

MARIST notebooks



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Editor in chief:

Patrimony Commission
Allan de Castro
André Lanfrey
Antonio Martínez Estaún
Colin Chalmers
Heloísa Afonso de Almeida Sousa
Michael Green
Michel Morel Patricio Pino
Spiridion Ndanga

Publishing Director:

Luiz da Rosa

Contributors to this edition:

Br André Lanfrey
Br Antonio Martínez Estaún
Br Augustin Hendlmeier
Éric Perrin
Br Frederick McMahon
Br Louis Richard
Br Manuel Mesonero
Br Patricio Pino

Cover photo: Br Adolphe-Louis (Héctor Ammel), of the former province of Beaucamps. He was born on 20 January 1883, in Halluin (59 - France) and died in Pommeroel (Belgium) on 1 June 1940. He was wounded on 11 June 1915 by a piece of shrapnel in Hébuterne (62 - France). He is represented as a soldier and with a cassock, with his military medals.

Formatting & Photolithography by:
TIPOCROM Srl - Guidonia (Roma)

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

Website: www.champagnat.org

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

Printing by:
CSC GRAFICA Srl - Guidonia (Roma)

Translators:

Br Aimé Maillet, Br Aloisio Kuhn,
Br Carlos Martín Hinojar,
Br Charles Filiault,
Br Claudio Girardi, Br Edward Clisby,
Br Fabricio Galiana Martínez,
Br Gilles Hogue, Br Joannès Fontanay,
Br Moisés Puente,
Ricardo Tescarolo, Robert Clark,
Br Salvador Durante.

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andrelanfrey@orange.fr



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augustin-hendlmeier@web.de



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augustin-hendlmeier@web.de



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eric.perrin@saint-etienne.fr



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fred.mcmahon@marists.org.au



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lrichard@maristes.net



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manuelmesonero@maristasiberica.es



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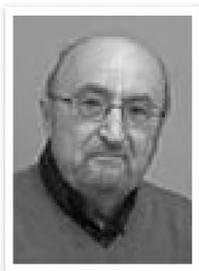
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Br André Lanfrey

EDITORIAL

We are preparing to celebrate the bicentenaries of the Society of Mary (1816) and of our Institute (1817). At the same time, it is an opportunity to remind us that the centenary took place during the First World War (1914-1918), in which more than a thousand Brothers were mobilised, around one hundred and fifty killed, and many others deeply affected by wounds, illnesses and various types of trauma.

Revolution, persecution and war, moreover, have accompanied the history of the Society of Mary from the beginning, since it was constituted immediately after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, the first Marist aspirants having known the times of persecution and escaped military service through their ecclesiastical commitment. In the decades following, peace remained precarious. Up to 1840, military service was one of Fr Champagnat's main preoccupations. Revolutionary

phases (1830, 1848, 1870-71) were not wanting and, if they did not have a lasting effect on the Institute, they created a feeling of uncertainty. The law of 1889, obliging religious and ecclesiastics to military service, was interpreted by the Institute as one of the clearest signs of a return of the persecuting spirit of the Revolution.

The war of 1914-1918 followed, then, from the clash of military ambitions and became the matrix of a tragic twentieth century marked on every continent by revolution, civil war, totalitarianism, which many Brothers had to confront suffering, exile, mortal dangers, persecutions, captivity and other consequences. If the Institute has been careful to honour the memory of the Brother martyrs, it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently mindful of the numerous Brothers who suffered, over long periods, from a multiform and often violent compulsory military service, while trying not to lose their humanity or their identity.

THE INSTITUTE IN WORLD WAR I



Br André Lanfrey

The war which broke out in Europe at the beginning of August 1914 affected a multinational institute but one of which the French personnel (about 50 % of the effective total) had been very widely scattered since 1903. Numerous brothers mobilised, therefore, had to return from China, America, the Middle East. The German Brothers, formed in Arlon, already constituted a very significant group. The youngest (80 novices and postulants and 140 juniors¹) were conducted to the Dutch frontiere for the return to Germany, while the German and Hungarian novices in Italy were transferred to Fribourg in Switzerland.

The mechanism of the Institute was thus seriously affected : in France obviously, in Belgium where Belgian, French and German brothers were working, but also in the Ottoman Empire, China, and the

houses of formation. Yet even though the war indirectly affected the whole world, mobilisation involved only the brothers native to four countries: France, Germany, Italy², Belgium. In the United Kingdom and in most of the British Empire, *clergymen* were dispensed from military service and, despite alerts in 1915 and 1917, it appears no brother was mobilised³.

MOBILISED AND KILLED IN THE 1914-1918 WAR

There were 9281 French religious mobilised⁴ (including 708 Marist Brothers) and 1517 (16.3 %) killed (101 Marist Brothers). Of 45 congregations, the Marist Brothers ranked 3rd after the B.C.S. (1896 mobilised, 280 killed) and the Jesuits, (855 mobilised, 177 killed⁵).

¹ Br Augustin Hendlmeier, "The beginnings of the province of Germany" in *Marist Notebooks* No 27, p. 68.

² It entered the war only on 23 May 1915.

³ Brother Clare, *History of the province*, New Edition, 2011, p. 154.

⁴ Christian Sorrel, *La République contre les congrégations*, Cerf, 2003, p. 211.

⁵ Statistics taken from *Le prix du sang. Le livre d'or du clergé français*, t. II, 1925. Other sources give slightly lower figures.

For the Marist Brothers, the most reliable global balance of the brothers engaged in the war is to be found in the acts of the General Chapter of 1920:

“During the war, we had 1037 mobilised ; 154 dead and disappeared; 193 citations in the order of the day; 140 Croix de Guerre; 5 Military Medals; one Cross of the Légion d’Honneur and 4 other decorations”⁶.

As for the number of wounded, it rose on the French side to 91 brothers and a total of 120 wounds, some having been wounded several times⁷.

The statistics in the archives under the heading “Marist Brothers

soldiers during the 14-18 war”⁸ which served as the basis for these figures, also reveals the small number of French brothers who returned from Spain, Canada, the United States, Brasil,⁹ the British Empire...while the French provinces of Mexico, China, Constantinople and Syria were badly affected. The Work of St Francis Xavier was particularly affected because it had numerous French, German and Italian aspirants. The following table is also a good index of the degree of internationalisation of the provinces: this is particularly visible with the province of Beaucamps comprising a large number of German brothers, but also Constantinople, and the province of Saint Paul where Italian brothers were numerous.

Provinces	Mobilised						Killed			
	Fr.	It.	Ger.	Belg.	Other	Total	Fr.	It.	Ger.	Total
St Genis L.	85	2	5			92	17		2	19
Hermitage	95	17				112	18			18
St Paul	49	53				102	10	5		15
Aubenas	45					45	5			5
Beaucamps	49		169	20		238	4		39	43
Varennnes	56	10				66	6	1		7
Lacabane	27					27	1			1
Islas	1					1				
España	17					17	1			1

⁶ If the figures of the mobilised and the dead concern the whole of the institute, the decorations appear to concern only the French Brothers.

⁷ This figure is with doubt much lower than the reality and might refer only to the seriously wounded.

⁸ AFM France 600. Undated dossier, folder “letters of the year 1914”

⁹ Nothing is said of Colombia.

Provincias	Mobilised					Killed				
	Fr.	It.	Ger.	Belg.	Other	Total	Fr.	It.	Ger.	Total
Canadá	20					20	2			2
Estados-Unidos	17					17	2			2
México	58					58	15			15
China	32					32	1			1
Constantinopla	59		8		16 ¹⁰	83	9		3	12
Siria	58					58	5			5
Brasil central	11					11	3			3
Brasil sur	1					1				
Brasil norte	6	1				7				
Africa del sur	1	1				2				
Nva. Celandia			1			1				
Nva. Caledonia	2					2				
Seychelles	3					3				
St Fr. Xavier	16	5	21			42	2		4	6
Total	708	88	205	20	16	1037	101	6	48	155
%	68	8,4	19,7	1,9	1,5		65	3,8	30,9	

Remark: Volume XIV of the Circulars (p. 348) gives the last list of the dead containing the professed, novices and postulants who died in the war. To the list of deceased above could be added 3 novices and 3 postulants not taken into account previously.

In fact, eleven provinces (half of the administrative units) and the work of St Francis Xavier supplied more than 90 % of the mobilised and almost all the dead. As most of these units were already ageing, the war of 14-18 contributed to reinforcing an earlier division of the Institute into zones of expansion (essentially the Americas and Oceania) and areas in crisis (Europe, Middle East, China).

LEGITIMACY OF THE MOBILISATION?

But let us return to 1914. The general mobilisation decreed in France on 1 August 1914 was liable to affect not only the men of the reserve, classes 1900 to 1910, but also those of the territorials, that is to say, classes 1886-1899. In France, one had to be over 48 to escape mobilisation.

¹⁰ Fourteen Hungarians, 1 Rumanian, one Bulgarian.

Most of the French religious living overseas could object that, since the law of 1901 and the Combes decrees of 1903 had condemned them to exile, they had no duty to a country which had rejected them, even if this position of categorical refusal had been weakened by the circular of the Minister of the Interior, Louis Malvy, asking the prefects on 2 August 1914, to suspend the application of the decrees against the congregations. But this measure could be seen as hypocritical even odious, the aim of the government being to recover the exiled religious to serve as cannon fodder¹¹ without offering them in exchange the least serious opening, since the circular granted nothing in the long term¹². In the short term, this suspension was without any practical effect because, since 1906, the State had been quasi- powerless against the secularised and the congregational schools had nearly all been closed.

This mobilisation could appear irrational for a large number of French brothers who had not done any military service for, having left Europe before the age of military service, they had benefitted from Article 50 of the law of 1889 dispensing from military service (except in the case of war) young men living abroad at the

time of their incorporation and staying there at least ten years. Without military training and forced to undertake long voyages to return, they could hardly see their usefulness as combatants.

The superiors of the congregations obviously had no sympathy for the persecuting Republic. For example, Br Jean-Joseph, superior of the Brothers of Ploërmel, considered that duties towards God were superior to the interests of the homeland and hoped that none of his brothers on mission would join the army¹³. But, as it was not a question of imposing a line of conduct in this area on the brothers, the superiors of the Marist Brothers sought to alleviate the effects of the mobilisation as far as possible, taking advantage of contacts made before the war between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute in view of the opening of missionary novitiates in France.

Thus, a letter of Rev. Br Stratonique to the French Minister of War on 6 October 1914¹⁴, explains that of the 250 brothers working in the Middle East and China, half have already been mobilised. As for the deferred brothers, their mobilisation in the auxiliary services would destroy the

¹¹ The law of 1904 forbidding congregational teaching had given them 10 years to close.

¹² This will be seen in 1924-26 when the Left Block, led by Edouard Herriot, has the impudence to re-launch the anti-congregational policy.

¹³ Christian Sorrel, *La république contre les congrégations*, Cerf, 2003, p. 210-211.

¹⁴ Letter No 14798. There is a question about its date : perhaps 6 September 1914.

thirty-six establishments conducted in that country up to this date. So he asks that the latter be dispensed from military service and adds:

"In France they could be no more than an insignificant contribution; for, being for the most part a great distance away and communications being rare and difficult, it is to be presumed that by the time they arrived, the war would be almost over.¹⁵"

Another letter of 10 November 1914 asks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the houses of Italy not be deprived of their formators, a petition that was granted¹⁶.

Nevertheless, the superiors were outstripped by events: at the end of 1914 a large number of brothers were expelled from the Ottoman Empire which had sided with the Central Powers. The provinces of Syria and Constantinople were thus destroyed and "the general council accepts that they (the expelled brothers) be employed for the time being in our establishments in France¹⁷ "to replace the secularised brothers mobilised. It was on their behalf that the Rev. Brother wrote to Minister Delcassé (Foreign Affairs) in order "that they be permitted to accept the offers of employment made them almost everywhere in free teaching, and without the obligation

of laying aside either their title or their religious costume".

Such a request had no chance of being successful, but it was a means of reminding the French government that the "Sacred Union" decided by the parliament on 4 August 1914 ought to have as consequence an effective re-establishment of the right of religious and not simply purely formal concessions. And all through the war, the Institute knew how to assert the services rendered: in 1916 the superiors would recall that 2600 French brothers were overseas; nearly 600 under the colours, and 55 already dead for the homeland¹⁸.

THE REFRACTORY BROTHERS

The majority of the missionaries, and the Marist Brothers in particular, were patriotic, easily amalgamating defence of the homeland and of the Church: they felt themselves, as a famous hymn says: "Catholics and French" and most considered the call of the homeland as a duty both civic and religious. But, for fortuitous reasons (distance, difficulties of communication) or more deliberate ones, a significant number of French brothers called up by the authorities did not obey.

¹⁵ This idea of a short war was widespread at the time, including among the military.

¹⁶ See letters 14880, 14882...

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Letter 14926.

This problem would become particularly embarrassing around 1920-25 when the superiors were trying to have the French government authorize the opening of novitiates in France for the works abroad¹⁹. The archives of the Marist Brothers have preserved a report by Br Joseph Prosper²⁰ (January-February 1925) after his interviews with the military and the politicians about the insubordination of the brothers, particularly notable in Brasil²¹. And in his manuscript history of the institute²² Br Marie-Nicet, himself refractory, explains in detail the arguments justifying the refusal to respond to call-up.

"In the new provinces: China, South Africa, Colombia, Brasil, Mexico... , made up almost exclusively of "young brothers", the mass departure of those mobilised would fatally cause the ruin of the works. On this occasion, that is to say in these exceptional circumstances, the consul in Rio, not being able to say to the brothers "stay", made this wise observation:

"The Germans are staying; if you leave, they will supplant you".

It was frank and clear: Intelligent in pauca!

Shortly after, Senator Baudin, on mission in the countries of Latin America, exclaimed: "How could you abandon now these magnificent

works which do honour to France? It would be a crime; or rather a great stupidity: to give up what you have for something you don't know."

However, the superiors remained perplexed. It is sometimes more difficult to know one's duty than to perform it. "One serves one's country better by making friends for it than by killing its enemies", this is indubitable. But, on the other hand, the order of mobilisation was general...; the families of the refractory would be dishonoured, so to speak...; and if extradition took place...?

Let us note also that the greatest number of expatriates affected by the mobilisation were the expatriate victims of the Combeist persecution, outlawed after numerous vexations, struck out of the number of citizens...It is clear that this dispensed them from going to serve an unnatural mother who had rejected them.

The Apostolic Nuncio to Brasil, consulted by the Brother Provincials of the Centre, fully agreed:

"If at least the sectarians who persecute you were honest pagans, they would abolish at this tragic hour the exceptional laws they have brought against religious, so that you

¹⁹ Christian Sorrel, *op. cit.* p. 212-216.

²⁰ AFM, France 600, dossier 1918. Official file: Théodore Naudet (1882-1983) born in Paris, of the province of Beaucamps, arrived in Porto Alegre in 1902, perpetually professed in 1906. He did not do war service in France. In 1923, he did the Second Novitiate in Grugliasco. In 1924-31, he was administrator at Gravatahy. He seems to have been sent on mission to France.

²¹ A dossier of 1914 indicates fifty-six refractory French in Brasil Central and twenty-three in Brasil South.

²² Volume VI a, ch. XI, p. 354.

could return properly to your country and boldly fulfill your military duties. But it is altogether illogical for you to return clandestinely, so to speak, to a country which has not wanted your services and has treated you against the law of peoples²³. So much the more, since you are doing here in America a work not only humanitarian but excellently patriotic; for you are making loved and esteemed the France which others (alas) seem doing their best to revile.”

Finally, the provincials of Brasil established a line of conduct on three points:

- “1° To abstain from discussing this burning question in public (that is, in community);
- 2° To those who insisted on going, to allow them;
- 3° To those who asked advice, to invite them to stay”.

In 1914, the risk of extradition was not purely theoretical, since it was difficult to foresee the political future of the host countries in favour of one camp or the other. Moreover, in Mexico, the hostility of the government towards religious obliged fifty-nine French brothers to return to France²⁴. On the other hand, the countries of North America and the British Empire offered great security,

something which partly explains the small number of brothers who returned and allows one to suspect some cases of disobedience and different arrangements²⁵. Thus, Br Léonida, born on 25 February 1886 and having left for Mexico on 5 August 1902 before the age of call-up, a brilliant teacher in 1915, would be dispensed from all military obligation by the Legation of France²⁶.

Even if non-compliance with mobilisation affected only the brothers of Brasil, it seems to have been the only case which created a problem, for two reasons: the massive scale of the refusals and the letter of one provincial to the French authorities, probably to justify the lack of submission²⁷. Such a refusal was not confined to the Marist Brothers: an historical study shows that in Lozère, a very Catholic area, the number of refractory was more numerous than elsewhere, many brothers (of various congregations) who had left for Spain not returning for mobilisation²⁸. Among the Brothers of the Holy Family of Belley, fifty French brothers established in Uruguay declared that they refused to return²⁹.

²³ This word helps make understandable the request of the superiors with regard to the soutane mentioned above.

²⁴ F. Gabriel Michel, *Nos supérieurs. F. Léonida*, Maison générale, Rome, 1976, p. 35

²⁵ No French brother returned from Colombia. In the *Histoire de l'Institut de 1947*, p. 121, Br Jean-Emile specifies that in China and New Caledonia mobilisation took place on site.

²⁶ F. Gabriel Michel. *Nos supérieurs. F. Léonida*, Maison générale, Rome, 1976, p. 36-37.

²⁷ Br Joseph Prosper will specify that it was not signed and therefore without juridical value. In any case, the massive insubordination of the French brothers of Brasil explains the very small number of brothers who returned from that country: nineteen in all, three of whom were killed.

²⁸ Antoine Prost, Jay Winter, *Penser la grande Guerre*, Seuil, 2004, p. 122.

²⁹ Information from Br Teodoro Berzal, archivist of the Holy Family.

PATRIOTISM AND INCULTURATION

Although Br Marie-Nicet shows evidence of a violent resentment towards the anti-clerical Republic, he extols a peaceful service of the motherland, the only one fitting for missionaries. But he suggests another sentiment: the brothers have remade their lives elsewhere and do not wish to choose between the old and the new homeland. In short, they have become inculturated and this attachment to their country and province of adoption comes through sometimes in the letters and biographies of the soldier brothers. Having known the high seas, they can feel France as a narrow world, malevolent and no longer familiar.

Finally, the strict anti-clericalism of the French government, which the beginning of the war showed up more than it toned down, was in singular contrast with the religious freedom and the respect which the Brothers enjoyed in most of the countries where they were implanted. Also, whether they were refractory or consented to return, many of them had towards their country an ambivalent feeling of resentment and devotion. Once the war was over, most returned to the countries they had left temporarily.

BEHIND THE NATIONALITIES, RELIGIOUS RIVALRIES

The brothers could even consider their insubordination as a religious duty, for international public opinion was shocked that a so-called Catholic country forced military service on priests and religious. It was scandalised above all that it imposed armed service on them, instead of using them in the auxiliary services (chaplancy, medical³⁰...). At the beginning of the war, a French missionary bishop in Korea³¹ reported that in the eyes of the Protestants “France could not present itself as a Catholic country since, counter to the rules of the Church, it imposed armed service on all the clergy. It was necessary then, they said, to hope for the victory of Germany, a much more Christian country than France”. And when Br Marie-Nicet says “The Germans are staying”, he is doubtless putting two factors together: the enemy nation but also the Protestant power. And the problem persisted throughout the conflict: even when compulsory military service was established in England in January 1916, clergymen, and thus the brothers, were exempted. Again in 1917, the director of the Propagation of the Faith in New York indicated that the opinion of Catholic Americans had been particularly alienated by: “the iniquity committed by the French government in forcing priests to bear arms”. But he

³⁰ This was the case in Belgium.

³¹ Paul Christophe, *Ibid.*, p. 41.

also criticised priests who had left their missions without trying “to exempt themselves from a bad law made out of hatred of religion”³².

It is understandable, then, that the French government had to show proof of flexibility towards the congregations who were fighting abroad the accusations made against a France enemy of Christianity. But already, for the Brothers of 1914, to remain refractory was to declare oneself a follower of Catholic universalism before being a Frenchman. One remained “Catholic and French”, but the two terms ceased to be equal. And, even among the brothers who agreed to return, the patriotic fibre was in some measure balanced by a wider vision of the world.

REALIZATION OF A LONG AND DEADLY WAR

Obviously, the opening months of the war were particularly confused and it was only slowly that the

Institute realized the unexpected character of the event: a very deadly war without an end in sight. Starting from September 1915, The *Bulletin de l'institut* instituted a column “Our soldiers” which listed the names of the brothers killed, sometimes their province, the place and date of their decease when known. In numbers 37-51 appeared twenty biographies of brothers dead in the war, almost all French for communications with the Central Powers were very difficult³³. The wounded and prisoners were rarely mentioned, but always those cited in the order of the day or decorated because they were good arguments against the French anti-clericals who claimed the Church was not participating in the patriotic effort. However, as internationality required, any nationalism or outrageous words against the enemy were banned, even if here and there there appeared the idea of a struggle for justice and right. The table below gives some of the main information supplied.

N° of Bulletin	Mobilised	Killed	Year	Remarks
36 (1915)	3 à 400	7		Only the names of the killed are indicated
37 (1915)				No new death
38 (1915)				No death mentioned
39-40 (Sept. 1915)		12 10	1914 1915	22 deaths since the beginning of the war. Indicates the wounded (30...) and half a dozen prisoners
41 (Nov. 1915)		8	1915	11 wounded

³² Paul Christophe, *Des missionnaires plongés dans la Grande Guerre. Lettres des Missions étrangères de Paris*, Cerf, 2012, p. 326.

³³ Some letters come from Italian brothers.

N° of Bulletin	Mobilised	Killed	Year	Remarks
42 (1916)		10	1915	
43 (1916)		4		1 killed in 1914, 1 at an unknown date, 2 in 1916.
44 (1916)		6	1916	
45 (Sept. 1916) (list)		8	1916	Indicates a total of 62 brothers killed. (58 in the list)
46 (Nov. 1916)		4	1916	
47 (March 1917)		9 5	1916 1917	
48 (1917)		8	1916-17	One killed in 1916; the others in 1917. Indicates a total of 85 killed. (84 in the list)
49 (Dec. 1917)	850	15	1917	
50 (1918)		6	1918	
51 (1918)		13	1918	
52 (1918)		10	1918	Indicates a total of 145 brothers killed.(128 in the lists)
		128		

THE LETTERS OF THE SOLDIER BROTHERS

No 36 of the Bulletin (January 1915, p. 53) commenced to publish some series of extracts from letters of the soldier brothers which were to become an important element of the bulletins right up to July 1917³⁴. These eighty letters, most often addressed to the Br Assistant but sometimes to the Superior General or other superiors (Provincial...), recount with relative accuracy the harshness of the

battles, the very hard life of the camps and the front³⁵, the most peaceful employments (hospitals, secretariat), even captivity. Many have come back from Mexico, Syria, the province of Constantinople and recall memories of their previous life in those countries to which they appear already to be attached. They are replying most often to the letter-circulars of the Assistants who also send the Bulletin and the circulars of the Superior General as well as, sparingly, money. As is fitting, one of

³⁴ The suppression of this correspondence in the Bulletin at the end of the war appears due to financial difficulties which made paper scarce.

³⁵ Did they pass through military censorship or were they sent by roundabout ways?

WWI veteran Brothers of the former province of Beaucamps.
From left to right:
Br Marie-Gervais (seated),
Br Laurent (standing),
Br Edmond-Paul (standing),
Br Adolphe-Louis (seated) and
Br Mathurus (standing).



the recurrent themes of these letters is love of the congregation, the soutane, religious and brotherly life, in the end quite easy compared with the harsh military life. It is a devotion to the Institute, rather than to Fr Champagnat who is not often mentioned.

The tone of the letters evolves in a notable way. At the beginning, marked by the events of 1903-1905 which made them think of an anti-religious France, the brothers are very surprised to see a large number of very religious officers and troopers very respectful of their state. Then they seem more pessimistic even though they do not complain of any hostility in their regard. They indicate the indifference, the religious ignorance, the blasphemies of the mass of the soldiers; and some feel a bit isolated or grouped in little rings of priests, religious and soldiers, although they attempt and sometimes succeed in apostolic activities. They have practical experience of a world already very secularised.

Obviously, the brothers give an account of their spiritual life in a context which has nothing to do with conventual life. For many, the practice of the sacraments is rare and they have hardly any books for spiritual reading. None of them indicates that he possesses a bible, but the New Testament does not appear to be part of their kit either. Their religion is founded on the sacraments: Mass, confession and communion as much as possible. Several mention the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. As for personal practices, the Little Office being more or less easy to recite in a context of marches, exhausting work and numerous constrictions, they mainly use the rosary, ejaculatory prayers and meditation, notably during their long hours of watch. One brother, returned from the East in August 1914, even gives his personal retreat programme (T. VI, p. 464) of three days in August 1916, based on meditations proposed by the magazine *Le prêtre aux armées*, the reading of *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ* and the rosary. He recalls nostalgically

his entry into the congregation and the retreats followed in exile. A letter of 8 January 1916 (Tome VI, p. 176), from a brother preparing to go to the front for the first time, seems to us to betray a general enough state of mind:

"Happy New Year! The adjective "happy" seems rather derisory amidst the current tragic events; [...] Let the war with its bloody horrors end! Make room for victorious peace, peace granted to right, to civilisation! And may a glorified Christianity freely resume its benefits again on a new society!

Another letter of a brother "on campaign" returned from Lebanon (he invokes Our Lady of Lebanon) writing in his "guitoune" (tent) expresses a more profound sentiment (T. VI, p. 177):

"We have need of pure victims who make atonement and sway heaven. And where to find these innocent victims? Isn't it especially among religious? ... Where is the soldier apostle's heart which has not dreamed of being a holocaust agreeable to God, of offering itself, after the example of Jesus Christ, in sacrifice for the salvation of its dear motherland? [...] For my part, I can tell you that I never, thanks be to God, lose sight of this double aim: to expiate and to merit, in imagining that Providence has made of these current events a subject of improvement for me. And if only you knew how I have been in interior peace since I surrendered myself, without reserve, into her maternal arms! There are thoughts which are of supreme comfort in times of anguish
[...]

"Christ suffered more than you... United to his sufferings, yours will be of an exceptional

price... Thus you will realize the letter of the saying of the Gospel: Carry my Cross and you will be truly my disciples.

[...]

You would not believe how in reasoning in this way, one comes easily to accept death".

This is the fundamental spirituality of many of the soldier brothers, made up of abandonment to divine providence in imitation of Christ crucified. This sacrificial spirituality which mixes intimately patriotism and the Christian spirit does not prevent questions in the face of the extent of the massacre and destruction and especially the length of the war. While in 1915 the war is seen as a regenerating trial, in 1917 the tone is less assured. In a letter of 10 July 1917 (T. VII, p. 221), a soldier brother declares he can do good only by good example for, he says:

"My regiment unfortunately is composed mostly of men who appear to me to be strangers to any religious notion and have hardly any concern for self respect in their words".

At the same period (T. VII, p. 223), another brother affirms:

"It is impossible after having seen what one has seen to remain indifferent, stationary (in religious life): one becomes worse or better".

In sum, confronted with unexpected events, the soldier brothers leave a relatively simple mental universe to enter into a more personal and deeper spirituality which does not prevent their perception of the absurdity of an endless war in which

the regenerative aspect is hardly evident. They often perceive clearly that their life, if it is not cut down, will no longer be the same and even sometimes that the world will be changed. This is what a brother artillery officer (T. V, p. 150) evokes on 18 February 1915:

"The much vaunted progress is evident everywhere in this frightful war; only (in) its tragic and unique role of destruction".

The brothers who had been through the war and who, in the great majority, rejoined the ranks of the congregation, were, humanly and spiritually, new men.

THE APPENDIX TO THE CIRCULAR OF 24 MAY 1917

It goes without saying that not all of the brothers mobilised shared the sentiments revealed above. The war, moreover, created for the temporary professed and the novices a novel situation: novitiate interrupted and temporary vows reaching expiry. Thus, for the good of the brothers under the colours, the canonical bond with the Institute was broken and the length of the war threatened to transform what was, in the beginning, regarded only as a transitory situation into definitive separation.

In order to respond to this danger, the circular of 24 May 1917 was accompanied by a brochure of forty pages written in September-December 1916 by a brother mobilised³⁶ for over two years, and entitled "Benefits of my congregation. Its inward and outward beauty, its great men". The introduction of the Rev. Br insisted on family spirit and the supernatural spirit "among most of our soldier brothers" but at the same time betrayed concern about their fidelity after an interminable separation. The brochure itself is a hymn to the Institute as a mystical body:

"I will compare you, as a society, with other organisations established by man, and I am convinced that I would find none whose constitutions are so perfect; then I will see your rapid expansion into all the countries of the world; I will count the establishments founded, the children instructed, the religious saved within you; finally, I will briefly examine the life and works of your holy founder and his first disciples, the virtues of your members, especially of those who are kept far from you by a terrible war and of whom more than sixty have already died for their motherland".

And it is an invitation to the soldier brothers to remain worthy of such an election:

"To you my life; I wish to devote myself to your works until my dying breath. My God, grant me this grace. Blessed Virgin Mary, obtain for me to always remain your child".

³⁶ He does not appear to have been temporarily professed but to have still pronounced the vow of obedience. He made the second novitiate. His brochure seems as well to have been partly based on his notes from this period.

This powerful reminder prepared for the circular to the soldier brothers of 25 December 1917 in which the Rev. Br informed the temporary professed, who had been unable to renew their vows while their active military service continued, that they would now be able to do so thanks to an indult obtained from Rome on 3 December 1917 (Circulars, T. XIV, pages not numbered). One is a little surprised by the late date of this measure, which shows that for a long time an early end was hoped for this war.

WAR AND SECULARISATION

At the Chapter of 1920, the commission of secularisation stated that of 197 secularised mobilised 180 had returned to the congregation and

that 12 had died. This was an argument for the rehabilitation of the secularised and an invitation to the Chapter to give them other than sporadic help. But, as we saw above, the problem of the secularisation of the returned brothers free of military obligations had arisen since 1915 with the expulsion of the brothers from the Ottoman Empire. It was also certain that brothers waiting for call-up or wounded in the war or still free from military obligations during the conflict, remained in France. Of the fifty-nine French brothers of the province of Mexico who left for the war, fifteen had been killed and only a dozen returned³⁷. So, in 1915-18 and up to 1922 authorisations for secularisations became numerous. Here is a table of them drawn up according to the registers of deliberations of the General Council:

Province	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	Total
Lacabane	1								1
St Paul	3			1	7			1	12
Aubenas									
Varennes	2	1	11	2		<u>17</u>			33
Hermitage		1	2	2	20	<u>4</u>	14	<u>2</u> +2	47
St Genis	2	1	2	2	4			3	14
Beaucamps									
TOTAL									107

Remark: the figures underlined indicate the brothers who changed province and did not only obtain a provisional permission. After 1922, there is no trace of permissions from the General Council. The absence of figures for Beaucamps probably comes from the fact that this province, situated in a battle zone and under German occupation, was disorganised.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 39.

One can estimate at around 750 (688 in Beaucamps) the secularised of 1913 who would be no more than 664 in 1920, with a very high median age³⁸: The reinforcement received during the war and in the immediate postwar period only partly compensated for the mobilisation of the youngest secularised elements.

THE INSTITUTE IN OCCUPIED COUNTRIES

From the first weeks of the war, almost all of Belgium and a large part of the north of France were occupied by the German army. By this fact, almost the whole territory of the province of Beaucamps, Germany included, was isolated from the rest of the institute, Br Diogène, Assistant General, finding himself confined to the provincial house with the old brothers. Throughout the war he would serve as mediator between the occupying power and the civil population while the boarding school was occupied by a military hospital. At the end of the war, he succeeded in evacuating the old brothers of the house, first to Belgium and then to St Genis-Laval, passing through Switzerland³⁹. The history of the province of Beaucamps⁴⁰ records that in France as in Belgium – and in

Germany – the brothers had to suffer hunger, numerous requisitions, extreme difficulty of movement, and the absence of relations with the rest of the institute. Several boarding schools and houses of formation (Péruwels, Pommeroeul, Lille-Ozanam...) were, like Beaucamps, partly occupied by military hospitals and troops. Up to 1918, the schools functioned more or less well with the aid of lay teachers, but in 1918 the men were evacuated to Belgium and, during their retreat, the German army destroyed the boarding school of Beaucamps and a great part of the village.

RAPID INTERNATIONALISATION OF PERSONNEL

The war contributed to accelerate the internationalisation of the congregation and the superiors would then use this fact as an argument with the French government to obtain the opening of novitiates on its territory⁴¹. In a history dated 20 November 1920, Br Stratonique, Superior General, observed that the French element abroad which was 50% in 1914 had decreased to 37% in 1920.

³⁸ According to the provinces, the brothers older than sixty were between a third and a quarter of the total.

³⁹ *Nos Supérieurs*, St Genis-Laval, 1953, p. 352-363.

⁴⁰ History of the province of Beaucamps, 1838-1944.

⁴¹ Which they would partly obtain in 1929.

Year	Schools	Total of brothers (prof.)	French brothers	Pupils
1914	395	2646	1370	69090
October 1920	418	2778	1044	84087

For the Institute, this result is remarkable since despite the war the effective total has increased, countries other than France (in particular Spain) having taken the baton of the mission while in many places (Canada, United States, Oceania...) the growth is endogenous. One can even ask if it is the positive effect of the withdrawal of the French brothers which obliges the provinces to rely more on local recruitment.

Nor did the war seriously affect the perseverance of the brothers as might have been expected. Certainly, the Acts of the Chapter of 1920 state:

"From 1908 to 1918, the withdrawals of perpetually professed Brothers had followed a constantly diminishing progression, passing from 71 in the first of these years, to 26 in the last ; unfortunately, in 1919, it climbed to 94, principally because of the mobilised who did not return.

A survey made based on the individual files of the brothers⁴² gives 93 withdrawals of perpetually professed in 1919, including 54 French brothers⁴³, 4 Germans, 4 Italians and 1

Belgian recently demobilised. Almost all had been mobilised in 1914 or 1915 and so had lived a long time away from the Institute. But it should be noted that in 1914, the number of withdrawals of perpetually professed rose to 35 and that the median of 1915-1918 had fallen to 24. In 1921, it was 43 and in 1922 the 37 withdrawals of perpetually professed seems to rejoin the rhythm of 1914. The war therefore would have slowed down the movement of withdrawals to concentrate them in the years 1919-21.

It is more difficult to know what was the perseverance rate for the temporary professed. Nevertheless, the Chapter of 1920 noted that between 1907 and 1920, of 3086 brothers admitted to profession 35.4 % had withdrawn and 7.7 % had died (about 90 of them in the war, or 2.9 %). But in the same time bracket, of 1437 brothers admitted to perpetual profession 32 % had withdrawn. So there was hardly any difference between the perseverance of the ones or the others. Globally and statistically speaking, deaths and depar-

⁴² Carried out by Br Henri Réocreux

⁴³ But half of them had returned before 1914 after a longer or shorter stay abroad.

tures caused by the war had only a secondary importance: in 1907 there were 4093 professed and 4513 in 1920. The impact of the war was more qualitative than quantitative.

THE WAR EXPERIENCED BY THE BROTHER COMBATANTS

I have already said that from 1915 to 1918 the Bulletin de l'Institut had published 20 biographies of brothers killed in the war⁴⁴. Up to the years of the 1960s, the biographical notices frequently mention the war service of such and such a brother, but rather as a sad parenthesis in an apostolic life. However, three biographies appear to me to constitute three extreme cases in the range of attitudes of the ones and the others.

Br Salutaris (Louis Goutaudier, 1880-1966) entered the province of Varennes in 1900, then sent to the Middle East, returned to France at the beginning of the 14-18 war. He revealed himself there as a remarkable leader of men, amalgamating without scruple patriotism and devotion to the Sacred Heart: "The whole Regiment knew him, and an artillery lieutenant, a man of faith, seeing him set out on a hazardous mission, said: "he'll come back because he has the

insignia of the Sacred Heart on his left arm". The rosary, his favourite prayer, was his "combat weapon". He recited it in the trenches, under shelling, and had his soldiers recite it. The fact is that, despite an extremely risky life, he came out unharmed and became an officer. At the end of the war, he found himself charged by the French army to resupply a starving Lebanon. Once back in France, he carried out in a notable way the functions of recruiter-fund raiser and economer.

A quite different sensibility is manifested by Br Felice (Noël Bertrand 1886-1961), born in the village of Chabotte (Hautes Alpes), formed in the novitiate of St Paul, then leaving for Mexico. During his second novitiate, before returning, he reveals in his notes an amazing thanksgiving: "My God, thank you! But what am I going to do to get rid of this mud which is covering me? Blessed Virgin, I am counting on you, for I have need of your help!". And the day of closing, he writes: "I feel, my God, that if I do not go away with a will resolved to reparation for what five years of war have destroyed in me, I am lost...". The war that Br Salutaris seems to have lived as a soldier-monk, Br Felice experienced as a corruption of the soul.

⁴⁴ Five are temporary professed and one with stability. Nineteen are French and one Italian (Br Brunone).

other by that of the province of Constantinople penetrating into Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, while the province of Syria was beginning to be solidly established in Lebanon-Syria, Iraq (Bagdad), Egypt and Palestine. The History of the Institute of 1947 already gives an idea of the difficulties during the war: dissolution of the juniorate of Orsova in Hungary; in Serbia, the Brothers of Monastir taking refuge in Greece. Finally, the Brothers of Greece forced for a time to take refuge in Grugliasco. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires was going to make it very difficult for any resumption of expansion in this zone. It remains true, however, that the effect of the war on the whole of the Institute in the short term, was relatively limited and not without positive aspects. Whence the temptation to consider this conflict as a parenthesis, while it accelerated a worldwide secularisation of States and societies and limited the



Brothers of the Province of l'Hermitage who died during WWI.

field of expansion. The time of a world largely open to missionary initiatives is coming to an end and the concept of Christian civilisation has lost its credibility.

THE MARIST BROTHERS OF BELGIUM DURING WORLD WAR I



Br Augustin Hendlmeier

The year 1914 marked the history of the Marist Brothers of Belgium in a particular way. The occupation of the country by German troops and the consequences that resulted were felt in many of our houses and led to deep changes and much hardship. Many Brothers were recruited into the army and some lost their lives, as was the case for Brother Emile-François, who died in a battle on the Marne River, near Verdun (see the annals of Verviers). Several Brothers also decided to leave the country.

The German troops – and also the Allies after 1918 – occupied some of our schools. Even if the Brothers tried to work the best they could, there was much turmoil and even loss of human lives.

We unfortunately have little information about this difficult period. The archives of the Belgian Province in

Brussels-Linthout hold the annals of many but not all the houses, and they offer little information regarding the events of this challenging period of 1914-1918. It is likely that, given the circumstances, they refrained to comment on the political events of the time. However, I discovered some precise indications on the events of these years in three of the annals, those from the houses of **Mouscron-Centre**, **Warneton** and **Verviers** (*where the Brothers directed the primary school of Saint Francis Xavier College, run by the Jesuits*). I have tried to get a picture of our Brothers' life and the situation of our houses in Belgium during these tragic events by using the annals of Mouscron, and I will try to offer a faithful and brief summary. The city of Mouscron was in the combat zone, and we can assume that other houses faced a similar situation.

1. PART I : IN THE HOUSE OF MOUSCRON-CENTRE

This is what we read in the annals of our house at Mouscron-Centre:

1915-1916

Back from vacation without particular events. The aeroplanes divert our students' attention from time to time. Soup distribution every day at 9 o'clock. During the first days of January, a German army officer (the text uses the pejorative term 'boche' for German), accompanied by 4 soldiers, broke into the house while we prayed the Office. He requisitioned about 500 bottles of wine for his troops. We were given a receipt which, of course, will be honoured in due course! The military also inspected our small farm. Once the visitors had left, we hurried to hide the many chickens that were still left, so that the 'boches' could not take advantage of us. The number of students this year went from 435 to 465.

1916-1917

The new school year starts normally. The number of students goes from 465 to 485. We try to save fuel and we even have to cut down trees for firewood. We still serve soup on school days.

The occupants have forced us to give them all the wool from the mattresses. Each week, there is a person in charge to attend the supply post on our behalf. We rent a field to ensure a potato crop. No chance to find beer. Due to lack of fuel and lighting, we are forced to drop the youth recreation activity on Sunday.

We try to get food from local farmers: cereals, eggs, etc. Gas runs out regularly, which forces us to limit lighting time. We must speak to the Commander to get sacramental wine.

Some Brothers leave the central house and go to Pommeroeul. For a while now we are no longer in touch with the Province Superiors. It is not possible for them to visit us.

1917-1918

We resume classes again despite the fact that some parents are afraid to send their children over because of the dangers that threaten them.

There is an ammunition depot just 200 metres away from the school. Sometimes bombs fall in the immediate area at night, but we are under the protection of God who answers our prayers. On the other hand, holy Brother Angonius is a good "lightning rod" for us.

A few German soldiers have settled on the property but they stay

away from the school area and our house. We regret the death of two students in the bombing of the train station. We are trying to exploit the slightest piece of land for crops. Every Thursday, usually a day off from school, we set out to search for food. Sometimes we find ourselves in the combat zone and stumble upon many soldiers. But we are under the protection of *Providence*. We harvest potatoes together with a few students. More animals kept in the barnyard, otherwise the dog...

1918-1919

We are unable to resume classes: lack of fuel, and the Germans occupy all the classrooms. In March, we managed to set up classrooms in surrounding buildings and private houses. On October 7 we stop teaching because the Germans let us know we must leave the house..., but the Allies liberate us on October 18. We spent eight days in the cellar. Mouscron was bombed for three hours. On October 29 we resume classes without further interruption because the weather remained rather mild. The armistice was signed on 11 November.

We "relocate" gradually. The Irish troops occupy the property and the study room. The playground is full of horses and mules. We do what we can! The British supply us with food and different commodities. A team of

25 German prisoners is brought for eight days to restore the damage done by the British... We receive compensation for the accommodation of troops.

2. PART II : THE FATE OF SOME BROTHERS

In the Annals of our house in Verviers we find a number of unique remarks regarding the events of the 1914-1918 war. Some comments tell us about the fate of some of our Brothers. Other Brothers elsewhere probably experienced similar situations.

1914-1918

Dispersion of the community

Upon the declaration of war, **Brothers Alphonse-Adrien and Emile- François**, who could be called to service in the French army, hurriedly left Verviers.

On August 4, the German troops occupied the city. The number of military increased each day and the troops took quarter in Saint Francis Xavier College. The classrooms, gathering room, and other spaces were occupied by the soldiers. The horses found shelter in the courtyards and in some classrooms.

The three Brothers stayed in the school, spent their vacations there,

and were not disturbed in any way. On October 15, posters put up by the occupying authority invited all allied citizens to appear before a control commission. **Brother Charles-Gabriel**, a Frenchman, deemed it more appropriate to leave Belgium. M. Maystadt, a dentist, helped him cross the border safely. He took the boat to Vlissingen, Holland, and reached England, where he was to stay for a few months. Recognized as fit 'for auxiliary service' by a new Inspection Council, he was directed to France and incorporated into the Military Logistics Corps (Intendance), where he served until the end of the war. **Brother Joseph-Liguori**, however, left the congregation, as he had planned for some time. He also reached Great Britain. The last Brother who stayed – in charge of the first grade of primary school – was Urban-Joseph. Other classes had religious and diocesan priests, and also laymen as teachers during the first months. These frequent changes did not favour the students' preparation and progress at all.

The late **Brother Emile-François** had been enrolled in the 310th Infantry Regiment of Dunkirk at the beginning of the conflict. He suffered his first baptism of fire on August 20, and had to undergo the fatigues and privations of a rapid retreat to the Marne River.

Injured first with a piece of shrapnel in the Battle of the Marne, he was evacuated and treated in Brittany. Having fully recovered around Christmas, he was sent to the 8th Infantry

Regiment in the Eparges sector, south of Verdun. That is where Brother **Émile** died for France in the field of honour. He went missing during a violent bombardment that levelled the trenches and made the shelters collapse. The letters from his parents and fellow Brothers were returned with the label "disappeared". A glimmer of hope was kept for a few weeks, but it finally surrendered to evidence.

Brother Emile was part of the community of Verviers for three years: 1911-1914.

Excellent religious, of solid piety, he was also gifted with a happy, cheerful and accommodating nature. He was appreciated by all his students. His name is on the honour roll of teachers and students from Saint Francis Xavier College who died for God and their country.

Brother Alphonse-Adrien was enlisted in the 1st Section of Military Nurses and appointed to the military hospital of Bergues (North), where he stayed for a year. He was then assigned to a stretcher-bearers team, and spent the second year in different sectors of the Rivers Oise and Somme. Then he left for the East. He sailed from Marseilles on January 1st, 1917, landed in Salonika on the 10th, and immediately started a trip in stages to the area of Monastir in Serbia. After 16 months in Macedonia, he was sent back to the Verdun front in France. When the armistice arrived, he marched in stages to the Rhine in order to occupy the right bank of the

Koblenz bridgehead (General Marchand's division). Brother Alphonse-Adrien was demobilised in March 1919.

The only Brother who remained at the school was **Urbain-Joseph**. At Christmas, he went to Arlon, together with the Director of our school of Dison, in order to find some Brothers to join him and come back with him. But the effort had no success and they returned alone on December 28. In late January 1915, Brother Urbain-Joseph wrote to Brother Raymond-Célestin in Recklinghausen, with the Fathers' permission, to ask if Brothers Meinrad and Denis-Adrien could join him. Brother Visitor, Marie-Agathon, was passing by Verviers at that

time. He did not hesitate to take care of the first grade of primary school for fifteen days. Brothers Meinrad and Denis-Adrien arrived in Verviers on February 5. However, Brother Meinrad had to leave immediately the next day.

The example of Brother Emile-François is emblematic of the fate of some Belgian Brothers who died in the First World War. We cannot forget all those Brothers who died for their country. This article can encourage us to remember them. May they rest in peace, next to all their German fellow Brothers who also suffered a tragic fate during these appalling events in world history.

GERMAN BROTHERS IN WORLD WAR I



Br Augustin Hendlmeier

The number of German Brothers already serving in the army in the first weeks of the War in 1914 was 70. At this time also 28 Belgian and 26 French Brothers from the Province of Beaucamps were also in the army¹.

During the whole war the number of German Brothers on the frontline was 160 or even 205, the number of those who were killed was 45. These numbers are to be found in the report *Dis-trict d'Allemagne- Origine et progrès*²:

*"When the war was ended the released Brothers found a home in Furth thanks to the alteration in the building. The war has – what a disaster – left big gaps in the rows of our Brothers. Of the 120, who were called to the flags, 45 have lost their lives. Others returned worn-out or sick. What a joy for the Superior in the house to see the zeal and the warm affection for these Brothers."*³

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

² AFMS: Doc. 612. H. 007: handwritten report in French, no author, no date, probably 1927, 12 pages DIN A4. Here and in other documents the number of Brothers involved in war or military service (e.g. Brothers who worked in the hospital in Recklinghausen) is 120. But according to recent research by Br André Lanfrey the number of these Brothers is 205. It can be found in lists in the Archive in Rome. The difference in the numbers can be explained by the question as to how to define who really was a "German Brother" and the definition who really was considered to be a member of the army. And above all, the fraction of Brothers killed (45 out of 120) would be much too high and not at all realistic. That's why the number 205 seems to be more accurate.

³ A list in the Province archive in Furth with all the deceased Brothers, novices and postulants from 1914 until 1969 enumerates 45 brothers and 3 postulants killed in the war. The first Brother, Michael Ferdinand Hamacher died in August 1914, the last one, Kamillus Wagner, on the first of September 1918. From 11 Brothers there is no information about the place of death. As for the others, 7 were killed in Russia, 17 in France, 6 in Flanders, 1 in Palestine, 1 at sea, and 3 of them died in military hospitals. A list in the Archive of the Beaucamps Province names all the German Brothers including those from Alsace-Lorraine, which was part of Germany from 1871 until 1918). 41 are listed as killed as soldiers ("Heidentod" or "death in action"). Unfortunately there is no system in the list and there are also false details. The number of Brothers with German nationality is 313. They all belonged to the Province of Beaucamps, of which Germany was part until 1920. Among these Brothers were 64 from Alsace- Lorraine.

Brothers at home caring for wounded prisoners of War

In Recklinghausen (first Marist house in Germany since 1914) a military hospital was installed.

In the above mentioned report we find the following remarks on this:

"Three months after the opening of the house the Great War broke out. The juniors had to return home, since the house was transformed into a military hospital. The Brothers after having been trained as nurses⁴, had to care for the wounded soldiers, who came in great numbers. The good now done by the Brothers will remain a mystery of God.

Soon also many wounded soldiers from France, Belgium, Italy, Great Britain and other countries were admitted into the house. Now the zeal of the Brothers could develop completely. All these prisoners

of war soon got the feeling of being in one great family and competed in the desire to please the Brothers, whose zeal and commitment, which let them overcome all difficulties, they admired so much.

They especially appreciated the Superior, Brother Laurian, who besides caring for all the material issues cared first of all for their spiritual and emotional welfare. Therefore he installed a day of retreat every three months, which proved to be a great success. Many of the soldiers found their way back to God, and so they had celebrations of first communion and conversions of heretics. The great gratitude, which for these rough soldiers was not only an empty word, was expressed in many gifts to the house.

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

The farewell at the end of the war was extremely touching and will always remain in the hearts of all who were witnesses. 7000 wounded were cared for by our Brothers. 82 of them were guided to first communion."

⁴ Some Brothers were already trained in the normal school in Arlon for this job and got a "Diplome d'Ambulance". See: Metzger, Anton: Chronik der deutschen Ordensprovinz der Maristen-Schulbrüder, Erster Teil, Furth 1975, p. 57. There is also the remark, that some of the Brothers worked in a hospital of the St John of God Brothers in Dortmund from 1914 until 1916, where they lived in a community of 10 to 20 Brothers.

During the same time two Brothers worked in the welfare institution of Rüdeseim. Doing this the Brothers were exempted from military service until 1916. Those in Recklinghausen were exempted during the whole wartime because the house was declared a military hospital.

In the *Extrait des Annales da la Maison Provincial de Furth/Bavière 1918/19*⁵ the following notice can be found:

“Les frères mobilisés retournent peu à peu, 43 restent sur les champs de bataille.”

The 3 postulants were not included. Then the number would have been 46. These figures could also be true, because of some contradictory remarks in the statistics.

Officially, statements of the Institute say that 1037 Marist Brothers from all nations at war took part as soldiers in the war, and 118 were killed⁶. This means that 37% of the German Broth-

ers were killed, whereas the percentage of those in general only was 17%.

To date, the graves of 14 German Brothers and two postulants who were killed have been identified exactly. The rest have not been found because of uncertain or vague information. These graves are located in Flanders and in the North of France like Menen or Neuville-St. Vaast⁷.

⁵ AFMS: Doc. 612. H. 010. 0 4

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

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

SUPPLEMENT

concerning the Military Hospital “Konvikt” (marist house)

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

The meticulous registrations give a rather clear picture of the life in a typical military hospital for prisoners of war during World War I. 2880 prisoners of war are registered and also 382 German soldiers, so the summary is 3262. This was done in the period from May 1916 to April 1919. A list of former patients does no longer exist.

The statistics contain exact data about age, place of birth, date of entry, date of leaving, kind of sickness and workplace of the prisoners. Also cases of deaths and causes of deaths are mentioned. So the book is to be seen as an important contribution to research the history of prisoners of war in Germany during the First World War.

The first two patients admitted to the hospital who are registered in the book on 31st May 1916 may be mentioned personally: Francois Addé from Ste Nidoque, France, 37 years

old, suffering from bronchitis. He left on 30th June. The second one, Constantin Michewski from Jaklowo, Russia, 34 years old, suffering from an injury of his hand. He left on 21st June and worked in the coalmine Ewald.

The great majority of the patients were Russians and Frenchmen. But the number of British prisoners is considerably high. They were 430, among them 22 from Scotland (7 from Glasgow, 4 from Edinburgh, the rest from other places). 8 were from Ireland (among them a man called Harry Castello from Dublin). Then there were 97 Belgians, 39 from Italy, and some from Switzerland, Portugal, USA and even from Argentina. Besides these special patients from other countries the bulk came from Russia and from France. The workplace for almost all of them were the coalmines near Recklinghausen and the famous Ruhrgebiet, perhaps the then biggest coalmining area of Europe.

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

During this period 74 prisoners of war died in the hospital, most of them of pneumonia. Among the dead there were also 8 from Britain. The last admitted prisoner was John Brown from Edinburgh. He arrived on 7th November 1918 and stayed until 15th November. Since 12th April 1918 more and more German soldiers were admitted in the military hospital "Konvikt" and got surgery besides the

prisoners of war. On 15th April 1919 finally all the patients were sent home or to hospitals in the town.

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



A group of Brothers nurses in Recklinghausen juniorate during the war (Institute Bulletin, N° 72, 1927, p. 395).

JEAN-CLAUDE BERNE, (Br CLAUDE-CASIMIR) SOLDIER IN THE WAR OF 1914-1918¹



Eric Perrin

The commemorations of the century which separate us from the declaration of the First World War are an opportunity to recall the war experience of one of the Marist Brothers, whose correspondence, preserved by his family, I came across one day.

Jean-Claude Berne was born on 3 July 1885 into a family of soft furnishers in the hamlet of Lachaud, commune of St Médard-en-Forez (Loire)¹. His father, Jean-Marie Berne, was born on 28 August 1852 and died on 4 November 1919. He married Catherine Tisseur with whom he had 5 children:

- Michel Marius, on 8 January 1883, (died on 16 January 1973) who became a soft furnishings maker like his father.
- Jean-Claude – the Marist Brother who is the subject of

this article – on 3 July 1885 (died on 22 July 1974).

- Benoît, on 21 May 1887, (died on 28 February 1938), who married Françoise Clavel on 31 December 1919.
- Claude-Marius, on 5 November 1890.
- Pierre-Marie, called Pétrus, on 22 October 1893, (died on 1 October 1954) who married Elisabeth Meiller on 30 December 1922.

Jean-Claude was, therefore, the second of the Berne children and the last of the brothers to die. He attended the school of the Marist Brothers founded in 1842. He made his First Communion on 2 May 1897, in the church of St Médard, as indicated on the memento card of his First Communion, on the back of which he later chose to write down his war record.

Thanks to Mme and M. Panel for the communication of their family documents.

¹ 45 km from Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage.

Recalling later “his destiny” which had “torn him from the paternal home” and a family life full of pitfalls, he remembered the evening of 6 February 1898, when only 12 years old and accompanied by his father, he spent his first night in one of the bare and narrow rooms of the Hermitage. That same morning, on leaving Lachaud, he had left his grandfather, Michel Berne, who, like the scriptural Jacob, had placed his hand on his head, saying in the dialect of the area “Adji mon Daude, preï bien la Sainte Viergi parme, te serez le plus heureux de tous frores!” (Farewell, my Daude,² pray to the Holy Virgin for me, you will be the happiest of your brothers³).

One of his letters recalls “our holy Brother Casimir”, his great-uncle Jacques Berne, born on 17 March 1811 in St-Médard and deceased 10 January 1887 at the Hermitage⁴. He had been a Marist Brother before him and Jean-Claude remembered having visited his tomb “on the left side of the central alley of the cemetery of the Hermitage”. It was doubtless in memory of this uncle that he received the name of Br Claude-Casimir. In the Annals of the Houses (school of St Médard), Br Avit notes

that Br Casimir “has spent his life in the Hermitage garden where he is at present (July 1886) looking after the cemetery”.

Jean Claude Berne entered the juniorate at La Valla on 6 February 1898. In June, he was confirmed in the church of Izieux by Cardinal Coullié, Archbishop of Lyon. He entered the postulancy at the Hermitage in October 1900 and took the habit on 19 March 1901. He pronounced his first vows on 15 August 1902⁵. He was then appointed cook at Moret-sur-Loing (Seine-et-Marne, to the east of Paris) as was the custom at the time⁶. That was doubtless where he obtained his elementary teacher’s certificate in 1903.

This was a particularly trying year, for on 3 April the Combes government notified the Congregation of its dissolution. So each Brother had to make a difficult choice: leave for a foreign country or remain as a secularised Brother, dressed as a civilian, and threatened with prosecution for attempting to reconstitute the Congregation. Unlike most of the young Brothers, Jean-Claude Berne became a secularised Brother⁷.

² Diminutive of Claude.

³ More happy than his brothers.

⁴ His personal file indicates he made his temporary profession (vow of obedience) on 10 October 1841. As he was born in 1811 he was a late vocation. He made perpetual profession on 25 September 1853.

⁵ Information drawn from his personal file. It was probably at his taking of the habit or his first vows that his photo as a young Brother was taken.

⁶ The Brother cook also assisted the Brother of the junior class and prepared for his teaching certificate.

⁷ As he was a minor, his family could have opposed his going abroad or he could himself have opted for secularisation.



Jean-Claude Berne, young Marist Brother

Accordingly, he became a teacher at St Médard, his home town, from October 1903 to 1910 with one interruption because of military service⁸. Called up with the class of 1905⁹, he was enlisted as a soldier on 6 October 1906 in the 16th Infantry Regiment. He became a corporal on 20 July 1907 and obtained his good conduct certificate. He was under the colours until 25 September 1908. He pronounced his perpetual vows at Arlon, Belgium, in August 1910¹⁰, and then taught in the boarding school of Valbenoîte in St-Etienne,

from 1910 to 1913, and at St Félicien (Ardèche) from 1913 to 1914. He did a refresher course in the same regiment from 21 August to 12 September 1911 before being “called up for active service” on the declaration of war. He rejoined his unit on 4 August 1914¹¹.

Like many former “poilus”, he had little to say about his war experience, the unspeakable being by definition difficult to express in ordinary language. The regiment register provides no information about his first contact with the War, but the history of the 16th infantry regiment reports that three trains left Montbrison (Loire) on 6 August 1914 for the Vosges, on the Franco-German border. After three days of station and accelerated training, they departed for the front. On the 14th, the regiment passed through the first destroyed village, where a strong smell of burned flesh reigned, and crossed the frontier with German Lorraine on the 16th, under the first enemy bombardments¹².

Only two postcards addressed to his brother much later, in 1958-59, give a glimpse of the physical and psychological shock of this inhuman situation. The first, from St Félicien,

⁸ His personal file does not place him at St Médard until 1908.

⁹ ADL 1R153 – Regimental Register for the subdivision of Montbrison for the class of 1905.

¹⁰ Since the congregations were officially suppressed in France, the formation and retirement houses were situated outside its borders.

¹¹ 16^e *Régiment d'infanterie*. History of the regiment during the war of 1914-1918. Montbrison, military press J.-L. Serre, 1919.

¹² The French general staff had planned an offensive in Alsace-Lorraine from the beginning of the war. It failed very quickly.

dated 13 September 1958, recalls: "This date, 13 September, reminds me suddenly of 13 September 1914, a day, also a Sunday, which was without a doubt the most dramatic in my life: taken prisoner at 5 in the morning, rain and shells all day, to finish machine-gunned by our 75¹³ and deliverance by the Alpine Chasseurs!..."¹⁴. The history of the 16th IR mentions on this date the arrival in Picardy after 15 days of retreat. Lapse of memory or not, the battle of Dreslincourt, where the regiment endured heavy fire from the Germans and heavy losses, dates to 16 and 17 September 1914. Still from St Félicien, 20 September 1959, a sec-

ond post-card notes "the finest escapade of my life", in recalling 20 September 1914 "date of one of my most tragic days of the war".

And, in fact, this was the period of the war of movement, particularly deadly, before the armies dug themselves into the trenches. Most of the 1037 Marist Brothers mobilised did not experience this phase for, having to return from abroad, they did not enter the conflict until 1915.

A postcard addressed by Jean-Claude Berne from Le Puy-en-Velay on 20 January 1915 tells us of a short break in his military life:

Dear family

It is over a nice bottle of vin rosé that I am writing to you before leaving Benoît. I have obtained 4 d. of leave starting from the 21st. [...] I will arrive in St Médard tomorrow Thursday evening or Friday. It depends on Valbenoîte¹⁵.

*Your escaper¹⁶
Jaude*

The regiment register then mentions, on the date of 21 February 1915, the transfer of Jean-Claude Berne to the 175^e infantry regiment .

Of this period under the banner of the 175th IR, he wrote ironically much later of his "honeymoon voyage of 1915" , in fact his dispatch to the

¹³ Slang name for the 75 mm. gun in service in the French army.

¹⁴ Since none of the daily logs of Jean-Claude Berne's units have been preserved, it is difficult to know what specific events he is alluding to. (www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr).

¹⁵ The boarding school of the Marist Brothers where he wants to pay a visit whose duration he underestimates.

¹⁶ Neologism. An escapade is an action consisting of shirking one's obligations in order to amuse oneself.

¹⁷ On the site www.gallica.bnf.fr one can consult the History of the 175th Infantry Regiment during the war of 1914-1918.

¹⁸ Letter read at the golden wedding anniversary of his brother Michel Berne, on 14 July 1961.

battle of the Dardanelles:

"In the spring of 1915, the 4th of March to be precise, Claude left again for the front".

Of the beginning of his voyage he kept all his life a momento, fastened to his communion certificate, accompanied by the following caption :

« Banner of the Sacred Heart of Jesus offered to me Berne Jean-Claude on 22 March 1915 when a soldier in the great war, I passed through Paray-le-Monial thinking to be leaving for the French front when actually I was leaving for the East by a roundabout route. This banner has followed me faithfully everywhere as far as the Hermitage today, 24 August 1969".



Flag of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

This image, distributed without doubt to the soldiers in transit through Paray-le-Monial, is typical of the Catholic sensibility amalgamating

love of country (tricolour flag) and devotion to the Sacred Heart. But the story of the "honeymoon voyage" continues:

'At Moulins, stop, a joker comes up to shout at us 'You're going to Marseille !... ' [...] The next morning, in the full sun of the South, the regiment disembarks in the park of the city of Marseille. Then shouts of: 'We're sailing!'. Where to ?... Serbia !... Turkey !... Greece ?... People salute Bizerte, people point towards Malta, Crete, the Aegean Sea, Patmos, Lemnos... Wait. Suddenly we are off again to head straight south: 15 days on the sea shore at Alexandria... (Of Egypt I saw some luxurious villas, the invasion of the little frogs, a cloud of locusts, but I didn't see the pyramids)... Then when all the barbed wire was ready, even in the water, we embarked for the Dardanelles . Wounded on the 11th (or 15th ?) June, I was evacuated to Lemnos and 15 days later I was back at the front in the Dardanelles¹⁹... On going to embark, I thought I saw someone I knew well.

¹⁹ The battle of the Dardanelles or Gallipoli had as objective to take control of the Sea of Marmara in order to be able to besiege the Turks, control the shipping lanes of the Bosphorus and eliminate the Ottoman Empire from the war by a naval action. After the naval campaign, a land campaign was engaged. 75,000 allied soldiers disembarked on 24 April 1915. But it did not have the expected surprise effect. A new disembarkation of troops on 6 August only extended the list of the victims. In the heat of summer, the allied soldiers experienced the hell of rats, dysentery, thirst and insects. This failed operation caused some 250,000 victims on the side of the allies, against about 211,000 on the Ottoman side. The survivors were evacuated from December 1915 to 9 January 1916. A funny honeymoon voyage!



**The two Berne brothers, hospitalized.
Jean-Claude is standing**

Some days after, Benoît, of the 2nd Colonial, writes to me of his arrival in the Dardanelles²⁰. Secretly, I make some enquiries, and I find my brother. What hugs ! ... in what circumstances ! ... in what a place ! ... Three months later, Benoît comes to tell me: "I have been evacuated!" ... Eight days after, me too. [...] At the end of eight days a hospital ship passes [...] It takes us back to Alexandria... A forced regime of 4 enemas a day to flush out the jaundice and 2 glasses of milk for the question of nourishment and at the end of eight days, the doctor who had not seen us pronounced that we had won the fight. Here we are on our feet, both of us ; my brother 42 kg and me 44 !... 45 days of convalescence and good again 14 for service²¹ !... 23 November (1915) disembarkment at Marseille after a very turbulent crossing (one evening the rolling made me sit on a plate of macaroni !...). And 25 November, Saint Catherine's day, feast of my mother and grand fête vé Saint Garmin²². Arrival at 10.30 at night at Viricelles and at midnight vé²³ Lachaud, where I heard my mother was ill. An original idea as quite often crossed my mind ».

Jean-Claude Berne and his brother Benoît, arriving both on leave then followed a folklore tradition encouraged by the festive atmosphere on the occasion of the great fair of Saint

Catherine by singing a traditional song in patois : the one about the soldier returned from the war who wants to make himself recognized by his beloved.

Original in patois	Translation ²⁴
Et pan, pan, pan ! à grands coups de boton à la pechita porta !... Veux-tu savoi l'histoire d'un grenadier !... Il partit pour la guerre... Elle dura bien sè-tan-an ! ...Et pan, pan, pan ! Au bout de la septième sa porte vint frapper pan, pan, pan ! Ouvrez-moi donc main'zello. Ouvrez au grenadier !...	And bang, bang, bang! Great blows of a stick on the little door!... Do you want to know the story of a grenadier!... He leaves for the war... it lasts a good seven years ! And bang, bang bang! At the end of the seventh he comes to knock at his door bang bang bang bang ! Open to me then mademoiselle. Open to the grenadier!...

²⁰ ADL 1R155 – Regimental Register of the subdivision of Montbrison for the class of 1907. Benoît Berne, born on 21 May 1887 in St Médard. Class of 1907. Wounded 1st April 1917, he was cited on the regimental order n°40 of 3 June, "brave and courageous gunner ; continued to serve the piece with calm and coolness despite violent artillery fire": War Cross, Bronze Star.

²¹ Good once again for service.

²² Grand Fair at St Galmier (a dozen km from St Médard)

²³ Dialect word meaning "at" or "towards".

²⁴ Translated into French by Br Michel Fatisson.

Surprise of the family who protest :

<p>J'entends le loquet de la porta de la méson qu s'ure... Et le père Jean Marie que guèle; « Ou fodre po to zou crevo !... Et de la fenêtra de la chombra la Marie que criait : « Ou vé de soulans que venons de la fairi... laissi lou don guélo... ».</p>	<p>I hear the latch of the house door being opened ... and father Jean-Marie who shouts: "You'd better not break anything". And from the window of the bedroom Marie²⁵ who cries: "It's the drunkards coming from the fair...so let them yell".</p>
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The song continues :

<p><i>Bon jou, bon jou ma demoisello, con-nais-tu grenadier^{er} ? (parlé) Non, non beau militaire, connais point grenadier !... (chan-té) Qu'on apporte des cartes, aux cartes al-lons jouer, allons jouer la bello... La bello connaîtrez^{ez} mé. Et pan, pan, pan.</i></p>	<p>Good-day, good-day mademoiselle, do you know the grenadier ? (spoken) No no handsome soldier I do not know the grenadier! (sung) Let someone bring the cards, we will play cards, we will play <i>belote</i>...At <i>belote</i> you will recognize me. And bang bang bang.</p>
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The family is perplexed and the joker addresses his brother, revealing his identity.

<p><i>Le papo cjize plus rin et Marie s'ètche quézia, et la maman malade... et je me dis : « Faudrait pas leur faire trop peur fât. Et moi qui n'en savais plus de la chanson... Allons chanta don Benoît, que je nin sé plus !...</i></p>	<p>The father says nothing more and Marie is silent, and the mother ill ... and I say to myself: "You musn't give them too much of a fright, must you ? And I don't know any more of the song ... Come sing Benoît, I don't know any more ! ...</p>
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The family recognise them; the door is opened and they are joyfully congratulated.

<p><i>Ah !... il an trop parlo... il an trop parlo !... Et le père Jean Marie vint ouvrir la petchita porta... Vous devinez le reste... ».</i></p>	<p>Ah ! they have said too much ! ... they have said too much ! ...And father Jean-Marie comes to open the little door... you guess the rest..."</p>
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²⁵ Servant or relative?

This account gives an exceptional glimpse of the culture of origin of numerous Brothers coming from families where the Franco-Provencal dialect was still very much alive and where the social and family life did not disdain jokes and farces. The war strongly accelerated the decline of this culture.

But this leave was only a rare intermission in an endless war. A letter of his brother Benoît of 10 March 1916 written in pencil on paper for military censure lets us know that Jean-Claude was corporal in the 175th Infantry, C company, at La Palud (Vaucluse), very far from the front. There he shows a mix of humour, stoicism, sincere piety and affection :

"Very dear brother. I have received your amusing card which gave me pleasure at knowing you are in good health and still at la Palud, and especially in the warmth in your kitchen. As for me, after spending a bad spell in the trenches, I am now at rest and in good health except for the feet which had started getting frozen. Here we are having humid and cold weather. Finally, every evening I go to the church to warm myself in prayer. At this moment I am thinking of all the family. Accept dear brother the greetings of your brother who loves you and thinks of you.

Berne".

As for J.C. Berne, as the regiment register mentions, he was attached to the 52nd IR as from 26 April 1916. From that date to the end of the war, his life is only known from the official honours he received. He was cited in the order of the 52nd Infantry n°167 of 30 May 1918: "Liaison agent of great cool-headedness, performed his service

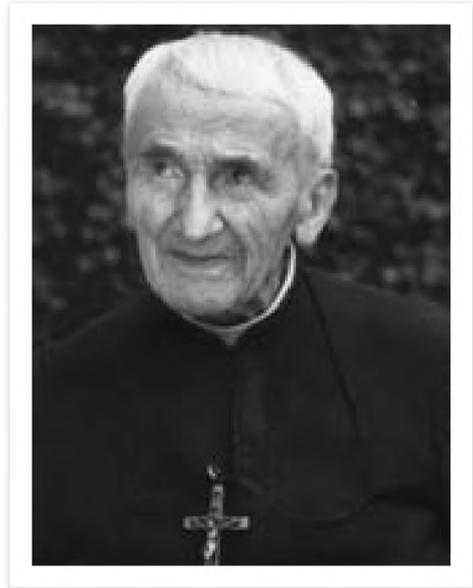
with devotedness and courage for 12 days in circumstances made difficult and dangerous by violent enemy bombardments". He was made sergeant on 23 June 1918²⁶. Wounded three times in the course of the war, he was decorated with the *La Croix de guerre* and *La Médaille militaire* on 15 September 1918 with this mention:

"Excellent non-commissioned officer who distinguished himself by his courage and cool-headedness in the course of the operations of 27, 28 July 1918. Wounded in the course of a counter-attack. Two previous wounds. One citation."

Fétain

²⁶ On the site www.gallica.bnf.fr one can consult the History of the 52nd Infantry Regiment during the war of 1914-1918.

A Marist teaching Brother once more, he was teacher-director at Monastier sur Gazeille from 1919 to 1935²⁷, Panissières from 1935 to 1936, St Julien Molhesabate from 1936 to 1957²⁸. He was teacher then retired at St Félicien from 1957 to 1969. In a letter of 1959, when he had caught a cold and was confined to bed, he discreetly recalls his war traumatism: "Everything revolts: dysentery in the Dardanelles and swamp fever ... and the more racket these microbes make, the more silent I become". After 1969, Brother Claude-Casimir Berne retired to N.D. de l'Hermitage, where he died on 22 July 1974.



Br Claude Casimir (J.C. Berne)

Jean-Claude Berne (Br Claude-Casimir) was, in the strongest sense of the term, an old soldier who experienced, in a little over four years, three forms of war : that of the first months which, it appears, left him with the most vivid memories; the expedition to the Dardanelles (1915) which he describes for us in some detail, where he was wounded and the victim of illness; finally the war of the trenches (1916-1918), without doubt the most testing, and about which he remained discreet despite his wounds and decorations. Like most of the former combatants, he was marked for life by the hardships he endured.

As a Marist Brother, he is no less interesting. Through his correspondence we discern the characteristic traits of the culture of so many of the Brothers coming from rural milieux geographically and culturally close to the Institute on the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is quite typical of a generation of Brothers born around 1885, and who died around 1960-70, who would have gone through a short twentieth century made up of upheavals and tragedies. Yet retained a constancy for which they scarcely thought of claiming merit.

¹⁹ His personal file indicates that he made the vow of stability on 15 September 1927 and that he was based at the Hermitage as recruiter in 1931-32.

²⁰ According to Brother Joannès Fontanay who knew him, he would have been greatly appreciated in this commune.

COLIN AND CHAMPAGNAT

Marists in the making



Br Frederick McMahon

A Study in three Parts of the personal and spiritual development of Jean-Claude Colin S.M. and Marcellin Champagnat S.M. and the relationship between these Marists in their respective apostolates. Letters are also examined for their bearing on events and characters.

PART II

Revelations from the correspondence: 1828-1835

INTRODUCTION

In this section of the development of Colin and Champagnat as Marists, we set out to consider the letters of the period of between, roughly, 1828 and 1835.

The first subject to arise in this period is the matter of the Marist priests electing a “Central Superior” with authority over the aspiring Marist priests in both dioceses – Lyon and Belley. Champagnat is insistent on this, the result being the election of Colin as the leader. The Marists in Lyon then choose Champagnat as

their head within the archdiocese, an action which is confirmed by the archdiocesan authorities.

The troubles caused to the Marists by the French Revolution of 1830 are then considered; this is followed by exposing the problems that arise from the move of some of the Marist priests to Valbenoite. Following this move, Colin proposes a new election for Superior in the archdiocese, but the men there are opposed to such an action. Consequently, Colin defers the matter. Further trouble occurs in the matter of the *Joseph Brothers*, where Colin’s ac-

tions cause difficulties for Champagnat and some of his Brothers.

The departure of some of Lyon Marist priests from the Hermitage into other apostolates are to be seen both in the activities of Pompallier and Forest in parish missions and in Pompallier's association with a Third Order confraternity of men and a "Christian Virgins" group of women. Colin's delayed move for another election among the Lyon Marists results in Séon becoming the new leader there.

Colin makes the journey to Rome, seeking approval for the Marist congregation. In his own diocese he backs Bishop Devie in the latter's effort to induce Champagnat to open an agricultural school at Bresse.

Vexatious Valbenoîte again comes into focus with Champagnat's action in his concern for the spiritual welfare of the aspiring Marist

priests there. As a remedy, he offers a superb, secluded property to the archdiocese for the priests' accommodation. In regard to this matter, Colin shows sensitivity to Séon's leadership position.

The final section of Part II deals with correspondence about the position of Joseph Brothers in the Marist movement and also about Champagnat's rejection of the proposal to have Marist Brothers as sacristans.

We shall now examine the letters from Colin to Champagnat, in whole or in part, reflecting on their significance for the notable events in the Marist story and also for what they reveal of the persons involved.

An early letter we have from Colin to his confrère Champagnat is dated 22 May 1828. In part, it reads:

My very dear friend,

I will tell you nothing about our little journeys in the last campaign; the good Lord wished to continue his protection over us and to crown our little efforts with some success for the salvation of souls.

I contracted an illness there which lasted nearly two months, but finally here I am, quite ready to set out again. When you come to Belley, you will see a new building going up at Bon Repos and also the novice you sent to the community; everyone is very happy with her. Fr Déclas rejoices to see you and meanwhile sends all kinds of good wishes, as does Fr Pichat and my brother.

In the midst of the rapid success of your establishment, I am very pleased that the cross appears from time to time; it is the best proof of the love that God has for your Brothers. Tell them that they are often present to my mind, that I embrace them all and that I recommend myself to their prayers.

...

We will receive with pleasure and great gratitude the Mass stipends you tell us about, for in this mountain region we receive hardly any. You could bring them with you when you come if it is no hindrance to you. I have found in my breviary a souvenir of Fr Séon; I keep it as a precious memorial. I embrace you both a thousand times in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

*I have the honour to be, with esteem and a very special affection,
Your very humble and obedient servant,*

Colin, junior, missionary.¹

This is a buoyant, joyful letter from a man who has suffered physically because of the exigencies of the apostolic work which he is accomplishing with a light heart.

There is also some light banter towards the end of this letter (not recorded here). Colin is jesting at the rise in archdiocesan position of Terrailon, whom he still hopes to retain as a Marist.

Evidence of the growth of the Sisters' congregation is clear, as is also, in the spiritual exhortation of the second last paragraph, a perceptible assumption of a leadership position on the part of Colin.

Then in 1829, when the sudden death of Fr Pichat at the age of forty-one created a vacancy for the position of Superior of the minor seminary, Bishop Devie appointed Colin to the post in spite of Colin's

entreaties. And so the Marists in Belley were now engaged in two main apostolates— as diocesan missionaries preaching in parishes — and as staff members of a minor seminary and secondary school. It is to be noted that some students who had no desire for the priesthood were also accepted at the minor seminary.

In appointing Colin to this new rôle, Devie may have been influenced by the comments of Vicar General De la Croix, who was conscious of the exhaustion of the Bugey missionaries, especially Colin. Although he was aware of Colin's lack of experience in matters pertaining to secondary schooling, Devie had been impressed by Colin and by his splendid work on the Bugey mission; he had confidence in the man chosen.

After his appointment as Superior of Belley College in Easter 1829,

¹ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 182.

Colin settled to the manifold tasks that came his way. In early January 1830 Fathers Champagnat, Bourdin and Pompallier [the last-mentioned having replaced Séon at the Hermitage in the autumn of 1829] returned from the Retreat at Belley. What had been proposed on that occasion by the Marist aspirants of both Belley and the Hermitage, namely, the project of a re-union at

Lyon for the election of a central superior, is related to us in the following letter from Jean-Claude Colin. Such a move was designed to strengthen the unity of the two groups while leaving the members under immediate dependence on their ecclesiastical superiors. Colin here invites Champagnat to prepare the way for the approbation of this idea by the archbishop's Council:

M. Champagnat

(in his absence the one who replaces him)

Belley, 25 January 1830

My very dear Confrère,

For some time now I have been looking for time to write to you—and I could hardly find any.

We will be pleased to hear that your return from Belley to the Hermitage was happy, as also that of the two missionaries [Fathers Bourdin and Pompallier]. All were pleased with them at Belley; the Retreat went off very well [that is, a Retreat given by Bourdin and Pompallier to the minor seminarians at Belley]. I hope that the remembrance of it will be preserved for a long time.

The bad thing was that all three of you departed too promptly.

On the Belley front all appears to be moving towards the success of the work of Mary; I do not know what those in Lyon think of it. You could gradually prepare the way and dispose their minds to a centre of unity, that is, induce the archbishop's Council of Lyon to agree to the nomination of a central superior. This could occur without our withdrawing for the present time from the control of our respective superiors [Bishops de Pins and Devie] and it is well that we make representations to them in advance, and even indicate to them the time of our re-union in Lyon, so as to prepare them to view it favourably and to agree to give us their consent.

Our missionaries are still out on their work; one of them, Fr Girard, was dangerously ill, but has now recovered.

Fathers Pompallier and Bourdin have promised to return to Belley in Lent. Our bishop, who appears to esteem them greatly, has commissioned me to remind them of their promise.

They will give several discourses at the cathedral or elsewhere. Try to do what lies in your power so that we will not be deprived of the pleasure of seeing them again soon. I embrace them both with all my heart.

While awaiting our reunion in Lyon, as it was decided, let us pray our tender Mother to prepare hearts and minds so that at length she may reunite her scattered children under one same Rule and inflame us all with the fire of divine love and with a holy zeal for the salvation of souls. All are well at Belley; I speak of those who are of concern to you.

*Believe me to be, with most sincere affection,
Your very humble and very devoted confrère,*

Colin, Superior²

About three weeks later we find Colin again writing to Champagnat, who had informed Colin about the steps he intended to take in regard to having the teaching Brothers authorised. Champagnat had also sug-

gested that the Marists elect a central superior for the priests without telling the two bishops. Colin was prompt to reply, approving the first measure but firmly rejecting the second:

Belley, 13 February, 1830

My very dear confrère,

I was unable to reply to you earlier because on two occasions I went to the bishop's house and on both I was unable to speak to our worthy bishop. At length, he replied that he persisted in advising you to have your Brothers approved on the Statutes of Brothers already approved. He thinks that this approach will encounter fewer obstacles. He has written to Valence. As to the proposal of electing a centre of unity in secret, we reject it more firmly than ever. We have never done anything for the work of Mary secretly and without the knowledge of the superiors. We must not start to change this way of acting; we must go straight towards the goal. The work is encountering difficulty in no place more than in Lyon. God wills it so as to purify it, but let us not be discouraged at all. You should, I think, address a request to your superiors and, if I may say so, and if you agree, we will tell you in what sense we think you should further the matter. Reply to us and, if it suits you, we will convey our ideas to you at once. I embrace you with all my heart.

I am, with respect, your very humble and very obedient servant,

Colin, Superior³

² Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O. M. 1, Doc. 209.

³ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O. M. 1, Doc. 212t.

Bishop Devie had previously been approached by Champagnat on the matter of legal authorisation for the Brothers. Devie, who previously had been Vicar General of Valence, where the Brothers of Christian Instruction had obtained approval in 1823, could have been quite useful to the authorisation project. Unfortunately for Champagnat, Archbishop

de Pins of Lyon preferred a different method – a direct approach to the government.

A letter from Vicar General Cattet to Champagnat dated 18 February shows that Champagnat had already contacted the Lyon authorities about the proposed meeting of the Marists:

We can do nothing about the priests. To bring about the meeting and to extend the Society beyond the archdiocese it is therefore necessary either for the Pope to intervene or for the bishops to agree.⁴

Seeing that it was impossible to obtain approval for an inter-diocesan meeting of would-be Marists or for an act that affirmed both the religious nature of the Society of Mary and its supra-diocesan character, Colin was on the horns of a dilemma. Nine months had passed since the

Belley meeting where the Marists had decided in principle on the election. Champagnat, sensing that the time-lag might “stretch out to the crack of doom”⁵, put pressure on Colin. In his reply of 10 September 1830 Colin was at his cautious best in suggesting reasons for delay:

*To Fr Champagnat, priest,
at Our Lady of the Hermitage,
near St Chamond, Loire.*

Belley, 10 September 1830.

My very dear friend,

I am a long time in answering your letters. Don't be angry with me; it is not through indifference or forgetfulness. You will learn later of the reasons which forced me to examine matters for a long time. I still cherish the work of the Blessed Virgin more than ever; the circumstances of these times

⁴ Letter of Fr Cattet to Fr Champagnat, O. M. 1, Doc. 213, Lines 30-34.

⁵ W. Shakespeare, “Macbeth”, Act IV. i. 117.

only serve to increase my confidence and my courage. But I do not know whether the meeting you ask for would be prudent. I know that the election of a central rallying point is necessary for the pious undertaking. I desire it as much as you do, but it seems to me that it would not be prudent to have a large number travelling in these times. Moreover, for the election we would have to be all together. We are seven; you are only four. It would be easier for you to travel to us than for us to travel to you. Furthermore, if we come together, even for a few days, without the consent of our superiors, they will take offence. It seems to me therefore that we should put everything off to a more opportune time, or else decide to hold this election secretly by letter, collecting the votes at your place and here. This latter method is not the best. Let us be patient; let us work to form ourselves well. I will not be annoyed to see you increase. Write to us what you think of our way of looking at things. Fr Terrailon, whom I embrace with all my heart, has sent 300 Masses and you, 100. I thank both of you for them. If you have a journey to make to Lyon, you could write to me; it is possible that I may go there to talk to you. Very best wishes to your three confrères, whom I embrace with all my heart. Our priests also greet you with all their hearts. The new members would be very pleased to make your acquaintance.

*Trust me till death. With very special esteem and affection,
Your very devoted servant and confrère,*

Colin⁶

Perhaps the meeting at Lyon between Champagnat and Colin, suggested by the latter in the above letter, did take place, for it was in September or October 1830 that the Marist group gathered. September, in the middle of the holidays, was indeed a favourable time. Obviously, the reticence of Colin concerning a clandestine meeting was occasioned by the political crisis of the July Revolution and by the possible reaction of the diocesan administrations.

We know, for example, that the Lyon chancery had raised objections to such a reunion. Despite all that, Colin's hesitation had now subsided; Champagnat's forcefulness had prevailed. The Lyon men came to Belley (with the exception of Terrailon). There the combined group elected Jean-Claude Colin as Central Superior of the two groups. They also agreed that a local superior (Provincial-Rector) should be elected by the Lyon group. He would, of course, be subject to the Central Superior.

⁶ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 220.

Despite Colin's earlier misgivings, the Marists in Lyon at this period came to be better accepted by their Archdiocesan authorities than their confrères were by the Belley authorities. A letter from Fr Cattet of 18. 12. 30 (O.M. 1. Doc. 226—18) officially appointed Champagnat Superior of the Society of Mary in Lyon.

The following letter, which directly acquaints us with these facts, reveals neither the exact date nor the names of those who participated, and no Minutes were preserved of the election which

was then made. But the very fact of the election is undeniable, and it is as Superior, anxious above all to maintain the unity of the work, that Jean-Claude Colin addresses himself to his confrères:

Belley, 22 October, 1830.

My very dear confrères,

May the grace, peace and mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. I have deferred writing to you for a longer period than you thought. It is not through forgetfulness, for you are present to my mind every day and several times a day, but through a feeling of confusion and astonishment at the choice which I had no grounds for expecting, and which can only do harm to the project to which we all aspire and for which I feel myself ready to sacrifice everything, if such were the will of God and of Mary our Mother. What consoles me, however, is that your choice is but provisional and that, at another reunion, the Lord will show you the one whom He destined from all eternity to direct the pious undertaking for His greater glory and for the salvation of each of us.

In the meantime, my dear confrères, let us love one another as being all members of the one same body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. Let there be among us neither contention nor any of those kinds of contrariety which, without shattering charity, nevertheless spoil its sweetness.

Without being religious, we must try to learn the virtues of religious, to accustom ourselves to love poverty as our mother, and humility and obedience after the example of Jesus and Mary, our divine models. These virtues, so necessary for religious, will become for us an unfailing source of that peace which God's children enjoy even here below. It is in the novitiate that the novices are chiefly formed to virtue. Let us all consider ourselves as novices and, so as to have the merit of obedience, choose the one among you to be at the head of the others. You could have regard for age. Let us recall that merit is found much less in the commandment than in the act of dependence and that the happiest man is not he who commands but he who obeys for the love of God.

In due course and by sure means I will send you the plan of the Society, which you can communicate to people who ask to be aggregated to it, and also, for yourselves, a summary of practical rules for the present. Meanwhile, these are our practices at Belley: We take about seven hours sleep; we say three Hail Marys and the Sub Tuum on going to bed and getting up; we have evening and morning prayer and meditation in common; we also recite Office together and at set times; each day these Fathers have a conference on Theology when they are at home.

As regards the establishment of the Brothers and a group of missionaries at la Côte-St-André, Grenoble diocese, if you see no difficulty about it, we will take steps to favour it and enter into the views of that priest. [Fr Douillet] But we must maintain that those Brothers are dependent on the mother house of Lyon and also that the group of missionaries is one with the other members of the Society. As for the rest, we leave that to your prudence. If one of you has the occasion to see the bishop of Grenoble, you must not fear to inform him about our objective and the plans of our Society.

These Belley Fathers, who are particularly attached to you, embrace you wholeheartedly. I do the same myself, and especially Fathers Bourdin and Séon, whom we have not seen for a long time. Let us be full of courage and place our confidence in Jesus and Mary alone. Let us not allow either trouble or discouragement to enter our souls. The time is coming when our reunion will become still more perfect on earth and eternal in heaven.

*Believe me, all of you, with special affection to be
Your very devoted servant,*

Colin, Superior⁷

This important letter shows Colin's reluctance to accept the position of superior of the group, but, at the same time, for the benefit of the Society of Mary as a whole, he conscientiously sets about exercising his powers as leader. The employment of "we"—our English "royal plural"—shows one aspect of the assumption of leadership; the directive he gives for the expansion into the diocese of Grenoble manifests another. Moreover, his spiritual exhortations are definitely in line with the role of a superior.

It is to be noted that the reference to Bourdin and Séon "whom we have not seen for a long time" is an indication that perhaps they were not present for the election of the central superior.

Also to be noted is that the aspiring Marist priests in Lyon and Belley

were now moving into similar apostolic works. The Belley priests were engaged in parish missions and in secondary schooling at the minor seminary. And now, starting with Pompallier and Bourdin, Marist priests living at the Hermitage were becoming engaged in conducting Retreats and parish missions and in "schooling" Champagnat's Brothers for the religious life and for the teaching apostolate.

Shortly after their return to the Hermitage, the Lyon contingent gathered to elect a Provincial-Recto. They spent five days in prayer, meetings, and discussion before proceeding to the election. The Minutes of these proceedings have been preserved – the first known copy of a meeting of the aspiring Marist priests. A summary of rules for community living was also composed, probably by Pompallier. The

⁷ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc.221

young priests elected the senior member, the experienced Champagnat, as their leader – and this despite his manifold activities with an ever-expanding congregation of teaching Brothers.

A month after writing to his Lyon confrères, Colin was in touch with Champagnat again about a matter which was later to cause much heartache — the Valbenoîte situation. He writes:

Belley, 24 November 1830.

My very dear confrère,

I am very pleased to receive your letter, as also one from Fr Bourdin. We think that your arrangements with the parish priest of Valbenoîte [Fr Rouchon] will turn to the advantage of our project. Establishments which are founded during the course of storms are usually more solid and more stable. [This is a reference to the uncertainties of the political situation in France at the time, not to any trouble with the arrangements.] ...

If I can get away for a while, I will willingly go to the Hermitage. What a pleasure for me to see you all there and to be able to discuss several matters relative to our Society. You could let me know the exact week when all of you would be there. But I am hardly at all master of my house.

The more I examine it, the more difficulties I see in being able to draw up for you a summary of the Rules, and for this reason: All of us would have to read and discuss them so as to avoid serious inconveniences later on. See if that is not right.

I think that the rules for the week, the month and the year, and the exercises for each day will suffice for you at the moment. Once again, they are not all practicable unless the community is present.

I write to you in haste; our Retreat is about to begin and I have time to tell you only that we have noted 600 Masses to your credit.

I have written a long letter to Fr Cholleton. If I can go to the Hermitage, I hope to see him. Your confrères at Belley embrace you, and I with them.

*Your very devoted servant,
Colin, Superior.*

P.S. I forgot to tell you that I am thinking of renewing our correspondence with the former Nuncio at Paris, today a Cardinal. But I will speak to you later on.⁸

The prelate alluded to is Vincenzo Macchi, created Cardinal on 2 October 1826. It seems obvious that Colin is hoping to pursue the establishment of the Society of Mary with the assistance of this former acquaintance.

In regard to Fr Rouchon, the Marists at the Hermitage had previously been directed by Vicar General Cattet to send one of their members to help Rouchon in the Easter period at Valbenoîte. Rouchon hoped to attach

⁸ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M.1, Doc. 222.

the Marists to himself in a more stable arrangement, which he was later able to do, much to the mounting regret, for several reasons, of Champagnat.

Two weeks after Colin's letter of late November another arrived for Champagnat and the other Marists at the Hermitage:

Belly, 6 December 1830.

My very dear confrères,

... I cannot make the journey to the Hermitage at this time: 1. Because it is said that priests are readily arrested. 2. Because our house demands my presence at this difficult time. 3. Because, from one important aspect, my journey would not have the result I desire. ... I beg you to believe me, however, that I have no less eagerness than you yourselves could have to make the journey and to confer with you. I do not think that it is advisable for you to send the summary of the rules. On careful reflection, I think we ought to discuss them in council all together. Providence will provide us with the opportunity.

Let us always be full of courage; very soon we will reach the time when our work can expand more. Act together so that you may have the reward of obedience and so that the greatest union may reign among all. It seems to me that this is not the time to settle at Valbenoîte; you will perhaps be safer at the Hermitage. Consult the Lord well. It is hardly the time for action, but rather for forming oneself to religious virtues, and especially to a great abnegation.

Let us still say nothing of what happened at our last reunion at Belly. The choice is regarded as having been made among ourselves only, but in time it must become obvious to our superiors. I have written to Fr Cholleton and conveyed to him the need for the Society to have a central point. He replied in a most satisfactory way. His letter greatly consoled and encouraged me. Lyon will place no obstacle to it, but they advise us to postpone it because of the times. If new subjects come along, receive them if it suits you. As for us, we would also have received subjects if we had had rooms in the seminary. Our priests embrace you; they are full of courage and good will. It's a long time since I've seen Fr Bourdin, and longer for Fr Séon. What a pleasure for me if I could make it to the Hermitage! But the pleasure is only postponed.

I intend to write to Cardinal Macchi, the former Nuncio in Paris. We are praying about that particular matter; join us. I leave you in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and I am, with most sincere affection and the most entire devotedness,

*Your very humble and very obedient servant,
Colin, Superior*

P.S. In providing us with Masses, you do us a service. I ask you to leave the money with Madame Goiffon, a Sister of St Charles, Superior of a refuge in the parish of St Nizier, Rue 4 Chapeaux No. 12 — and to advise me by letter.⁹

⁹ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 225.

This letter shows that anti-clericalism was still rampant after the revolution of July 1830; priests were not as yet in safety on the streets. For the Marists this climaxed with the official inspection of the Hermitage in July 1831. The magistrate who conducted the search for weapons and for evidence of royalist troop-training left with nothing – except with admiration for Champagnat's thorough co-operation in the fruitless search.

The postscript's mention of "money for Masses" refers to the custom of stipend offerings for celebration of Masses for the deceased. Bearing in mind the great Indulgences disaster that split the Church in the Sixteenth century, we need to have some form of explanation for these stipends. Their justification lies in the payment, not so much for the Mass itself, as for the priest's time and the use of church facilities and materials. It is obvious that Colin, whose men received little in the way of Mass stipends during the country missions, was grateful for the monetary support that came from the better-placed brethren in well-populated areas.

It seems that Colin was oblivious to the fact that, at the time of his writing, his confrères in the archdiocese of Lyon were meeting to draw up rules and to elect a regional superior. It is also obvious that the Rules drawn up at the Hermitage did

not enter into the plans of Colin, who wanted "to discuss them in council all together".

In the archdiocese of Lyon, the archbishop and his Council, having been informed of the election of Champagnat as community leader of the priests at the Hermitage, hastened to name the Director of the Hermitage as Superior of the Society of Mary in Lyon. They were careful, however, to avoid any reference to the election. Yet the Council recognised in set terms both the existence of the Society of Mary and its name, at the same time appointing a Superior:

All the priests and Brothers of Mary will obey you as their Father... You will really have the sentiments of a father towards those who will be members of that Society.¹⁰

In Lyon glimmerings of archdiocesan recognition were breaking through for the Marist priests. In Belleley, however, the Marists could glimpse no such rays to arouse hope in their hearts.

Soon afterwards, in January 1831, Fr Séon, formerly at Charlieu, was appointed (by the archdiocese) curate to the parish of Valbenoîte, near St Etienne. Fr Rouchon, parish priest, had acquired the old Cistercian abbey of Valbenoîte in 1817. This property he offered to the Marists on condition that they would supply him with curates. He was thinking of join-

¹⁰ Letter of Fr Cattet to Fr Champagnat 18/12/1830 O.M.1, Doc. 226, line 22-26.

ing the Society himself, but Colin dissuaded him. Séon's appointment was followed by that of Fr Fontbonne, thus making a second Marist community in the archdiocese (at Valbenoîte). Cattet's letter to Champagnat on this occasion also announced that Fr Chanut would stay on at the Hermitage and that Fr Bourdin had permission to transfer to Belley for two years, there to teach Humanities at the minor seminary. In fact, but certainly not in word, the archdiocese was moving towards a wider recognition of the priests' branch and of the supra-diocesan character of the Society of Mary.

Colin was again in contact with Champagnat on 25 January 1831. Evidently, he replied to a letter from

Champagnat in which the new Superior at Lyon informed the central Superior of several things: the election in Lyon which had taken place in December; the compilation of rules for the Lyon community; and the installation of Séon at Valbenoîte. Colin's response ratified these different initiatives, but not without some reticence on Colin's part in regard to the rules composed at the Hermitage; he accepted these only provisionally. With this letter the normalisation of the juridical situation of the two groups was completed, exactly a year after the preliminary invitations of Colin to elect a centre of unity. The letter contains many passages of spiritual exhortation, as was becoming to a superior in those times. Parts of it read thus:

25 January 1831.

My very dear confrère,

... We are quite at ease that you have taken possession of Valbenoîte; establishments which are made in times of storm are ordinarily more durable because they are generally founded on a greater confidence in God. We rejoice no less that the choice of a superior has been made among you. That will be an additional means of forming you to obedience. I still hope soon to find the opportunity to spend a few days among you, and then, all together, we will accept a common Rule. While waiting, follow the one which you have fashioned, but with a disposition of then accepting the one which will be recognised to be the most useful to the glory of God and for the salvation of our souls.¹¹

Colin felt himself unable to come to visit the Hermitage Marists, who were anxious to see their central superior. Instead, he wrote to them,

¹¹ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 227, Lines 13-23.

trying to inspire them to remain constant to their zeal and devotedness to the work of Mary:

Belley, 6 May 1831

My very dear confrères,

...So let us be patient. In June, if the conditions of these difficult times impose no obstacles, we will have the pleasure of seeing and embracing you. Meantime, this is what seems to me most useful and most according to God at the present time. I think that during May we ought to suspend all kinds of projects and not think of any foundations. Banish all solicitude, every kind of anxiety from our hearts; think only of the actual day and put aside all thought of the future. So, if you allow me to give you this advice, let us offer this act of obedience in honour of the Blessed Virgin. We will find therein our advantage, and the Society's likewise. Let us refrain from even speaking of our pious projects. Let us give this whole month to our advancement in virtue. Let us offer ourselves without ceasing to the Blessed Virgin to work for the glory of her Divine Son and for her own.

I thank you greatly for the kindness you have shown in supplying us with Masses; we will keep them for ourselves.

I pray you to ask the Lord, with us and with your dear confrères, for the lights necessary for the approach we are thinking of making to the Roman court. We could say the 'Veni Creator' and the 'Ave Maris Stella'. ...

Your very devoted servant,
Colin.¹²

By August Colin had still not visited the Marists in Lyon archdiocese, but a letter in that month tells of his near approach:

Belley, 9 August 1831.

My very dear confrères,

... At last the time is drawing near when we will be able to see you at the Hermitage. ... Yesterday we received a letter from Rome itself on behalf of Cardinal Macchi, former Nuncio in Paris. This letter pleased us. His Eminence invites us to pursue our work with zeal and to make the journey to Rome to speak to His Holiness. He promises us his protection for the success of the venture. This journey, however, will be unable to be made for a while yet.

¹² Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 228, Lines 14-33.

We have many things to finalise together before All Saints. We are thinking of having a Retreat all together at Belley. We will invite to it all our confrères of the diocese of Belley who are asking to be received and who appear to suit us. We also very much desire to see nearly all of you; this will be very necessary. But we will speak of it together at the Hermitage.

We aim to have in our house next year only professors who are admitted to the Society and we intend to give the house a new time-table — one conformable to our purposes. . . . I do not know whether any one of you would want to enter into teaching; in that case he could obtain permission from Lyon. Let us redouble more and more our prayers, my very dear confrères. It is in times of storm that the works of God are made solid. [This is a theme very dear to Colin.] It is then that courage which has its source only in God becomes stronger, more daring. . .

*I am, with most tender affection, your very devoted confrère,
Colin.*

P.S. Very affectionate greetings from me to Fr Terraillon. What a pleasure I will have to see him again and embrace him! I do not regard him as a deserter.¹³

In speaking of Terraillon, Colin is really saying that he does not regard Terraillon as being lost to the Society. While preserving the same hope, Champagnat does not hesitate later on to designate as desertion the manner in which Terraillon quit the Hermitage in 1826.

By November 1831 the situation in Lyon had changed. A second Marist, Fontbonne, had been appointed by the archdiocese to Valbenoîte (in September), so a second community of Marists now existed in the archdiocese. We now find Colin writing to Champagnat seeking prayers for a solution to the problem:

Belley, 7 November 1831.

My very dear confrère,

I am not sorry about the little contradictions you meet with; the work of the Blessed Virgin advances only through crosses and sufferings. Be glad, therefore. We must pass through periods of cutting remarks; we must at first be despised, sometimes even calumniated, before we are solidly established. The Valbenoîte question is important in the interests of the Society. I advise you to recommend it to God in a special way. Make a novena for this intention, that is, in order to know the will of God. Have this novena made by all the Brothers who are in the house.

¹³ Letter of Fr Colin to his Hermitage confrères, O.M. 1, Doc. 233.

*On our part we are seeking before God to know the designs of Providence in this matter. ...
The Lyon administration seems well disposed towards the work; they have just granted us Fr Bordat,
deacon, as a teacher. So you see that, while Providence tries us on the one hand, He consoles us on
the other. ...
I embrace Fr Pompallier and your other confrères and recommend myself to your Holy Sacrifices.*

*I am, with the greatest affection, your very humble servant,
Colin, Superior.*

P.S. Remember me to all your good Brothers.¹⁴

A second letter from Colin (31 December 1831) caused much consternation among the priests at the Hermitage and Valbenoîte. Having been elected central superior a year before, Colin thought to implement what he thought to be best for his confrères in the archdiocese of Lyon. He feared that the priests' group might be subordinated to the work of the Brothers and that the priests might not be able to acquire an autonomy and character of

their own. Colin therefore decided to have separate leaders for the Brothers and the priests. Champagnat would retain authority over the Brothers; someone else was to be elected for the priests. This was the substance of this letter and this was the proposal that provoked much perturbation.

The opposite sections of the letter addressed to Champagnat now follow:

Belley, 31 December 1831.

My very dear confrère,

... Since All saints we have prayed God to enlighten us and make us know what would be most for his glory. After examining the matter well and having taken advice from our Belley confrères, we think the time has come to give more stability and strength to the Society in the Lyon diocese so that, if times become more favourable, it may go on extending and thus bring more help to the faithful. To this end, we think that the group of missionaries ought to be separated from the group of Brothers and that each group ought to have its own particular superior. There will result from this an appreciable benefit to each group. If, therefore, after taking advice from your confrères of Lyon, especially the seniors, you do not see any obstacle to what we propose, we ask you to proceed with the election of a superior for the group of missionaries in Lyon. ...

¹⁴ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 239, Lines 5-10, 20-23, 27-32.

You will order three days of prayer and a fast for the intention of learning the Lord's will. Then you will all assemble at the Hermitage to cast your votes. . . . You will regard Fr Terraillon as a member of the Society; he will cast his vote like the others. [With about eighteen others, Terraillon had attended the Marist Retreat at Belley in September 1831 and, with them, signed the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin which ended the Retreat.] I thank you for all the Masses you have sent us. You can retain the money; I hope to collect it myself when I have the honour of seeing you.

The letter ends in the customary way. In a postscript, Colin states:

We would advise that the election be held as soon as possible. Later on, we will inform the Lyon superiors of this choice, and we will discuss ways of giving a new structure to the group of our missionaries.¹⁵

For once Colin miscalculated. Only a year before, the Lyon Marists had spent five prayerful days in settling on a Rule of life and in electing a leader, a leader who had subsequently been appointed — not merely approved — by the archdiocese. They were upset by Colin's directives and they were not slow to let him know it. After all, he had stated: "If you do not see any obstacle to what we propose." They certainly did!

Presented with "obstacles" and protests, Colin had the good grace and wisdom to defer matters. He did not change his views, however, for he intended to have consultation with the Lyon authorities (who had

appointed Champagnat as Superior) and with Fr Rouchon of Valbenoite, whose offer of property was very tempting, not only because of the possession of the abbey premises, but also because accommodation there would give the Marist priests more scope for apostolic work not so closely tied to the Hermitage commitments.

In his wisdom Colin decided that it would be prudent not to push the issue at that particular time. Addressed to Champagnat, but intended for the whole group of priests, Colin's conciliatory letter deferring the matter of a new Lyon Superior is dated 3 February 1832:

¹⁵ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. Vol. I, Doc. 241, Extracts.

Belley, 3 February 1832.

My very dear confrères.

I do not know how you could have taken as you did my proposal regarding the election of a superior for the group of missionaries in the diocese of Lyon. My interest in the work, the desire to see it assume greater stability and to prevent greater difficulties later on— these alone prompted my suggestion. I feel sure that I have not offended any one of you; certainly, that did not enter into my intention. We must draw closer the bonds which unite us and neglect nothing for the success of a Society for which we have all made so many sacrifices.

We must not be surprised to see that Fr Rouchon at times thinks differently from us.

On the other hand, we should not oppose him or grieve him, without, however, swerving from our end or varying in our sentiments. But we should have regard for his age and show him all possible respect. I think Fr Rouchon would do better not to become a member of our Society, for it would be difficult for him to accept our ideas and agree to depend on those younger than he. [The signature of Rouchon, however, appears on the Consecration to the Blessed Virgin of 8 September, 1831.]

But, as he has the intention of doing a good work, it seems to me that he could hand over to the missionaries the apartments which he has to spare. The missionaries could lend him the help of their ministry in his parish and those adjoining. In this case it would be easy for you to assemble at Valbenoîte and choose among you a superior and a vice-superior. I even venture to tell you that, if things were arranged in this way, I would not fear to come and spend some time with you to help you establish at Valbenoîte the same procedures, the same spirit as at Belley. But, for that, you must all be of one mind, and the authorities in Lyon must intervene. Meanwhile, redouble your prayers in a spirit of humility and charity.

We here still think that the group of Marist priests will acquire little stability while it remains in the Brothers' house; that the Brothers' superior cannot be the superior of the priests, and that the first thing you have to do is to see, when the time comes, in which place the missionary priests should assemble and who is the one it would be proper to put at their head. There, my dear confrères, is what I dare not yet settle, and what I will never settle without the consent and advice of the Lyon superiors. Remain, therefore, all of you, as you were hitherto, submissive to Fr Champagnat until the new order. I hope soon to have an interview with Fr Cattet V.G., and then we can take up matters with Fr Rouchon and make some proposals to him. But, until then, remain peaceful and continue to form yourselves to solid virtue, to the knowledge necessary for a missionary. Let us love to be humiliated, to suffer for Jesus and Mary. Let temporal views never influence us in our conduct. Let the glory of God and Mary, let the good of the Society alone rule our steps and efforts. God is rich enough; He will supply us with all we need.

As for the arrangement regarding Marist and Joseph Brothers, of which we have spoken, we here at Belley think that there will be only one group of Brothers, that this body will be composed of two kinds of Brothers, Marist Brothers and Joseph Brothers. Those who have been received as Joseph Brothers will never be able to become Marist Brothers, unless for a very grave reason, but Marist Brothers will be able to become Joseph Brothers; the employment to which they are assigned will make among them the distinction of being either Marist Brothers or Joseph Brothers.

We will see later on if the latter will have the same religious costume. We will, however, examine this further.

When the time comes to form at Belley an establishment of Brothers, I will be happy to write to you. I have made a favourable reply to Fr Douillet. If you have a journey to make in the diocese of Grenoble, I would be very pleased if you would obtain some information about the Sisters of St Clair. You could see them and find out to which group they are attached and if they are still thinking of the Society of Mary.

The difficulties which occur and which seem to oppose your organisation console me and encourage me, and become for me the proof that the undertaking may be in God's will since it bears the character of His works.

My confrères and I embrace you all in Christ and Mary, and I am, with the greatest affection, your very devoted servant and confrère,

Colin, Superior¹⁶

This letter manifests Colin's determination to pursue the matter of separating at least some of the Lyon Marists from the Hermitage and of electing a new leader for the Lyon group. His words, "I feel sure that I have not offended any one of you", clearly show an insensitivity towards Champagnat, who was not only elected by his peers as Superior but was also appointed by the archdiocesan authorities. Perhaps Colin's long acquaintance with Champagnat gave him the certainty that Champagnat was both humble enough and generous enough to accept the changes that Colin now postpones but intends to implement. One would hope that "Let us love to be humiliated" was a sentiment strongly held by Champagnat; he certainly had opportunity to practise humility.

In this letter we have the first written reference of another group of Brothers besides the Marist Brothers, a group that was destined for material tasks, not for teaching. These Brothers were certainly envisaged at the time of the Fourvière Pledge, and the increase in the numbers of priests at Belley rendered it necessary to set up this group of auxiliary Brothers which Colin is trying to integrate into the general plan of the Society at the risk of alterations to Champagnat's Institute. This is an issue that was destined to cause friction in future years.

As for the suggestion concerning Champagnat's possible journey to the diocese of Grenoble, we have here sufficient evidence of Colin's lack of interest in, and knowledge of, the affairs of Courveille since 1826.

¹⁶ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 242.

Knowing nothing of the establishment of the Sisters at St Antoine, Colin believes these Sisters to be still at St Clair, where Marie Jotillon, Jeanne Marie Chavoïn's first companion, had lived for several years, helping in the management of the

school there. Marie Gardet, the third recruit, had also been with Marie Jotillon at St Clair.

Jean-Claude Colin pursues some of the above-mentioned topics in a letter written in April:

Belley, 8 April 1832.

My very dear confrère,

... I was expecting that you would have decided with Fr Cattet whether it was advisable or not to set up the group of priests at Valbenoîte or elsewhere; that you would have made some proposals to Fr Rouchon, and, from his replies, would have seen whether it was possible to think of Valbenoîte at this time. If I had foreseen that you would do nothing, I would have endeavoured to see Fr Cattet at the time of his departure and would have asked to accompany him to the Hermitage. ...

I even venture to tell you that I made the Lyon journey purposely to speak to him, but, having learnt that you had preceded me by a few days in seeing him, I returned without seeing him for fear of being in variance with you. ... Since then I have left the matter in God's hands.

It still seems to me that the first thing you have to do is to organise the group of priests in Lyon. In your present position, with some at Valbenoîte and others at the Hermitage with the Brothers, several of you run the risk of forming false ideas about the work and perhaps of losing the Marist vocation.

As to the Brothers called 'of St Joseph', my intention would be to join this group to yours, so that the two groups, whether they be together or separated, would depend on the same Superior. Thereby we would restrict our plan and perhaps even make it easier.

But, if your Brothers do not wish to agree with this arrangement, or if there are difficulties with it, we will form the group of Joseph Brothers at Belley; I already have five or six available to me.

If you had been able to give us at least one old Brother full of virtue and devotedness, we would have placed him for the time-being at the head of the undertaking.

It would not be advisable for the Brothers engaged in manual tasks in the colleges or other houses of the Society to have the costume you have given to the Marist Brothers.

Their costume will be something very much more simple and more conformable to their employment.

Show my letter to your confrères and to Fr Terrailon and give me your final reply.

I do not consider the present time as an obstacle to our endeavours.

*The Sister Superior of Bon Repos will be able to receive two or three of the subjects you are presenting. She agrees with your choice; you will postpone the others.
Your Belley confrères embrace you with all their heart, as does the writer, who is, with the greatest esteem, your very humble and obedient servant,*

Colin, Superior¹⁷

There does not appear to be any evidence that Champagnat was commissioned by Colin to speak to Cattet about the Valbenoîte situation nor about the restructuring of the Marists in the archdiocese. As he had done in the past, Champagnat took no action, perhaps hoping that time and the workings of Divine Providence would bring a happy conclusion to this problem without his stirring. Unlike Mr Micawber, who was always “waiting for something to turn up”, Champagnat here was waiting for something not to turn up!

It is evident that Colin is determined to pursue the Valbenoîte affair and also the Marist leadership position in the Lyon archdiocese, but he is prepared to wait for a suitable occasion. He now clarifies his ideas about his “Joseph” Brothers and the teaching Brothers of Champagnat. His ideas would have brought no comfort at all to Champagnat and the Marist Brothers, who could see all sorts of difficulties arising from any

implementation of Colin’s ideas. It was Champagnat who was one of the firmest advocates of a central Superior, but he is now encountering difficulties with that same Superior. As with Courveille’s assumption of leadership, so now, with Colin’s election to leadership, there came headaches and heartaches to the founder of the Marist Brothers.

Colin’s plan to join the two groups of Brothers under the one superior would arouse the opposition of Champagnat’s Brothers since it called in question the very structure of the Marist Brothers’ Institute. Likewise, the concept of two different costumes for the Brothers would not find favour among Champagnat’s men.

That section of the letter which concerns the Marist Sisters reveals the fact that the Sisters’ house is now crowded (Colin was not enthusiastic about expansion for the Marist Sisters). It also shows Cham-

¹⁷ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 246.

La Capucinière was taken over in early November 1832 in exchange (with Bishop Devie) for a property left to Fr Colin by his deceased friend, Fr Pichat. This house for Belley diocese and Valbenoîte for Lyon archdiocese were two houses reserved for Marist priests.

pagnat's active campaign for recruiting women for the Sisters' congregation.

A letter from Pompallier to Champagnat dated 2 May 1832 gives an enthusiastic account of the three parish missions conducted by two priests from the Hermitage — Pompallier and Forest. It also shows that the Marists in Lyon and those in Belley, at this stage of their development, are engaged in similar apostolates — parish missions and education. Both groups were active

in diocesan parish missions and, while Marist priests in Belley were conducting school at the minor seminary, other Marist priests in Lyon were at the Hermitage, educating the trainee Marist Brothers.

A year after his request for the election of a new Superior for the priests in the archdiocese for Lyon, Colin had his positive answer. Sèon, now residing at Valbenoite, was elected and was then approved by Archbishop de Pins. Colin wrote about it to Champagnat, the former Superior:

Belley, 13 November 1832.

My very dear confrère,

I received your two letters in due course. I deserve your reproaches for my delay in replying but I did not want to interfere in any way at all with your arrangements, and this out of respect for the intentions of the Lyon superiors.

I have just received a letter from Fr Sèon, superior of the priests at Valbenoite, which tells me that all is completed and that the Lyon superiors have given their approval. I cannot tell you how much I bless the Lord. Let us admire, my very dear confrère, the ways of Providence which imperceptibly gain His ends. Let us not forget to give humble thanks to Jesus and Mary for it. This separation from your confrères will perhaps be painful to you, but it is part of the Lord's designs. Although separated in body, you will not be so in spirit. May the greatest union exist among us all, to whichever branch of the Society we belong and, as members of the same body, let us be ever ready to render service to one another, to support, encourage and help one another. Let us consider ourselves as children of the same Mother, the glorious Mary, and may the heart of this tender Mother become the bond which unites us all.

I think my letter will arrive before your separation. If you allow me, I will tell this to all of you, my very dear confrères: perform your task; correspond with the Lord's designs on you; regard Fr Sèon as another Jesus Christ in your midst; comfort him in the trouble inseparable from being Superior by your docility, your cordiality, etc.

Here we ourselves are likewise in a novitiate house. We are only three, with five Brothers; the others are employed in the seminary. I have not been able to leave the seminary myself, but the two houses form but one.

I cannot travel to Bordeaux at present. I don't think that I can do it this year even. I urge you strongly to do so if you can. In this case, make all the inquiries possible. I have just received a letter from Fr Chaminade, Superior of the Society of Bordeaux, in which he invites us, and tells me that he will be in Agen for some time yet and that we could meet him there.

I now think that it enters into the designs of Providence to render service to Mr Collard and his associates through Fr Pompallier.

The Bon Repos Sisters are all ready to form the establishment at St Chamond if the superiors allow it. Kindly confer with Fr Terraillon, and both of you make this request. One of the young ladies you presented has come to Belley; the Sisters will receive her. As for the others, they will have to wait, for at present they are too crowded at Bon Repos.

Embrace all your confrères for me. As soon as possible I will go to see you. I am also going to write to Fr Séon.

Accept the full assurance of my sincere attachment and my entire devotedness.

Your Belley confrères all share the joy which the success of your arrangements brings and they warmly greet you. I am infinitely grateful to you for having left me Fr Bourdin for this year.

*Your very humble and very obedient servant,
Colin, Superior¹⁸*

This letter mentions many of the strands of Marist activity, some of which require explanation:

The mention of Pompallier and Mr Collard refers to a substantial step taken in the formation of the Third Order of Mary. Some men of high quality (and of high qualifications), loyal to the “legitimate” King and disgusted with the regime of the Voltairian Louis Philippe, the so-called “Citizen-King”, quit their official positions and turned to other occupations, especially to that of conducting boarding schools. They aspired to a richer spiritual develop-

ment and sought guidance as members of a Third Order, choosing the Marists as guides. Pompallier was commissioned to direct them.

At this period, in Bordeaux, Fr Chaminade was in process of establishing the Marianist congregation. It seems that Colin wrote to Chaminade and that the latter extended an invitation to come to see him at Agen. Because Chaminade had government authorisation for his congregation, Champagnat, seeking government approval for his teacher-Brothers, was particularly interested in examining some form of liaison; Colin

¹⁸ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O. M. 1, Doc. 255.

wanted to help him in this matter. The Archdiocese of Lyon, however, was not supportive of such a move. Eventually, any thought about some form of union for these Societies was dismissed because the ends proposed by the groups were different.

Marist high hopes for a foundation of Marist Sisters in the archdiocese of Lyon (at St Chamond, so close to other Marist centres) were dashed by the rejection of the project by Archbishop de Pins, probably because of the existence of sufficient Sisters' establishments near the city of Lyon.

In regard to new arrangements for the Marist priests in Lyon archdiocese, Colin eventually had his way. Séon was now leader of the Marists in the archdiocese of Lyon and two establishments of Marists existed there — one at the Hermitage, the other at Valbenoîte. Very soon there was a third centre — Pompallier living separately as Director of the Third Order and chaplain to its boarding school.

Colin's concern for the development of the branch of priests in Lyon was matched by Champagnat's worry about the formation of the Brothers, in which the Marist priests

played a most significant part. After all, apart from Séon's enthusiasm, it was Champagnat's charism and capacity that led to the Lyon Marist priests making a second start after the disaster of 1826. His concern to have sufficient priests at the Hermitage is therefore understandable. This, however, was not the only reason for Champagnat's opposition to having the priests centred on Valbenoîte. As we shall see, there were other motives.

On the spiritual plane the ingredients for the remedy to the Valbenoîte headache were humility (Champagnat), patience (Colin), prayer and family spirit (all). The spirit of fraternal charity, of give and take, which animated these early Marists was undoubtedly strengthened by their participation in annual Retreats together, alternately in the dioceses of Lyon and Belley. At the Retreat of 1831 they composed a prayer of consecration to Mary which was recited and signed at subsequent Retreats. This consecration harks back to the Fourvière pledge and shows the continuity of their determination to continue their spiritual and apostolic endeavours in the company of the good Mother. It conveys some idea of what lay behind the constant resolve which impelled them. An extract:

...Tender and loving Mother, at this moment and forever, we place into your hands our hearts, our wills, our persons, our goods, our entire selves. We promise you to pursue, by all the means at our disposal, the success and the extension of your Society; to work during our whole life for the glory

of your divine Son, and for yours, too; to extend devotion to you as much as possible; and never to do anything, to undertake anything, without imploring your assistance. Be always for us, Holy Virgin, a Mother full of tenderness and mercy. Be our advocate and protectress before God. ...¹⁹

A prayer such as this is a brief drawing-back of the veil to disclose the spiritual furnace burning within the hearts of these men of Mary.

In 1833 the troubles aroused by the July Revolution of 1830 were subsiding. There was less obvious animosity towards the Catholic clergy and, as a result, travelling was

less dangerous. Since there had also been troubles in Rome in those years, Colin had not attempted to reach the Eternal City to advocate the acceptance of the Society of Mary, a move which had been advised by his friend Cardinal Macchi. A letter to Champagnat in March 1833 speaks, among other matters, about this topic:

Belley, 17 March 1833.

My very dear confrère,

I could not have answered your last letter earlier, as our bishop [Bishop Devie] is on his rounds [in Bresse]. I wrote to him regarding the kindly offer you made him of two Brothers for his foundation in Bresse and so far I have received no reply. ... I hope to write to you about Easter time; then I will give you his Lordship's reply.

I ask you to tell Fr Terraillon that we have noted down 700 Masses to his credit, and to thank him for us by offering him the homage of our sincere affection. We have also noted down 50 Masses on your account at 1 franc 20 centimes.

We must all thank the Lord for having given us Fr Cholleton to conduct and guide the efforts to be made for the Society. It is an admirable stroke of Providence.

We at Belley intend to write again to Cardinal Macchi, former Nuncio at Paris, to ask him if he thinks it suitable to make the journey to Rome. Perhaps I will see you before that, and we will talk over everything. I ask you to have a novena made for the success of this new approach to Rome.

My love to all your Brothers. I commend myself to their prayers and also to yours, and I am with respect and sincere affection.

*Your very humble and devoted servant,
Colin, Superior²⁰*

¹⁹ Marist Consecration to Mary, made at Belley Retreat, 8 Sept. 1831. O.M. 1 Doc. 236, Lines 8-17.

²⁰ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 266.

An important appointment by the archdiocese, relayed to Colin by Champagnat, was that of Vicar General Cholleton as custodian of Marist affairs in the archdiocese. Cholleton had been a great supporter of the Marists and eventually joined their ranks. On one occasion, however, in the attempt to unite Champagnat's Brothers to those of Fr Querbes, he almost caused heartbreak to Champagnat.

The projected opening at Bresse was for an agricultural school or model farm, for which Champagnat had no Brothers available at the time. Eventually, it was opened without Champagnat's men; it proved to be a financial disaster.

TO ROME

The election of Jean-Claude Colin as Central Superior of the Marists in 1830 spurred this retiring cleric to plan and to act for a world beyond that of the dioceses of Belley and Lyon. Rome became a target. Retaining the title of "Superior" of the minor seminary [such was the bishop's wish], but having a vice-Superior for guiding its every-day affairs, Colin was able to give thought to strategies designed to win approbation for the Society of Mary. The fact that there were now houses for Marist priests in the dioceses of Lyon and Belley meant that Colin could

approach the two bishops with confidence that he would at least be heard. In addition, Colin was well aware of the impact made by Champagnat's Brothers in the sphere of education, and of the effectiveness of the Lyon Marist priests in helping in the formation of the Brothers and in ministry to the parishes of the archdiocese. In regard to Belley, the Marist leader could point to the spiritual uplift that came from the inland missionaries and to the well-regulated minor seminary in Belley – both being works of the Marist priests. All these factors gave him confidence and hope.

Colin possessed something further – his capacity as negotiator and his patience in attaining his ends. Given the supra-diocesan nature of the Society of Mary (indeed, Champagnat's men were also in the dioceses of Viviers and Grenoble), Colin was able to make use of the quasi-rivalry between the two principal dioceses to further the cause of the Society. "I play one off against the other — and God's work gets done."²¹

These words encapsulate so well the mixture of human cleverness and supernatural trust which are manifest in Colin's letters, especially in those dealing with diocesan affairs. The whole Colin is to be found there – quiet humour, real Faith and a profound knowledge of men.

²¹ Words attributed by Fr Maitrepiere to Fr Colin, O. M. 2, Doc. 752, Lines 337-338.

Jean-Claude Colin was in touch with Champagnat again in mid-year 1833:

Belley, 24 June 1833

My dear friend,

The bishop of Belley wishes you to supply him with two Brothers for a foundation in Bresse. At Easter you were disposed to grant them to him; I hope you will not change your mind. He must have them at once; he would desire that there might be one for Marboz. They will be employed, for a start, in agriculture, then, later on, in bringing up the orphans. Provided that they are solid in their vocation, it is not absolutely necessary that they be well instructed. Kindly give me a prompt reply, as his Lordship awaits it. I desire you, before anything else, to come and see for yourself the house, the situation. You would stop at Meximieux and Fr Maître pierre, who is the seminary superior there, would take you. From there you would come on to Belley. Cardinal Macchi addressed his reply to the bishop of Belley, asking his Lordship to allow us to go to Rome. The bishop is not opposed to it, so I am thinking of leaving at the beginning of September. We'll see each other before that time. Meanwhile, prepare a summary of the Rules of your Brothers. I hope to write soon to Fr Terrailon. I will be very happy if there were at La Côte [St-André] an establishment of Sisters because I hope that the college will also belong to the Society one day. Do what you can that the venture may succeed. The bishop of Belley expects a prompt reply and we expect the pleasure of seeing you very soon. I write in haste. Our love to all of ours. I embrace you all with all my heart [toto corde], and am for ever,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

*Colin*²²

This letter clearly reveals the exercise of “political” (or “clerical”) pressure – by Colin on Champagnat and by Devie on Colin. Devie wants Brothers for his agricultural project, but Champagnat just has not the men available. It is possible, too, that Champagnat is chary about entering into this new sphere of

apostolate (conducting an agricultural school) and that he hesitates to make an establishment in the diocese of Belley, whose bishop had at times been very difficult for Colin and his fellow Marist priests. The Bresse undertaking was eventually taken up by a Father Granjard; it failed financially.

²² Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 272.

In regard to the Côte St André mentioned in the letter, Champagnat's teaching Brothers had already been there for two years.

The time was now fast approaching for Colin and two Marist companions (Fathers Bourdin and Chanel) to travel to Rome. Desiring to have some information from Champagnat prior to his departure, Colin wrote in August:

Belley, 25 August 1833.

Father and dear confrère,

The hour of our departure for Rome is due; I will be leaving Lyon on Thursday morning, 29th. Several of our confrères are accompanying me as far as Lyon. We will assemble there between 7 and 8 a.m. at Madame Chavassieu's, Little Bombard Street. From there, at about 8 a.m., we will all go up to Fourvière to place our journey under the protection of our common Mother. One of us will say the Mass, which the others will attend. It is necessary for you to be at the meeting; you must sign the petition to His Holiness which we all signed at Belley. This signature does not make us enter any engagement. If anyone cannot come, he would have to authorise another to sign for him. I am writing by this same mail to Fr Séon. Fr Terraillon could likewise sign; show him my letter. I think you have obtained the certificate in favour of your Brothers from the bishops of Grenoble and Viviers; kindly bring it along to me. Very best wishes to your good Brothers, to whose prayers I earnestly recommend myself.

I am, with respect and very special affection,

Colin, Superior²³

Although Terraillon came and signed, Champagnat could not come, so Colin signed for him. In regard to the requested recommendations from the bishops, a testimonial letter from the bishop of Grenoble reached Colin by post only at the beginning of October and was added to the Marist dossier in Rome. The Bishop of Viviers, however, appears not to have written.

The three delegates duly arrived in Rome, were presented to Pope Gregory XVI and presented the case for the establishment of the Society of Mary – all four branches. Colin stayed in Rome for discussions concerning their application; Bourdin and Chanel made a return journey (not exactly by a direct route) to France, there to take up their teaching posts again.

²³ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 283.

Colin wrote to Champagnat on 28 September 1833, giving news of the voyage to Rome and an account of his sojourn there. On 27 February 1834, having just returned to Belley from Rome, Colin again wrote to Champagnat. Without giving details of the discussions in Rome, he stated that the Marists must now simply await the result of the deliberations of the appropriate authorities in Rome. He also mentioned a meeting which would involve Champagnat and would deal with the application to Rome, but he gives neither date nor detail.

VEXATIOUS VALBENOÎTE

At the end of 1832 Séon replaced Champagnat as leader of the Marist priests in the archdiocese of Lyon. That did not mean a diminution of Champagnat's interest in his brother priests. On the contrary, there soon developed in Champagnat an anxiety for their future as Marists. In his eyes the problem lay in the house of residence at Valbenoîte, where the care

of the parish seemed to Champagnat to be incompatible with the religious and missionary life to which the Marists aspired and in which the newcomers needed formation. This was Champagnat's viewpoint and was the substance of his complaint to the archdiocesan authorities who were in charge of clerical appointments. His was no empty plaint, for he proposed a remedy. The Marist aspirants could live at La Grange Payre, the superb estate willed to Champagnat by a generous benefactress. What was more, the property would be donated to the archdiocese for that purpose. It was a munificent gesture, typical of Champagnat's bigness of heart. It was also a measure of Champagnat's concern for the priests of the Society. The Brothers at the Hermitage must have reflected ruefully on their founder's largesse, for, with numbers burgeoning at the Mother House, the Brothers could have made good use of the property thus proffered to the priests.

The following extract from Champagnat's letter to Vicar General Cholleton is heartfelt:

The position of my confrères at Valbenoîte is not at all to their advantage. This parish and curacy cannot suit the Society, especially as the priests are placed at present. The administration of the parish occupies all of them and will do so still more. The best subjects lose their vocation there. Those who feel some attraction to the religious life do not dare offer themselves, for fear of being employed as curates. ...There is no sacrifice I am not ready to make for this work.²⁴

²⁴ Fr Champagnat to Fr Cholleton, O.M. 1, Doc. 321, Lines 3-10, 31-32.

The proposal to hand over Grange Payre came in this letter.

Champagnat also wrote of his anxiety to Jean-Claude Colin. It would seem that the Marist authorities at Belley thought along the same lines as Champagnat — that the affairs of the priests at Valbenoite

needed taking in hand and that, if possible, these priests should be in a separate house under the direction of Pierre Colin. Jean-Claude's letter to Champagnat reveals quite clearly his esteem and affection for his fellow-labourer of the first hour. This is Colin's reply to two letters from Champagnat:

Belley, 4 September 1834.

My very dear confrère,

All the letters which come from your hand are dear and pleasant to me, but certainly I have never received any from you which gave me more pleasure than your second last one, in which you informed me of what you wrote to Fr Cholleton. I saw then your disinterestedness and your devotion to the Society of Mary in general. Let us be well convinced that we will be able to work effectively for the glory of God only in so far as we live by Faith and expect more from Him than from men. . . . As soon as Fr Cholleton replies to your letter, kindly, if you will, convey it to me, for my brother will not leave for Valbenoite before we know the decision of the Council [of Archbishop De Pins] in this matter. Try to have this delay accepted by our dear confrères at Valbenoite. My intention still is to send you two of our Brothers so that they may make their novitiate with you and receive in your house the holy habit. It is time that these different Brothers become centralised and attached to the Mother House of the Brothers. You know that my intentions are that the Marist and Joseph Brothers form but one body. I did not think you were making your Retreat so soon; I thought that it would take place in the month of October. God be blessed. The two candidates will probably set out with my brother during October. But you must prepare me a good Brother to do the cooking. I am counting on this.²⁵

Colin's letter goes on to tell of the reception from the Sovereign Pontiff of three Briefs for setting up the confraternity "we call the Third Order".²⁶ There is also a plea for

prayers for the recognition of the Society by Rome and a desire that Marist numbers may increase in Lyon. The letter finishes in the usual way.

²⁵ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc.322, Lines 1-34.

²⁶ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 322, Line 36.

Probably encouraged by Colin's letter, and certainly anxious to have a decision from the archdiocesan authorities who, of course, were responsible for parochial appointments, including those to Valbenoîte, Champagnat again wrote to Cholleton, Vicar General. Champagnat had heard that Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte, had made over

the collection of parish dues to his curates, the young Marists, in much the same way as the State did in the Ancien Régime – by farming out the tax collection to general agents. This letter touches on the matter of money and also presents Champagnat's strong views on religious life. Once again he makes no attempt to hide his convictions and feelings:

I see clearly that the work of the priests is going to collapse completely at Valbenoîte, for it is in a false situation. My God, what do you ask of me? There is nothing I am not ready to sacrifice to save Mary's work from shipwreck. I assure you that I still believe more than ever that God wills this work, but in a situation other than that in which it is now.

The concern, the desire to become rich will ruin everything. God preserve me from judging my confrères. Their unselfishness and devotedness have edified me so much since I have had the honour of having them with me. I wish to blame only those who gave them such advice. . . .

Let Fathers Pompallier, Séon, Forest and Bourdin, or one from Belley instead of him, be all brought together, living their Rule, having no other ministry in the meanwhile than Retreats and short Missions in the country, and then you will see things take a new turn. . . .

I promise you again that I will not let my confrères want for anything, even if I have to sell my last shirt. I tell you this with tears in my eyes. . . .

It is only by living withdrawn from the world and by meditation on the great truths that we can maintain the religious spirit.²⁷

Champagnat then informed Colin of his second letter to Cholleton. Colin, the "Central Superior", while supporting his colleague's move and the reasons for it, discreetly sounded a note of caution in his reply, for he

was aware that feelings might be hurt. In particular was he sensitive to the position of Séon, the new Marist Superior in the archdiocese, and confirmed in that position by the authorities:

²⁷ Letter of Fr Champagnat to Fr Cholleton, O.M. 1, Doc. 323, Lines 18-107 (parts).

Belley, 23 September 1834.

My very dear confrère,

The good dispositions which, I see, the Lord has put in your heart fill us with joy and arouse our emulation. We pray the Father of all perfect gifts to strengthen you more and more in this spirit of Faith and in the disinterestedness which animates you. When you have received Fr Cholleton's reply, I beg you to share it with us; and, whether it be affirmative or negative, kindly tell us what it is best to do, and at what stage it will be necessary for my brother to set out. I would be very happy if they could do without him until at least after our Retreat, which will probably take place towards the end of October.

It behoves me, however, to convey to you my little fears regarding your excellent proposal to transfer the cradle of the Society of Mary in Lyon into your house near St Chamond. I fear that Fr Séon may become weary and take occasion to withdraw, which would be a serious setback.

Arrange everything with peace and sweetness. Your ideas are good, but if they cannot be carried out without disturbing the peace and the union of hearts, it would be necessary then to temporise and take the time needed to know more and more the most holy will of Jesus and Mary.

I hope you will send me a Brother cook immediately after your Retreat. I am awaiting his arrival so as to organise our house in a different way. My humble respects to Fr Terrailon and to all our dear confrères and Brothers. I leave you all in the holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and am, with the most sincere affection,

*Your very humble servant,
Colin, Superior*

P.S. Fr Fontbonne would suit us perfectly as a professor of Theology. Please make sure of his consent, and I will ask Lyon for him. Write to me forthwith on this matter.²⁸

This letter shows the masterly manner in which Colin could act as a conciliator. The first two sentences are not mere flattery, because Colin is genuinely moved by Champagnat's disinterestedness and concern for his confrères in Valbenoîte. It appears that Champagnat's letter to Colin contained the substance of what Champagnat wrote to Cholleton on 8 September. Colin admires the generosity, concern and bigness of heart of his fellow-labourer.

There follows a request for advice on what should be done and at what time Colin should send his brother Pierre to help the situation. So far all the running has been left to Champagnat. Then comes Colin's "little fears" regarding Champagnat's "excellent proposal". The ground is thus skilfully prepared for introducing Colin's big worry—Séon may so object to interference that he may simply withdraw! We recall that Séon had been elected leader by his Lyon confrères in

²⁸ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat. O.M. 1, Doc. 324.

November 1832 and had been confirmed in the leadership by the arch-diocesan authorities. Colin is so obviously right on this occasion. His final comment is a masterstroke. While acknowledging again that Champagnat's "ideas are good", Colin's plea "to arrange everything with sweetness and peace" and, if necessary, to temporise, calls for a readier spirit of compromise on Champagnat's part. In raising Champagnat's thoughts to the spiritual plane of seeking "the most holy will of Jesus and Mary", Colin reaches the climactic point of a wonderfully woven letter of persuasion.

In the above letter Colin is exercising those qualities of prudence, caution and consideration for consequences that mark his leadership. In this instance, the emotionally-stirred Champagnat needs cautioning and restraining. It is the reverse of the situation in 1830 where Champagnat's purposeful drive was essential in cleaving through the vacillations of an over-careful Colin in the matter of electing a Central Superior.

Other points to note in the letter are:

1. Colin's persistence with Terrailon, a persistence which paid off, for Terrailon made vows of religion with the other Marist priests in 1836;
2. Fontbonne was with the Lyon Marists for some years, but finally volunteered for the North American mission. Chanut, another priest who had been with Champagnat, eventually took the theology post in Belley.
3. Although the Grange Payre offer was not taken up on this occasion, Colin, in a letter of 17 January 1835, suggests the idea of moving the novitiate for Marist priests from Valbenoite to La Grange Payre; such a move did not eventuate.

Three weeks after this classic letter of late September, we find Colin penning a short letter to his friend:

Belley, 10 October 1834.

My very dear confrère,

I write to you in a hurry to tell you that our little Retreat is to begin on 10th of this month. We do not have a preacher, but we will make it at the foot of our crucifix in meditation. Then we will regulate several articles on the progress of our undertaking. I strongly desire you to come. I think it is even necessary for you to be here; several things are to be settled with you concerning the house in Lyon. If you cannot come the first days, at least try to leave the Hermitage on 19th so as to arrive here on 20th.

I beg you to bring with you a Brother cook for us, and, on returning, you will take back two of our Brothers to make their novitiate with you. If Fr Bourdin is with you, kindly advise him of the time of our Retreat. Please tell me whether Fr Fontbonne is still available to accept a Theology class. I have time only to embrace you in spirit and to say that I am, with respect,

*Your very humble servant ,
Colin, Superior.*

P.S. Don't fail to come, I beg you.²⁹

The reference to the house in Lyon concerns whether or not to transfer the Valbenoîte group to la Grange Payre; it also concerns attaching Pierre Colin to the group.

Pierre Colin eventually arrived at Valbenoîte, where, as a Marist priest of experience and standing, he was capable of assuring the stability of the community. Talk of relocating the young priest aspirants continued, but nothing came of it, despite an offer by Fr Forest in January 1836 to set up a

priests' novitiate at La Favourite, near Fourvière. Eventually, after Papal approbation of the Marist priests in 1836, the novitiate for all trainee Marist priests was transferred to rue Montée St Barthélemy, Lyon — on the hill of Fourvière. That was in November 1836.

By January 1835 no substantial news had been received from Rome, but a further letter from Colin to Champagnat sets out Colin's ideas re Joseph Brothers and Marist Brothers:

Belley, 7 January 1835.

My very dear confrère,

I received your letter and I thank you for the New Year good wishes you offer me and your other confrères at Belley. Have no doubt about those we formed here for you and all your house. You always have a share in our remembrance in the presence of God.

I am very happy that my brother is of some service to our dear confrères of Valbenoîte and that they are pleased to see him among them. I hope the Lord will bless their good will and that their number will gradually increase. Here we are happy, and could not be more so, with Fr Chanut.

The only fear I have is that his health may not stand up to the work he is taking on. Our little novitiate is going reasonably well; a new subject will soon join the other novices, So, little by little, the Society of Mary will attain stability.

²⁹ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 325.

I am pleased that you are happy with our two Brothers whom I brought to you. I note that you are giving them the Habit very soon, but I leave that to your judgement. I think it would be fitting if both were reserved for manual work—in the kitchen, the garden, etc. The big one can do hardly anything else, and, as the small one has a taste for this kind of work, it would be good, I think, to assign him to it. I desire, if you find it suitable, that the big one be employed a little at carpentry, gardening, and other things of that kind, and the small one at cooking and at learning the care of the linen. We must have Brothers who know how to do all that. I am also very happy with good Brother Timothée. He has good will and a desire to do well; he will make a good religious. But, as for Br André, he has not much taste for anything; he does not know how to cook or to garden and shows ability for nought. Br Timothée does not always venture to order him about. I think that, close to Lent, you will do well to recall Br André to the novitiate to train him to a more laborious life and to manual work. And, at this stage, I think we must have a gardener. Br Timothée would like Br Joseph or Br Jerome, but, before that, I hope to write to you.

It also seems to me that it would be good if the Brothers engaged in manual work did not wear the rabat, and that, instead of the cross on the breast, they wore a Rosary hanging from their cintures. You will examine all that in your wisdom. . . .

I warmly embrace all your dear confrères, and especially the two whom I brought you. My best New Year wishes to your priest confrère whose name escapes me. Br Timothée and Br André wish you all the happiness that could be wished you.

*I am, with the most sincere affection,
Your very humble and very devoted servant,
Colin, Superior.*

P.S. Recall me to Fr Terrailon's remembrance and offer him the sincere prayers I never cease making for his conversion. When I say 'conversion', he knows what I mean.

P.P.S. Mother Superior of Bon Repos still has in the world two nephews, brothers of the young Millot whom you have in your house. She greatly desires to withdraw them from the world and see them enter the Society of Mary. The elder is 15 years old, the other is 12. We could in time make them Brothers for the colleges or other similar houses, but they would have to be instructed and formed early. See what your charity can do for them.³⁰

By the time this letter was written Pierre Colin had gone to Valbenoîte in the office of a man of religious experience, capable of assuring the stability of that little community.

Chanut, mentioned here, went from Valbenoîte to Belley, perhaps by way of exchange for Pierre Colin, and took the Theology class that had been intended for Fontbonne.

³⁰ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 330.

The jocular words about Terrail- lon refer to Colin's hope that Terrail- lon would finally clearly decide for the Society of Mary by giving up his post as parish priest of Notre Dame in St Chamond. It was only three years after his profession as a Marist in 1836 that Terrail- lon left his parish.

No doubt Champagnat sent a prompt reply to the above letter, in which Colin proposed ideas about the formation of the Joseph Brothers and a distinct costume for them. Evi- dently, Colin had touched a sensitive nerve and Champagnat would have insisted once again that no distinction be introduced among the Brothers. Colin now replies to these objections:

Belley, 17 January 1835.

Very dear confrère,

The remarks I made to you on the Brothers' costume cannot be put into effect for the present, but they are to be examined before God. I think that, with time, we will not wear the rabat ourselves; it would not be suitable for the Brothers to wear it – I speak only of the Brothers who will be in the Fathers' houses. The Capuchins, the Jesuits in Italy and several other religious bodies wear the Rosary hung from the cincture. It seems to me that this costume would suit us more than them, we who will be especially under the protection of Mary. If one day we admit this rule for the priests, it would be suitable that the Marist Brothers, who form a branch of the Society, were also consistent on this point. I give you these ideas only to be examined before God; I myself have no fixed idea at all on the matter, and so, assuredly, there is no hurry.

You must feel that Brothers intended for manual employments cannot be formed like the others. During their novitiate they ought to be especially employed at various manual occupations, as otherwise they would lose the taste for work and would thus become accustomed to a kind of sluggishness which would render them unfitted for their functions. I strongly believe that the Brothers who have spent several years in teaching school would indeed be hardly suited to become servant Brothers. It is this impression that induces me to advise you to apportion to manual work, from the start of their novitiate, those novices who appear to you suitable for these kinds of employment. I leave it to your judgement, however, to see if young Millot would be adapted to manage the tasks of the kitchen or any other work of this kind. I am not unaware that he is tickle; I think that age will correct this defect.

My opinion would be that you recall Br André to your place and that, under the guidance of a good Brother, he be continually employed at some manual tasks. Thus directed, he would then be able to make himself useful. We would have great need of Cartier, now Br Eugene. He would remain at La Capuchinière, would do the garden and have charge of the cellar in the seminary. See if you can send him back to me towards the middle of Lent and, at the same time, take back Br André. Nevertheless, I submit all this to your prudence.

We also have here at Belley two Brothers known for a long time now. If you consider it proper, they will take the Habit here; nevertheless, they will still belong to your house of Brothers. You will assign a religious name to them and they would likewise be dependent on you. You will let me know your opinion. We would thus avoid the travelling expenses.

I have learned that Fr Fontbonne is at the Hermitage. Urge him to come and help us to preach the Jubilee; he would render us an important service and would also prepare himself for the great mission for which his zeal destines him. I don't dare to ask Fr Séon about it; I think his presence is necessary at Valbenoîte .

Be assured that the good Lord destines you to found the novitiate house of the priests in your Grange Payre. Do not lose sight of this idea. It seems to me that you could very soon propose it again to your confrères at Valbenoîte.

I embrace you with all my heart [toto corde], and am, with respect, Father,

*Your very humble servant,
Colin³¹*

With reference to the two Brothers at Belley, we know that Francis-Xavier Girod received the Habit at the Hermitage in July 1835, in which case Champagnat must not have accepted the solution proposed by Colin. In regard to the other, Joseph-Mary Luzy, he does not appear in the registers of the Marist Brothers, and the registers at Belley conflict with the diary of this Brother. He was one of the early pioneers of the Pacific mission, and is buried in the Marist Fathers' cemetery at Villa Maria in Sydney.

La Grange Payre and Valbenoîte are again mentioned, showing that Colin was favourably disposed to having the novices of the Marist priests placed at La Grange Payre. Yet he was disposed to temporise on this proposal because of the opposition that could come from some of those at Valbenoîte.

La Grange Payre never saw a community of Marist priests; it was sold by the Brothers in 1853 to pay for part of the cost of building a new General House for the Marist Brothers at St Genis-Laval.

³¹ Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 331.

THE PERSONALITY OF Br FRANÇOIS

as reflected in his personal letters
on the Government of the Institute
and letters related to his giving
of spiritual direction



Br Louis Richard

Following the canonisation of our Founder in 1999, and in light of the impending or completed beatifications of our Spanish martyrs, the time has come, perhaps, for a re-evaluation of the one who was the right hand and first successor of Father Champagnat. I would go so far as to see him as a sort of co-founder. My interest in him has greatly increased since I computerised his many notebooks and also his letters. They have revealed to me insights into his personality that are quite different from what I was previously led to believe.

AN ALREADY IMPRESSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are no obstacles to anyone wishing to know more about Brother François, for we have five biographies written about him. The first was written in 1899 by Father L. Ponty who was the chaplain at Notre-Dame de Lacabane. It was published in Lyon by E. Vitte.

On May 8, 1923, a certain Brother Philippe was given the task of providing an abridged version of the life of Brother François by the General Council. He based his work on the earlier version of Ponty. It appeared in Turin in 1924, 24 pages long and included illustrations.

In 1949, Guy Chastel wrote a life of Brother François that is interesting and rather easy to read. It was published by Alsatia in Colmar.

Brother Louis-Laurent, (Pierre Zind), published *Sur les traces du Frère François*, in which he uses an historical approach, highlighted with the use of many photographs.

Finally, in 1996, Brother Gabriel-Michel also wrote a biography in which he makes extensive use of Brother François' notebooks and collections of his letters.¹ Also included in this work are references to the biographies of Ponty and Chastel.

¹ (301) Various. Personal notes and others. * 302, 303, 304 Retreat notes from 1825-1869 * 305 Trip to Rome. Various. Retreats from 1872-1880. * 306 « Outlines of instructions » 307, 308, 309* « Instructions » * 310, 311, * "Various notes" * 312 Various Topics * 313 Politeness, Reports, Circular Manuscripts.* 10, 11, 12 "Letter book", from pp 1 to 1086 * 13 additional " Letter book" * 41-49 Notebooks dealing with the areas of science and medicine* Printed Circulars (volumes one and two pertain to Brother François).

Additionally, there are other authors: the rich and picturesque *Annales* of Brother Avit; the *Life of the Founder* by Brother Jean-Baptiste which provides information that cannot be overlooked; *The Memoirs of Brother Sylvestre*. These various authors were well acquainted with Brother François, and we shall later see that they offer us a variety of insights and perspectives.

Finally, in 2003, Brother Giovanni Bigotto wrote a little book, *La joie d'être frère, Frère François*, in which the contribution of the personal letters of Brother François is evoked very much to the point on page 4.

These letters, he writes "...bring us into direct contact with a Brother François who is extremely interested in all that concerns the Brothers. It is an interest that comes from the heart, from his long experience of administration and from the time he spent in the presence of God. These letters are a treasure without equal among the documents that we have from the Brother, in which we find the depth and richness of his brotherly love and the art of dialogue with Our Lord and with the Good Mother."

We shall later refer to numerous testimonies presented at the Diocesan Process for his Beatification.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

A brief review of his personal history may be in order. Gabriel Rivat was born in 1808 and pronounced his first commitment into the hands of Father Champagnat in 1819. After having performed his duties as cook and

teacher in Marllhes, Boulieu, and Vanosc, he became Father Champagnat's personal secretary at the Hermitage and his correspondent during his stays in Paris. He was appointed Director General in 1839 and then Superior General in 1852. In 1860, he retired to the Hermitage where he died in 1881 at the age of 73.

Given the elements of time and space that separate us from him and the fact that all interpretations of his life are ultimately personal ones, it should not be surprising that he appears a distant personality to us. Let me, if I may, interject a personal note: my great paternal grand-mother was born some ten years after the death of Champagnat. She was in her thirties on the death of Brother François, and yet I have a very clear recollection of her sweetness and her kindness. So, all that is not so distant! But let us return to the subject at hand: the letters of Brother François.

THE PERSONAL LETTERS OF BROTHER FRANÇOIS

Among the treasures of our beginnings, on the shelves of our Archives we preserve the 18,063 "Administrative Letters of the Institute" extending over the years 1834-1953 arranged in 17 volumes. They deal with all of the problems inherent in the administration of the schools and other establishments of the Institute, covering every possible administrative matter.

There is another set of letters that deals primarily with the Brothers: the *Lettres Personnelles* of Brother François. Often enough, the recipient of the letter is unknown. Originally

organised into eight notebooks, they were rebound, most likely after the death of Brother François, in two volumes, according to the following organisation:

Volume 1	Volume 2
Letters pp 1-514 (1842-1852)	Letters pp 527-1104 (1852-1858)
Table of contents pp 515-519	Administrative letters pp 1-144 (1852-1860)
	56 pages un-numbered, 9 of which are used as a table of content for both volumes

As a whole, the collection contains 1,091 pages of letters dating from 1842-1860 and 13 index pages containing cross-references.

year to another. For example, in Volume 2, the authors date 136 letters to the year 1853 but only 21 to 1858.

When the personal letters of Brother François were published in 1996, the editors Brothers Paul Sester and Jean-Pierre Cotnoir re-numbered the letters and included another 30 found in other sources. The process had the added benefit of providing more accurate dates. The final collection is made up of 701 personal letters, 670 of which are drawn from the two volumes of Brother François. The letters are arranged in chronological order from 1841-1860 without including specific dates, in most cases, and the number of letters varies greatly from one

When editing his collection of letters, Brother François was most likely making a selection to serve as the basis of data for giving instructions and conferences just as he had done in most of his many notebooks. As, in general, we no longer have the originals, we may assume that he destroyed them, unless after his death they disappeared through negligence in the process of moving, or intentionally. Whatever the case may be, the letters should not be looked upon merely as documents preserved for their own sake, but rather as a database, whence the indexes established by Brother François himself.

The 1996 collection is presented as follows:

- Volume 1 : Letters 1001-1418 (1841-1852)
- Volume II : Letters 1419-1701 (1853-1860)

Actually, the content of both collections is different. In the first volume, if most of the letters are written to Brothers, there are many others concerning parish priests, superiors and other authorities and dealing essentially with administrative issues. It is in the second volume that one finds the letters dealing with spiritual direction corresponding to the requirements of the Rule of 1837:

The *première* Brother Directors will write to the Superior every month, and the Brother Directors of each establishment every two months, in order to inform him of what is happening in their houses.

The Sub-directors will write themselves every four months. The Superior's visitation will not dispense them from this duty.

We know that until the election of Brother Pascal as Assistant General on May 20, 1854, Brother François was in charge of the little "Province du Nord" (29 Brothers in 1852) in addition to his responsibilities as Superior General. The comparison of dates and numbers of letters written inclines us to believe that a great part of his spiritual direction effectively involved the Brothers of this Province, as the abrupt decrease of his correspondence in 1855 seems to indicate.

1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858
26	15	8	60	36	49	14	9	16	21

Nevertheless, every Brother had the opportunity of writing to him as Superior General and his spiritual direction certainly extended to Brothers of other Provinces.

Whatever the case may be, it is in the correspondence of the second volume that he best expresses his personal feelings. And it is on these letters, personal, even intimate, often written to persons still unknown to us, that I would like to focus, in order to throw light on his personality and the main axes of his spirituality.

PRECIOUS INDEXES

As these indexes were first introduced by Brother François himself, we may consider that they give an excellent idea of what he considered most important. In all, Brother François' general index contains 107 items, almost all concerned with spirituality or the ascetical life. Those he considered most important were subdivided into sub-themes with as many as 8 entries in each. For example, the headings: Temptation, Vocation, and Children, each have 8 sub-divisions; the headings Jesus,

Mary, and Directors, 6; Ministry, Rule, and Prayer, 4. Corresponding to each item, page numbers were assigned. At times very similar items could be combined; for example: Prayer (16

cross-references), and Piety (8), or The Rule (8 cross-references), and Fidelity, (11). In the following table, an overview of topics that have at least 10 cross-references is presented:

CR ²	Topics	Subdivisions
43	Vocation	(benefit, gratitude, temptation, uncertainty, advice of confessor, thought, word against, discouragement, constancy)
37	Combat	obstinacy, fall, God and the Devil
33	Director	(responsibility, conduct, for the Brothers, challenges, qualities, trust)
33	Prayer	(distractions, periods of dryness, subjects)
30	Children	(progress, education, rewards, prayer, vigilance, confession, sensual affection, relationships, supervision)
30	Temptation	(advantages, courage, wiles of the Devil, means of resisting, scorn, invocations, victory, cleanliness)
28	Jesus	(imitation, sufferings, love, dedication, in the children, trust, all)
25	Employment	(challenges, duties, indifference, temporal, cooking)
18	Piety	
16	Encouragement	
16	Generosity	
16	Types of prayer	aspirations ³
15	Advice	Religious
15	Our Lady	recourse to, protection, temptation, filial love, for the children, consecration
14	Transfers	requests, resignation, of Congregation
14	Charity	community spirit
14	News	about the Society, General Chapter, Brothers in Oceania
14	The Society	Plan to withdraw, applying to re-enter, leaving
13	Discouragement	
12	Fraternal correction	

² Number of cross-references

³ Very short abbreviated prayers

12	Faults	support
12	Obedience	(respect union with the Director, failure, follow-up)
12	Sorrow	(anxiety, of the bad religious)
11	Spirit of Institute	(of faith, family spirit)
11	Regularity	
11	Sufferings	
11	Superior	(openness, docility, correspondence)
11	Unhappiness	
10	Trust in God	
10	Death of the religious	(good - thoughts)
10	Perfection of state (means)	

These topics certainly reflect the content of the letters in which the Brothers shared their difficulties with their Superior: temptations (30), discouragement (13), unhappiness (11), sufferings (11), sorrow (12), shortcomings of the Brothers (12), or problems of charity (14)... To which

the Superior responds by bringing to mind what is essential: first vocation (43), the spiritual combat (37), prayer (33), following Jesus more closely (28), and Mary (15)... A summary list of all the headings of this index could be synthesized as follows:

Great truths	57	Combat 37; Death of the religious 10, the World 5, State of soul 5
Prayer	67	Community prayer 33, Piety 18, prayers 16
Spirituality	82	Jesus 28, Mary 15, Trust in God 10, The Will of God 8, Love of God 7, Presence of God 5, Grace 5, Communion 4
Charity	29	Fraternal charity 14, Short-comings, support 12
Virtues	51	Cheerfulness 8, Enthusiasm 7, True devotion 3, Religious Study 4, Willpower 3, Prudence 3, Generosity 16, Zeal 7
Defects	21	Tepidity 4, Sin 4, Discouragement 13
Vocation	103	Vocation 43, perfection of state 10, regularity 11, Spiritual direction 33, Particular examen 3
Exhortation	19	Encouragement 16, Success 3

Existential problems	91	Temptations 30, sufferings 11, Worries, anxieties 12, Unhappiness 11, Illness 8, Annoyances 8
School ministry	86	Students 30, employments 25, Dedication 7, establishment 6, Boarders 4, transfers 14, Recreation 3

However, any effort to systematise information is risky, and for many topics there are many possible references overlapping. I have, therefore, chosen to dwell upon four salient themes of the collection:

1. Treatment of personal problems (570 cross-references)
2. Matters dealing with the interior life (314 cross-references)
3. Teaching, (226 cross-references)
4. The Institute, (138 cross-references)

Given the fact that the Superior is conducting a correspondence with his Brothers according to Rule, it is normal that we should find that the majority of letters are addressed to their personal problems. It is first necessary to confirm them in their vocations (43 references). The Institute is young and the Brothers even younger, so the direction (in the spiritual and institutional sense: 33 references) is a capital duty in continuing the work of a short postulancy and novitiate or to complete the work of the directors. He encourages, demands generosity and effort, urges putting up with trials, sufferings or sicknesses.⁴

His Brothers are religious and this quality has to be maintained by an active interior life. Community prayer, personal prayer, turning frequently to God in love, trust and confidence through Jesus and Mary, fraternal charity, mutual support and religious study are all indispensable means of keeping oneself a good religious, faithful disciple of the Founder.

They are also teachers and this reminder appears as a secondary observation, for it is a matter of a more structural problem which is officially settled with the Directors. All of these cases are concerned with the children, recreations, personal dedication, but also transfers and employments.

Although the letters are personal in nature, they do not overlook the Institute, or the “Society”, as François often refers to it. In them can be found general advice, recalls to the spirit of the Institute and the Rules, news about general chapters, the missionaries in Oceania and the progress of the Institute. At times, the Superior requests information he needs and he acknowledges the New Year greetings of the Brothers.

⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that prior to being nominated Director General, Brother François never officially held the position of local Director which would happen only after he had completed his major leadership role at the Hermitage, that is to say, when he was no longer writing.

However, it is important to move beyond generalities to particular examples which show Brother François with a mother's heart, suffering with those who suffer, instructing, tirelessly explaining but without departing from resolute firmness.

READING HIS LETTERS

The first impression that one has upon reading his letters is the warmth that one finds in the introductions and conclusions, whether he is writing to young Brothers or to the Directors. For example, when the recipients are most likely young Brothers:

1424 I received your letter with a very affectionate interest.

1495 I embrace you with all my heart and promise not to forget you and to take the most fatherly care of you.⁵

To a Brother Director:

1582 You know that from the first time we met, I have always had a high regard for you. I regard you even more highly now that you represent me and are going to form for me a family of saints. You will pray for me every day, and I will pray for you!"

What we have in Brother François is not a chief directing his troops from a distance and on high, but a

father – and a mother – watching over those in his care and letting them know in all sincerity and truth the loving concern of his heart. And this personal love leads quite naturally to the quest for brotherly love and unity in the little communities of the period.

1421 Preserve this peace and sweet harmony among yourselves, this fraternal charity which is the joy of religious life and which provides the strength to overcome the difficulties and obstacles opposed to our salvation.⁶

It is not a matter of simply human love, but of applying the sentiments which reigned in the Holy Family. This love pushes Brother François to suffer with the sufferings of the Brothers as to rejoice for the happy events recorded by his correspondents, never forgetting the positive role of joy.

1425 I sympathise with you in your trials and concerns in the role confided to you.

1434 How I would like to see you happy, gay, joyful and satisfied among your good Brothers!⁷

There is even a certain humour in the images that he uses:

1436 Always cultivate your spiritual garden well: till the soil, remove the stones, rake, sow, plant, water, pull out, cut, replant, etc... There is always something to do in our garden, both in and out of season.

⁵ Also: 1427, 1430, 1472, 1481, 1653

⁶ See also: 1422, 1428, 1447

⁷ See also: 1439, 1540, 1559

1572 It is not by what he does in the barracks that a soldier earns the Medal of Honour, but what he does on the battlefield.⁸

However, this human warmth is not only sentiment. It must be imitated by the Directors who have to, over and above their pupils, direct and form young men full of good will and ignorance. Let them then give proof of patience, kindness and quiet but determined support:

1470 The first thing that you must do in dealing with the Brothers is not to be more surprised at their faults and shortcomings and all the irritation they may cause you than to hear the North wind whistling in winter. You should even expect these things and count on them as certain. And whatever their defects, faults and failings, never give up on them.

Like knowledge, virtue is acquired gradually by degrees, with much effort, by frequent lessons often repeated, as our pupils witness. In the same way, virtue enters the heart little by little, over time and so to speak, drop by drop. It must be poured gently, introduced into the heart of a young man much like filling a bottle with a very narrow neck. If one tries to fill it too quickly, the liquid flows to the side. Almost nothing gets in. If one pours gradually, drop by drop, or in a trickle, nothing is lost, and the bottle soon fills up.

1491 Another thing I would recommend is that you take good care of the young Brother and

neglect nothing to form him well and make a good Brother of him. You should not be overly concerned or upset over the minor annoyances that he may cause you; they are a fact of human weakness. We all have our own tastes, temperaments, characters, inclinations, whims and ways of doing things which we cannot always master even in spite of ourselves and which we can overcome only with great difficulty. This Brother forgets himself at times, is childish, shows himself insubordinate, neglects his duties. It is not that I excuse his behaviour, much less approve of it. But how much effort, how many sacrifices has he to make, at his age, to overcome himself, to restrain himself in many circumstances and not to abandon everything.

Was it because of the fact of his frail health that Brother François was always interested in the medical care given to the Brothers? As Brother Avit notes (2nd section, 1819), it was also because “*The Good Father gave his follower lessons in Latin and had him study medicine. The future General was first of all the guide of the infirmarians and the friend of the sick whom he cared for as best he could.*” Later, as infirmarian at the Hermitage, he would further his medical knowledge by meticulously copying the symptoms and remedies used at the period, as his numerous notebooks indicate. We know that life expectancy in the mid-nineteenth century was lower than it is today, but sanitary conditions, work and diet contributed to an even shorter life expectancy among the Brothers. One can imagine, then,

⁸ Also: 1462, 1617.

this concern of a superior seeing so many young religious die prematurely.

1475 You tell me that I have two very ill children. You know well that this touches me to the heart and that if I so desire to know all of the details of their condition I am even more concerned to know what medication is being given and the means used for their cure. So, I would like you to tell me simply and honestly if you have as much affection for these two as you have for the others, and even more than the others, because a person who is ill needs more love and attention than the others.⁹

He often suggested his own remedies: the first and most prudent being to live a prudent, regular and balanced life and to have proper nourishment.

1591 I also want you to take reasonably good care of your health and that of the Brothers. Feed yourselves well according to the Rule. Be prudent. Take precautions when travelling or on outings not to get too hot or too cold. In class, do not shout or speak too loudly. Enter and leave exactly on time."

1664 "As far as your indisposition is concerned, besides following the advice of the doctor, I would suggest that you follow an appropriate regime, that is to say, eat the proper food without worrying or getting in a state. Whenever a person is indisposed or suffering from a chronic illness, he should be, to some extent, his own doctor, and when he finds what is necessary, follow that course of action."

He even uses the medical model as an image of the spiritual life.

1563 A good dose of these virtues taken every morning, noon and night would quickly reduce the fever and soften the bitterness that you might feel at these encounters and agreeably restore the peace, tranquillity, gentleness and holy contentment of a soul who receives everything from God's hands, and rejoices at having to suffer something for love of Him.

The goodness so evident in him took nothing away from the firmness he showed when the need demanded it. To a Director who seems precisely to lack this virtue he does not mince words:

1475 I am well accustomed to fight, but I cannot resign myself to giving in. I do not want the Devil to get the upper hand and the passions triumph. I prefer fighting the good fight the whole year, the whole life. There are some Directors who have faced extraordinary challenges, especially this year, either from the Brothers or from outsiders. I have not yielded and I have reason to congratulate myself, for issues have been resolved, and the Brother Directors are happy. If you read my letters carefully, you will notice that they have quite a different purpose. Since the beginning of the year, I have tried to share with you the importance of reflecting the spirit of the Society and form you in the proper direction of the Brothers and the school. You are taking my place and representing me with the Brothers. I would like you, accordingly, to speak, act, treat them in everything as you know I do, to have same care and attitude for them that I have.

⁹ 1524: 1688.

That way, it is not possible for the Brothers not to submit, not to surrender. Long experience has taught this to be true.¹⁰

He is the one who is in charge. Like a good leader, he does not fear to go into details when addressing someone who is without doubt a Master of Novices:

1449 I was very happy to receive the written compositions by your good Novices. I was also pleased to see that some of them have made excellent academic progress. But I would also like you to provide me with a note on each one of them, as dear Brother Marie-Protais did last year. You could consult with him and with Brother Director when he returns. For each Novice, this note would include his name, age, country of origin and when he entered. You could also note the condition of his health, his aptitude, his character, his mental ability, his dispositions, whether he is devout, compliant, sociable, attached to his vocation, if he has common sense and good judgment and if he is happy to do what he is asked to do and if he does it well. Finally, I would ask you to provide me with all the details and information necessary to know a subject well in order to be able to guide him correctly.

In 1860, Brother François no longer has the responsibility of directing the Institute, but is living in the quiet and peaceful atmosphere of the Hermitage. However, he does not tolerate any infraction of the Rule, and that is why he calls a Director to task for being somewhat negligent:

1672 I am sorry to say that it has come to my attention that your Brothers came to bathe in our enclosure yesterday without saying a word to me or submitting a written note indicating that they had permission. You can understand that this has caused scandal for the house and embarrassment for the Superiors. Haven't we already received strong lessons in this regard? If your Brothers need to bathe, they should get themselves in order and show it. This is the second time that I have been forced to write to you to call them to order in the space of a few weeks. When we were together, I did not need to do it.

A letter that reflects his spirit of poverty also seems to shed some light on the circumstances of his departure from St. Genis-Laval in 1860, which does not appear in the beginning to have been considered definitive:

1679 As it appears that I will be remaining for some time here, where I have found myself so happy with my numerous and good family of novices and postulants who are returning to you, would please send me my old habit, my old culottes and two pairs of stockings as soon as possible? They can be found in my room in the bottom drawer of my dresser.

If there was one concern for him, never finished, always on the go, the balance here being gained through an imbalance there, it was certainly the matter of transfers. The Superior had to jockey between need and obligation. For example, to a Brother in the Province of Beaucamps:

¹⁰ 1547: 1561

1701 I have often thought of sending you someone to help you. As much as I would have liked to send you someone, in light of the enormous debt that you have inherited from your predecessor I have refrained from doing so. On the other hand, during your visit to Beaucamps, you were able to observe for yourself the lack of subjects available. You were well aware that we have had to make use of Brothers who have no certification and have not even completed their Novitiate.

Faced with such an enormous task, a lesser person would have been discouraged. However, Brother François, faithful imitator of his master, Marcellin Champagnat, relied upon the same conviction that Our Lady would protect us, often using the same terminology. In several of his letters (1433, 1510, 1513) he appeals to the tender protection of Mary: “*We are so much at ease when we rely upon her!*” To another, he writes:

1538 Often ask for the Blessed Virgin’s protection and consecrate yourself to her service every day. This Good Mother, who looks upon you as her child, will take care of you. If you follow her, you will never be lost. Pray to her, and you will always succeed. I leave you with confidence in her hands.

I cannot conclude these excerpts without referring to what he would often repeat to the Brothers: the Rule, the Institute, it is “the good Father.”

1650 I am with you in the warmest affection and union of prayer in the chapel, in the house and at the tomb of Father Champagnat.

1666 I also urge you to be imbued with the Rules and the Constitutions so as to be able to cite them in your advice and recommendations, in such a way that the Brothers perceive it is not you who speak, command, require, but that it is the Rule, it is Father Champagnat.

1678 (1872) I am overwhelmed with joy and satisfaction when I see how much our Holy Founder’s family has grown and expanded so much in spite of all the difficulties of the time.

THE PERSONAL LETTERS AND THE TRADITIONS ABOUT BR FRANÇOIS

His letters confirm his image as the first and fervent disciple of the Founder. But they also present him as a Superior both brotherly and firm. On these two points, they appear to us to be in contradiction with a tradition particularly transmitted to us by Brothers Louis-Marie, Jean-Baptiste and Avit.

Nothing could be more striking in this regard than the Circular dedicated to the memory of Brother Jean-Baptiste (t. IV p. 239) after his death in 1872 by Brother Louis-Marie while Brother François was still living. For him “...*the Venerable Founder is indebted (to Brother Jean-Baptiste) for having lived on himself for thirty-two years*” and therefore “*is he not for us like a second founder?*” Brother Jean-Baptiste “*had a very special mission in the Institute which was to shape and bring it to fulfillment,*” no one else being able to “*penetrate as he could into the inti-*

mate and original thought of the Father Founder... to go back with the same knowledge of persons and things to the origins of the Institute; and to determine, with the same authority, the spirit, the end, the rules in concert with the Régime and the General Chapter.”

So Brother François, although first Superior and the oldest follower of the Founder, seems to be quite forgotten. But already in his biography of Brother Louis (*Biographie de quelques frères* 1868 p. 30,) Brother Jean Baptiste had formulated a rather ambivalent eulogy:

Brother François has always been distinguished by a marked attraction for the hidden life, for the life of prayer and for union with the mysteries of Our Lord. That is how he has risen to this virtue regarded so highly by everyone and how he has contributed so much to the Institute. When he became Superior, he generally left the practical aspects of administration to his assistants; he let them treat of matters with men while he, raising his hands towards heaven, treated of them with God and thus obtained these graces of benediction which have been the main reason for the extraordinary development and prosperity of the Institute.

In his *Annales*, Brother Avit would, as was his custom, formulate much more critical judgements:

Although he was held in high regard by all, dear Brother François did not have the character, drive, and initiative of Father Champagnat. He did not have the ability to win hearts and rule wills as the Holy Founder of happy memory did so well. His cold, slow and sententious style in his instructions was not appreciated. We found him meticulous, someone who attached sometimes too much importance to minor infractions, rarely tolerating excuses and too afraid of comments.

Referring to the *Circular on Faith*, (1850, § 53) published by Brother François beginning in 1848,¹¹ Avit appears surprised by the quality of teaching he finds in it and writes:

“We allow ourself to say that for the most part it was the work of Father Matricon and of Brother Louis-Marie.¹²

¹¹ It would be done in four parts.

¹² Brother François was certainly not the only one involved in the writing of this Circular. However Brother Avit overstates his case when he maintains that he played only a minor role in the endeavor.

Furthermore, Brother François was beginning to become frequently exhausted by his headaches which rendered any serious work very painful.

When Brother François resigned in 1860, Brother Avit insists a bit too

much on his attachment to the Hermitage and his wish to relinquish the responsibilities of administration (1860 § 25, 67). Finally, commenting on news of his death, (1881 § 35) Brother Avit is content with these words:

"Nonetheless, we will not add anything further to what has already been said about the holy deceased, other than he combined with his knowledge of medicine a sweet aptitude for religious poetry. It was he who composed four of the hymns in our Hymn Book."

Brother Sylvestre is the bearer of the opposite tradition. In his recollections of Father Champagnat, he mentions Brother François by name 35 times,¹³ and not only as a model Brother. When he refers to "...the wonderful development of the Con-

gregation" after the death of Father Champagnat, (p. 224-225), he strongly emphasises the eminent role of Brother François and avoids mentioning Brother Louis-Marie in the acquisition and construction of St. Genis-Laval:

Under his immediate successor, vocations increased, new establishments multiplied, so much so, that the Hermitage, or as Brother François, the first General, called it: 'the great reliquary of Father Champagnat', was no longer a house large enough nor suitable enough to be the centre of the Institute. Saint-Genis Laval, a canton a few kilometres (p.225) from Lyon was designated to be the place for the new Mother House of the Congregation, with the Hermitage becoming no more than an offshoot, precious in every respect. And, still under his successor, Brother François, the Congregation was approved by the Holy See with the faculty to canonically elect a Superior General and make the simple vows of religion.

¹² Brother Louis-Marie is mentioned 21 times and Brother Jean-Baptiste very little. But it is true that his work relies heavily on the Life of the Founder.

AN INVITATION TO FURTHER STUDY

The study of the letters above, I believe, contributes to strengthen the thesis of Brother Sylvestre, bring into question the judgement of Brother Avit and to add nuances to that of Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste. In fact, it was under the mandate of Brother François that fundamental changes were made in the Institute which cannot be attributed solely to his two Assistants. Furthermore, Brother Avit seems to have forgotten that after his resignation, Brother François continued to be involved in the formation of the Brothers (lectures, retreats, etc), as his notebooks testify. However, it is rather unfortunate and curious that nothing remains of his correspondence after the year 1860, for it is not very likely that his activity as spiritual director came to an end. Whatever the case may be, it is difficult to avoid the stated facts (health problems, his premature retirement) as well as the reservations existing in his regard. In spite of the work that has been undertaken to improve our knowledge of Brother François, he continues to appear to us as far too *"hidden and unknown."*

In conclusion, what do these pages contribute to us about Brother François? They confirm especially what we knew about him:

As a ten year old child, he was brought to the recently appointed curate of Lavalla by his older brother to receive a holy picture and then later by his mother who entrusts him to him in complete ignorance of his future. Father Champagnat begins teaching him Latin (which he himself had such difficulty learning) and gives the rudiments of medicine; and he binds him to his nascent Institute, seeing in him one of his first disciples, and for us a model of obedience and docility as Brother Avit describes him in his 'Annales'. He was always reserved, reflective and prudent, but when responsibilities were proposed to him, and he could see God's will channelled through the will of his Superior, he accepted them and carried them out with skill and foresight. All his Brothers were for him true brothers of heart. When evening came, he discretely retired, remaining always at the service of his own in the house of the Hermitage, the Reliquary of his master and model, Marcellin Champagnat.

And so it is, that in revealing the depths of the heart of Brother François, these personal letters, throw light for the reader of the XXI Century on the essence of our specific nature. Although the conditions of all orders are different, among us and in the world around us, this spirit of our origins must continue to inspire us in the necessary evolution of the Institute.

AN ICON OF MARIST MISSION

The young Montagne



Br Manuel Mesonero

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jean-Baptiste Montagne “has become the archetype of all those children and young people to whom Marist mission should be directed”¹. To find the precise and complete meaning of Marcellin’s encounter with the Montagne boy, we need to know the context in which it took place, but above all, to understand the meaning he gave to the event, and how it affected him, since it took place just a few weeks before founding his work.

To this end, let us try to analyse and to understand a number of Marcellin’s writings which convey the source of his inspiration to found the Marist project. By doing so, we can gain an overall picture of what the providential encounter with this young man meant to him. Therefore,

before turning to the story itself, we need to understand what happened beforehand so as to get a broader view and to discover the underlying meaning of the event. Hence the need for a deeper exploration, which I invite you to share with me.

AN INSPIRATION ALREADY PRESENT AT HIS CONVERSION: TO CATECHIZE

Writers hold that in the middle of his ecclesiastical studies, in 1810, the year his mother died, Marcellin had a conversion. The suffering and mourning caused by her absence, together with the significant improvement in the conduct of the Seminary of Verrières², led him to reflect on the meaning of his life, and the goals he wanted to achieve. Our seminarian

¹ Cf. *Origines Maristes* [OM]. IV, p. 120.

² The change was brought about by a new Director, Jean-Joseph Barou, who had better organizational skills and more authority over the young seminarians.

was 21 years old. Two facts that confirm this conversion are the improvement of his grades in the area of behaviour, and his resolutions notebook which includes the following text³:

My lord and my God, I promise never to offend you again (...); never to go back to the tavern without necessity; to avoid bad companions and, in a word, not to do anything which would go against my serving you. I promise, on the contrary, to give good example (...); to instruct others in your divine teachings; to teach catechism to the poor as well as the rich. Divine Saviour, help me to carry out faithfully all these resolutions I am taking⁴.

The manuscript contains all the essential elements that occur in a true and sincere conversion. The first resolution, “never to offend you again”, is straightforward: Marcellin assessed his life from a moral perspective, and tried to move away from any offence to God. The commitment to “never to go back to the tavern without necessity” reveals that attending bars in his spare time was an ongoing activity. The expression “never go back” indicates that he wished to stop something he was actually doing, and implied detachment from a well-established habit. The resolution to “avoid bad companions” is a well-known strategy, and spiritually a sort of perennial rule-of-thumb: to flee from danger.

Bad friends corrupt good morals, and hence the need to take distance from them.

The second series of resolutions within the text begins with “to give good example”. Marcellin sees himself as light and witness: “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). The text goes on “to instruct others” which shows he is willing to try out his future mission as shepherd of the flock.

And the last resolution, “to teach catechism”, certainly moves us because it offers a glimpse, in this early manuscript, of his deepest inclination: to teach children, to evangelise them, to bring them to God. And the catechesis is for a particular group: young people. At a time not too distant from that moment he would find precisely in this very kind of work his mission as a Founder. From the first hour of his conversion, we can see how the Spirit was already moving him in that direction.

The testimonies about his holidays in Le Rozey that year show that he actually followed his resolutions:

He would tell several people in the hamlet,
‘If you come, I will teach you the catechism and tell
you how you should live’. His little room filled up;
on the following Sundays, people came from

³ This manuscript is actually undated. The date of 1812 is only a remote possibility. The text is independent and written before the other manuscript dated that year, because it includes a beginning, a number of concrete resolutions, and an ending. Brother Alexandre Balko held that it dates from the end of 1810, which seemed most reasonable to him, and more in agreement with the context and the rest of the information we have about Marcellin.

⁴ Resolutions 28.

La Frache, La Faye, Ecotay, Marconi re, Montaron, Allier, and the room was too small; so he stood on the doorstep and spoke to his listeners who filled both his room and the adjoining one. He was very young, but he preached so well that children and adults stayed sometimes for two hours without growing bored. As for me, even though I was only twelve, I never tired of listening to him, because he explained everything so well⁵.

These words from Julienne  palle, a little girl who was his neighbour, show that she realized the change that had taken place in Marcellin when he came back to Le Rozey in the summer holidays, and appreciated the quality of the catechism lessons as a particular gift the young seminarian had.

HIS INSPIRATION IS CONFIRMED

If we go on exploring his notes, we find that he wrote his *holiday plan* in 1814, at the end of his first year of Theology in Lyon. Marcellin was going home, and his parents had both passed away by then. He confirms his project: despite the rigor and preci-

sion suggested by the Seminary’s *holiday manual*⁶, he was at ease, looking for family love, but with a passion evident for his favourite apostolic activities. His family ranks as his first duty, even above prayer⁷. In his relationship with them, he stepped away from the social privileges that “wearing the soutane” already gave him, and intended to adapt himself to “his family’s lifestyle”. Moreover, the resolutions about his favourite apostolic activities portray the most genuine elements of his personality:

12° I will instruct the ignorant, whether rich or poor, in what concerns salvation.

11° I will visit the sick as often as I can⁸.

As we can see, his program focused again on teaching catechesis to all, “rich or poor”, so this resolution stresses the importance of being constant in this activity over time. The latter accounts of people who recalled their childhood memories, indicate that Marcellin actually implemented his plan: “*Elderly people recall with emotion the pious instructions he gave them during his seminary holidays*”⁹. These children help us understand that

⁵ (SUMM 44) Julienne  palle, SUMMARIUM, PRIMA POSITIO, 1910. Cf. also Witnesses on Marcellin Champagnat p. 20, at: <http://www.cepam.umch.edu.pe/Archivum/Archivum02/3380001.doc>

⁶ The seminary’s manual devoted twenty pages to preparing the students for their holidays in a section called: “Life rules for the holidays”, which gave many concrete and practical guidelines. Gaston de Pins. J.P. Petit manuel   l’usage du s minaire de S. Ir n e. Lyon. Rusand. 1833. p. 214 -235.

⁷ These are the resolutions regarding his family:

1° I will spend my vacations with my family.

2° I will seldom go from home.

3° I will conform, as much as possible, to the way of living of my parents. I will treat them with respect, meekness, and love. I will endeavour, both by word and example, to gain them to Jesus Christ. I will not say anything that may vex or annoy them” (Marcellin’s Resolutions).

⁸ RESOLUTIONS.

⁹ CPO, fol. 315.

Marcellin first discovered his personal charism as an educator and catechist specifically in his birthplace. Few months later, this personal gift turned into his charism as Founder:

He frequently spoke to us about the missions and the joy of converting the souls to Jesus Christ. And when my brother – martyred in Oceania in 1845 – left home without saying a word to anyone, my father showed resentment against Father Champagnat, because he was convinced that the idea of going to the missions came from the exhortations of the then seminarian Champagnat¹⁰.

Along with this gift of teaching, his visits to the sick appear in his writings here for the first time. We see his compassionate heart moving him to action through this apostolic service. We are particularly interested in following Marcellin's development regarding these two apostolic activities because they both meet precisely at the Montagne event: caring for a seriously ill person, who urgently needs basic catechism.

THE CALL TO ESTABLISH A NEW CHARISM AS FOUNDER

When Marcellin returned from his holidays to begin the second year of Theology (1814-15), the monarchy

had not established itself securely. As a result, Napoleon came back to scene, returning from Elba to seize the throne, while the Bourbons fled to Belgium. That historical period is known as *The Hundred Days*¹¹. On June 23, 1815, five days after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, the Bishop of Grenoble ordained Marcellin and his companions as deacons.

With the restoration of Louis XVIII, the Church began to organise itself and decided to foster popular religious practices in an effort to re-Christianise French society. This political shift elicited enthusiasm in the seminary of Lyon. One result of this strong ecclesial climate being propagated by the seminary professors – who sensed that the seminarians would be indispensable for this huge task¹² – was that various religious institutes appeared, such as the Society of Mary.

The Society started with a group of about fifteen seminarians gathered around Jean-Claude Courveille who was the initiator and leader¹³. Marcellin was also invited by him and became part of the group. Their meetings envisioned an apostolic and missionary future that filled them with enthusiasm.

¹⁰ The witness is Julienne Épalle. Her brother was younger than her, became a priest, and was martyred. Brother Gennade Rolland FMS witnessed the murder of Bishop Épalle in the Solomon Islands in 1845. SUMM 71.

¹¹ It goes from March 20, 1815, to June 28, 1815, date of the second restoration of Louis XVIII as King of France. This time the monarchy would last longer.

¹² In this context, there was an explosion of institutions that very quickly and within a few years would occupy a significant place alongside the great ancient Orders.

¹³ Courveille was a new seminarian, who joined the Seminary of Saint Irenée during the second year of Theology. He had been inspired on August 15, 1812 in Le Puy (cf. OM 2, doc. 718 (5), p. 580).

Marcellin was an active and central figure in the group. He strongly felt the project of this Marian congregation should include a branch of catechist brothers. He often stated: “We need brothers”. The other members of the group were not opposed, but Marcellin’s idea seemed tangential to them¹⁴. After much insistence, the group resigned itself to the foundation of the brothers: “Well, since it was your idea, you see to it!”¹⁵ Many years later, his confrere Colin – who would later become the first Superior General in the Society of Mary – recalled the facts and Marcellin’s specific position:

The idea of such an Institute was entirely his own. It was he who – vividly recalling the difficulty experienced in his own education – said to his fellow seminarians:
‘We must also have teaching brothers’.¹⁶

The day of his ordination finally arrived, after eleven years of formation. It was July 22, 1816. Marcellin was 27 years old. The next day, July 23, a group of twelve young priests made its way to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fourvière, where they made a written pledge to found the Society of Mary. This ceremony is considered as the foundation of the Society of Mary:

All for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
We (...) declare (...) our sincere intention (...) to dedicate ourselves (...) to the foundation of the pious Congregation of the Marists (...) seeking only God’s glory and the honour of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ (...).
We solemnly promise to give ourselves (...) for the salvation of souls in every possible way (...).
Amen¹⁷.

Let us read the text with the eyes of Marcellin: what did the pledge of Fourvière mean to him? They committed to found a Congregation including different branches: fathers, brothers and sisters, but within a single structure. He felt particularly committed to develop the branch of the brothers:

Ordained to the priesthood in 1816, even before leaving the seminary in Lyon, I thought seriously about creating a society of teachers, whom I felt I should consecrate to the Mother of God¹⁸.

The text is clear: “before leaving the seminary in Lyon” means that, when he was close to ordination, but before ending his formation as a seminarian, he seriously thought about the Institute of the brothers. The consecration of the Institute to Mary began at Fourvière. Unaware of the problems ahead of them, the

¹⁴ P. Zind, *Voyages Maristes [V-M]*, No. 138, p. 3.

¹⁵ The expression comes in the biography. *LIFE*, Ch. 3.

¹⁶ OM, doc. 171, p. 470.

¹⁷ OM, doc. 15, p. 58-64.

¹⁸ Letter 34 to King Louis-Philippe.

young priests welcomed their appointments in the diocese full of enthusiasm. Marcellin would go to La Valla.

But before going to his parish, he wrote four guiding rules for his future priestly life. These emanate from both his personal initiative and the formation received from his professors at the seminary. In this little plan, Marcellin asserts himself again. “The prospect of an imminent apostolic action makes him return to his natural dynamism and spontaneity”¹⁹. His first resolution in this context indicates his disposition to compassion:

After lunch, I will visit any sick person in the parish.
Before leaving, I will make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, which I will repeat whenever I leave the parish or town. On my return, I will visit the Blessed Sacrament again.

Beyond his own obligations – such as the proper celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, and daily meditation – he assumed, on his own initiative, the commitment of caring for the sick²⁰. Once again, he is moved by his compassionate heart. He framed this apostolic activity within his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which he intended to visit before and after attending the sick.

The fact that visiting the sick became Marcellin’s first commitment just a few weeks after encountering the Montagne boy inescapably captures our attention. It is obvious that his heart was open to the inspirations of the Spirit, and that he was willing to follow them.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH MONTAGNE

Marcellin arrived in the parish of La Valla on Thursday, August 13. The population was spread throughout the deep valleys and steep mountains of Pilat²¹, and only 23 kilometres away from his hometown. On Saturday, Feast of the Assumption, he celebrated his first Mass there, introducing himself to his parishioners. At the beginning of his apostolic ministry, Marcellin was not ad-libbing but following a plan, realising his written resolutions.

On October 6, scarcely eight weeks after arriving in the parish, he contacted a young man and decided to invite him into his project. His name was Jean-Baptiste Granjon and he was 22 years old²². Marcellin made the decision on Saturday 26th of the same month²³. One day,

¹⁹ BALKO, p. 64.

²⁰ This is the text of the Resolutions: “2nd I will review once a year, the rubrics of the missal. 3rd My meditation, lasting half an hour, will always be, if possible, before leaving my room. 4th Never say Mass without a quarter of an hour of preparation, more or less, and the same time afterwards to give thanks”.

²¹ Populated parish in the canton of Saint-Chamond (Loire). The census of 1820 indicated 2423 inhabitants.

²² OM II, 741.

²³ OM II, 754.

Jean-Baptiste asked him to visit a sick person in his hamlet of La Rive, which was about a fifteen-minute walk from the La Valla. Along the way, Marcellin got to know him a bit better, and the next day, in similar circumstances, invited him to take part in his project and asked him to think about it²⁴.

The Montagne incident took place the next day, Monday, October 28. In the morning, Marcellin was asked to visit a sick youth in Le Bessat²⁵. The name of the person who asked him to go was not recorded by history. It could have been François, the young man's brother, who was a carpenter. This village, the largest in the parish, was also the farthest and most difficult to reach. In a little less than ten kilometres, altitude increases over 600 metres. It takes a couple of hours to get there in good weather conditions. In the winter, however, it was inaccessible, as half the year it was covered in snow.

Although he was aware of the difficulties, Marcellin went there straight away, because caring for the sick was a priority in his ministry. Situations like this won the hearts of the parishioners, and later on, they would express their appreciation:

Father Champagnat loved the sick with his whole heart. He visited them, took care of them, helped them to die well, and all this with fatherly tenderness. Nothing stopped him, whether bad roads, darkness or snow; he wanted all of us to have the consolation of dying strengthened by the Sacraments of the Church²⁶.

Marcellin, a newcomer to the parish, had to be guided to his destination. The road crosses very steep slopes, forests, rocks and streams, offering spectacular scenery at that time of the year. When they reached Le Bessat – at an altitude of 1179 meters – they had to walk half a kilometre further, because the Montagne family lived in the hamlet of Les Palais.

When he finally reached the house, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, 52, and Clémence Porta, were waiting for him, because their 16-year-old son, Jean-Baptiste, was very ill. At that point, the only encouragement and dedication that Marcellin could provide through his ministry was to prepare him to die well.

Marcellin's pastoral attention to the young man took very long because of the particular circumstances. Besides the severity of Jean-Baptiste's condition, his religious ignorance was great. Marcellin

²⁴ That same day, Sunday 27, another young man from La Valla, Jean-Baptiste Audras, went to Saint Chamond to apply for entry to the De La Salle Brothers. But given his age, 14, he was asked to wait, and to speak to his confessor, who was Marcellin. OM IV, 189.

²⁵ Le Bessat belongs to the municipality of Saint-Étienne, on the side of Saint-Genest-Malifaux. Located at an altitude of 1179 meters, it had 71 households and a population of about 500 people.

²⁶ WITNESSES. Angélique Séboujard.

had to invest his best efforts as catechist to lead him to understand the basic truths of the faith in such a delicate moment. When he thought Jean-Baptiste was ready, albeit in a very limited way, he heard his confession²⁷.

After spending quite a while with the adolescent boy, Marcellin took some time to visit other sick persons in the area, intending to visit the family again before leaving, wanting to be close to them at that critical time. But when he returned to the Montagne home, he found out that Jean-Baptiste had died at seven in the evening. The only thing the priest could do was to comfort the family in their pain for the death of a son at such a young age. Marcellin was not able to stay long with them because night was falling, and a long walk back home awaited him.

Back in La Valla, the challenge Marcellin had expressed to his seminary companions resounded deeply in his heart: "We need brothers!" But the events of the day gave immediacy to his feelings: he had just assisted a teenaged boy whose religious ignorance made him unable to receive the Sacraments at a crucial moment of his life, and it was all

due to the lack of Christian education in his childhood: *How many children are in the same predicament every day, away from the road to salvation!*²⁸ After having spent the day in Le Bessat, Marcellin crossed the gate of his parish house late in the evening, tired, and with a deep feeling of how URGENT it was to begin his work.

Five days after the Montagne incident – on Saturday, November 2, All Souls' Day – another teenaged boy came to confession. His name was Jean-Baptiste Audras and he was 14 years old. He mentioned his interest for religious life, and how the De La Salle Brothers had not admitted him because of his young age. Marcellin saw this providential circumstance as an opportunity for a second candidate. He invited Jean-Baptiste to his project, and gave him time to reflect²⁹.

The following month, Marcellin managed to buy a house near the parish³⁰. He spent two months of hard work to make it habitable, and on January 2, 1817, a Thursday, the two young men he had invited began living there. This is considered as the foundation date of the Marist Brothers' Institute.

²⁷ The Synod's dispositions at that time indicated to withhold absolution in different cases. The 8th paragraph read: "Those who ignore the central mysteries of faith".

²⁸ Cf. OM 754. ch338001.doc. The quotation is not verbatim but respects the basic meaning.

²⁹ OM IV, 189. He gave him the book entitled *Think Well About It* (*Pensez Bien*)

³⁰ It was an old building belonging to a neighbour, M. Bonner.

HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY OF THE STORY

The historical authenticity of the Montagne story is beyond question. In 1966 Brother Gabriel Michel provided us with a copy of the birth and death certificates of the young man³¹. These documents confirm his name, the precise location, who his family was, and the date of his death. Marcellin's biography did not provide this basic information.

His age became clear thanks to this research. The biography describes him as a child, while Brother François mentions he was 17 years old because he only knew the teenager's date of death³². When we compare the dates on both certificates (born May 10, 1800, and died October 28, 1816, at 7 p.m.) the mistake becomes clear. The young man, therefore, was 16 years old.

Regarding the narrative itself, the oldest testimony we have is a letter from Father Bourdin, who lived with Marcellin in the Hermitage from 1828 to 1831. He kept a record of the conversations he had with the Founder, and this spontaneous notes confirm the core of the narrative:

[6] Which made the work urgent:
a child sick in the foothills of Pilat, needed
the sacraments...
Goes to a neighbour for a moment, returns [to find]
child dead, reflection:
'How many children far from the means
of salvation³³.

These notes are an evidence of the story's essential elements: the place, although imprecise; the ill youngster and his death; the approximate timing of the event, pre-dating the foundation of the Brothers; and the mistake about his age ("a child") by the same Marcellin, for reasons we ignore.

FROM STORY TO MYTH

Beyond the basic facts of the story we can consider some interpretations that have resulted in some mythologising. Here are a couple of texts that can help us:

- Jean-Baptiste's lack of knowledge about Jesus convinced the young priest that God was calling him to found a congregation of Brothers³⁴.
- With the episode of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, Marcellin Champagnat's resolution firmly materialised. It became an unavoidable duty to move from the project to its realisation³⁵.

³¹ Marist Bulletin 204.

³² There was a confusion regarding his age at death, supposedly 17, but comparing the dates of birth and death, we undoubtedly know he was 16.

³³ OM 754. ch338001.doc.

³⁴ Water From the Rock. Marist Spirituality.

³⁵ Pierre Zind.

The expression “it convinced him that God was calling him” is inexact, for it contradicts Marcellin’s own writings and the accounts from the Society of Mary’s founding group, both of which reveal that Marcellin made the decision to found the branch of the Brothers before becoming curate in La Valla.

It is neither true that visiting the sick youngster had the effect of making Marcellin “move from the project to its realisation”. In fact, we know that Marcellin had already taken steps for the practical realisation of the Marist project, proposing it to Jean-Marie Granjon the day before the event.

Marcellin himself later wrote about the experience of the first few months in La Valla and mentioned the plan he already had before arriving there:

Ordned to the priesthood in 1816,
I was appointed as curate to a rural parish;
what I saw with my own eyes made me feel more
keenly the importance of putting into practice,
without delay, the project I had long meditated³⁶.

“What I saw with my own eyes” meant a general lack of education in the parish. Marcellin did not specify

a situation, or mention concrete names. On the other hand, by saying “it made me feel more keenly” he referred to a previous conviction. In fact, the draft of this letter, slightly different before the corrections, specified the time of his decision to found the institution: “Even before leaving the seminary of Lyon”³⁷.

It is true that the Holy Spirit can act immediately and independently of a person’s life story, but it is also true that it seldom happens that way. The Montagne incident should be considered as “the culmination of a journey the course of which was evident from 1810-1812”³⁸. It is not coincidence that one of Marcellin’s resolutions after his conversion was to teach catechism, or that his first resolution was to take care of the sick, or that he felt the need for a branch of Brothers during the meetings of the Society of Mary’s founding group.

If we consider all these data, we realise that the Montagne incident was providential, and had a great impact on Marcellin. It certainly influenced him deeply, and made him grasp that his project was urgent and admitted no delay. It was like the straw that broke the camel’s back.

³⁶ Letter 34B to King Louis-Philippe. January 28, 1834.

³⁷ Letter 34A to King Louis-Philippe. January 28, 1834.

³⁸ Brother André Lanfrey FMS. Essay on the Origins of Spirituality.

MEANING OF THIS ICON

An icon is “a sign that is in a relationship of consistency with the object which is represented”³⁹. Hence, it is important to understand what the encounter with this young man meant for Marcellin. In order to do so, let us return to Father Bourdin’s notes regarding his conversations with Marcellin. We already quoted what he wrote about the Founder’s pondering on the Montagne incident:

[6] Which made the work urgent: a child sick in the foothills of Pilat, needed the sacraments... Goes to a neighbour for a moment, returns [to find] child dead, reflection: ‘How many children far from the means of salvation’⁴⁰.

Marcellin’s reasoning is clear: the young Montagne lacked religious instruction and therefore he did not know what the Sacrament of Confession or repentance were. If young people had an appropriate religious instruction, such dire situations would occur. Marcellin’s biography makes the same point, and has him say: *“How many children are in the same predicament every day, exposed to the same dangers because they have no-one to teach them the truths of faith”*⁴¹.

The utmost importance of religious education or the lack of it af-

fected Marcellin and moved him to find an urgent answer. The expression *“which made the work urgent”*⁴² confirms the effect of the Montagne event as something which moved him to act without delay.

Today there is a tendency to see the Montagne boy as the prototype of the poor: a needy and socially marginalised young person, the candidate *par excellence* for Marist mission. The following text could be interpreted in this way:

“Let’s go in haste (...) to the side of young Montagne, bringing Jesus Christ to the young, especially the poorest, in all the dioceses of the world”⁴³.

It is true that the young Montagne could have belonged to a poor family. However, the historical sources quoted do not indicate so. A good story concentrates on the most important facts. Since this is not mentioned, we can logically think it was not the case, or that it was considered a secondary element of the story.

According to the narrative, the two circumstances that shook up Marcellin were the lack of religious education and the urgency to provide for it. But socio-economic information is lacking, and remains

³⁹ Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy.

⁴⁰ OM 754. ch338001.doc.

⁴¹ Life, Ch. VI.

⁴² The original French text reads: « Ce qui nécessitait LA HATE de l’œuvre ».

⁴³ XXI General Chapter.

uncertain. Therefore, rewording the General Chapter, we could put it this way: *“Let’s bring Jesus Christ to children and young people, especially those who are most in need for religious instruction”*.

This fact does not deny – obviously! – that the Marists were started to educate and evangelise primarily the children and young people who were most poor and needy. To show this, we only need to look at the detailed information about the little schools Marcellin founded, or read some of the Founder’s basic texts, such as the following:

We are too committed to making good Christians and good citizens among the inhabitants of the rural areas⁴⁴.

The Institute of the Brothers is also aimed at directing providence houses or shelters for young people⁴⁵.

Rural areas had fewer resources within society at that time. In addition, the Institute was also aimed at “non-regulated” education through houses of providence or shelters for marginalised children and young people, usually orphans, who could not be cared for by their families.

The Montagne icon can find a broader meaning if we cite another historical source: the work Marcellin carried out in Le Bessat after encountering the young Montagne in that village. He took note of the children’s situation in Le Bessat, where formalised instruction had not been for centuries:

Its inhabitants lived for more than three centuries in blunt ignorance and a really deplorable roughness⁴⁶.

Therefore, as soon as Marcellin gathered some young men that became educators and catechists, he sent Brother Laurent to instruct the rest of the “Montagnes” in the village.

The initiative of this mission belonged to Marcellin. He consulted the brothers and listened to their opinions and suggestions about the proposal. This is why, when Brother Laurent insistently asked for the mission, the Founder assigned it to him⁴⁷.

The mission of Le Bessat is a symbol of audacity and courage to go beyond conventional Church locations, in order to reach the places

⁴⁴ Letters 273

⁴⁵ The Rule of 1837, p. 10.

⁴⁶ « Délibération du Conseil Municipal de Lavalla, 28 mars 1827 : Lettre du préfet de la Loire à Frayssinous, 7 juin 1827 ». ARCHIVES NATIONALES, PARIS, F-19, 750B.

⁴⁷ Regarding some of the mission appointments for the Brothers, the Founder used to present them with the possible pastoral work and listen to their reflections before deciding who should be sent.

with greater need for religious instruction. The same biographer describes this pastoral work as if it were a charismatic model of the origins, which was not carried on because of the regulations that were in place at that time.

Through many acts of zeal and sacrifice, Brother Laurent achieved outstanding results. He stayed in a private home; cooked his own food; went to La Valla each Thursday to stock up on supplies; taught catechism twice a day, ringing a bell to call the children. He went on with this work for two years, and earned such respect that the farmers would take off their hat when he passed by. The village underwent a genuine transformation.

At the end of 1822, Brother Laurent was sent to open a school at Tarantaise, close to Le Bessat, by request of the parish priest, Father Préher. He taught in a granary there, and went on visiting Le Bessat on Sundays and Thursdays.

The information we have about Brother Laurent indicates that he was a born catechist, and that his most cherished mission was that of Le Bessat. The following text shows how he asked Brother François for a mission similar to that of the early days:

You let me hope that I would go teach catechesis to the children in the diocese of Angouleme.
Oh! I beg you to let me go as soon as possible!
I just need a catechism book and a bell.
I can hear those poor children telling me:
'Ah! If we knew that great God who created us,
who gave his life for us, we might serve him
better than our unfortunate parents'⁴⁸.

Brother Laurent's text is magnificent, because it reveals his fundamental understanding of his mission until the end of his life: catechesis as the essence of the charism. It reflects, in a faithful way, the meaning Marcellin gave to the Montagne event: take religious instruction of children to the places where it is most needed.

CONCLUSION

After the previous reflections, we can now draw some conclusions as to the significance of the Montagne icon:

For Marcellin, this encounter was the culmination of his inspiration as a Founder, urging him to address the lack of religious instruction. Following his conversion, God elicited in him the personal charism of becoming a catechist. The first witnesses who attest to this gift were the children of Le Rozey, Marcellin's home hamlet, when he was a seminarian. This

⁴⁸ Letter to Brother François, 26.12.42. Laurent was already 49 years old. Delorme, Alain. *Our First Brothers*, p. 35.

charism, with his interest in education, led him to ask for the branch of the Brothers to the Society of Mary's from its founding group when he was still in the major seminary. For Marcellin, the Pledge of Fourvière, made when he was a newly ordained priest, was a public commitment to foster all the Marist branches, especially that of the Brothers. For this reason, when he arrived in his parish, "what he saw with his own eyes" confirmed his decision; and then the Montagne incident prompted a deep sense of urgency in him. It was like hammering down the last part of a nail already stuck on the wall.

The sources of the story are reliable and consistent in its essential elements and the impact this young man had on Marcellin, caused by a very serious lack of religious education. Remedying this situation is the essence of the Marist mission.

The first beneficiary of the new Institute's mission, that is, the place to start, is the person who is most in

need of this religious education. We are talking about the children and young people who are not taken care of by other Church institutions⁴⁹.

The mission at Le Bessat, begun as a result of the Montagne incident, represents a charismatic model for the Marist Institute because of its fullsome enthusiasm and also because it does not conform to the parameters of The Rule that appeared later. It is an heroic life personified by Brother Laurent in Le Bessat, living on the charity of the Brothers from La Valla since his school had no income of any kind. However, over time the Institute developed and grew, acquiring pastoral and educational commitments to large works which are difficult to leave behind. So, an institutional drama presents itself, one which we could call *renewal* or *rebirth*: to leave what we have, and return to the place where we were born: to the children and young people for whom no-one or almost no-one cares. Difficult, very difficult, but exciting and challenging!

⁴⁹ From this point of view, the priority target groups for the Marist Brothers are on the frontiers, that is, in locations that are distant, secluded, not necessarily from the geographical point of view, but regarding the lack of pastoral attention.

MATHIEU PATOUILLARD, NEIGHBOUR OF THE HERMITAGE



Br André Lanfrey

The present buildings at the Hermitage occupy both sides of the Gier but it was not always so. When, on 13 May 1824, Fathers Champagnat and Courveille purchased, in the commune of Saint Martin-en-Coailleux, the land where they wanted to erect the house of *the Hermitage de Notre Dame*, on the other side of the river were the industrial buildings belonging to Antoine Thiollière-Laroche, in the commune d'Izieux.¹ He sold it on 3 July 1824 to Mathieu Patouillard who thus became the neighbour of the Hermitage until 1 January 1839, the date of the sale of the property to Champagnat for the high price of 39,000F. So, despite its name, the Hermitage remained for 15 years a house that was forced to co-exist to a very close neighbour and with quite a different vocation.

We know a little about Patouillard from the Marist sources thanks to the deed of sale passed in 1839 (OFM3, doc. 677 p. 480). He had a wife, Françoise Toullieu, and three children: Jeanne, Vincent and André. The deed describes him as a “fuller” and gives an exact description of the property purchased in 1824: “consisting of a fulling machine, a workshop for bleaching cotton, a house, hayloft, stable, reservoir, levee, canal, a water course and supply point in the Gier river, meadow, orchard, pastures, lands and woods and rocks, outhouses, lean-tos and outbuildings”. So he was a minor industrialist specialising in the cleaning and combing of fleeces (fulling machine) and the dressing of cotton fabric, thanks to the power supplied by the waters of the Gier. He was

¹ According to the *Annales de l'institut*, this establishment had been created in 1668 by the Dugas family (T. 2, 1840, § 22).

also the owner of farmland in Izieu and St Martin-en-Coailleux². In purchasing it all, Champagnat more or less doubled the surface area of the Hermitage and acquired the right to make use of the driving force of the Gier.

The marriage certificate of the Patouillards³ on 19 January 1813 gives us some important family details. Mathieu Patouillard was then a carpenter in la Bruyère, commune of Izieu, where he was born on 11 September 1784. He was the son of Jean Patouillard, deceased at Lavalla 21 October 1806, and Jeanne Salichon. His wife, Françoise Touilleux, a linen maid, was born on 30 September 1792 and was still living at Moulin de Soulage, right below Lavalla. She was the daughter of François Touilleux, an edge-tool maker⁴ resident in the same place, and Antoinette Dumaine deceased at Izieu on the thirtieth of Ventôse, year 11⁵. The witnesses, the father of the bride and her uncle, a blacksmith, together with Mathieu Lassablière aged fifty years, an innkeeper in le Creux (Izieux), signed the certificate. Only one, Vincent Rivori, aged forty-five, a farmer, did not know how to write his name.

We are, accordingly, in the world of craftsmen who were still close to its country origins but already literate. At the time of his marriage, Mathieu



Portrait of Mathieu Patouillard – Picture taken by Br André Lanfrey on 5 December 2011, in the home of Miss Maryvonne Arnaud in Saint-Chamond, in the presence of Mr Marius Arnaud, her cousin.

Patouillard was twenty-nine years old (five years older than Champagnat) and his wife twenty-one. This was the age difference common at the time, the husband needing time to set himself up before establishing a family. He chose his spouse from the circle of craftspeople of which he himself was a part. Thus it is a matter of the lower middle-class but one which shows some ambition, because the purchase of the property of les Gaux in 1824 would certainly have obliged some borrowing.

² The deed indicates that they caused him a legal suit with the widow Motiron, concluded in 1837.

³ Registry of Marriages, A.D. de la Loire

⁴ An edge-tool maker is a craftsman who makes tools with a sharp cutting edge, such as axes, etc.

⁵ Date in the French Republican calendar equivalent to 21 March 1803.

In the meantime, two children were born: Jeanne on 20 November 1813 in Izieu, when her father was probably still a carpenter ; but her brother Vincent was born on 13 February 1816 at Moulin Soulage in the commune of La Valla. In purchasing the Thiollière-Laroche property, the Patouillard couple were thus coming closer to the town and becoming proprietors of a textile industry workshop at the time when Champagnat was in process of building the Hermitage on the other side of the Gier. We may add that a third child was born in March or April 1831⁶. In the deed of 1839 he has the Christian name of André but in his marriage certificate of 17 October 1855 he uses the Christian name of Vincent, aged 24 years and five months⁷.

Obviously, a relationship of neighbours over 15 years has left traces in the *Annales* of the Institute. A preliminary question may be examined: why did Champagnat and Courveille who purchased the rocks and meadows opposite the industrial establishment not go as far as acquiring the workshop which would have corresponded to one of the articles contained in the projected prospectus of 1824:

“The instruction of children in general and of poor orphans in particular is the aim of our establishment.

As soon as we have finished the house of the Hermitage and our means allow us to make use of a good supply of water [...] we will take in children from the Houses of Charity; we will give them a trade in giving them a Christian education
(F. Pedro Herreros, *La Regla del Fundador* p. 23) ».

One can imagine the many difficulties: too high a price, care to respect the industrial vocation of the property, an area judged too confined...but the question is worth posing. It may even be asked if Champagnat and Courveille did not at one time hope to buy the Thiollière-Laroche property and its water rights.

In any case, relations between Champagnat-Courveille and M. Antoine Thiollière-Laroche, a merchant resident in St Etienne, were not bad, since on 3 July 1824, the very day he ceded to Patouillard his property on the left bank of the Gier, he sold the two priests “a holding of rock and woods” of 57 ares and 40 centiares situated on the right bank, for three thousand francs, advanced by M. Benoît Bonnard of Rive-de-Gier⁸.

The *Annales* (T. 1 1824 § 51) indicate that, during the construction of the house, the Brothers and Fr Champagnat lodged in “a shed belonging to M. Patouillard⁹”. On 6 Jan-

⁶ A.D. de la Loire, Registry of civil status.

⁷ With children with several Christian names usage establishes a dominant one. It is probable that the last son was called André Vincent, (his brother being his godson) but was known in St Chamond as Vincent.

⁸ OFM 3 doc. 647.

⁹ But, since he did not buy until July, it can be supposed that at the beginning they were lodging with M. Thiollière-Laroche.

uary, when Champagnat, very ill, composed his will, “Mathieu Patouillard, fuller and landowner¹⁰, resident in the place des Gauds, commune of Izieux” was one of the signatory witnesses. And in 1839 (T. 1 p. 469-470) the *Annals* sum up the 15 years of relations between the two neighbours:

“The Patouillard family had sometimes accused the Brothers of throwing stones into its meadow and taking water from the Gier to water the garden. Moreover, the proximity of this family, and especially the numerous people who had business with it, deprived the Brothers of all the advantages of solitude, advantages which had moved the holy Founder, in 1824, to locate here the mother-house of his Institute”.

Leaving aside the matter of the stones thrown into the Patouillard garden, which appears anecdotal, we can accord more importance to the water problem, since the Hermitage having no right to a water supply point and drawing its water from the Gier upstream from the Patouillard reach, spells of drought could lead to conflicts¹¹.

As for the concern to enjoy solitude, this is to be seen as relative, since Champagnat was looking for the least bad compromise possible between the desire for retreat from the world and the needs of a teacher

training establishment. His purchase of 1839, then, certainly corresponded to spiritual motivations, but the material factors (water, proximity of the town...) were not without importance either. It may also be asked if he were not finally realising a purchase he had had in mind since 1824.

The account books and several other documents show us that, overall, relations between the Patouillard family and the Champagnat family were not bad. In fact, the first to benefit from the closeness was Philippe Arnaud, son of Marie-Anne Champagnat and Benoit Arnaud, the teacher with whom the young Marcellin had spent some time before the seminary. The *Annales* (T. 1 p. 8 § 32) tell us that Philippe, born in 1805, had first taken some lessons in Latin with his uncle in Lavalla in 1821 and had even been capable of teaching the Brothers the reading of manuscripts, the final step in learning to read. Although already well educated, he did not continue his studies but became a carpenter and joined Champagnat at the Hermitage in 1828¹². The account books of the Hermitage testify to his activities over many years, as carpenter and jack-of-all-trades. On 29 January 1834, he married Jeanne (or Jeannette) Patouillard¹³ creating a bond of distant kinship between Champagnat and the Patouillards which certainly helped

¹⁰ That is to say, a peasant landowner.

¹¹ In the purchases made by Champagnat the water question is raised a number of times.

¹² Or did he do his apprenticeship between 1821 and 1828? It could be that he worked for a time for Patouillard.

¹³ Letters of Champagnat, Vol. 2 p. 53.

in the conclusion of the sale of 1839. Philippe Arnaud and Jeannette Patouillard were also present at the signing of the deed in 1839.

The account books also show in their way the business relations be-

tween Champagnat and Patouillard. On 20 October 1824, Champagnat received 200 F. from his neighbour who was then in the process of installation (*Origines des Frères Maristes* (OFM) doc. 105.8). Then transactions follow on quite regularly.

Document OFM	Date		Sum
121.5	20/8/1827	Given to P. in settlement	180 F.
125.2	7/2/1831	Paid to Patouillard in settlement up to 1st February 1831	8
126.4	27/2/1832	Given to P. in complete payment	27
111.3	27/2/1832	Agreed with P. for our little carts from Saint Chamond to the Hermitage at 20 F. a year	
126.17	26/10/1832	Given to P. in complete payment	87
127.5	6/6/1833	Loaned to P. to buy a cow	140
	9/6/1833	Patouillard has repaid	140
128.4	5/7/1834	Account to Patouillard. 4 pairs of shoes Resoling and repairs	26 4, 5
129.2	21/2/1835	Given to P. in complete payment	246
	27/2/1835	Given to P. in payment for the carts from St Chamond to the Hermitage	30
	25/3/1835	Received from P.	1000
129.3	Févr. 1835	Agreed with P. for the carts...	30
129.3	8/4/1835	Given to P. for the payment of Remillieu de Sorbiers and for balance	211, 50
130.13	19/10/1837	Given to P. in settlement	263
130.16	19/12/1837	The lime from P. is paid	30
130.17	26/12/1837	Given to P. (for) money borrowed	100

If the accounts are to be believed, relations between Champagnat and Patouillard, relatively few before 1830, then became more regular. But this difference could come from the account books being less faithfully kept in the beginning. In 1832, relations were obviously good, since Champagnat and Patouillard came to a lasting agreement, the latter making himself responsible for the Hermitage's minor transports and errands in Saint Chamond. One also notes between them the borrowings and lendings typical of people living on good terms.

As for the sale of 1839, which rose to 39,000 F. officially but was doubtless in fact higher, the advance of payments before the death of Champagnat was thus¹⁴.

Date	Sum
1/3/1839	10,000
5/8/1839	500
7/9/1839	300
20/12/1839	1000
?	200
20/1/1840	4000
20/4/1840	1000
End of May	1200
Total	18,200

¹⁴ OFM 1, doc. 136.7

¹⁵ The deed of 1839 does not mention this press.

The remaining debt was one of the great concerns of Br François, Champagnat's successor. Br Avit (*Annales* T. 2, 1840, § 19-21), moreover, gives the conditions of a loan of 22,000 F. for 5 years by Br François and Br Jean-Marie arranged with the two sons of the notary Finaz, at an interest of 4.5% and at the cost of a mortgage registration on all the goods of the Civil Society located at les Gaux and at la Grange Payre. Fortunately, M. Antoine Thiollière, industrialist of Saint Chamond and benefactor of the congregation, would soon have paid the amount owing for the purchase of this "little factory".

But before this providential payment intervened, Br François was considering "using the fulling machine, the mill and the oil press¹⁵ which were in the said buildings" to create financial resources. His two assistants, who did not agree, appealed to Fr Colin who strongly disapproved of the project (*Annales*, T. 2, 1841, § 41-53). Also, in the Patouillard buildings were installed "the stables, the workshop of the blacksmith and the locksmith, the bakery and the different storerooms which occupied the buildings situated in the courtyard. These buildings were demolished". It is legitimate to wonder, however, if Br François was not wishing, in adopting it, to realise Champagnat's desire of 1824: to set up a sort of apprenticeship centre for

adolescent orphans, some of whom could become Brothers.

As for Philippe Arnaud and Jeanne Patouillard, they had eight children, the first four born while Philippe and his wife were still living at the Hermitage, under the present chapel in the renovated memorial space. The eldest, Jean-Baptiste, born in 1835, would even have assisted with his father at the reading of the testament of Fr Champagnat. The Founder would as well have advised Philippe to buy the Patouillard woods situated on the left bank of the Gier above the present buildings¹⁶. Philippe then established his carpentry business at La Bruyère, perhaps in the former Patouillard workshop, on the road linking Saint Chamond to La Valla. He died there on the 1st of August 1886 aged 81. His wife was then aged 73.

But let us return to M. Patouillard, asking the reasons for the sale of his "factory". In 1839 his wife (47) and he (55) were still relatively young. But during the sale, she could not sign the deed "because of her great weakness from her illness" and the marriage certificate of her son Vincent lets us know that she died on 8 January 1839. So the sale had something to do with the death of Madame Patouillard, doubtlessly expected for some time. Their daughter Jeanne had been set up since 1834. The first son married in 1848 at 32

when he was a wool-carder at Moulin Dion in the commune of Izieu, son of "Mathieu Patouillard living" wool-carder in the same place. As for the second son, we know that, according to his marriage certificate in 1855, he was a master baker in Saint Chamond, "legitimate son of Mathieu Patouillard, living, proprietor and wool-carder aged seventy-two years, resident at the said place of le Creux".

We sum up, then, what the different deeds mentioned above are telling us: Mathieu Patouillard, having become a widower some days after the sale of his property at les Gaux, retired with his sons to the place called Moulin Dion in Izieu where he appears to have specialised in the carding of wool. His first son was then aged 23 and the second only 8. In 1855, at the age of 72, Mathieu Patouillard was not a man of independent means but still exercising his trade, certainly together with his eldest son. As for the second, he must have entered rapidly into apprenticeship in the bakery. Even if we do not know the date of his death, we know enough about M. Patouillard to clear up his portrait presented at the beginning of this article.

This canvas 61 cm high 50.5 broad was kept up to 2012 by Maryvonne Arnaud recently deceased. It came from her father, Jean-Baptiste Arnaud, eldest son of

¹⁶ Bulletin de l'institut n° 218, 1976, « La 'descendance' Champagnat » par le F. C. Déchaux.

Camille Arnaud son of Philippe. There existed a similar painting of Jeanne Patouillard kept for a time in the Verdier family, Madame Jeanne Verdier being an Arnaud girl, sister of Camille. As we know the date of death of Madame Arnaud, we may presume that the two paintings were executed at the same time, that is, before January 1839. It is not very likely that the date of composition was much before, for Mathieu Patouillard appears to us as a man with pronounced features. He could easily be some fifty years old. And as he was 55 in 1839, one can suppose that the paintings were done between 1835 and 1838, at a time when the Patouillards were reasonably well off.

In having these portraits made, Mathieu Patouillard and his wife very consciously situate themselves in the world of the middle class, the only one having the financial means and the sense of its own respectability to allow itself this type of operation. In sum, these portraits testify to the social ascension and the solidity of one family in the course of the early nineteenth century. In as much as the clothes worn by M. Patouillard – black frock coat, hat with a broad brim, waistcoat buttoned very high, a little white linen – seem to us typical of the lower or middle bourgeoisie. But it would require a specialist in art history to refine



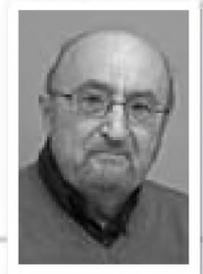
Maryvonne and Marius Arnaud, standing on both sides of the portrait of Mathieu Patouillard, on 5 Dec 2011.

or correct this commentary. A restoration of the painting, now darkened by time, would permit a new approach to what may be considered a portrait typical of the middle of the nineteenth century. And the question is also posed about the painter, who could have been Joseph Ravery.

EPILOGUE

Maryvonne Arnaud having died in 2012, the family has generously made a gift of the portrait of M. Patouillard to the house of the Hermitage.

BROTHERS WHO DIED IN THE WAR OF 1914-1918



Br André Lanfrey

Marist sources contain inconsistent information regarding the number of Brothers who died in the First World War. We have therefore tried to clarify it by confronting the lists published in the *Bulletin of the Institute*, and the military records consulted by Brother Henri Reocreux. Brother Augustin Hendlemeier provided some clarifications regarding the German-

born recruits. The process indicated that the most reliable figures are those provided by the acts of the 1920 General Chapter: 1037 mobilised and 155 dead¹. After identifying each of the Brothers who died in the war by name, we got the following summary, with slightly lower figures compared to those from the General Chapter

Year	French	German, Alsace-Lorraine	Others	Total	Profesos Temporales	Profesos Perpetuos
1914	14			14	2	12
1915	24	6	1 Italian	31	15	16
1916	23	10	1 Hungarian	34	20	14
1917	18	16	1 Italian	35	27	8
1918	21	11	2 Italians 1 Romanian ²	35	29	6
Totales	100	43	6	149	93	56

¹ The latest edition of Marist Chronology indicates a total of 118 dead, which is well below reality.

² He went missing in 1916.

Estamos, pues, seguros de que el Instituto ha tenido al menos 149 profesos muertos en la guerra, de los cuales 62.4% eran de votos temporales. Las listas que dan las Circulares mencionan además un novicio y tres postulantes alemanes así como un novicio francés, lo que daría un total de 101 Franceses, 46 Alemanes, 6

Hermanos de otros países (ningún belga) o sea 153. Pero es probable que no se tomaron en cuenta una serie de Hermanos (desaparecidos, profesos temporales perdidos de vista a lo largo del conflicto...) y que el balance real de la guerra habría que situarlo más bien en torno a los 160 profesos muertos o desaparecidos.

LIST OF NAMES ACCORDING TO THE BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE AND THE MILITARY RECORDS

The Provinces indicated below are only an estimate, since the documents do not clearly state the Province to which they belonged. But the place of birth allows us clearly to determine their nationalities, except for some of those from Alsace-Lorraine enlisted in the German army. For the younger Brothers and those working in the for-

mation houses of Italy, I indicated the house they were at when they left for the War. Together with the religious name, I have indicated the *Bulletin of the Institute* issue containing some of the Brothers' biographies. The death date of the Brothers who went missing indicates only the year, plus the sign of "00.00" for month and day.

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1914	CHAREYRE Aimé	Adelaido (n° 37)	1893	Ardèche - France	Spain	1910-09-27		1914-08-20
1914	NEGRIÉ Marius Joseph	Marius Léon	1893	Aveyron - France	Carmagnola	1912-11-01		1914-09-00
1914	BRUN Pierre Bernard	Jean Marcel	1886	Haute-Loire - France	Syria	1903-09-20	1908-08-13	1914-09-09
1914	JACQUIN François Louis	Paul Marcel	1888	Doubs - France	Grugliasco trabajos man	1905-04-23	1912-09-10	1914-09-12
1914	RESSICAUD Pierre Antoine	Dioscore Antoine	1883	Rhône - France	Constantinople	1900-09-16	1906-07-15	1914-09-30
1914	COMPAGNON Claude	Ange Emile (n° 38)	1883	Loire - France	Canada	1900-09-26	1905-08-23	1914-10-15
1914	MISSONNIER Pierre	Pierre Sénateur	1878	Puy-de-Dôme - France	Varenes	1895-08-29	1901-09-19	1914-10-23
1914	PION Joseph Antoine	Joseph Procu'e	1885	Isère - Francia	China, Grugliasco	1902-09-04	1907-07-28	1914-10-31

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1914	DEPALLE Louis	Cassiodore	1873	Lapalisse - France Allier	Varennes	1894-09-09	1907-09-15	1914-11-04
1914	BAUQUIN Marie Léon Emile	Joseph Albert	1882	Doubs - France	Constantinople	1899-09-19	1905-08-15	1914-11-16
1914	CROSET Alexis	Marie Théotiste (n° 39)	1881	Haute-Savoie - France	Seychelles (St Paul)	1898-09-28	1902-08-28	1914-12-08
1914	DUCLUTY Jean Henri	Léon Casimir	1881	Ardèche - France	Hermitage	1898-09-13	1907-09-15	1914-12-20
1914	LIEFOOGHE Henri Rémi	Marcellianus	1884	Nord - France	Beaucamps	1901-08-15	1911-09-10	1914-12-03
1914	CROSET Alexis	Marie Théotiste	1881	Haute-Savoie - France	Seychelles (St Paul)	1898-09-28	1902-08-28	1914-12-08
1915	HOCKE Adam Antoine	Jules Xavier	1893	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1909-09-02		1915-00-00
1915	DUPUY Jean	Joseph Adonis	1875	Loire - France	Hermitage	1894-09-06	1900-09-16	1915-03-02
1915	PETITJEAN Rèmi René Evariste	Marie Donat	1890	Meurthe-et-Moselle France	Beaucamps	1906-09-11		1915-04-01
1915	PARA Albert Henri	Didace (n° 39-40)	1882	Hauts-Alpes - Francia	St Paul (Italy)	1899-09-17	1907-09-15	1915-04-08
1915	LEININGER Louis	Louis Boniface	1894	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1911-03-19		1915-04-09
1915	CHAVAS Henri Joseph	Louis V'italien (n° 39-40)	1883	Loire - France	Canada	1900-09-26	1905-08-23	1915-04-25
1915	BAUD Louis Joseph Noé	Adrien Camille	1894	Ardèche - France	Grugliasco	1910-09-04		1915-04-28
1915	DEV'ERS Albert	Joseph Néophyte	1881	Gourdon, Lot - France	Lacabane	1898-09-23	1911-09-10	1915-05-09
1915	PINQUIÉ Louis Isidore	Louis Marcellin	1896	Constantine - Algeria	San Maurizio (manual work)	1912-11-01		1915-05-17
1915	SARRAZIN Alexandre Marius	Vit (n° 39-40)	1887	Hautes-Alpes - France	Mexico	1903-12-16	1908-09-03	1915-06-14
1915	MAIRE-D'ÉGLISE Joseph Honoré	Louis Kostka	1890	Haute-Saône - France	China	1906-09-17	1911-08-15	1915-06-16
1915	MAZET Jean-Claude	Daniel Joseph	1894	Haute-Loire - France	Hermitage (San Mauro)	1911-09-10		1915-06-16
1915	AUTH Henri	Laurentius	1894	Rhenish - Prusse	Beaucamps	1911-03-19		1915-06-17
1915	MERCADIÉ Emilio	Fidel	1892	Tarn-et-Garonne France	Spain	1908-12-08	1914-08-05	1915-06-21
1915	POTHAIN Charles Constant	Marie Augustalis (n° 39-40)	1879	Ain - France	Constantinople	1896-09-13	1901-07-28	1915-06-24
1915	BADIE Vincent	Gélasin (n° 41)	1887	Pyrénées-Orientales France	Spain	1903-08-06	1908-12-08	1915-08-07
1915	KRELLMANN Henri	Henri Ferdinand	1895	Westphalie - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-08-15		1915-09-08

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1915	JUNG René Louis	Marie Germain	1888	Territoire de Belfort France	Constantinople	1904-02-02	1910-10-30	1915-09-25
1915	DELDON Bruno Firmin	Artémidore	1880	Arcèche - Francia	Aubenais	1896-09-17	1901-09-19	1915-09-25
1915	CHEVALLIER Candide Louis	Paul Gabriel (n° 43)	1894	Savoie - Francia	Constantinople	1911-01-06		1915-09-26
1915	HOFFMANN Charles	Joseph Mauricius	1895	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1911-09-01		1915-10-00
1915	AYGALENC Louis Urbain Daniel	Marie Attale	1884	Aveyron - France	Hermitage (manual work)	1912-09-12		1915-10-03
1915	CHALIER Onorato	Brunone (n° 42)	1892	Torino - Italy	St Paul - Italy	1909-09-29		1915-10-09
1915	BOUVRESSE Albert Eugène	André Chanel	1893	Jura - France	Constantinople	1909-10-16		1915-10-15
1915	RÉVOL Joseph	Rupert (n° 42)	1875	Le Grand-Serre, Drôme France	St Paul - Italy	1892-08-21	1897-09-21	1915-10-25
1915	MONÉ Joseph Jean	Gentius (n° 42)	1885	Pyrénées-Orientales France	Mexico	1902-08-15	1907-12-25	1915-11-03
1915	DENIS Constant Charles	Joseph Alexandre	1884	Dunkerque, Nord France	Beaucamps	1902-03-30	1909-09-12	1915-11-10
1915	REYBARD Jules Joseph	Jules Ernest	1892	Jura - France	Constantinople	1909-03-19		1915-11-14
1915	CHABERT Victor Hippolyte	Honeste (n° 46)	1870	Gard - France	St Paul - Italy	1889	1894-09-16	1915-12-10
1915	VANOOSTEN René Auguste C.	Emile François	1886	Nord - France	Beaucamps	1903-03-19	1911-09-10	1915-00-00
1915	BERAUD Jean-Baptiste	Louis Régis	1894	Haute-Loire - France	Syria, Varennes	1911-08-02		1915-07-17
1916	SUTAK Michel	Marie Bernardin	1897	Hungary	Fribourg (Switzerland)	1914-10-04		1916-00-00
1916	MAURIN Jean Baptiste	Uipien	1875	Arcèche - Francia	Hermitage Seychelles	1892-09-14	1900-09-16	1916-01-29
1916	LAUX Louis	Louis Bertrand	1896	Grand Duchy of Baden	Constantinople	1912-08-24		1916-02-17
1916	BRUNEL Jean Baptiste, Jean Pierre	Louis Benoît	1885	Lozère - France	China, Constantinople	1902-09-04	1907-08-15	1916-03-00
1916	PLANCHON Henri Philippe	Elie Etienna	1893	Mende, Lozère	Brazil (Merdas)	1911-08-02		1916-03-03
1916	ROBERT Jean Baptiste	Joseph Florbert	1886	Loire - France	USA	1903-11-09	1908-08-25	1916-03-04
1916	BLANCHET Pierre-Marie	Dimitrien (n°45)	1883	Savoie - France	Mexico	1900-09-13	1904-12-19	1916-03-07
1916	HAUSTEIN Germain	Léon Corsini	1896	Bavière - Germany	Beaucamps	1914-03-19		1916-03-08
1916	ADUSTET Régis Marius Joseph	Ignatius (n° 45)	1889	Haute-Loire - France	USA (?)	1906-05-06	1911-08-22	1916-03-09

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1916	MOULIN Léon Jean-Pierre	Ilidius	1881	Ardèche - France	Spain	1901-08-06	1904-12-08	1916-04-14
1916	ZWICK Hermann	Paul Georges	1895	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-03-19		1916-04-24
1916	DAVIN Adrien-Louis	Chrysanthien (n° 46)	1887	Hautes-Alpes - France	Mexico	1905-12-08	1909-12-25	1916-05-24
1916	RICHIER Paul Denis	Marie Fidèle	1880	Bouches-du-Rhône France	Mexico	1897-09-16	1903-12-08	1916-06-12
1916	LINDEMANN Nicolas	Gerhard	1895	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-03-19		1916-06-12
1916	LENHART Jacques	Etienne Marlus	1890	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1907-08-29	1912-09-10	1916-07-02
1916	VEZIN Théophile Joseph	Théophile	1894	Lozère - France	Grugliasco	1912-09-12		1916-07-08
1916	ROTERING Bernard	Edgar Frédéric	1896	Mülheim - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-08-24		1916-07-17
1916	CAYLA Pierre	Pierre Maurice	1895	Cantal - France	Syria	1913-08-02		1916-07-30
1916	THOMACHOT Jean-Antoine	Marie Thomas (n° 46)	1882	Saône-et-Loire France	Syria	1900-08-15	1905-08-15	1916-08-01
1916	PAND Joseph	Dominique Joseph	1896	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1914-08-15		1916-08-04
1916	MOURET Auguste Antoine	Solemnis	1881	Drôme - France	Mexico	1898-09-20	1905-01-01	1916-09-00
1916	PIOTTE Siméon	Marie Abel	1883	Allier - France	Brazil, China	1900-08-15	1904-01-21	1916-09-13
1916	DUSSERRE Fernand	Epagathe	1886	Hautes-Alpes - France	Mexico	1902-09-11	1908-01-01	1916-10-24
1916	BOYER Pierre	Pablo José	1895	Hautes-Alpes - France	Argentina	1911-03-19		1916-11-02
1916	ROSTAIN Emile Jean	Paolo	1896	Hautes-Alpes - France	Italy	1913-07-16		1916-11-02
1916	WESSENDORF Joseph-François	Joseph Patrice	1896	Westphalie - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-03-19		1916-11-13
1916	BERTRAND Victor-Pierre	Marie Gatien	1896	Ardèche - France	Chippis (Switzerland)	1914-08-15		1916-12-00
1916	BLASS Joseph Georges	Joseph Ernest	1899	Prusse - Germany	Beaucamps	1915-00-00		1916-12-06
1916	LABROSSE Louis	Louis Etienne	1894	Saône-et-Loire - France	Bairo	1910-10-02		1916-12-15
1916	CHAZALON Jean Baptiste	Jean Arsène	1893	Ardèche - France	Mexico	1912-12-08		1916-12-21
1916	RIEUBON Joseph Paul André	François Ernest (n° 47)	1896	Ardèche - France	Aubenas	1912-03-19		1916-12-29
1916	DIONNET Frédéric Charles	Ezéchias Joseph	1873	Haute-Loire - France	Hermitage	1890-09-14	1898-09-20	1916-07-12

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1916	ROTERING Bernard	Edgar Frédéric	1896	Mülheim - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-08-24		1916-07-17
1916	MALLET Jean François	Marie Amédée	1896	Haute-Loire - France	San Mauro	1913-08-15		1916-10-30
1917	JOHANN Auguste	Georges Auguste	1897	Palatinat - Germany	Grugliasco	1914-08-15		1917-01-05
1917	SCHMITT Charles	Charles Ignace	1896	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-08-24		1917-01-13
1917	PERRELLE Claude-Marie	Paulin Antoine	1897	Rhône - France	San Maurizio	1913-10-06		1917-01-20
1917	BLASS Ernest Ludwig	Marie Ernest	1896	Rhine Province Germany	Fribourg (Switzerland)	1913-10-06		1917-02-07
1917	KELLER Albert	Reinhold	1897	Palatinat - Germany		1914-03-19		1917-02-17
1917	BAUER Auguste	Bonaventure Léon	1884	Bayern - Germany	Copenhagen	1904-07-27	1909-09-12	1917-03-12
1917	BERAUD Antoine	Antoine Emile	1896	Haute-Loire - France	Syria	1913-08-02		1917-04-06
1917	SCHÖNEBERGER Eugène-Hugues	Agathon Eugène	1895	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-08-24		1917-04-12
1917	ALLEC Noël Victor-Antoine	Natale	1893	Hautes-Alpes - France	Italy (St Paul)	1910-03-19		1917-04-16
1917	LANIEL Maurice Alphons	Joseph Victoire	1878	Haute-Loire - France	Varennes	1895-08-29	?	1917-04-17
1917	LAMERS Gérard	Armandus	1894	Düsseldorf - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-03-19		1917-04-29
1917	SÉRAYET Claudius-Ambroï	Marie Victor	1887	Ardèche - France	San Maurizio	1905-12-08	1911-09-10	1917-05-00
1917	BILLAMBOZ Louis Marie	Marie Kostka	1896	Doubs - France	San Maurizio	1913-10-06		1917-05-05
1917	CAMPELS Henri Louis	Henri Marie	1891	Aveyron - France	San Maurizio	1910-10-16		1917-05-25
1917	BILLARD Louis	Louis Daniel	1893	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1909-09-02		1917-06-07
1917	SPLINGER Hubert	Paul Antoine	1894	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1910-08-31		1917-06-07
1917	IMHOF Guillaume Bruno	Galdius Norbert	1897	Westphalie - Germany	Beaucamps	1914-03-19		1917-06-08
1917	CLERC Louis Félix	Louis Rémi	1896	Haute-Savoie - France	San Maurizio	1913-10-06		1917-06-19
1917	MÜLLER Eugène	Marie Emile	1893	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1909-09-02		1917-06-20
1917	SIEGENTHALER Alois	Marie Sigisbert	1897	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1914-03-19		1917-07-01
1917	DUNY Pierre Basil C.	Humérien (n° 50)	1879	Ardèche - France	Aubenas	1895-09-10	1900-09-16	1917-07-06

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1917	FISCHER Joseph	Joseph Willibrord	1893	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1914-03-19		1917-07-29
1917	RAYNAL Lucien	Joseph Othon	1886	Aveyron - France	Central Brazil	1904-01-21	1909-01-15	1917-07-31
1917	DODANE Louis Gustave	Joseph Emmanuel	1885	Doubs - France	Constantinople	1901-09-05	1906-09-08	1917-08-00
1917	BAUMGARTEN Marcel-René-Emile	Marie Adon	1886	Haute-Alsace - Germany	Constantinople	1905-12-08	1910-12-08	1917-08-28
1917	PDNS Jean Baptiste	Jean Sébastien	1897	Lozère - France	Grugliasco	1914-08-02		1917-09-03
1917	PRADIER Fernand-Laurent	Ildefonsus	1895	Gard - France	Aubenais (Pontos)	1911-08-15		1917-10-13
1917	SARRAZIN Louis	Maurizio	1897	Hautes-Alpes - France	En su familia	1914-07-16		1917-10-23
1917	PASTOUR Alessandro Balt	Carlo Borromeo	1893	Aosta - Italy	Italy (St Paul)	1910-03-19		1917-11-01
1917	RANCHER Barthélemy	Mario Pietro	1896	Alpes-Maritimes France	Vintimille	1913-07-16		1917-12-27
1917	DUFFAUT François-Baptiste	Lucis	1873	Haute-Loire - France	Hermitage	1890-09-14	1897-09-21	1917-00-00
1917	LAURENT Pierre Louis	Charles Joseph	1898	Loire - France	San Mauro	1915-08-15		1917-00-00
1917	BLASS Ernest Ludwig	Marie Ernest	1896	Rheinprovinz - Germany	Fribourg	1913-10-06		1917-02-07
1917	SÉRAYET Claudius Ambroï	Marie Victor	1887	Ardèche - France	San Maurizio	1905-12-08	1911-09-10	1917-05-00
1917	MÜLLER Eugène	Marie Emile	1893	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1909-09-02		1917-06-20
1918	GADIN Carlo Basilio	Giulio	1893	Aosta - Italy	Italy	1909-09-29		1918-01-15
1918	GASTAUD Roch Claude	Ariston	1884	Var - France	Spain	1901-09-12	1906-12-18	1918-02-18
1918	CHASTEL Marius Auguste	Charles	1886	Savoie - France	China	1902-09-04	1907-08-15	1918-03-25
1918	GERTZ, Joseph ³	Edgard-Louis	?	?	?			1918-4-4
1918	REITH Joseph	Joseph Lambert	1897	Hesse - Prussia	?	1914-03-19		1918-04-19
1918	WEIMAR André Joseph	André Camille	1896	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1913-08-24		1918-04-24
1918	LINDNER Joseph	Emmanuel Joseph	1894	Bavière - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-08-24		1918-04-30

³ Brother without clear documentation, probably German, who died in Palestine.

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1918	REY René Julien	Léon Xavier	1897	Savoie - France	Carmagnola	1913-10-06		1918-06-09
1918	MATHON Emmanuel	Crescentius	1887	Drôme - France	Spain	1904-12-08	1909-12-25	1918-06-10
1918	HIRBÉ Marcel Emile	Marcel Louis	1897	Territoire de Belfort France	Lausanne	1913-10-06		1918-06-11
1918	BILLE Léon-Clair	Joannès Louis (n° 51)	1897	Ardèche - France	Grugliasco	1915-08-15		1918-06-22
1918	MAZET Jean Pierre	Armand Joseph	1892	Haute-Loire - France	San Mauro	1909-08-30		1918-07-19
1918	ESCOT Pierre Marie	Emile Léon	1897	Loire - France	Sangano	1913-08-15		1918-07-23
1918	TEYSSIER Edmond-Marius	Gabriel José	1898	Privas, Ardèche France	Spain	1914-11-21		1918-07-25
1918	MERCIER Claudius-Antoine	Marie Maximin	1895	Rhône - France	San Maurizio	1913-10-06		1918-08-30
1918	BRÉDY Michele Giovanni	Brunone	1900	Aosta - Italy	Italy	1917-07-26		1918-10-03
1918	MARTIN Jean Gabriel	Régis Henri	1888	Loire France	Hermitage (San Mauro)	1905-08-30	1913-09-10	1918-10-07
1918	MALZIEUX Charles-Louis	Marie Cécilien	1896	Haute-Loire France	San Mauro	1913-08-15		1918-10-20
1918	LIABEUF Jean Pierre Aug	Ansbert	1886	Le Puy, Haute-Loire France	Santa Maria	1903-11-09		1918-10-20
1918	MARTEL Jean Baptiste	Bernard Louis	1898	Haute-Loire -France	San Mauro	1915-08-15		1918-10-29
1918	PICAUD Francis Charles	Louis Clémentin	1887	Jura - France	Constantinople	1905-02-02	1910-08-15	1918-12-11
1918	BOURRET Pierre Jean Claude	Marie Liguori	1895	Haute-Loire - France	Polistena	1911-09-10		1918-12-22
1918	DIETL Aloys	Louis Sébastien	1895	Upper Palatinat Germany	Beaucamps (Copenhagen)	1912-03-19		1918-00-00
1918	FUCHS Philippe Martin	Léon Dominique	1895	Palatinat - Germany	Beaucamps	1912-03-19		1918-00-00
1918	ANHALT Joseph	Joseph Emiliani	1896	Rhenish - Prussia	Beaucamps	1915-05-28		1918-00-00
1918	GEISELMANN François	Gottfried	1895	Wurtemberg Germany	Beaucamps	1912-08-24		1918-00-00
1918	VINCENT Ludovic Albert	Henri Albert	1896	Ardèche France	Grugliasco	1914-08-15		1918-04-24
1918	GÉRARD Jean Pierre	Isidore Pierre	1894	Lorraine - Germany	Beaucamps	1910-08-31		1918-05-00
1918	SCHNEIDER Joseph	Joseph Engelbert	1895	Wurtemberg Germany	Beaucamps	1911-09-01		1918-07-14

Year	Family name	Religious name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Province	T.V.	P.V.	Death.
1918	PATUEL Barthélemy Arnéd	Sérapien	1884	Pyrénées-Orientales France	Mexico	1901-08-23	1905-12-08	1918-07-18
1918	MAZET Jean Pierre	Armand Joseph	1892	Haute-Loire - France	San Mauro	1909-08-30		1918-07-19
1918	MARCÉROU Alphonse	Alphonse Léon	1896	Aude - France	Grugliasco	1914-08-15		1918-07-27
1918	BRUNEL Albert	Marius Albert	1898	Lozère - France	San Maurizio	1916-10-01		1918-08-24
1918	WAGNER Nicolas	Camille Nicolas	1893	Lorraine - Germany	Beaucamps	1910-03-19		1918-09-01
1918	SCHEER Anton	F. Antonius	1896	Palatinat	Beaucamps	?	1912-24-08	1918-13-02
1918	JOVANELLI Romulus	François Gonzague	1896	Romania	Constantinople	1912-11-01		1920-00-00 ⁴

We can add some novices and postulants to this list:

Bergner Joseph	Br Joseph-Clémentin	1898, Palatinat	Beaucamps	Novice/ Postulant	1918-17-.2
	Br Pierre Léon			Nov.	1918-5-19
Thiewe Johannès				Post.	1918/5/31
Spittler Frantz				Post.	1918-6-4
Mettendorf				Post.	Missing

⁴ No news since 1916.

EXTRACTS OF BROTHER FRANÇOIS IN HIS NOTEBOOKS



Br Louis Richard

Subsidiarity was a concept which was recalled to prominence by Vatican II, drawing on Thomas Aquinas and *Rerum Novarum*. It is a concept that was already strongly evident in the Notebooks of Brother François, as he tried to prevent local superiors from confusing who they are with the position they may have had. A body of wisdom is revealed in the quotations cited below: wisdom acquired by life, experience, and the interior life. Are not these wise considerations still relevant for us?

The formulation may be changed, but I hope that the sense remains.

NOTEBOOK 303

Old age is a tyrant which forbids, at the risk of life, all the pleasures of youth (p.448)

One should speak little, one should speak quietly; speak without

passion; speak with reason; speak softly; speak simply; speak sincerely; speak without affectation; speak unhurriedly; speak without vanity; speak with charity; speak when it is necessary; keep silence when necessary. (Ibid., 6th Saturday) It is rare that those who do not know how to keep silent know how to speak well. (p.517)

We would be much happier if we thought less about being so. (p.640)

It is a great failing in one who is in charge of others to like coming and going from one side or the other, in the house or elsewhere, and to do by himself many exterior things he should confide to others. (p. 706)

Nothing resembles more what will be done than what has already been done. (p.718)

The insights of those who teach often come from those who listen. (p.759)

NOTEBOOK 304

Superiors who work, who dispatch matters, who do the most business are those who govern least. They do the work of others; and yet their own work, they don't do: no one takes care of it.

The true Superior is the one who, appearing to do nothing, gets everything done; who thinks, invents, looks into the future, goes back to the past, who compares, resolves, decides, arranges, shares out, who prepares from a distance, who ceaselessly steels himself to struggle against difficulties, who is attentive night and day to let nothing decline through the negligence of those who must work under him.

As he never throws himself into exhausting details, he has a mind more free to take in the whole of his great work in one glance and to see if it is making progress, if it is moving towards the principal end. In a word, a true Superior should do only the things that no other can do without him. He must supervise everything, but he should not apply himself to any work other than making the decision on important matters. Activity forms the man, strengthens the character, enlightens the mind, gives experience; but it is not necessary for the activity to be excessive, overburdening. (p.801)

The most painful things become agreeable to us when we do them

willingly, just as those which are in themselves agreeable become tedious when we do them under suffering. (p.825)

The rule for all the pleasures and all the satisfactions in this life, is necessity, usefulness or convenience. But it should not be that pleasure alone is the reason for it. (p.877)

It is to have a petty soul not to dare to become wise, because fools make fun of it. It is regarded as a grave fault in a Superior not to accept the advice and counsel given him; as far as saying that a man of limited intelligence who knows his failings and takes advice is more suited to governing than one who is more intelligent but who is full of himself, and who so believes he knows everything that he resents anyone warning or giving him advice. (p. 932)

Those who are raised to great responsibilities will place themselves in way of being enlightened by God, taking comfort in making use of the common, ordinary means, and accepting the advice of others. For they must not imagine that they are as elevated above all other men by their intelligence as they are by their authority. (p.933)

The Superior should return each matter to the one responsible for it, without wanting to decide or regulate everything by himself. Our Lord sends St. Paul to Ananias. The angel

tells Cornelius to fetch St Peter. (p.1070)

It must be supposed that, when we are advised of our faults, we are told only the half, and that when we are told of those of others, they are doubled. (p.1088)

We are not ordinarily guilty of malicious gossip in speaking of things which the person being talked about cannot with reason wish kept hidden. (p.1123)

Superiors do not ordinarily receive any special talent of nature, but they have the invaluable advantage of being able to use those of others. (p.1124)

Superiors who enjoy the finest things on earth risk not having the finest things in heaven. (p.1128)

One must never condemn everything, approve everything, deny everything, believe everything, grant everything, or refuse everything, but follow reason, fairness. (p. 1489)

Men commonly take on the feelings, the language, and the conduct which the ways in which they are treated inspires in them. They become childish or serious, reasonable or capricious, shy or bold, children of the family or servants, according to the way they are treated. (p.1501)

To conform with good understanding to what public opinion holds

as right, is the sign of the ability of a man who governs, and frankness in the explanation of circumstances and situations is the first condition of a manly character. It is on this condition that mutual confidence is established between superiors and subordinates. (p.1505).

Sermons which cost the preacher little, cost his hearers much. (*Ibid.*) that is to say, when the preacher does not take the trouble to prepare his sermons, the faithful have trouble in listening to them. (p. 1508)

A regular occupation, diligent work, chases away boredom and temptations, just as the wind from the south dispels the fog. (p.1525)

The Superior is fastened to the Cross by three nails: his own misery, that of his Brothers, and the administration of the Institute or the house. (p.1532)

With age, memory becomes weak but judgement improves. It is better to have a poor memory and good judgement than a good memory and poor judgement.

As the best vines grow in stony ground, the strongest virtues grow amidst afflictions.

If we need to have patience with everyone, it is first of all with ourselves, we who are more demanding on ourselves than any other. It is better to do little and well, than to

push oneself to do much. Hasten slowly: for soon enough will be good enough. (p. 1554)

Man cannot be too long without pleasure, whether it comes to him from the earth or from heaven. (p. 1585)

It is not a lesser knowledge to ask the right questions than to give the right answers; and sometimes one teaches just as well by asking questions as by answering them. (p. 1586)

The first element for succeeding in the spiritual life is good humour. (p. 1558)

Means for obtaining peace:

1. Frequent conversations with God, who is always in peace.
2. Few or no conversations with seculars : they say scarcely any words of peace.
3. Do not become preoccupied with what does not concern us, nor the conduct of the Superiors : that serves no purpose.
4. Concern yourself only with the present, without worrying about the past or the future. Do what you are doing.
5. Limit one's desires for the things of the present life: they torment us.

6. Entire submission to the will of God: God wishes it; I am content.

7. Love God only in everything and in all: do not become attached to anything else.

8. Accept [1602] one's whole responsibility, one's whole Rule, without wanting to leave a part out.

9. Regard oneself as a block of marble from which God wishes our Brothers to sculpture the image of Jesus crucified, through their words, faults, manners, character, etc.

10. Love to be hidden, unknown, stay at home and look after your own affairs.

11. Expect a time of trial, desertion, complete abandonment, like Jesus on the cross: the most sensitive trial.

12. Rely for everything only on God. (p. 1601)

Superiors should not involve themselves too much in the conduct of affairs which are the responsibility of those beneath them who occupy important posts, and treat them only as simple instruments which carry out their orders. Here are some reasons why:

1. God ordinarily grants each the graces appropriate to the office entrusted to him.
2. If one sees that the Superior wants to do everything himself, one does not apply to his work the interest and devotion needed for carrying it out properly.
3. Experience in the immediate performance of an office teaches more to the one exercising it than a Superior can calculate or foresee by his own reflection.
4. Many things happen upon which a wise decision can be taken only according to special circumstances, which cannot be known and appreciated by one who is not habitually involved in these affairs.
5. Finally, it is better for the Superior to be able to reprimand his subordinates, if they fail on some points, than to receive from them the observations made necessary by his lack of knowledge in the things he wishes to direct. (p. 1624)

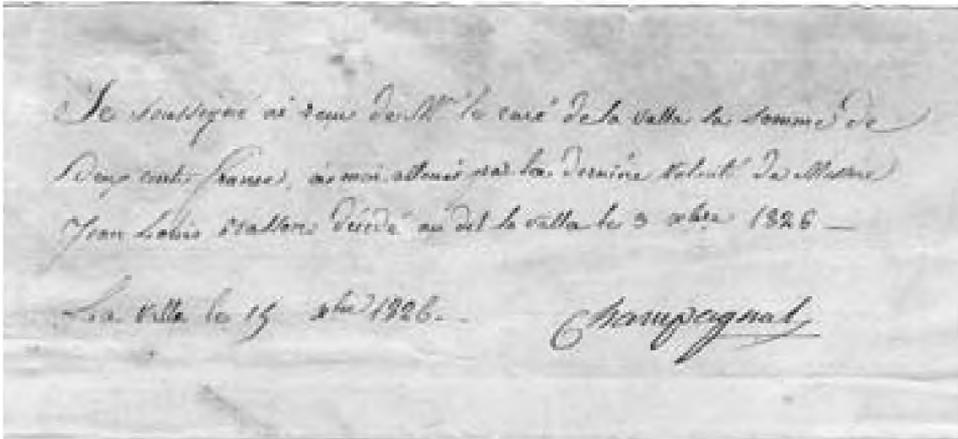
A Superior must avoid two great faults: that of doing nothing or wanting to do everything; and that of giving no orders or wanting to order everything; because in acting in this way, he either cancels out himself or he cancels out the others. (p. 1630)

TWO NEW DOCUMENTS ABOUT CHAMPAGNAT



Br André Lanfrey

AN UNPLISHED NOTE OF Fr. CHAMPAGNAT FROM 1826 concerning a bequest of M. Besson



On 20 March 2014, Mme Richard, resident in Caluire, a suburb of Lyon, forwarded two documents to Notre-Dame de L'Hermitage, the most important of which was a letter, signed by Fr Champagnat, containing the following words:

I the undersigned have received from the parish priest of la valla the sum of two hundred francs, left to me in the last will of Messire Jean Louis Basson deceased at la valla on 3 xbre (December) 1826.
La valla 15 xbre 1826

Champagnat

A NINETEENTH CENTURY IMAGE OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



The second document is an image of Marcellin Champagnat which the Institute distributed to its benefactors, especially to those supporting the work of the juniorates. Without being exceptional, this image provides evidence of the iconographic tradition originating from the portrait of Ravery but with the intention of offering a less austere portrait of the Founder than the original painting. As Fr Champagnat is not given the title of Venerable, it is before 1896 and probably later than 1877-79, the time of the creation of the work of the juniorates.

COMMENTARY

The first document justifies a more detailed commentary. First of all, it corroborates what the *Life of the Founder* tells us about M. Basson in Chapter 12 of the second part. At the time of the blessing of the first stone of the Hermitage, in May 1824, the Brothers were too poor to offer a suitable meal to the vicar general who had come for the occasion. So Fr Champagnat told the Brother cook:

Go and tell M. Basson that I will be coming to dinner with him with the Vicar General". And Br Jean-Baptiste adds, "This M. Basson who was a rich man and a

great friend of the Brothers was happy to receive them. Moreover, it was not the first time that Fr Champagnat asked this service of him. He made use of it every time he found himself in a similar situation.

We know in addition from the census of 1815 that M. Jean-Louis Basson was the sole inhabitant of La Valla to carry the title *bourgeois*. That is probably why Fr Champagnat gives him the somewhat archaic title of *messire* (Master). Elderly and a widower, he was then living with two servants. The letter of Mme Richard, which accompanied the gift of this

document, makes it clear that it had been kept by her grandmother, Mme Verne, née Anne Basson. So it does not come to us by chance but from a family aware of the historical value of this document and one which maintained ongoing contact with the work of Fr Champagnat, as the image from the end of the XIX century shows.

It is a bit strange that the gift came to Fr Champagnat in an official way through the intermediary of Fr Etienne Bedoin, parish priest of La Valla from 1824, rather than through a will. This is a sign of the good relationship among the three men. It is also important to note that this gen-

erous sum (the equivalent of 200 days of work for an ordinary labourer) must have been a great encouragement for a man whose work had just been sorely tested through illness and the withdrawal of his two priest companions, Fr Courveille in May and Fr Terrailon around All Saints Day.

Let us add, to finish, that this gift figures in the receipt book of the Hermitage (*Origines des Frères Maristes*, 2011, t. 1, doc 111/5) in December 1826: "received from M. Boisson (sic): 200". We now clearly know that it involved a gift from M. Basson, faithful friend of Fr Champagnat.

A LOOK INTO MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT'S HEART

Br Patricio Pino

Brother Manuel Mesonero, from the Province of Ibérica, has given us in recent years three important contributions regarding our Founder's inner life. The first text, *San Marcellino Champagnat, experiencia de Dios y vida mística* (Saint Marcellin Champagnat, Experience of God and Mystical Life), is a profound account of Marcellin's intimate Dark Night experience within the circumstances of his personal life. It is mainly focused on the multifaceted crisis that Champagnat – and his project – went through from late 1825 until 1827. But he also studies Marcellin's mystical life as a whole, which lead him, confident and abandoned in God, to the exciting mission the Spirit entrusted him.

In the second text, *Sencillez y Abandono en Dios, San Marcellino Champagnat* (Simplicity and Abandonment in God, Saint Marcellin

Champagnat), the author, using a colloquial style, presents a dialogue between Marcellin, Brother Stanislas, and other people, through which the Founder explains the experience of simplicity and abandonment in God as two charismatic fulcrums of his spirituality.

In the third text, *Historia de un amor, itinerario espiritual de San Marcelino Champagnat* (A Love Story, Spiritual Journey of Saint Marcellin Champagnat), the author – following *The Interior Castle* of Teresa of Ávila – explores in detail Marcellin's internal process of conversion and discipleship, offering a comprehensive vision of his spiritual path.

These well-written texts are the result of intensive and up-to-date research of our Marist spiritual patrimony, and offer a practical application to everyday life

AN ESSAY BY Dr PEDRO FELIPE MONLAU

Interesting discovery for our Marist spiritual patrimony

Br Antonio Martinez Estaún

Santiago Vasconcellos, a lay Marist from the Province of Santa María de los Andes, was studying for a diploma in Marist patrimony when he found, thanks to a casual web search, a Google eBook in Spanish entitled *De la instrucción pública en Francia: ensayo sobre su estado en 1838 y 1839* (Public Education in France: an essay on its situation from 1838 to 1839). Brother Patricio Pino, who was guiding the studies, shared this finding with the members of the International Marist Patrimony Commission in its meeting of June 2013.

Once back to Curitiba after the meeting, I was able to study the book, and I realized it offers some interesting information that is actually a novelty from a historical point of view. The book has been preserved

on the library shelves of the Complutense University of Madrid for generations (Barcode 5315634802) until Google decided to scan it as part of a project aimed at making a number of books from around the world available online. It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. Therefore it cannot be marketed. However the book is not interesting from the commercial point of view, but as a historical document.

This book is particularly appealing for students of Marist history because it was written when Marcellin was still alive. It collects information about teaching in France from 1838 to 1839, and mentions the Marists as the second major educational institution in the country:

Another corporation of schoolteachers was formed in the Loire Department in 1824, directed by Father Champagnat, under the name of Little Brothers of Mary. They teach reading, writing, arithmetic, linear drawing, and the rudiments of geometry. Each Little Brother has a manual work task and carries it out during the children's recess time, in order to set an example of work and inspire the students to love it. In this way, the Hermitage, head-house or centre of the Institute, is cultivated by the Brothers, and they themselves have built the structure that serves as their teacher training college. Their teaching has quickly spread. At the moment they already have 40 well-established schools in the Loire and other neighbouring departments. They direct a hospice for orphans in Lyon; and receive new requests to direct and establish primary schools every day. The zeal of the Little Brothers of Mary is not limited to France; they are also forming missionaries

to spread their teaching all over the world. They have already founded a school in Polynesia, and soon will establish others in the European settlements of North Africa. In 1838, the Director of the community made a request to the Minister, asking him to declare his Institute as an establishment of public interest destined to train primary schoolteachers. The Minister, before proposing the decree to the King, consulted with the General Councils of the departments of Loire and Rhone. The first offered a very favourable report; but the second gave a strongly contrary opinion. I do not know if the Minister has made a final decision yet.

We can say this is the first news in Spanish known so far about the existence of the Institute, and written by someone outside the Marist Institute, published a number of decades before the arrival of the Brothers in Spain. Another novelty, among others deserving in-depth study, is the translation into Spanish for the first time of “Petits Frères de Marie” as “Hermitos de María”, a translation done by someone who knew French and Spanish well, and did not belong to the Institute.

The book was published in Barcelona in 1840 by *Imprenta de D. Antonio Bergnes y Compañía* (Antonio Bergnes & Company Press), located at 2 Calle Escudillers. It contains – besides abundant and well-documented statistical information about the “Administration of Primary Education,

Secondary Education, High School Instruction, and Vocational Training (Public Administration, Theology, and Law)” – very useful information to study Marist pedagogy in France during Marcellin’s last years of life.

The author is “Dr Pedro Felipe Monlau, Medical Surgeon of the Military Hospital of Barcelona; Professor of Geography and Chronology at the Academy of Natural Sciences and Arts in the same city; Professor of History and Literature at the University of Barcelona, and member of the Royal Spanish Academy (seat D), etc.” Monlau died on February 18, 1871. His writings are many and he covered many topics, always under the form of essays. Exiled in France for political reasons, he devoted himself to collect all the information later published in this book.

BROTHER HENRY RÉOCREUX

Br André Lanfrey

On 20 January 2014, a good crowd gathered at the Hermitage to celebrate the funeral of Br Henri Réocreux. Born on 19 May 1945, in the hamlet of La Rivoire, Izieux, very close to the Hermitage, and later a junior at La Valla, Henri was definitively reunited with his origins, both familial and spiritual.

He had been a teacher of mathematics in our Marist schools and colleges in France – at Chazelles, Charlieu, Toulouse, Valbenoîte and St Etienne – and also in Nouméa (New Caledonia) from 1970 to 1973. From 1997 to 2004, he was an assistant to the Secretary General of the Institute in Rome where he was particularly appreciated for his competence with computers. On returning to France, he took up spiritual animation with the Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement for which he was an adviser, and then in recent years with the young people in the two Marist communities of Mulhouse in Alsace.

His calmness and a certain unhurriedness contrasted somewhat with a lively intelligence, particularly, but not only, in the areas of mathematics and computer science. He was also well-read and an able technician. Moreover, during his time in Rome, he diligently collated the digitalised documents from our Archives and, because of this, became a resource person in the study of our patrimony. This is why, from 2006 to 2012, he was secretary of the Patrimony Commission which had been created in 2004. Among other activities, he took part in the editing and layout of the *Marist Notebooks*. And he was especially involved in the completion of the *Origines des Frères Maristes* of Br Paul Sester, published in 2011.

The Marist Patrimony Commission has thus lost a valuable collaborator. It wishes to recall an important if little known facet of the rich personality of Henri Réocreux and express its gratitude for the work he accomplished.

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