability to write than for forgetfulness. Please be so kind as to be willing to forgive me.” (Letter from Bro. Michel<sup>181</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 209, May 17, 1840)*

*“A French ship setting sail for le Havre, I cannot miss this occasion to give you some news. I will not tell you very many things about the mission, in which I have the happiness to participate; you would not be unaware of such matters, since many letters are sent by our dear missionaries.” (Letter from Bro. Michel<sup>182</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, n° 209, May 17, 1840).*

*“My very Reverend Father, I thank the Lord every day for having granted me such a beautiful vocation through you. Please, do not forget me in your fervent prayers and above all in the holy sacrifice of the altar. All the Brothers who are in New Zealand are enjoying good health and count on your prayers. Please, be so kind as to greet the beloved Brothers François, Louis Marie, Jean Mary, Stanislaus, . . . I conserve for all my Brothers the most tender and sincere affection.” (Letter from Bro. Michel<sup>183</sup> to Fr. Champagnat, No. 209, May 17, 1840).*

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<sup>181</sup> See note 53

<sup>182</sup> See note 53

<sup>183</sup> See note 53

# THE LOST LEADER

## *The story of Jean-Claude Courveille (1786-1866) and his part in the Society of Mary*

Bro Frederick McMAHON, FMS



*Jean-Claude Courveille as a  
Benedictine monk later in life*

## PART 2

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### INTRODUCTION

*In the first part of the article, "The Lost Leader" (Jean-Claude Courveille, see Marist Notebooks No. 24), we presented Courveille's career up to the year 1826, the year in which he withdrew from the movement that was seeking official church recognition of the Society of Mary. In this second part we examine his endeavours to set up a different religious group under his sole leadership, a group quite separate from that which was emerging between 1816 and 1826. After failing in this attempt,*

*Courveille led a type of wandering life among sundry dioceses in France until his admission to the Benedictine monks of Solemnes in 1836. There, for thirty years, after a long period of adjustment, he led the life of a humble monk until, for Courveille - "something ere the end, some work of noble note may yet be done" (Tennyson, "Ulysses"). Not only did Courveille*

reappear in the Marist story, but there was also opportunity for his many gifts to “shine in use” in apostolic work beyond the monastic walls. In a way, we are viewing a type of resurrection story.

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## THE AFTERMATH OF COURVEILLE’S DEPARTURE



*Monseigneur Alexander Devie,  
bishop of Belley*

There still remained the thorny problem of the co-ownership by Father Courveille of the properties at La Valla and the Hermitage. As was to be expected, Father Courveille had not stayed at La Trappe, Aiguebelle; he had not even asked officially to be admitted there. He withdrew to the Marist Sisters at St Clair-sur-Rhône after Father Colin, still deemed unacquainted with what had happened at the Hermitage, had refused to receive him into the Belley group.

We have the following account of Courveille’s visit (some time before 19 July 1826) to the aspiring Marists in the diocese of Belley; it comes from Father Pierre Colin: “When he came to Belley on his return from” (the Retreat house),

“we told him not to come back, that we could no longer regard him as one of us. He wept, begged. ... We were inexorable. Monseigneur Devie, bishop of Belley, ... was exactly of our opinion and even forbade us to let him stay among us. We had had enough trouble concerning him. Afterwards, we destroyed all our correspondence with this poor Courveille; nothing of it remains.”<sup>1</sup>

For Courveille’s meeting with Champagnat about financial matters we find that it was Father Gaucher, parish priest of Chavanay (the Brothers had opened a school there in 1824), who prepared the way for the meet-

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<sup>1</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 689, Paras 8-10

ing. (Chavanay is on the right bank of the Rhône, opposite St Clair.) At the end of September Father Champagnat wrote to his former Superior, now resident at St Clair, to ask for a meeting. The rough draft of his letter shows us Champagnat's embarrassment:

*My dear Father Courveille,*

*I desire very much that you come or that you assign me a place for an interview. ...Father Terraillon not being at the Hermitage, and, if the Vicars have not forbidden you, I ... as I have to make a journey to Grenoble for an interview with the archbishop.*"<sup>2</sup>

The answer came back quickly.

*All for the greater glory of God and M.D.G. j.cb. Amen.*

*Reverend and dear friend,*

*if you wish to give me the pleasure of seeing you and conferring on our business, which we will conclude, I hope, with the grace of God and the help of the august Mary and in spite of evil tongues, in a just and satisfactory manner on your side as well as mine, and that we will always be united together, I ask you kindly to come on Wednesday 4, Thursday 5, or Friday 6 October to St Clair, because after that I have to leave on a rather long journey. Give my regards to the Brothers; I commend myself to your prayers and to theirs.*

*Receive, my very dear friend, the assurance of the attachment and sincere friendship with which I have the honour to be,*

*Your very devoted servant,  
J-C Courveille f.d.s.p.g. Priest.  
St Clair, 29 September 1826.*"<sup>3</sup>

The meeting took place as arranged. Before M. Lions, solicitor of Chavanay, Father Courveille granted to Father Champagnat "all rights in property that he has or could have, over all that comprises the establishment called 'The Hermitage', without reserve... except the right to live in a room

<sup>2</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 163

<sup>3</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 165

at the said Hermitage when he pleases... a room reserved for Father Courveille, with all the furniture he brought. ... If he finds any of it to have been taken away or damaged or lost, he has the right to be paid by Father Champagnat."<sup>4</sup> (This Deed was agreed on for the sum of 5,000 francs, which Father Courveille declared having received that day from Father Champagnat, and for which sum he gave a receipt. Nevertheless, Father Courveille still retained his title as co-owner of the house at La Valla, contenting himself with appointing Father Champagnat as his agent under Power of Attorney, by an Act under his personal signature.

So Father Courveille retained a room at the Hermitage. ... "He was not being completely rejected; he was regarded as a friend of the house. This restored him somewhat in the eyes of all, and it was also a shrewd act of charity and appeasement. ... Moreover, his fault was perhaps not very much noised abroad, thanks to the prudence of Fr Champagnat."<sup>5</sup> We can see from these proceedings that Courveille did not regard his expulsion as final, so he retained a way of re-entry. Father Champagnat informed Father Colin of all these transactions. Colin was very happy and replied on 5 December 1826: "We are very happy in the news that you have concluded matters with Father Courveille. This was very disturbing for us on your behalf."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, difficulties arose in regard to the La Valla property. Father Champagnat sold his half in two portions (in 1827 and 1829). The management of the other half, owned by Father Courveille, had been relinquished by Power of Attorney to Champagnat. Through an anomaly, however, Courveille, on 29 September 1828, gave a Power of Attorney to a M. Mouton to sell, in his name, the half-share of the La Valla property which belonged to him! And M. Mouton sold it to Jacques Coste on 12 October. No doubt the difficulties arising from this double power of attorney forced Fr Champagnat to ask Fr Courveille to approve all the operations he had enacted in Courveille's name. Fr Courveille approved of them without reservation - but Courveille, probably in need of money for his new venture at Saint Antoine, obviously had not done the right thing by Champagnat.<sup>7</sup>

Couveille's departure from the Marist scene in 1826, ten years after the pledge of Fourvière, was a watershed in the affairs of the Society of Mary. In

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<sup>4</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 166, Para.2

<sup>5</sup> O. M. 3, Doc. 865, Paras3,4

<sup>6</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 169, Para. 2

<sup>7</sup> O. M. 1, Doc. 217, Para. 1

a way, it was a blessing, too, for Courveille, who was handling Marist affairs principally within the archdiocese of Lyon, was far from being popular with archdiocesan authorities; he had trodden on too many corns. Besides, his rather imperious ways (e.g., his conversation with the Mayor of Charlieu), his lack of judgement and of inter-personal skills (e.g., his treatment of the novices at the Hermitage, and also his failure to seize opportunities (e.g., not speaking to Archbishop de Pins about Marist aspirations) all impeded progress for the Society of Mary in the great archdiocese. From now onwards Belley slowly became the centre of gravity for the Society of Mary under the leadership of Father Jean-Claude Colin. But the archdiocese of Lyon was yet to see a great Marist resurgence in the priestly branch, led by Séon and Champagnat - so much so that, when the Marists gained approval for the priests' branch of the Society of Mary in 1836, the number who gathered from Lyon for the occasion was short by only one from the number from Belley, and, although the bishops of Belley and Lyon carefully conserved their priests under their own authority until 1836, the archbishop of Lyon had given fuller recognition to his aspiring Marists before 1836 than had his counterpart in Belley.

As for Courveille, his fall from grace was no doubt tied to his successive failures over the ten years since the Pledge at Fourvière. He had tried to carry out Mary's behest as he saw it, but the strife he encountered with archdiocesan authorities, the failure of his ventures at Verrières (the Third Order), Feurs (his Marist Brothers), Charlieu (the centre for missionary priests), and the Hermitage (becoming the Superior of Champagnat's Marist Brothers), as well as the unsuitability of his personality to relate to people, to lead people and to administer affairs all conspired against him. The isolation of the Hermitage location and the resentment he engendered there would also have contributed to turning him in on himself and would have placed greater stain on his self-restraint. Despite all this and despite his fall, however, Courveille was not yet finished and soon was 'once more unto the breach', this time following his star, his behest from Mary as he understood it, in another region of France.

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### **COURVEILLE FOUNDS A NEW CONGREGATION**

Jean-Claude Courveille remained at La Trappe, Aiguebelle for only a few extra days after his resignation from the Hermitage had been ac-

cepted. Supplied with a letter of spiritual association granted him on 11 June 1826 by Dom Etienne Malmy of Aigueville, according him the title of “Superior General of the venerable Marist Brothers”, and with a celebret from the archdiocese of Lyon dated 17 June 1826 (a “celebret ad revocationem”, i.e., not for a set time, but at the will of the archbishop), and another from the diocese of Chambéry dated 19 July, which recognised him as “Superior General of the Order of Holy Mary”, he took up residence in the diocese of Grenoble (at St Clair) about 7 September of the same year, 1826.<sup>8</sup>

Since 18 August 1826 a new bishop, Monseigneur Philibert de Bruillard, had succeeded to the see of this diocese after the death of Monseigneur Claude Simon. The Prefect of Isère, Jules de Clavières, had earnestly urged the bishop to found a congregation of Little Brothers, probably at La Côte-St-André. In the previous year de Clavières had asked the General Council of Isère to vote 6,000 francs for this eventuality. Also in 1825 (31 October) he had written to the Minister of Public Instruction and Worship, Monseigneur Frayssinous, to say that this project was of the utmost importance in a district where primary instruction had for a long time been left to errant and unprincipled men.

Scarcely a month after his arrival at Grenoble, Monseigneur de Bruillard wrote to the Prefect, 25 September 1826, stating that he sweated blood and tears in sharing the Prefect’s views of establishing Little Brothers, but that, unhappily, he despaired of succeeding. He then drew up for the Prefect a new plan, the result of an interview with Father Courveille, “a respectable priest” who had presented himself at the bishop’s house as “Director of the Little Brothers called of Mary” of the archdiocese of Lyon. He had been informed that several parishes of Isère were asking for these “Little Brothers”. The “venerable ecclesiastic” handed him some copies of a Prospectus dated 19 July 1824, approved by Vicar General Cholleton. Courveille wanted to buy, for 15,000 francs, part of the buildings of the abbey of Saint-Antoine (near St Marcellin in Isère) belonging to M. Jubie, if the consent of M. La Bâtie, sub-Prefect of Saint-Marcellin, was favourable. The bishop went on to say that he had himself promised Courveille 500 francs.

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<sup>8</sup> O.M. 1, Docs 153, 154,156

## THE BENEVOLENCE OF EPISCOPAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES

The Prefect rejoiced at this excellent news and immediately proposed an allowance of 1,600 francs for the foundation of the “Society of Little Brothers established at Saint-Antoine”. When Monseigneur de Pins’ council at Lyon heard of this enterprise, they wondered whether they should warn Bishop de Bruillard ‘of the mischief’ of Father Courveille at the Hermitage: “28



*Abbey of Saint-Antoine. The Sisters’ part is to the right of the wheel-window.*

September 1826. Father Courveille, having had some setbacks at the Hermitage, wishes to found an establishment at Grenoble. The bishop there welcomes him; the Prefect offers him a house at 600 francs rental. Should we give this prelate warning?”<sup>9</sup> It was decided to remain silent on the matter, “unless the bishop of Grenoble should ask for information”.<sup>10</sup>

The bishop of Grenoble suspected nothing and did not seek information. He was only too happy to have found a community ready to bring some life to the magnificent ruins of the abbey of Saint-Antoine and, with the approval of the Rector of the Academy of Grenoble, Berroyer, he hoped to form there a teacher-training school under the guidance of religious. Meanwhile, Courveille had prepared the way for his own acceptance into the local parish: “He told the parish priest of Saint-Antoine, whose successor told Brother Théodose” (one of Champagnat’s Brothers) “that, not finding himself well received, respected, esteemed, recognised as Superior at the Hermitage, he went to establish himself at the abbey of Saint-Antoine.”<sup>11</sup>

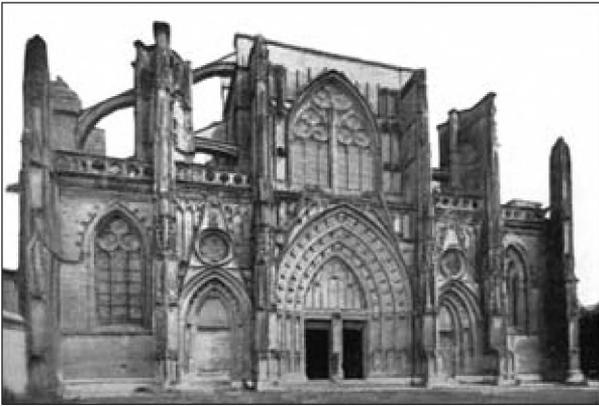
Under full sail now, Courveille bought for 60,000 francs a large part of the superb abbey and was pleased to hear himself being called Abbot of Saint-Antoine. He managed to entice there some two, perhaps three, Brothers from the Hermitage to join his new venture, among them Brother Do-

<sup>9</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 164

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 860, Para. 3

minique. As we have seen, Courveille's links with Champagnat's work in the archdiocese of Lyon were not entirely broken and he could thus make this new work appear to be a branch of the first. It seems that the ulterior motive of Courveille was to form in Isère another section of the Society of Mary, able to be joined to those of Loire (Champagnat) and Ain (Colin). By this means, he perhaps hoped that, when the moment of unification of all three sections came about, he could regain what he had lost by his fault. And (why not?) he could even manage to be elected as Superior-General? So he still continued to add his titles to his signature – the famous letters “f.d.s.p.g.”, meaning, probably, ‘Director of the Brothers and Superior General (of the Fathers)’.



*Facade of the abbey church. The abbey -one of the most beautiful in France'.*

On 10 December 1826 the municipality of Saint-Antoine, proud of the establishment which was favoured by the bishop, the Prefect and the Academy Rector, voted 220 francs to furnish “the Brothers of the Congregation of Mary 50 tables, desks and seats, 50 small desks for little children, and a high desk for the supervisor of the class”.<sup>12</sup>

Two days later, 12 December 1826, a Prefectorial note accepted the undertaking proposed by ‘the General of the Society of the Little Brothers’ to supply teachers for primary instruction in rural districts which asked for them, and agreed on a Departmental payment of 200 francs for each teacher who, at the end of his course of studies, obtained a certificate by the ordinary means. In addition, it granted an initial aid of 1,600 francs, as it had promised in September.

Soon the “Abbot of Saint-Antoine” had around him twelve to fifteen young men – in general, from good families, whom he wished to make religious. To this breakaway branch of the Little Brothers of Mary he added

<sup>12</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 170, Para. 4.

his Sisters of Mary whom he had brought from Saint-Clair-sur-Rhône and Rive-de Gier; they very soon opened a school for girls at Saint-Antoine. Indeed, it is two of the nuns (Francoise Brun and Antoinette Rollat) who are named as co-proprietors of Courveille's section of the magnificent Saint-Antoine abbey property, purchased for 60,000 francs. These ladies, then, put up the cash and retained the ownership of the parts purchased for the use of Courveille's religious personnel. Their retention of ownership was, all in all, a wise decision.

On 17 September 1827 Jules de Calvières, deeming that the novitiate of the Brothers of Saint-Antoine seemed "to be perfectly fulfilling the proposed end,"<sup>13</sup> "put at the disposal of "Rev. Father Courveille, General of the Society, a new fund of 2,300 francs from General Council funds"<sup>14</sup> (Prefecture of Isère). This payment was made on 2 November 1827 and was followed in 1828 by two others: 970 francs on 4 February and 400 francs on 14 May.

The Rector of the Grenoble Academy wrote to Vicar General Bossard, presenting the new government's educational organisation of 1828 as being still more advantageous to the Church than that provided by the 1824 Ordinances. He said that the government proposed to recognise and adopt the houses of Brothers and Sisters of congregations authorised for primary teaching, and the inspectors could do nothing more in conformity with the interest of these pious and humble educators of children than to assure them that, in conforming gladly to the rules traced out by the king with much benevolence towards them, they would suffer no change in their position except that of a yet more powerful protection assured for their pupils and for themselves.

Favoured by administrative support from the Department of Isère through its civil officers, from the University and from diocesan authority, assured of a definite revenue, occupying historic buildings, Courveille could hope to make reparation for his scandal, fulfil the mission confided to him by Our Lady of Le Puy and keep the promise he had made to Our Lady at Fourvière.

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<sup>13</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 177, Para. 3

<sup>14</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 177, Para. 4

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## **THE FAILURE OF JEAN-CLAUDE COURVEILLE'S NORMAL SCHOOL**

It was a comparatively easy matter, then, for the ousted founder of the Society of Mary in Lyon to make the Normal School at Saint-Antoine prosper. Unfortunately, he was not the man for the task.

The Prefectorial decision of 12 December 1826 anticipated a payment of 200 francs for each teacher who, on finishing his course of studies, would secure his brevet in the usual way, and, for this purpose, 1,200 francs had been advanced to the Superior of Saint-Antoine. "But, as the knowledge of the only student who it was thought could fulfil this condition was deemed unsatisfactory, there had not been one centime paid out of the allocation."<sup>15</sup> Thus, Courveille found himself obliged to give back to the Fund for Contingency Revenues of the Prefecture whenever he would have money available from the agreed-on bonus. Moreover, the bishop of Grenoble disassociated himself from the enterprise in February 1829, disgusted by the "the excessive ignorance" of the Brothers formed by Courveille.

The Academy Rector, Berroyer, ended his report to Vatimesnil (French Minister for Public Instruction) on 3 February 1829: "The personnel of this establishment is such that it cannot break out of its incompetence which, up till now, has been utterly complete. This is about all that must be said in this report, which Your Excellency has asked for concerning an enterprise of which even the name is unknown to the people of the district in which it exists."<sup>16</sup>

It seems that Courveille made other contacts. Since July 1828 he had been in touch with Father Mazelier, Superior of the "Brothers of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux" (Drôme) and there is a report of a visit of the archbishop of Valence. Because of this, Father Fière (Vicar General of Valence) informed the latter of the failure of the Brothers in Isère: "The Brothers of Saint-Antoine, for want of subjects, have abandoned their enterprise, and with great losses, after having acquired the convent. The lack of novices and of harmony between the parish priest and the Superior contributed to this disaster."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in "The New Congregations" p. 348

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

Division, together with a complete lack of resources, dispersed Courveille's Brothers. Brother Dominique returned to the sheepfold. "He presented himself at the Hermitage and asked to be re-admitted. Father Champagnat pushed him towards the refectory: 'Come in, yes,' he said to him, smiling, as if he wished to say. 'You poor prodigal son. Yes, you can come back. You have been made a fool of. You have made a blunder. Ah, well, re-enter, and may all that be over and done with.'"<sup>18</sup>

Division was not the only problem. "Courveille was often absent, often travelling. The young fellows, left to themselves, did practically nothing, spent their time playing and ended by withdrawing, at least after the departure of Courveille."<sup>19</sup>

A letter from the new parish priest of Saint-Antoine tells us of the dispersion of Courveille's Brothers. He is writing to Father Mazelier, founder of the Brothers of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux.

*Saint Antoine, Isère.*

*17th July, 1829.*

*Dear Father,*

*I hasten to reply to your letter of 13th in which you ask for information needed for the admission to your novitiate of the young man Joseph Roux of Chatte.*

*I will speak according to my conscience and my own personal knowledge of the young man in question. Firstly, I have been parish priest at Saint-Antoine for only five months, so what I say is only about the time since I took over the parish.*

*When I arrived, I found a community of Brothers, named after Mary, destined for the teaching of country children, but for reasons known only to the bishop, he sent away the Reverend Father in charge. The community thus found itself without a head and each member was forced to look af-*

<sup>18</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 861, Para. 8

<sup>19</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 873, Para. 11

ter himself. Some went this way and some that, all without any scandal attached, but all suffering from the surprise of finding himself unable to follow the vocation which had brought him to the one house under the one head.

Like the others, young Roux looked for some means of earning his daily bread, but, less fortunate than the rest, he was the last to arouse pity, and the Sisters of the convent of St Antoine (they had come from St Clair), out of charity, finally took him in as a sacristan – a task which he fulfilled admirably, being unable, because of his delicate constitution, to undertake heavy manual work. He continued the same work for me, to my great satisfaction. His conduct has been exemplary; the collapse of the community has in no way changed his practices nor the pious way in which he receives the sacraments. Since I took possession of this parish I can only praise God for the edification this young man has given to the parish and to his Brothers. I believe he would be very useful to any community that received him, and, when I say this about him, I speak from the depths of my conscience.

Perhaps you are surprised, Father, that, after the debacle brought about by forces of circumstances in this community, the Brother in question did not follow the others. There is nothing surprising about that; they were all obliged to fend for themselves, but this one, whose health, if not feeble, is at least delicate, was not able to do so. These are the details which my conscience compels me to give you. You may be sure that I would be very loath to harm your community by presenting someone to you who would not fulfil all the promise I have made of him.

Yours, etc.,  
PONCET, Rector of Saint-Antoine.<sup>20</sup>

Already, by proxy, on 29 September 1828, poor Courveille had given full liberty to a third party to take away and sell his furniture that remained at the Hermitage, and, on 12 October of the same year, he sold his share of the La Valla property for 2,000 francs to a merchant of St Etienne. (Father Champagnat had sold his portion of La Valla, i.e., the school, to Father Bedoin, parish priest (1 May 1827) and the remainder to Couturier on 5 February 1829).

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<sup>20</sup> Archives of Marist Brothers

## THE MARIST SISTERS AT SAINT ANTOINE

The establishing of Brothers at Saint-Antoine was one year before the Sisters, who went there in September 1827. They went from Rive-de-Gier to St Clair in mid-July 1827, where they joined those who had begun in 1816.<sup>21</sup> The situation at Saint-Antoine was better as far as the Marist Sisters were concerned, since, after having adopted the Statutes of the “Sisters of Notre Dame de Pradelles” (Haute-Loire), they found themselves authorised by the Royal Ordinance of 21 December 1828.



*Father Jean-Claude Colin, founder of Marist priests and Sisters.*

The following information comes from Father Detours' edition of the work of Brother Avit, Marist Brother, who certainly was not a witness, but who was a determined pursuer of facts and stories - and perhaps a too-credulous recorder. What he says here harmonises well enough with the character of Courveille: “After some time Courveille found himself pursued by his creditors and little esteemed by the Sisters. ... Father Courveille departed.”<sup>22</sup> And this is what Detours has to say about Courveille's portrait which, according to Detours, Courveille had arranged to be painted on the wall of the St Antoine convent: “A sister was found trying to efface this portrait, when someone remarked to her, ‘But Sister, is that how you treat your founder's portrait?’ ‘Ah, Don't talk to me about that’, she replied, and continued with vigorous strokes to erase the painting from the wall with her broom.”<sup>23</sup> Father Detours had some additional information from Marist Brother Théodose, who became well acquainted with the Saint Antoine scene: “In one section of the abbey he placed his foundation of Sisters, the Religious Sisters of Mary (that was their name); they put him aside at the end, for Courveille did not suit them. Then one fine morning Courveille put the key under the door and disappeared; it was said that he left for America. Maybe he is still there.”<sup>24</sup> Another statement from

<sup>21</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 859, Para. 3

<sup>22</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 859, Para. 4

<sup>23</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 873, Para. 10

<sup>24</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 860, Paras 4,5

Brother Théodose is to this effect: "It appears that Courveille wanted to administer in his own manner. The Sisters, annoyed with this, finished up by settling down in their own premises and governing themselves, putting him aside."<sup>25</sup> Courveille's break from the Sisters was now complete.

In 1844 Father Colin made inquiries about the Sisters in an endeavour to help them. The Marist Sisters of Belley tried to revive them and assimilate them by sending two Marist Sisters to be with them for a period of ten months. It was not a successful venture. The Sisters of Saint Antoine slowly declined in numbers until the persecution of 1903 finally dispersed them.

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## **COURVEILLE'S DESCENT**

*In 1829, with the collapse in of his attempt to found teaching Brothers, Jean-Claude Courveille abandoned the abbey of Saint-Antoine and withdrew to the parish of Apinac, where his mother had been born, where he owned some property, and where his uncle was parish priest. From the many celebretts that he received from diocesan authorities at this period, it would appear that he made an extensive journey throughout France in the spring of 1829 before settling in Apinac. His wanderings took him to Nîmes, Toulouse, Limoges, and Clermont.*

*By the beginning of July he turned his back on the diocese of Grenoble and settled in that of Lyon. It would appear that he lodged with his sister at Apinac and managed his own affairs as well as hers. Apinac was the parish of his uncle, but, being still in the archdiocese of Lyon, Courveille was not permitted to exercise priestly ministry. We read an archdiocesan Council Minute regarding this matter:*

*5 November 1829: "M. Gonnet, parish priest of Chénerilles" (a village about twenty kilometres from Apinac) "asks for Father Courveille as a helper during the Jubilee. Refused."<sup>26</sup> This refusal by the archdiocese seems to indicate that Courveille was deprived of confessional powers and that it was*

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<sup>25</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 861, Para. 10

<sup>26</sup> O.M. I, Doc. 205

*not intended to give them to him even temporarily. For a brief period, however, there was a relenting of this ban, as we learn from an archdiocesan Council Minute: "21 March 1832: Father Courveille is authorised to help Father Beynieux, parish priest of Apinac, until Pentecost."<sup>27</sup> This is the first time since 1829 that full faculties were given to Courveille.*

From later chroniclers of the Marist story we learn about a further attempt by Courveille to regain his position among his fellow Marists. There may be some confusion with an earlier attempt, but we cannot rule out the possibility of a second sally by Courveille to regain his lost post. The following is Fr Jeantin's account of Courveille's meeting with Jean-Claude Colin, an encounter in which we are told that Courveille attempted a very dramatic approach: "M. Courveille commenced to take on his mysterious airs and to menace them with the maledictions of God if they continued not to listen to him. Then M. Colin, animated with holy zeal, said to him: 'Do you believe that we are not aware of your conduct?' At these words he fell to a silence full of confusion. It was all over - it was the end."<sup>28</sup>

*After this rebuff by Colin, Jean-Claude Courveille returned for a while to Apinac. Father Jeantin, who is one of the chroniclers of the life of Father Colin, gives an account of what he gleaned from Colin concerning the period of Courveille's life from the failure at Saint Antoine and to his departure for the diocese of Bourges in 1833. It seems that a grave moral lapse occurred towards the end of this period: "M. Courveille retired to Apinac, his parish of birth. ... As he had constructed a little chapel in the wood bordering on the church, he brought children there on pilgrimage and acquired a great reputation for sanctity. One day, as one of the women was scolding a child who did not want to go on pilgrimage, and was reproaching him for his want of regard for a saint like Father Courveille, the child indignantly cried out: 'Your Father Courveille! I know him.' Astonished at this reply, the good woman interrogated the child and discovered secrets of iniquity. Other women, alerted by the first, questioned their children; six children were found who had been victims of this abominable passion.*

*"The priest in charge of the canton was informed about it; he denounced the guilty party to the diocesan authorities, who then imposed an interdict.*

<sup>27</sup> O.M. 1, Doc 245

<sup>28</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 819, Para. 78 (a), and Detours, O.M. 3, Doc. 872, Para. 44.

*At this news the good and worthy parish priest of Apinac closed the sacristy of his church to prevent his nephew from celebrating holy Mass. The latter having had the audacity to lay claim to the key of the sacristy, the venerable priest said to him with legitimate indignation: 'You wretch; you have been celebrating Mass here all too long; you will not celebrate here any more.'*<sup>29</sup> *Courveille then quit Apinac. For the best part of the next four years he led a tortured existence.*

Accepted by the bishop of the archdiocese of Bourges, Courveille was given the pastoral care of people in a home for the aged in a place called Châteauroux. The Register of the archdiocesan Council Minutes gives us a good account of Courveille's activities in 1833 and beyond. At the meeting of 18 February 1833 Courveille was appointed chaplain to the Old-Age home in Châteauroux. Then, "Minutes of 9 April: Father Molat believes that Father Courveille is capable of occupying a more important position and he presumes that he would not be averse to being named to a rather lucrative place to allow him to bring his sister, of whom he is the sole supporter. The Council is disposed to accept this nomination."<sup>30</sup> "Minutes of 7 October 1833: Some disturbing information having been given to a member of the council about Father Courveille, chaplain of the old-age home at Châteauroux, some inquiries have been made concerning his past history, the result being that he has many grave faults to reproach himself with in regard to moral behaviour. For this reason he was sent away from the archdiocese of Lyon ... These documents lead the Council to believe that M.Courveille needs to be supervised carefully."<sup>31</sup> "Minutes of 17 October 1834: Father Courveille...expresses the desire to occupy a post where he can give more scope to his zeal. The bishop proposes to reply to him that he will give attention to the request."<sup>32</sup> "Minutes of 17 August 1835: Father Courveille ... is accused of grave acts against morals, of the same nature as acts for which it appears that he had previously been convicted and punished. The bishop charges M. Molat to make inquiries."<sup>33</sup> Twenty-two days after the Council had decided on an inquiry concerning the denunciations relative to M. Courveille, the latter received his exeat from the archdiocese of Bourges. Courveille was on the run again.

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<sup>29</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 820, Paras 26-27

<sup>30</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 407, Para. 2

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, Para. 3

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, Para. 5

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, Para. 7

In September 1835 another scandal forced his departure to another location, this time in the diocese of Reims. The bishop there gave Courveille an assignment at Witry-lès-Reims, but he left that post suddenly in April 1836, no doubt for the same reason as his other departures. He is next to be found in the diocese of Le Mans, where the kind bishop, Monseigneur Bouvier, gave him not only a celebret but also an accompanying letter which reads: "Le Mans, 9 July 1836. M.Courveille, bearer of this present letter, is a pious and zealous priest. We permit him to celebrate Mass in the churches and chapels of the diocese, with the consent of the parish priests and chaplains. He is not due to stay long, unless he does not find a place at Solesmes or in another community."<sup>34</sup> On the same day the generous bishop wrote a letter, introducing Courveille to dom Guéranger of Solesmes: "9 July 1836. My dear Prior, here is a priest from the diocese of Le Puy who is recommended to me by an excellent parish priest of the diocese of Bourges with whom I am in contact. He gives the recommendation as a friend of the nominee and states that the latter is a pious priest. It appears that he wants to enter your establishment, but I can see that he would not be able to be of great use to you. If he asks to be associated with you, you will determine what prudence will advise you to do."<sup>35</sup> Courveille's friend on this occasion is the same Father Molat, archpriest of Châteauroux of the diocese of Bourges, the one who was charged with inquiring about Courveille's background. Doubtlessly, he took into account the possibilities of recovery for the unfortunate chaplain of the home for the aged and sought to give him another chance.

Thus four terrible years came to an end for Courveille when, armed with this letter of recommendation, he found acceptance in the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes, newly restructured by the famous dom Guéranger. As for the sad faults of this unbalanced priest, they were certainly seemed to be of a nature to bring him before the Courts of Justice, but it appears that he always succeeded in shielding himself from the wrath to come. Only one tradition, reported by Father Lagniet, mentions a brief imprisonment of Courveille, but such a report cannot be verified. In a way, Courveille's punishment was that recommended for Hamlet's mother: "Leave her to heaven, And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge to prick and sting her."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 410

<sup>35</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 411

<sup>36</sup> W. Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', Act 1, Sc. V, Lines 86-88.

Nevertheless, three rays of hope emerged from the events immediately prior to Courveille's acceptance to the monastery. In the person of Archpriest Molat he had someone who believed in the possibilities of his redemption, and this belief induced Bishop Bouvier to write the recommendation. Secondly, it can possibly be assumed that the misdeeds imputed to Courveille were perhaps not as grave as the denunciation could lead us to believe in the first place, because Molat investigated the charges against Courveille and yet urged the bishop to give Courveille the precious reference for Solesmes. Finally, the bishop's statement concerning Courveille's not being of any use to the monastery ironically turned out to be untrue, as we shall see.

There was yet another factor which told in Courveille's favour. Just prior to his arrival, there had been a type of internal revolt within the monastery walls at Solesmes; it aimed at nothing less than the deposition of the prior, dom Guéranger. After its failure, only four religious, including the Prior, renewed their vows, this time for five years. The fact that the re-establishment of monastic life at Solesmes had begun only three years before Courveille's application, plus the diminution of numbers after the 'revolt' may have had an influence on Courveille's being accepted.

The trust of Molat, the recommendation of the kind Bishop Bouvier, the readiness of dom Guéranger to receive recruits may perhaps be seen as the intervention of Courveille's guiding star, Mary, offering a lifeline to her devotee who had gone astray. Will he grasp it and come to shore, there to stand on solid spiritual ground once again?

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## **COURVEILLE – A CHALLENGE TO CHANGE**

It is difficult to be sympathetic towards Courveille, but an attempt must be made to be fair. It seems certain that he was genuinely convinced that the Mother of God commissioned him to found the Society of Mary. He gave himself totally to the task, but the sweetness of the first inspiration and the first achievements was soured by subsequent misunderstandings and failures. He was aware of his being put aside, of receiving a series of rebuffs which culminated in final rejection by his fellows in the words spoken by Colin. A series of moral failures marked some of the years of his

middle-age. Finally, at the age of fifty, this man who had not learned to look within, this man who had not come to an adequate knowledge of himself, this Courveille, stood at the threshold of the Solesmes monastery. There, for the next thirty years, this man of dreams had scope for the getting of wisdom.

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### **COURVEILLE – DEFECTS DOCUMENTED**

There are plenty of voices raised to point out the defects in Courveille's character – plenty of scope for Courveille's self-improvement within the monastery walls. His defects were constantly noted by observers. Marist Brother Théodose, who lived close to Saint Antoine for twenty years and thus to knowledge of Courveille, had this to say about him: "He launched out, putting himself at the head of everything, but had no continuity afterwards. There was exaltation, high spiritedness in him. One moment everything was fine, magnificent, and he was full of largesse, of expansiveness. Then all was lost; all was changed."<sup>37</sup> Brother Théodose also declared that, according to Brother Francois, Champagnat's deputy and successor, "Courveille wanted perfection in the Brothers - one must be perfect. He pushed ahead without discernment. He was an extremist. You cannot have perfection at the beginning. When he wanted to accomplish something, he pursued it, pushed for it without properly reflecting whether he was acting wisely and well."<sup>38</sup> Théodose has yet more to say of the mercurial Courveille: "At the Hermitage Father Courveille reared a crow, and he used to pluck out its feathers, saying to it: 'Defend yourself.' He was so changeable that he inspired little confidence."<sup>39</sup>

The Colin brothers were far from being enamoured of Courveille; they knew his faults only too well. Here is the voice of Pierre Colin: "Ah! How he harmed the Society at the beginning! He was stupid."<sup>40</sup> Pierre Colin then went on to give an example of Courveille's gross folly – the episode of the misuse of the Papal letter.

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<sup>37</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 860, p.8

<sup>38</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 861

<sup>39</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 861, Para. 2

<sup>40</sup> O.M. 2, Doc 689, Para.7



*Dom Guéranger,  
Benedictine monk, Abbot  
of Solesmes.*

Father Jeantin, a later historian (1870 who interviewed Father Jean-Claude Colin, has this to say about Courveille: "He was generally laughed at wherever he passed himself off as founder and superior of a religious order. People laughed at him because of his weak head and his little judgement."<sup>41</sup> Vicar General Cholleton, the protector and guide of the young seminarians planning the Society of Mary, says of Courveille: "I never considered M. Courveille as being the one who was to lead the project; he did not have the head for it. He was enthusiastic..."<sup>42</sup> These statements suffice to give the general impression that Courveille was much in need of self-knowledge and self-improvement. Just how much a middle-aged priest could enter into a self-evaluation programme remained to be seen.

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## **COURVEILLE'S PURGATORIAL PATH**

Jean-Claude Courveille was clothed as a Benedictine monk on 27 August 1836. There followed eighteen months of novitiate leading to his profession of vows in the abbey on 21 March 1838. During the period of his novitiate he was given charge of the sacristy. After first profession he was appointed to the post of being responsible for the lay Brothers of the abbey, an employment he fulfilled until 1841.

From the Annals of the abbey (12 May 1839) we read of the exhortation he gave to some children in the gardens of the abbey at the time of their First Communion. From the same annals (19 November 1839) we find that he made a gift of his possessions to his nephew in exchange for a life annuity.

The time of novitiate and the immediate post-novitiate period were fraught with tribulations for the middle-aged novice. Tension and trouble

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<sup>41</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 840, Para. 115

<sup>42</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 655, Para. 1

arrived when dom Guéranger had to absent himself from the abbey to travel, first to Paris, then to Rome to obtain approbation for the Constitutions of his congregation. His absence of nine months was an agony for Courveille, so much in need of the guidance and support of the abbey's founder. Courveille's letter, written when he was still a novice, shows his dependence on dom Guéranger and also his extreme sensitivity: "I would not know how to express just how much your absence is painful to me, how much disquiet it has brought to my inner self. But, one word from your revered self will restore tranquillity to my soul. At the present moment I am quite disconcerted. It seems that the devil has prevailed over me to make me carry out my duties very badly. ...Take good care of your health, which is so precious to us, and come back as soon as possible to the midst of your dear children, who are like poor orphans during the absence of their dear father. ... Don't forget me in your fervent prayers. I am, as you know, the most wretched of your children and the one who has most need of prayer. But I am also one of those whom you love most sincerely."<sup>43</sup>

Making allowance for the somewhat exaggerated mode of address in mid-nineteenth century France, we can, nevertheless, discern an excess of feeling and a touch of instability in this middle-aged monk. A second letter, written to dom Guéranger on the occasion his sojourn in Paris for work on the second volume of "Institutions Liturgiques" again contains protestations of humility and attachment. Written three years after that of 1837, this letter reveals emotions equally as strong as those of the earlier correspondence: "It seems that a century has passed since you departed from the midst of your dear children ... The hours of your absence seem like months and the weeks seem like years ... I have missed five fasts since the beginning of Lent. You know that when this old gourmand stomach of mine begins to rumble, it is absolutely necessary to give it something. I hope that the Lord will accord me the grace to fast for the remainder of Lent ... All goes well in the community, except for this cowardly old sinner who does nothing worth while, whatever it may be."<sup>44</sup>

The high level of feeling which these letters manifest was almost inevitably followed by a period of profound discouragement. The crisis seems to have come in 1840 and is brought to light in Courveille's letter to Dom

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<sup>43</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 778, Paras 1-4

<sup>44</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 779, Paras 1-3

Guéranger, dated 15 February 1841. The abbot was again in Paris, this time to make arrangements for a foundation in the capital city of France. From the letter we learn that, in an endeavour to endure the doubts that plagued him, Courveille had had recourse to a procedure from the past – living the life of a hermit, but, on this occasion, within the monastic grounds at Solesmes.

He had the permission of his abbot to lead a mitigated eremitic life, but with compulsory attendance at certain exercises made in community. This was a time of sensible graces which seems to have lasted for about a year and which ended, at the end of 1842, in a painful crisis after Bishop Bouvier refused Courveille's request to become a hermit permanently. His letter to his Abbot in the first days of eremitic life reads thus: "I have been in the little hermitage for about a dozen days, with a good and firm resolution to work all the better at my sanctification and to acquire the perfection of our holy state, for I must avow ...that up to the present moment I have not commenced to be either a true religious or a true Benedictine. ... I have led only a lukewarm religious life, seeking all too much my own convenience and comfort under pretext of infirmities, from which only death will deliver me.

*One other matter, dear and tender Father, which the devil made use of to ravish my poor soul, an issue which has been the reason that I have perhaps given you trouble and chagrin, a concern which has made me wanting in obedience and submission on several occasions, a consideration which has led me to lose almost entirely the confidence which I had in your Paternity during the first years of my monastic life, and something which has given me a distaste, nay, even a kind of resentment for the monastery – that matter is my self-love and the demon of pride which dominated me and persuaded me that you had only contempt for me, that you regarded me as nothing, that for a long time you had not spoken to me with that openness of heart which wins confidence. ...*

*But God, full of goodness and mercy, was waiting for me in the little grotto, where, to speak truthfully, I am very cramped for body space... but where, on the other hand, the God of all goodness has expanded my soul and enlightened my spirit to allow me to see and recognise the snares the Demon has spread for me. He has put into my heart a great desire to be held in scorn, to have the self-abnegation of a life hidden and unknown –*

*the type of life for which I formerly had great reluctance. Above all, I feel that God has given me a deep love of perfect obedience, has caused to be reborn in me the initial confidence which I had in your fatherly care.*<sup>45</sup>

It seems quite probable that the over-sensitive Courveille badly misread his Abbot-father. In the second half of 1840 dom Guéranger had much to occupy his mind – finishing the second volume of “Institutions Liturgiques”, grave financial concerns, and the reception of numerous guests. He just did not have for Courveille as much time as the latter craved.

It is obvious, too, that Courveille is treading the purgatorial path. Like the Ancient Mariner, that other spellbinder with words, this man Courveille, whose presence at Champagnat’s Hermitage was so very woeful and disturbing, could admit, “And I had done a hellish thing and it would work ’em woe.”<sup>46</sup> But, happily, we find, that, like the Mariner, Courveille “hath penance done and penance more will do”.<sup>47</sup> Again, like the Mariner, this “soul in agony”<sup>48</sup>, this Courveille, will, in the ways of Divine Providence, once again have occasion to say without pride, “I have strange powers of speech.”<sup>49</sup> Yes, despite his cloistered life as a Benedictine, Courveille was destined to feature once more in the Marist story. The opportunity to do so was, however, yet a long way off.

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## **COURVEILLE AGAIN ON THE RACK**

From the abbey at Solesmes the man who was living an eremetical life within the monastic grounds wrote to his Superior, dom Guéranger, who was again in Paris, making arrangements about a foundation there. The letter tells us much about the interior life of Courveille, much about the secret of his prayer life in the fifth year of his Benedictine way to God: “I can tell you, nevertheless, my tender Father, that, despite all my miseries and my extreme unworthiness, the good Lord - and He is so very good – has given me, and still gives me, some very great graces, especially in the

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<sup>45</sup> O .M. 2, Doc. 780, Paras 2-4

<sup>46</sup> S.T. Coleridge, ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

state of prayer, in which, in His infinite goodness, He has been pleased to place me for some time, and which, I am firmly convinced, is a true state of contemplation. He reveals himself to me in these precious moments in such a striking manner and makes Himself felt in my soul in such an ineffable way. I have never felt nor experienced anything like it before. On the other hand, He unfolds all my misery and makes me see so very clearly all my sins, my faults, and my innumerable imperfections, that my heart is broken with the most lively grief, so that I feel again such a great confusion about them that, if I could then do so, I would bury myself in the centre of the earth to hide from all creatures - so much do I see myself as being deformed, horrible, abominable. ... Oh, in those moments, how willingly and wholeheartedly would I leave my life, nay, give a million lives, in order never to have offended the good God.”<sup>50</sup>



*The abbey of Solesmes  
in the time of dom Guéranger.*

We have several letters of this period which inform us of the interior crisis in the soul of Courveille - a period when spiritual consolations marked by felt graces alternate with prolonged states of spiritual prostration. This period is also marked by projects which indicate that he was not fully settled to monastic life. At first there was the readiness to quit Solesmes for a new Benedictine foundation. This Courveille expressed in a letter on 30 April 1842. We cannot say whether, in the spirit of obedience, he was merely affirming his religious willingness to go wherever his Abbot had need of him, or whether he was drawn by the prospect of a change of location and a more active life. Then there came the idea of committing himself wholly to the eremetical life - a project which was forbidden by the local bishop.

A gap of five years in the Solesmes archives precludes our learning how these crises were resolved, but resolved they were. During these five years a missionary apostolic gave a report to Father Mayet, bringing knowledge of Courveille's existence to the Marist world, thus paving the way for the great revelation of later years - that is was indeed Courveille who was the initiator of the Society of Mary. Marists throughout France were aghast.

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<sup>50</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 781, Para. 2

When we next encounter Courveille and his troubled soul we find his situation has notably changed – for the better. This period 1847 –1852 was grim for dom Guéranger, but for dom Courveille it was close to being his “finest hour”.

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## **COURVEILLE UNBOUND**

The dissolution of Dom Guéranger’s Paris project left the Solesmes monastery in a critical financial situation. The committee formed to aid the monks stipulated that financial aid would have to be sought and that those religious who were able to do so should take a part. The monks were therefore asked either to take to fund-raising activities or to find in public ministry a mode of acquiring income for their threatened monastery. Dom Courveille volunteered to help and thus became, at least occasionally, a preacher in nearby parishes. It was a veritable godsend, in that the task lifted Courveille’s self-confidence, and the change from monastic life, undertaken under obedience, settled his restless soul, giving him a longing for stable regular existence after periods in a parish milieu.

From 1847 to 1852 and perhaps beyond, then, Courveille, despite his age, travelled in the Maine-et-Loire region, preaching missions, retreats and jubilees, at least during the period from autumn to Paschal time. We have definite information concerning his presence for a jubilee celebration at Etriché in 1847, his preaching at Morannes in 1848, other spiritual renewal efforts until May of the same year, a probable journey to Le Puy in July 1851, a jubilee at Brigné in December 1851, a mission at Chavagnes, and, finally, further preaching stints at Angers. These are the endeavours of which we have definite information. Beyond 1852 we have no more indications of his ministry. And it was during this period that Father Mayet made contact with him and obtained Courveille’s story of the origins of the Society of Mary.

The animator of former years had not lost his pulpit skills. The old enthusiasm revived, fervour and conviction were stamped on his bearing, and his witchery with words could still cast spells. Letters from parish priests bear testimony to Courveille’s impact for good.

Father Homeau, from a parish thirty kilometres from Solesmes, was more than impressed. Writing to thank dom Guéranger, he declared: “I cannot contain within me the sentiments of joy and thanksgiving which abound in my heart. ... I therefore attempt to relate to you the good things which the Jubilee has done to my parish, thanks to your kindness and to the zeal of Reverend Father Courveille. ... And, certainly, very Reverend Abbot, you who know Reverend Father Courveille better than anyone, you would have no difficulty in believing it. Indeed, in addition to his eminent virtues, what a talent he has for the pulpit. An instruction very solid and very logical, the art of fitting it within the capacity of the listeners, an inexhaustible fund of preaching skills. His preaching of the required sermons was worthy of a cathedral, his voice was magnificent, his delivery excellent, an eloquence surging from the depths of the heart, a tone paternal – and all this to gain the attention, to convince, to touch, to persuade. Moreover, in the confessional – the secrets of hearts and of conscience. In a word, without flattering anyone ... it is not possible to direct in a better way a Jubilee, a Retreat, or a Mission.”<sup>51</sup> Knowing something of Courveille’s checkered career at the monastery, we may wistfully wonder whether Dom Guéranger “would have no difficulty in believing it”.

There is no doubting the enthusiasm of Father Homeau concerning the impact for good that Courveille made in his parish. The same Homeau also seems to be a shrewd observer of men. His letter went on to say: “Reverend Father Courveille always conducted himself well during his sojourn at Etriché – and this despite his great labours. I am led to believe – nay, I am convinced, that similar occupations taken from time to time outside his monastery would be very beneficial for his health and would prolong his life.”<sup>52</sup> Courveille’s successful preaching at Etriché was no isolated event, nor was this the only laudatory letter received by Dom Guéranger. A second missive, this one from Father Terrien, parish priest of Chavagnes, confirms our picture of a restored and revived Courveille: “ I bless Divine Providence which has led into my parish from your abbey of Solesmes the Reverend Father Courveille, who was willing to sacrifice several free days in order to evangelise my poor parishioners. And he would have had such a pressing need of these free days in order to rest from his labours. I do not know how to express to you my sentiments of the most profound veneration and of

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<sup>51</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 787, Paras 1, 4-5

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, Para. 7

highest esteem which his virtues as a religious, his admirable zeal for the salvation of souls and his talents as a preacher have inspired in me. What is more, he has achieved a complete success in my parish, where political affairs and the difficulties of establishing a new church have distanced a great number of men. Of our population, which numbers 1,190, we have had more than 800 people taking Holy Communion. Great has been my joy, as you can imagine, my dear reverend Father, and I am happy to let you know about it, asking you to recommend to our divine Saviour these souls whom the reverend Father Courveille has recalled to their duty, in order that they may persevere in the good resolutions which he has inspired in them. This parish priest also recommends himself to your prayers.

“I have the honour to be, with the most profound respect, my very reverend Father, your humble and obedient servant. A.Terrien, Priest of Chavagnes.”<sup>53</sup> Continued success marked Courveille’s sallies from the monastery, but his abbot was careful to control the situation so that sufficient time was spent in recollection and with the community.

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## **A VOICE FROM THE PAST**

Towards the end of his life Courveille once again had contact, tenuous as it was, with the Society of Mary. In a post-scriptum of a letter from Dom Guéranger to another Benedictine we learn of Courveille’s departure for the diocese of Le Puy. We have no evidence that he arrived there nor that he visited the cathedral where, forty years before, the idea of the Society of Mary was born. We may reasonably assume, however, that Courveille went to the diocese and to the cathedral where it all began. From Dom Guéranger’s letter (19 June 1851) we gather that Courveille possibly had some family affairs to attend to, and that, given this particular situation, he was charged with collecting funds for the monastery. Dom Guéranger’s final sentence is significant. “He has never returned empty-handed to the monastery, even after his shortest missions.”<sup>54</sup> We are not quite sure whether the abbot is referring to Courveille as a bearer of heavenly or of earthly riches!

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<sup>53</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 790, Paras 1-2

<sup>54</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 789, Para. 1

If Courveille made that journey to Le Puy and to its cathedral, it would seem that the Lord (or Mary) was making a special intervention in Marist affairs. Shortly after his departure for Le Puy a letter arrived for Courveille from the world from which he had been excluded – the world of the Society of Mary. The letter came from the hand of Father Mayet, that indefatigable sleuth of matters pertaining to the Society. In 1846 Mayet discovered that, contrary to common belief in the Society of Mary, Courveille was not dead. About five years later he found time and occasion suitable to pursue inquiries with Courveille without the latter's knowledge of the true identity of the interrogator. The reply that Mayet received to his inquiries showed that Courveille - whether or not refreshed in memory by a visit to Le Puy cathedral - was quite clear on the origins of the Society. Later queries by Mayet were rewarded by a rather long account of the beginnings, one of the core passages being that in which Courveille establishes his claim to be the initiator of the Marist movement.



*Father Mayet,  
Marist priest and recorder  
of Marist affairs.*

It is of great significance to note that Courveille's reply to Mayet was made at a time when he was preaching in the parishes with such notable success. He was at the height of his powers, as we know from the pens of parish priests for whom he was conducting missions. So his replies to Mayet are from a man whose mental faculties were wholly unimpaired – a far cry from dementia-ridden Courveille of his last few years on earth. The old Benedictine's claim to initiating the Marist movement rings out clearly: "He heard, not with the ears of the body, but with those of the heart, interiorly but very distinctly"<sup>55</sup>, an inner voice. He was told that the Blessed Virgin wanted a Society of Mary to be consecrated to her. He doubted, but, "interiorly it seemed that the Blessed Virgin reproached him because of his hesitations".<sup>56</sup> She then urged him to consult his spiritual directors. What is remarkable in all this is that Courveille, more than twenty years after final rejection by the Society and believed to be dead, was rediscovered (it was after his own return from le Puy) and was called upon to unfold his

<sup>55</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 718, Para. 5

<sup>56</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 718, Para. 10

story. It must have been a great relief for Courveille to speak about the Society of Mary. That he kept the Society in mind is evident from the words of a priest who contacted Father Mayet, who says: "This missionary told me that Father Courveille displayed much piety and gave edification, and that he endeavoured to sanctify himself in solitude. He told the missionary that his whole happiness is to pray for the Society of Mary and that the Society is ceaselessly present to his mind."<sup>57</sup> Writing in 1869 to Father Fabre, Superior General of the Marists, Abbot Dom Guéranger added this reflection: "The impression that remains with me is that of his esteem and respect for the Society of Mary."<sup>58</sup> Evidently, there was in Courveille much magnanimity of heart.

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### **THE FOUNDER PROBLEM**

Well might the Marist world be puzzled when news of the existence of Courveille was noised abroad. The younger members had never heard of him; the few contemporaries who knew him or who knew about him either believed he was dead or preferred to remain silent in his regard. Jean-Claude Colin, first Superior General of the Society of Mary, had many reasons for not raising the name of Courveille. Not only was there the scandal of 1826 and the probability of later lapses of the same nature on the part of Courveille, but there was also Colin's conviction that Courveille had not played his proper part in trying to establish the Society. His letter of implied reproof to Courveille after Colin's interview with Archbishop de Pins, of whose archdiocese Colin was not a member, is a good indication of this attitude on Colin's part.

Of course, inquiries were now made and answers recorded. By 1851, the year in which Father Mayet had Courveille's reply re the foundation of the Society, Jean-Claude Colin was approaching the end of his mandate as Superior General. Much later, when questioned about Courveille, he was at a disadvantage, partly because he had destroyed much of the correspondence that had been at his disposal. Also to be taken into account are his advanced age when questioned, the stress of the years of struggle, the

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<sup>57</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 627, Para. 4,5

<sup>58</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 818, Para. 2

fading of his memory, and his conviction that Courveille was more a hindrance than a founder. Perhaps also to be considered are the inaccurate promptings of interrogators with special viewpoints which would have led to statements from Colin like those which follow.

In Father Jeantin's notes (1869-70) we find him quoting Colin thus: "In 1815 and 1816 M. Courveille passed in general as a pious seminarian ... In his mysterious language he allowed it easily to be assumed that he had received heavenly communications. He was the first who, in those years, manifested the project of a religious society of Mary. We say manifested, because others, without revealing it, were concerned interiorly with the same project."<sup>59</sup> Jeantin further reports Colin concerning the latter's choice of congregations: "How many times I wanted to give myself to this project and then to that one!" (At the seminary there was Father Bochard's "Pious Thoughts" and its priestly project. There were also the Lazarists, the Sulpicians and the Jesuits, the last-mentioned having been restored in 1814). "But, as soon as M Courveille manifested the idea of a Society of Mary, I said to myself, 'That's the one for you.'<sup>60</sup> "Never would I have had the courage to publish this idea; and, later on, when the thing was known, I was able to concern myself with it without seeming to be its originator."<sup>61</sup> Colin even claimed to have made prior preparations for the congregation of his choice: "Yes, yes, before coming to the major seminary of Lyon, I had even drawn up a little scheme."<sup>62</sup>

Jeantin also has this from Colin : "M. Courveille had the honour to be the first, in 1815 and 1816, of manifesting it exteriorly, and eleven or twelve seminarians of the major seminary of Lyons joined him to work with him at this project."<sup>63</sup>... "M. Courveille and his young associates, having become priests at the end of the 1816 scholastic year, and placed widely dispersed in the parochial ministry, gradually forgot their project, with the exception of two: Father Champagnat who, appointed curate at La Valla, set to work at once to form the branch of teaching Brothers, and Father....., curate of a parish in Ain, who, interiorly full of a lively confidence, equal to a kind of certitude that the project came from God and would be es-

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<sup>59</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 819, Paras 5,6

<sup>60</sup> O.M. 3. Doc. 819, Para. 9

<sup>61</sup> O.M. 3. Doc. 819 Para. 8

<sup>62</sup> O.M. 3. Doc. 819 Para 7

<sup>63</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 815, Para. 1

tablished in the long run, profited by his free moments to prepare its success by writing the first thoughts, which were to serve as the foundation of the Constitutions.”<sup>64</sup> Father Colin dismissed the idea that Fr Courveille had done anything towards the realisation of the project; all he did was to publicise it at the seminary. <sup>65</sup> “Father Courveille had no further credit in the project of the Society of Mary than that of manifesting it in 1815. Another, without manifesting it, had the same idea of the work.”<sup>66</sup>

It would appear that, from the start, Colin had his doubts about the suitability of Courveille. We hear this from Fr Mayet: “In 1815 and 1816 I became attached to the idea of the Society, but not at all to Fr Courveille. Besides, Father Courveille had no part at all in the steps which were taken with the administration of the diocese of Lyon, with the archbishop of Chambéry,” (Monseigneur Bigex) “with the Holy See, and at Paris with the Nuncio. If his name appeared sometimes on our letters, prudence seemed to demand it, because the work then seemed to be known under his name.”<sup>67</sup> Further to the letters’ problem we again turn to Jeantin: “We thought it prudent to put in this letter and in some other official letters written at this time, the name of him who passed as the first instigator of this work.”<sup>68</sup> Father Detours, another inquirer, received this reply from one of the very first Marists, Father Déclas: “At St Irenaeus they went to little Colin. He said to Courveille, ‘Why do you play the superior? Wait until you are elected.’”<sup>69</sup> Colin has a valid point there; Courveille had not been elected, but, there again, no one had, but it is evident that in the first ten years he was widely, but not wholly, regarded as the leader, possibly because he believed it so himself. Besides, Inspector Guillard was not the only one to have the impression that Courveille was the one who had authority over all the Marist projects. Some of the Marists also considered him as Superior, e.g., Champagnat, Terraillon, Déclas.

Colin went on to say, “During the whole time from his departure from the seminary until 1824, Fr Courveille did nothing in the way of achieving his project ... Father Champagnat” ...humble... “had no difficulty in letting

<sup>64</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 815, Para. 1

<sup>65</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 820-821. Paras 5,9

<sup>66</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 804, Para. 7

<sup>67</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 804, Para. 9

<sup>68</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 820-821, Para. 45

<sup>69</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 870, Paras 13-14

him take the title of Superior General and he recommended the Brothers to regard him as such ... His unintelligent, severe, and harsh government during Father Champagnat's illness alienated the minds of the Brothers."<sup>70</sup>

It is true that Courveille nearly wrecked Champagnat's work, but, although it is partly true that Courveille *achieved* nothing (the Sisters at Saint Antoine give the lie to this assertion), it is not true to say that he *did* nothing. In fact, he did a great deal, ranging from the attempt at a Third Order at Verrières, at Brothers in Feurs and Epercieux, at Sisters at Rive-de-Gier and St Clair, and, beyond 1824, at Brothers and Sisters at Saint Antoine to 1829. There is also the part he played, inconspicuous as it was, in the negotiations with Rome in conjunction with the Colin brothers. As mentioned earlier, we do not know how much Colin's many statements about Courveille were conditioned by his interrogators or by his lapses of memory, but they can certainly be challenged – and repudiated. It is clear that Courveille played a significant part in initiating the Society of Mary.

We also need to consider the thirty years of prayer life led by Courveille as a Benedictine and the salutary effect he had on the sundry parishes and in other spheres when he issued forth from the monastery at his Abbot's request.

Apart from the one lapse at Champagnat's Hermitage, and the 'wilderness' years between the Saint Antoine failure and his acceptance to the Solesmes monastery in 1836, Courveille strove apostolically and unrelentingly for what he believed was the mission confided to him by the Blessed Virgin Mary. This was the period 1816-1829. It was followed by the dark period, in which it would appear there were moral lapses (we do not know for sure how serious they were), interspersed with priestly ministrations and, finally, there were the thirty years of purification, amendment and spiritual growth at Solesmes. This is not exactly a life for universal execration.

"Forget and forgive", the words of King Lear after his purgation, are certainly applicable to Courveille. He had come to a stage where, like Lear, wrongs and misunderstandings could be put behind, forgotten and forgiven. That is evident from the words of a priest writing to Mayet in 1847:

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<sup>70</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 819, Paras 16, 20, 23.

“I have seen Fr Courveille weep warm tears when speaking of the Marists, and calling down on them, with the greatest fervour of soul, all the blessings of God. He immolated himself to God for the Society of Mary in prayer and contrition.”<sup>71</sup>

In writing in reply to Mayet’s inquiry in 1860, Courveille makes an unequivocal claim to founding the Society of Mary: “Being crippled and paralysed in the hands because of the gout which torments me, I am obliged to make use of the kind services of one of the Fathers to write to you. ...I can further certify and I give you assurance, since I am now on the edge of the grave and ready to enter it, that all I have said or written touching the Society of Mary, whether it concerns its origin or its formation, or the causes which led me to found it, is the pure truth. There, that is all I have to say to you, and that, I repeat, is the absolute truth.”<sup>72</sup>

*Courveille’s claim to be the founder of the Society of Mary (as he does in the passage quoted immediately above) has strong support from a document recently discovered (thanks to the assiduity of two French Brothers). A letter addressed to Monseigneur Bigex by Fr Pierre Colin, points out the initial rôle of Courveille in the beginnings of the Society of Mary - that he was indeed the founder in the sense of initiator, first mover, first organiser and administrator. Even though he lacked success in the two last-mentioned capacities, his role as founder in the sense of first mover cannot be gainsaid.*

Here are the relevant sections of the letter discovered in the archives of the diocese of Pinerolo, Piedmont, Italy. They are taken from “Marist Notebooks”, No. 11, P. 6-7.

*“9th October, 1819. Letter from Colin, parish priest of Cerdon, Ain, to Mgr Bigex, bishop of Pignerol, Piedmont, Italy.*

***1819 from Puy en Velay, project of the Congregation of Marists, Cerdon.***

*Twelve years ago a young man who is now 35 years old and has been a priest for three years, after receiving a special grace at Notre Dame du Puy en Velay, felt himself urged to establish a Society of religious under the name*

<sup>71</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 656, Para. 1

<sup>72</sup> O.M. 3, 799, Paras 4,5

*cf 'Society of Mary'. Being afraid that he might be mistaken, he kept it quiet for two years, but, being inwardly ever more strongly urged to start this work, he thought he ought to talk it over with his confessor and several other wise and learned persons. Finally, in 1816, in the last year of his theological studies in the seminary of St Irenée in Lyon, with the permission of his directors, he chose twelve subjects to whom he communicated his aim and the plan for the Society. They all undertook to support him and to use the rest of their lives for the glory of God, for the help of the Catholic Church and for the salvation of souls in the Society of Mary, provided that it was approved by the Sovereign Pontiff and by their Lordships the Bishops. Before separating to go and occupy the posts which Providence decreed to each one of them in their ministry, for they are almost all priests, they put their signatures, as a body, to the following, which contains, in abbreviated form, the aim and the plan of the Society.*

There then follows a statement of the pledge of Fourvière. Then comes:

*Since then, although dispersed, they have all remained intimately united, still persisting in their resolution and awaiting only the moment marked by divine Providence and the permission of their ecclesiastical Superiors to put it into execution. It is our intention to present ourselves to His Holiness as soon as possible.*

*With no hope of doing so immediately, considering the difficulties of the times, we have already taken the liberty of sending him a letter dated last February. We would also like to write to a cardinal from whom we could perhaps receive a reply. If Your Lordship deigns to appreciate the steps we are taking, we beg him earnestly to indicate the cardinal to whom it would be in order to address ourselves. It is in the name of all my companions that I have the honour of communicating to you our desires and our intentions, convinced that your paternal kindness will be able to direct our procedures by your advice.*

*I have the honour to be, with deepest respect for Your Lordship, Monseigneur, the most humble and obedient servant, Colin, parish priest of Cerdon,*

Cerdon en Bugey, diocese of Lyon, Department of Ain.  
9 October 1819."

It is obvious that this recently-revealed letter, a letter written by Pierre Colin but doubtlessly known to his brother Jean-Claude, goes a long way in supporting Courveille's claims about the Society of Mary and about "the causes that led me to found it." (J.-C.Courveille)

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### **ALBATROSS FAREWELL**

It was fitting that Courveille's abbot, Dom Guéranger, should have given Courveille the opportunity to exercise the great talents that he possessed for preaching and for imparting inspiration. It was fitting, too, that Courveille was invited to unfold his story to those searching for details of the origins of the Society of Mary. Like the Ancient Mariner, Courveille could say, "Until my tale is told, this heart within me burns."<sup>73</sup>

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### **DEATH LAYS HIS ICY HAND**

"25 September 1866: At 2 p.m. Dom Courveille died after a long period of unconsciousness. He had regained consciousness in the morning for a short period, during which he made his confession to Father Prior."

"2 September 1866: Funeral of dom Courveille. He is the first monk buried in the new cemetery."<sup>74</sup> Courveille is now buried in a little cemetery to the right of the choir of the church, in a tomb in which are gathered together the remains of all the monks who died between 1866 and 1895.

So, then, Courveille lived on until the age of seventy-nine, his last years marked by many infirmities and, finally, by childish oblivion. Of this chastened monk it would be truthful to say that, like the Ancient Mariner, he had passed through a long period of penance. Courveille was one who had long experienced the torture of the ostracised and the lonely:

"This soul hath been

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<sup>73</sup> S.T. Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

<sup>74</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 809, Para. 2,3

Alone on a wide, wide sea.  
So lonely 'twas that God himself  
Scarce seeméd there to be.”<sup>75</sup>

But Courveille had started something, had given early inspiration and impetus to a Society that would bear Mary's name and would do her honour. Perhaps we can see in Courveille's approach to Solesmes the guidance of his mother Mary, putting him in contact with a sound guide for the spiritual, moral and psychological troubles of his later years in the person of the gifted dom Guéranger. Surely those early years of endeavour and fervour on her behalf brought this response from Mary. After his thirty years of amended life, it was only fitting that she should be with him in death. And perhaps his last coherent thoughts may have formed a prayer similar to that of the Mariner:

“To Mary Queen the praise be given,  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven  
That slid into my soul.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> S.T. Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

<sup>76</sup> Following a complaint from Fr Favre, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, that, Courveille being alive, it was quite inappropriate to mention his fault so glaringly, Br Jean-Baptiste, in a second edition of “The Life”, greatly modified the manner of presenting Courveille's offence.

## *Appendix*

### *Brother Jean-Baptiste's Portrayal of Courveille and the Aiguebelle Letter*

Brother Jean-Baptiste has very little to say concerning the Aiguebelle letter, but his words about Courveille prior to dealing with the letter show that he would be adversely single-minded in viewing what Courveille wrote from Aiguebelle. Let us see the substance and tenor of his remarks prior to the letter episode. The following far-from-flattering portrait of Courveille comes from "The Life"(pp 134-137):

"Courveille was deeply hurt in that, despite his title of Superior General" (a title which was never challenged at the Hermitage), "the Brothers ignored him and had constant recourse to Father Champagnat. He therefore conceived the plan of having himself appointed as the special and exclusive director of the Brothers. Before making any move, he strove to gain the confidence of the Brothers and to win their allegiance, using every possible strategy."... When the ballot resulted overwhelmingly in favour of Champagnat, Courveille "said to him with a feeling he could not hide: 'It looks as though they put their heads together to give you their vote.'"

Champagnat thereupon called for a second ballot and expostulated with the Brothers: "I believe those priests' (Courveille and Terrailon) 'more capable than I of directing and forming you. They have not been involved with manual work, and, since they have given all their time to prayer and the study of religion, they have knowledge of these matters which I lack. Of course, I have no intention of abandoning you, but you can see that temporal affairs absorb much of my time and that, despite my good will, I cannot do for you everything that I would like. Someone else, then, should be given the task

of instructing you and of training you in piety.”... A second vote gave the same result; the Brothers would have no one other than Champagnat.

One commentator has suggested that Champagnat’s words about the role of Courveille and Terraillon may indicate that there may well have been an agreement among the three priests for taking different roles at the Hermitage - Courveille and Terraillon to be engaged in formation and visitation and Champagnat to deal with administration and temporal affairs, at which he had shown particular skill. But the ‘I have no intention of abandoning you’ indicates that Champagnat would see to it that the Brothers’ formation and instruction would be under his watchful eye.

Jean-Baptiste continues: “On his return to the Hermitage he” (Champagnat) “had to endure further trials from Father Courveille. The latter, who had been thoroughly mortified by the preference shown to Marcellin in the elections held during the holidays, took advantage of Marcellin’s absence from the Hermitage to show the Brothers how upset he was. To those in the establishments he even wrote letters full of bitter reproach for the fact that they continued to have recourse to Father Champagnat and to regard him as their Superior. He claimed that such behaviour was an insult to him and a failure in respect and trust which would certainly bring the curse of God on the Institute. Father Champagnat was not exempt from his display of pique; everything he did was blamed.

“According to Father Courveille, the Brothers were badly directed; the novices were not sufficiently challenged, were not adequately educated and lacked satisfactory training in piety. The discipline of the house was neither strict enough nor sufficiently monastic; temporal affairs were neglected and money was squandered. In one word, he thought Father Champagnat a poor administrator and he relieved him of the purse strings. However, in the changing-hands, the purse was not better filled – indeed, it was often empty. Then Father Courveille would vent his bad humour in bitter attacks on Father Champagnat.” Thus, in an administrative and financial role that he did not really want (his interests were more towards formation and visitation), Courveille become even more discontent. With time on his hands, he wrote those reproachful letters to the Brothers. This partial idleness and his discontent may have played some part in his moral lapse.

In regard to the exercise of sound human relationship Champagnat's first biographer does not hesitate to contrast Couveille's performance with that of Champagnat: "A few days afterwards, a postulant came along to ask admission to the community and was taken up to Marcellin's room. Father Courveille, who was there at the time, gave him a detailed examination and drew such a frightening picture of the obligations of religious life that the young man, disheartened by what he had just heard, was inclined to give up his idea. Father Champagnat had not said a word during the interview, but he observed the postulant closely. ...Hearing these words" (of Champagnat) "the postulant felt all his fears vanish; his heart overflowed with joy and courage. 'Yes', he answered, 'I shall come; you have my word for it.'"

In a vital passage of "The Life", the passage which deals with the Aigueville letter, Jean-Baptiste shows little sympathy for Courveille (Ps 145-146): "Divine justice intervened to avenge the persecution of the innocent and to halt the troubles of every kind that were put in his" (Champagnat's) "way. Father Courveille, who viewed everything with a jaundiced eye, who complained of a lack of piety and regularity in the House, and who believed that the Brothers and novices were not perfect enough, fell into serious faults. He drew down on his head that fearful judgement of our divine Saviour: *'If anyone scandalizes one of these little ones, it would be better for him to have a millstone tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea.'*

"After that shameful fall, he went to make a Retreat at the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle in order to put his conscience in order. However, far from opening his eyes to the depths into which his pride had hurled him, he persisted in his foolish aim to be in sole command. He wrote a letter complaining that he was being denied the respect that was his due, and concluded it by asserting that he would return to the Hermitage only on the condition of being given a formal promise of holding total authority for the future and of being treated as Superior."<sup>77</sup>

Had Jean-Baptiste been more detached, more dispassionate about Courveille, he could have allowed for other interpretations of the Aiguebelle letter, as has been made in another perceptive study of the letter.

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<sup>77</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 750, Para.11

## **A new perspective on Courveille, arising from the Aiguebelle Letter**

A new study by Brother André Lanfrey, published in “Marist Notebooks” Nos 7 and 11, provides a viewpoint on the affair of the Aiguebelle letter which does not appear in Jean-Baptiste’s “Life”, and which throws a different light on this vital period of Marist history and on the person of Jean-Claude Courveille. The study suggests that Brother Jean-Baptiste’s interpretations are aimed at blackening the character of Courveille in order to make Champagnat appear more clearly the sole founder of the Brothers and even the legitimate superior from the beginning. Moreover, it provides an interpretation which allows for a more favourable view to be taken of Courveille:

One aspect Br Lanfrey proposes for our consideration in regard to the Aiguebelle letter is the degree of strict religious spirituality that Courveille expected of the Marists. Courveille was strongly influenced by the writings and ideas of Armond-Jean Rancé, a reforming Benedictine abbot of the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. He possibly saw himself as a new Rancé called to establish the strict observance in a house he considered to be not sufficiently regular. In Courveille’s letter from Aiguebelle there are passages which seem to be based on Rancé’s letters. There is also evidence that Courveille had read “The Holy Ladder”, a way to perfection that originated with St Jean Climaque, an early Eastern monk. There is no doubt that Courveilles’ letter to his companions of the Hermitage was carefully crafted. There is not doubt, too, that he considers a strict monastic spirituality and the role of the abbot as keys to the sanctity and the perpetuity of a religious Order.

Br Lanfrey points out that, in the Aiguebelle letter, Courveille wrote to all at the Hermitage, including the Brothers. So what he wrote was to be a statement to all Marists. After pointing out the fine qualities of the religious life lived by the monks at Aiguebelle, he contrasts the Hermitage and Aiguebelle on that score. He then proceeds to give recommendations concerning the new Superior for the Hermitage. If he, Courveille, is not to be re-admitted (and he dearly wishes that he would be so re-instated), then the new Superior must have absolute power, because he takes the place of Our Lord and Our Lady.

Jean-Baptiste ignores the reference Courveille makes to St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, where mention of “a stumbling-block” is made. Courveille’s implication is that, just as the Jews stumbled over Jesus, so, too,

the Society of Mary has stumbled over Courveille. It was he, Courveille, who had received a revelation and he cannot conceive of a Society of Mary other than the one whose nature he has determined. He then asks that the new Superior (should Courveille not be restored) “may be filled with the spirit of God and that he may not depart in the smallest way from the aim of the Institute and from the real intentions of the divine Mary who, I hope, will make them known to him.”

So, for Courveille, he has not been unfaithful but the Society of Mary has. If he has to withdraw from the Society, he hopes that, sooner or later, the Society will return to the ways he first traced out for it – through a Superior who will receive the same revelation as he received. And then, if he is not destined to return to the Marists, he himself will be able to join forces with ‘the faithful Israel’, which is La Trappe, with men who have not wavered from their original purpose. In effect, Courveille is saying that, since he gave the original inspiration to the formation of the Society of Mary, its members, who have wandered from the true path, must adhere to the principles, religious practices and mode of formation that came from him. If he is rejected, his prayer is that the new Superior will receive an inspiration similar to his.

In view of this interpretation, Jean-Baptiste’s analysis of the letter gives no weight to Courveille’s generous acknowledgement of the possibility of another Superior in his place. Nor does Jean-Baptiste show appreciation of the fact that Courveille’s offer of departure was quite voluntary, a generous gesture from a man for whom the Society was clearly his all in all. The other Marists would have found it difficult to dismiss him, since some of them, at least, recognised him as Superior and there was no one in the Marist group in Lyon who had powers of dismissal. Moreover, as Father Terrailon pointed out, Courveille “has the reputation of a saint in this district”<sup>78</sup>, and this would make it all the harder for the Lyon Marists to shed the man regarded as leader. Jean-Baptiste elects not to acknowledge any spiritual motivation at all in Courveille’s offer to resign, not does he see it as a magnanimous gesture.

Again, Jean-Baptiste does not take into account Courveille’s touching concern for the welfare of the Society shown in the words: “I dare to as-

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<sup>78</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 750, Para.11

sure you that I shall never lose sight of it, that it will always be dear to me”, and in his willingness “even to being declared anathema, if need be.” Thus, Courveille declares that he submits to the Divine Will for the greater glory of God, but he will go on living for the Society and praying of it. And we know that he did just this. A priest, visiting Courveille some forty years later, records: “I have seen Father Courveille weep warm tears when speaking of the Marists and calling down on them, with the greatest fervour of soul, all the blessings of God. He immolated himself to God for the Society of Mary in prayer and contrition.”<sup>79</sup>

It is possible that, initially, Champagnat and Colin were not fully aware of the seriousness of Courveille’s moral fault, so the decision to accept the latter’s resignation was made on one fundamental question, that is, Courveille’s ability to direct the Society of Mary of Lyon. Father Terraillon’s persistence in convincing Fathers Colin and Champagnat to accept the proffered resignation of Father Courveille meant the end of the strong monastic direction that the visionary Courveille advocated. Eventually, the Society of Mary in Lyon was to be reborn on foundations which were progressively cleared of a too heavily monastic structure. There was a further factor in the acceptance of Courveille’s resignation: the rejection of Courveille’s plan for the Society of Mary, a plan which was too utopian and too dependent on a private revelation to be solidly based.

The movement away from strict monastic procedures for the Brothers was also influenced by Archbishop de Pins, within whose archdiocese most of Champagnat’s apostolic endeavours were situated. De Pins was interested in a standard congregation of Brothers, not a strict monastic Order. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the early practice of manufacturing nails at La Valla, the maintenance of vegetable gardens at the Brothers’ first establishments, and the continuing general spirit of abnegation by the Brothers are indications of an early monastic tendency on the part of the congregation. And even the name “Hermitage”, possibly suggested by Courveille himself, is a further indication of the early monastic trend.

Finally on this matter, we may say that Terraillon’s action in bringing about the acceptance of Courveille’s resignation also forced Champagnat

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<sup>79</sup> O.M. 2, Doc. 656, Para.1.

into the position of being sole founder, unhindered by Courveille's over-zealous interventions. The reading of the famous Aiguebelle letter, then, is open to interpretations other than that chosen by Brother Jean-Baptiste who was strongly biased against Courveille.

## **A Final Word**

Towards the end of his once-glorious career, Othello spoke words which would be appropriate in Courveille's case: "Soft you, a word or two before you go. I have done the state some service, and they know't."<sup>80</sup> Like Othello, Courveille "had done service", but his service was to the Society of Mary. Jean-Baptiste's account of Courveille's departure from the Marist scene is given with little sign of compassion for the departee. No mention is made of the fact that Courveille had spent ten years (1816-1826) striving to establish the Society of Mary and had endeavoured to set up, admittedly without much success, all branches of the Society in the places to which he was sent by an unsympathetic archdiocesan administration.

It is ironic that Jean-Baptiste would have been in process of gathering his notes and preparing the draft of his biography of Father Champagnat (which included the damning statement about Courveille objected to by Father Favre) at a time when the same Courveille was engaged in a series of parish missions whose quality was praised to the skies by the local parish priests. Of course, Jean-Baptiste, like so many other Marists, probably thought Courveille was dead, but that fact only illustrates the lack of interest in, and care for, a former companion in Christ displayed by so many Marists. (Champagnat is an exception here: "I would be very happy for you to come and for you to name a place for our meeting."<sup>81</sup>)

One wonders whether the abrupt dismissal of Courveille, his subsequent rejection in attempts at re-entry and the lack of interest in his welfare contributed to the very sad life he led from 1829 until 1836, when an inspired knock on the door ushered him into a pathway towards eventual peace in the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes.

<sup>80</sup> "Othello", Act 5, Scene 2.

<sup>81</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 163.

Dom Guéranger, replying to Fr Favre's inquiry in 1869 referred to Courveille's last years and his words about the Society of Mary. He declared that the impression he was left with him concerning Courveille's attitude to the Society of Mary was one of esteem and respect. And may these words in praise of the Society of Mary be an appropriate reminder of the bigness of heart of Courveille, its lost leader.

# *Good Father Champagnat and the “De Pins” family*

**Among the de Pins papers – carton II,  
the Allibert bundle – is a letter referring  
to the death of Champagnat**

**Bro André LANFREY, FMS**

<p>A « Mgr l'archevêque d'Amasie administrateur du diocèse de Lyon</p> <p>A la Grande Chartreuse, par Voiron, Isère ».</p>	<p><i>To His Lordship Archbishop of Amasie, Administrator of the Diocese of Lyon</i></p> <p><i>At the Grande Chartreuse, near Voiron, Isère</i></p>
<p>N° 16 Lyon 10 juin 1840</p>	<p><i>N° 16, Lyons, June 10, 1840</i></p>
<p>Monseigneur</p> <p>M. Mondésert vous a écrit hier, je n'ai donc pas à vous en parler.</p>	<p><i>My Lord,</i></p> <p><i>M. Mondésert<sup>82</sup> wrote to you yesterday and so I need not speak to you about it.</i></p>
<p>Voici le rescrit pour la bénédiction des chapelets, crucifix, médailles, et pour l'autel privilégié quotidien : le St Père l'a fait expédier de la manière la plus ample, et par une faveur marquée.</p>	<p><i>Here is the new text for the blessing of rosaries, crucifixes, medals, and for the daily special altar: the Holy Father has sent this on in the grandest manner and as a very special favour.</i></p>

<sup>82</sup> Mondésert packet, in de Pins Papers, II/I

Je vis hier Mme de la Barmondière; je lui lus votre billet, elle me dit combien elle y était sensible, combien elle vous en remercioit, mais qu'elle ne méritoit pas les éloges que vous lui donniez. Elle me chargea d'y ajouter l'hommage de son respect. De là j'allai par le jardin chez la Mère Géoffroy qui m'a parlé de vous avec cette effusion que vous lui connoissez et me fit promettre de vous renouveler le témoignage de son dévouement et de son admiration pour la paix dont je l'assurais que vous jouissiez. Vous rendre mon émotion dans ces deux entrevues, surtout quand je vis Madame la comtesse si expansive sur ses sentiments pour vous, et si gracieuse dans son accueil, seroit chose impossible. J'en étais au comble de la joie et je ne m'aperçus point de sa maladie. Il fallut lui promettre un quart d'heure d'entretien tous les 15 jours, je le fis avec empressement, et sans s'être entendus, la Mère Geoffroy me fit faire le même marché. Comme j'avois perdu la tête, ce fut bientôt fait. Reste à savoir si je pourrai tenir parole, j'en doute beaucoup, je suis même sûr de ne le pouvoir pas.

*Yesterday I met Madame de la Barmondière<sup>83</sup>; I read your note to her and she told me how very moved and grateful she was for your kind words, although she felt she did not deserve the praises you gave her. She also asked me to assure you of the token of her respect. On leaving her I went through the garden to Mère Gec<sub>j</sub>frcy<sup>84</sup> who spoke of you with all the <sub>j</sub>futureness you will recognize as distinctive of her; and she made me promise to reiterate her utter devotedness to you and her admiration for the peace you enjoy and about which I had assured her. It would be quite impossible for me to fully express my feelings during the two interviews, especially on seeing the Countess who was quite exuberant in her sentiments regarding your person and so gracious in welcoming me. I was beside myself with joy about this and did not even notice her illness<sup>85</sup>. I was compelled to promise a quarter-hour conversation with her every fortnight, a promise I made willingly; then, without their having conferred together, Mère Gec<sub>j</sub>frcy had me make the same concession. As I was in quite a state of distraction, this too was quickly arranged. We shall see if I can keep my word. I am very doubtful of that; in fact I'm quite certain I will not keep to it.*

<sup>83</sup> A very influential lady dealing with *legitimist* affairs

<sup>84</sup> Superior of the Dames of the Sacred Heart. She played a major role with Father Coudrin in resisting the Revolution at Poitiers.

<sup>85</sup> It seems she was almost blind (de Pins, Papers, carton 1, Mondésert bundle, letter dated June 9, 1840)

<p>On fabrique vos bas de laine blanche, Jacques les emportera avec 200 chapelets. Le bréviaire in 4° n'est pas fini. Voudriez-vous l'in 12° en attendant ?</p>	<p><i>Your white woollen stockings are being made; Jacques will bring them with the 200 rosaries. The breviary in 4 is not finished. Would you like to have the one in 12 while waiting?</i></p>
<p>M. Giroud déménage à force. Le moment fatal approche. M. Montagnier n'attend que son passeport de Paris et la dislocation de la famille va se consommer....</p>	<p><i>M. Giroud<sup>86</sup> is moving out for good; the inevitable moment is at hand. M. Montagnier<sup>87</sup> is only waiting for his passport from Paris and the breakup of the family<sup>88</sup> will then be complete....</i></p>
<p><b>Le bon M. Champagnat de Lavalla vient de mourir. C'est une perte.</b></p>	<p><b><i>The good Monsieur Champagnat of Lavalla has just died. What a loss that is.</i></b></p>
<p>Je suis avec un profond respect, Monseigneur Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur. Allibert</p>	<p><i>I am most respectfully, my Lord, Your very humble and obedient servant. Allibert</i></p>

## Commentary

This letter, announcing in its final words and off-handedly, the death of Marcellin Champagnat, deserves to be quoted in its entirety as it shows clearly the workings of Archbishop de Pins' entourage as well as those of Madame de la Barmondière's Legitimist salon. The whole group of letters gives a fairly approximate view of the group in question: among them are found Father Cholleton, Rusand the printer, M. de Verna, de Varax. In short, one finds in the ensemble of this correspondence a good part of the

<sup>86</sup> There is a Giroud bundle in the *de Pins* papers, carton II/1

<sup>87</sup> A Montagnier bundle of papers is found among those in the *de Pins* carton II/1. In 1837 he settled in as chaplain of several religious communities at Condrieu near Vienna.

<sup>88</sup> A reference to the faithful followers of Msgr de Pins

Legitimist network in disarray! At the time this letter was written, he had suffered through two ordeals: the 1830 Revolution which cut into all of his political power and the banishment of Msgr de Pins by the Orleanist government which favoured Msgr. de Bonald instead of de Pins to head the diocese of Lyon.

A third ordeal was to befall the group: the bankruptcy of M. Benoît Coste, a currency exchange agent and a man engaged in charitable activities.

A letter from Mondésert to de Pins, dated October 3, 1840<sup>89</sup>, announces this failure, not only of M. Coste but as well of M. Mathon and M. Drevet “all members of the association with whom you loved to meet”. “M. Coste is missing some three million. In this unfortunate business he has gotten the Jesuits entangled, along with the Dames of the Sacred Heart<sup>90</sup>, several communities, many priests and a good number of domestic servants”.

The letter also alludes to the rather outmoded type of relations these persons maintained, many of whom, like Madame de la Barmondière and Archbishop de Pins, were familiar with the *Ancien Régime*<sup>91</sup>.

The death of Father Champagnat thus coincided with the failure of a certain social class in Lyon, many of whom had supported him while jeopardizing him at the same time. The repeated failures he suffered in his attempts at having his congregation recognized surely was due, for the most part, to his connection with this social circle.

Although quite brief, the eulogy pronounced by Father Allibert is significant since it expresses genuine esteem. A surprising point is also revealed in the comment: to find Father Champagnat placed in Lavalla despite that fact that he had come away from that place fifteen years previously. It seems to indicate that Father Allibert still considered him one of the pioneers.

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<sup>89</sup> De Pins papers, II/1

<sup>90</sup> The Religious of the Sacred Heart who had a boarding school in Lyon

<sup>91</sup> The political and social system that existed in France before the Revolution of 1789 (Trans.)

K<sup>o</sup>. 16

Lyon - 10 Juin 1840

M<sup>o</sup>me eigueux

M<sup>o</sup>. Mandéant vous a écrit bien, je n'ai donc pas à vous en parler.

Voici la Noeuit pour la Bénédiction des Chapelats, crucifix, médaillon, et pour l'autel privilégié quotidien: Les Sœurs l'ont fait expédier de la manière la plus ample, et par une faveur marquée.

Je vis hier M<sup>o</sup>me Dola Normandière; je lui lus votre billet, elle me dit combien elle y étoit sensible, combien elle vous en remercioit, mais qu'elle ne méritoit pas les éloges que vous lui donniez. Elle me chargea d'y ajouter l'hommage de son respect. Dola j'allai par le jardin chez la Mère Geoffroy qui me parla de vous avec cette effusion que vous lui connaissez et me fit promettre de vous renouveler la témoignage de son dévouement et de son admiration pour la paix dont j'ai l'espérance que vous jouissiez. Nous rendes mon émotion dans ces deux entrevues, surtout quand j'eus Madame la comtesse si organisée sur son sentiment pour vous, et si gracieuse dans son accueil, seroit chose impossible. J'en étois au comble de la joie et j'en ai vu apparemment point de sa maladie. Il fallut lui promettre un quart d'heure d'attention tous les 15 jours, je lui fis avec empressement, et sans l'être entendu, la Mère Geoffroy me fit faire le même marché. Comme j'avois perdu la tête, ce fut bientôt fait. Aorte à l'avance si je pourrai tenir parole, j'en doute beaucoup, je suis même sûr de ne le pouvoir pas. On fabrique vos boîtes de laine blanche, Jacques les amportera, avec 200 chapelats la Noeuit sera en li<sup>o</sup> n'est pas fini. Voulez-vous l'inscr. ou attendant?

M. Giroud démanège à force. le moment fatal approche. M. Montagnier n'attend que son papoport de Paris et la dislocation de la famille va se consommer..... le bon M. Champagnat, de Lavalla vient de mourir. c'est un porte.

Je suis avec un profond respect,

Votre très humble et très  
obéissant serviteur

..... Allibert



# *Marcellin Champagnat's letter to M. Fond*

**Bro Paul SESTER, FMS**

*This letter, signed by Father Champagnat, was found in the archives at Valbenoîte, January 2008*

**October 19, 1836 To: Mr. Fond,** Mayor of Valbenoîte

To thank him for the interest he has taken in our Brothers at his school.

The letter was in the archives of Valbenoîte and came to light thanks to the transfer of these archives to Saint-Genis-Laval in January 2008.

The original is on a large sheet of white paper, rather thin but well preserved, folded in half so as to make up a four-page folder 29.7cm x 20.5cm. The text is on page 1 and the address on page 4. This last page bears, as well, in its upper right corner and written in a different hand the following words: *19<sup>bre</sup> 1836 – Lettre de Mr. Champagnat, frère mariste (19 October 1836 – Letter of Fr. Champagnac, Marist Brother)*. It is quite clear that these words were added later perhaps by a town hall secretary. We notice the name “Champagnac” is not written with a final *t* but with a final *c* as it was written some years before, and very evident in the archives of the Marlhès Town Hall. In addition, he is referred to as “brother” and not “father” thus giving some evidence he was not known as a Marist Father but simply as the superior of the Marist Brothers. In the Saint-Etienne region the Brothers are known as “Marist Brothers” and not *Blue Brothers* or *Little Brothers of Mary*.

The writing of the address and the body of the letter is not that of Father Champagnat, but could well be that of Brother François when one compares it with the May 1836 letter which certainly was written by the latter. The signature seems to be Champagnat's, but the handwriting does not indicate his usual assuredness and is written with the same pen as that of the letter text. Indeed, if it is an imitation, one must admit it is a good one.

In any case, we have proof that this letter expresses Father Champagnat's thoughts through Brother Avit who quotes another letter from the Mayor dated 1839, in the annals of Valbenoîte, showing the same sentiments of that magistrate towards our Brothers in these words: "The Municipal administration, satisfied with the devotion and teaching methods of your Brothers, has issued an order to request an additional teacher".

As to the question asked by the mayor, it may have resulted from the suspension of a pupil about whom the priest is not quite ready to express judgment. Even so, such cases must have been common enough since he speaks of them in one of his instructions to the Brothers as is related by his biographer (Life, p. 526).

This letter, written in October while the Brothers were at l'*Hermitage*, was surely prompted by the inevitable personal interview the Brother Director of Valbenoîte had with the priest.

Monsieur le Maire	<i>Dear Mayor,</i>
<p>J'ai appris avec le plus sensible plaisir le vif intérêt que vous montrez pour nos Chers Frères de Valbenoîte. En les confiant de nouveau à votre puissante protection je me fais un devoir de vous témoigner ma juste reconnaissance pour toutes vos bontés à leur égard. J'espère, Monsieur le Maire, que</p>	<p><i>It is with the greatest pleasure that I learned of the lively interest you have shown our dear Brothers at Valbenoîte. By entrusting them once more<sup>92</sup> to your worthy protection, I feel it my duty to manifest my deep gratitude for your kindness towards them. I hope, Mr Mayor, that you will continue to</i></p>

<sup>92</sup> *Once more* here means – for this new school year.

<p>vous continuerez à les honorer de vos faveurs. Soyez persuadé qu'elles seront pour eux un encouragement des plus puissants à faire chaque jour de nouveaux efforts pour vous contenter de plus en plus sous tous les rapports.</p>	<p><i>show them such favour. Be assured that this will constitute for them a strong encouragement to renew their daily efforts to satisfy you in every situation.</i></p>
<p>Vous désirez, Monsieur le Maire, connaître les différents cas où le bon ordre des classes nous oblige à en exclure certains enfants, nous tâcherons de vous les exposer à la première occasion.</p>	<p><i>You wish to know of the different occasions when we were obliged to exclude certain children so as to maintain classroom order, and we will certainly explain these to you at the first opportunity.</i></p>
<p>Veillez agréer avec mes sincères remerciements l'assurance de la parfaite considération avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'être,</p>	<p><i>With my most sincere gratitude and assuring you of my greatest esteem, I have the honour to be,</i></p>
<p><i>Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, Champagnat, sup.</i></p> <p>18 8<sup>bre</sup> 1836</p>	<p><i>Your most humble and obedient servant, Champagnat, sup.</i></p> <p>October, 18<sup>th</sup> 1836</p>

