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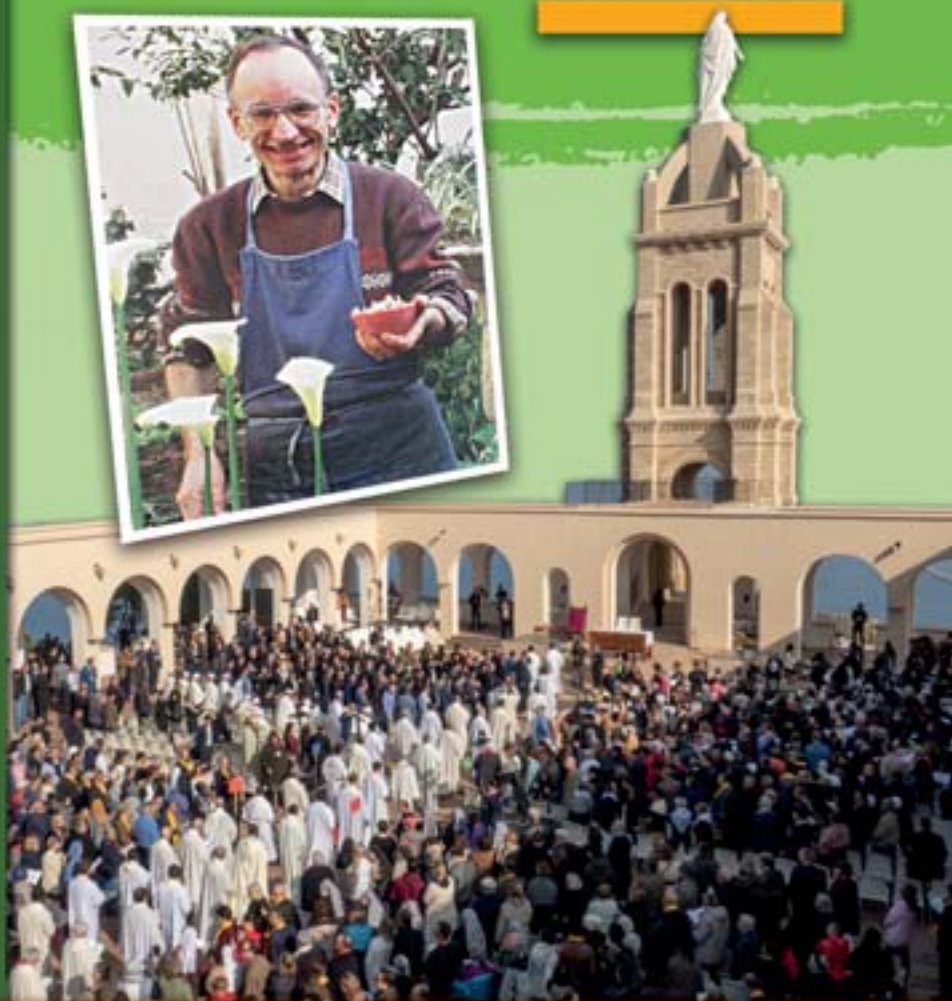


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Cover photos: Beatification of the 19 martyrs of Algeria, at the shrine of Santa Cruz of Oran, on December 8, 2018. Among them was Henri Vergès, a Marist Brother.

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EDITORIAL

Issue 37 of Marist Notebooks is the last one to be prepared by the Patrimony Commission appointed by Brother Emili Turú. We have not attempted to shape an issue around a specific theme. Nevertheless, in the four articles on Marist origins, two of the authors, working quite independently of each other, chose the same image of the forge to describe how Marcellin was shaped by St Francis de Sales and by his formation in the Seminary of St Irenée. The same image of the forge suits the following two articles. In these, we can see similar intensity in the little-known rivalry between Fathers Courveille and Champagnat over the foundation in Charlieu and also – and this seems to me more pertinent – the disagreement between Brother Louis and Fr Champagnat on the nature of the Society of Mary.

The final article, on the recent history of communications in the Institute, written by someone who was a major player in this topic, provides a balance

to the focus of the previous articles concerned with the years 1817-1840.

In the Documents section of this issue, I provide a fairly extensive presentation on an unpublished letter from Father Champagnat from 1837. Albeit not of great importance, it does give us the opportunity to recall the links between the Founder and the Diocese of Viviers before the merger with the Brothers of this Diocese.

Brother François devoted a large part of one of his notebooks to his stay of several months in Rome during 1858 where he was working to obtain approval of the Congregation. Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún shows us the places and chronology of his visits to holy sites which, along with his many insights, gives us a fresh view of Brother François.

In the brief news items at the end of this issue, we focus on the opening of the renovated cemetery at l'Hermitage, a major monument in

our patrimony. And we seek to honour in a special way the memory of Brother Louis Richard, recently deceased, who worked so hard to make Marist documents accessible.

We extend our best wishes to the new Commission that has been appointed by the General Council.

FORGED IN THE FURNACE OF GOD'S LOVE: The Influence of St Francis de Sales on the Spirituality of St Marcellin Champagnat



Paul Creevey, fms

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Reformation in Europe brought with it a renewal of the devotional life of the Catholic faithful in the late sixteenth century. Beginning with the Spanish mystics and the Society of Jesus, there was a strong desire for a personal experience of the person of Jesus and a quest for personal holiness. One of the results of this renewal was the founding of a 'school of spirituality' which today historians would call the Bérullian current. Under Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, Spanish mysticism was brought into the domain of French religious consciousness. Out of this Bérullian influence one finds arising in France the work of Jean Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, and Jean Eudes, the founder of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary. Much has already been written on the influence of these people on Marcellin Champagnat's spirituality, particularly the influence of the Sulpicians. However, the specific aim of this article is

to provide some initial reflections on the influence of a 'third' strand of popular devotion that arose at the same time as the 'Berullian school': that of St Francis de Sales. It will attempt to argue that Marist spirituality, as left to us by Marcellin, has within it, not only Bérullian influences, but a very strong influence from the legacy of St Francis de Sales.

1. INTRODUCTION: A CONTEXT FOR MARIST SPIRITUALITY

Since Vatican II, religious communities have attempted to discern and articulate more clearly the charism of their respective founders as they attempt to revitalise and make relevant their role in the mission of the Church in a post-modern world. As the *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life* states: "It serves the best interests of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose. Therefore loyal recognition and safe-

keeping should be accorded to the spirit of the founders, as also to all the particular goals and traditions that constitute the heritage of each community.”¹

Fundamental to understanding a founder’s charism within particular religious heritage is to be able to articulate the spirituality of that heritage. The word spirituality is quite elusive. Etymologically the word derives from the Latin, *spiritus*, meaning “breath, life, spirit” and so in its broadest sense it is concerned with that which gives life in the face of some of life’s ultimate questions. The modern appeal to spirituality has captured the imagination of contemporary people to encompass the quest for the spiritual, more than an appeal to a specific organised religion or to a systematic theology. By focusing attention on the practical, down-to-earth, lived experience of human persons, spirituality today is viewed as “a more inclusive, tolerant and flexible canopy under which to pursue the mysteries of the human spirit and the sacred. Spirituality has become ecumenical and inter-religious and not the reserve of any one tradition.”²

Christian spirituality then describes a particular way of responding to life’s ultimate reality by acknowledging the Spirit of God mediated to the world and ultimately it is related to Scripture and in particular the divine-human Jesus. It must be lived within the context of the faith and practice of the universal Church. As Schneiders states so succinctly:

When the horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ and communicated through his Holy Spirit, and the project of self-transcendence is the living of the paschal mystery within the context of the church community, the spirituality is specifically Christian. For example, Trinitarian monotheism, incarnation, a morality based on the dignity of the person created in the image and likeness of God, sacramentality, are constitutive features of Christian spirituality.³

From a different perspective Brother Charles Howard, former Superior General of the Marist Brothers, picked up this theme in his Circular on Marist Apostolic Spirituality:

Our (Christian) spirituality embraces all that we are, all the elements that go to make up our living – our relationships, our gifts, our joys and our sorrows,

¹ “Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, W.M. Abbott, ed., New York: American Press, p.468.

² Valerie Lesniak, “Contemporary Spirituality”, in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake, London: SCM Press, 2005, p. 8.

³ Sandra Schneiders, “Christian Spirituality: Definitions, Methods and Types”, in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake, London: SCM Press, 2005, p. 1.

our dreams and our moods, our struggles and our failures – everything. As Christians, we see the face, the hand, the word, the breath of God in every aspect of our human life, and of creation and beyond life itself.⁴

Our Christian spirituality contains then two elements. First, there is the sense of ‘the beyond in our midst’ or the ‘ground of our being’ drawing us to find God in all things and in all aspects of life. Second, it is the human response to the presence of the divine through which we can understand the sacramental meaning of events, people, and things that become for us a meeting place with God.⁵

For many in the Church this Christian spirituality is often opened up through the witness and example of one of many saints in our rich heritage. As Pope Pius XII said:

“You know that the spirituality of a saint is the way unique to him of visualising God: of speaking with Him and of relating to Him. Each saint sees the attributes of God by way of one special attribute, on which he concentrates and works, which attracts him powerfully and wins his heart... so there is a particular theology, a particular way of contemplating Jesus.”⁶

At each stage in history, the Holy Spirit has called forth a certain style of presence, a way of being with and for God in the world. Marcellin Champagnat was aware of the presence of these charisms and how vital they were, not only for the Marist Brothers Institute, but also to all those who had chosen a particular stance towards life, a passion for God and compassion for God’s people. This is why Marcellin strongly resisted the attempts of the diocesan authorities in Lyon to amalgamate with another congregation.

Your Grace, my Brothers and I are in your hands and you can do with us as you please.

As to the fusion which you propose to me, such a union, in my opinion, would be the ruin of our society and probably also of the Brothers of Saint Viator. I say this because the two congregations have an entirely different spirit, place their members differently, were founded in different circumstances and have quite dissimilar rules. It would be the end of our Brothers and would force them back into the world, if they were asked to give up their Rules, their costume, their teaching method and their way of life, in order to take up that of another Congregation, no matter which one. Knowing the situation, as I do, your Grace, I cannot in conscience support the proposal. If you insist, I shall not oppose it, but bow to

⁴ Brother Charles Howard fms, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*, Circular of the Superior General: Marist Brothers of the Schools, Volume XXIX, March 25, 1992.

⁵ For an excellent discussion of these two aspects to Christian Spirituality see Chapter 1 of Barbara Bowe, *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the Flame*, Lanham & New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003, pp. 9–21.

⁶ Pope Pius XII, From the Homily for the Beatification of Blessed Marcellin Champagnat, Rome, 29th May 1955.

your will, as is my duty; yet I fear for the consequences.

Each person has a sense of the spiritual, a realisation that somehow we transcend ourselves: perhaps it is wonder and awe in the face of power, a beauty or a mystery that is beyond us: especially in face of the ultimate mystery of existence. As the human mind rejects the absence of purpose in human existence, the quest is to discover the 'ground of all being'. It is a vital quest for the very existence of humanity and is essentially related to God as the ultimate source and explanation of life. It gives hope that there is the promise of eternal salvation through the grace and mercy of a compassionate God. For Marcellin Champagnat, for the Church Fathers, for the apostles, for Jesus and Mary, the ultimate source of all being was God and the purpose of human life was to discover this God and to serve him through living a life authentic to one's particular vocation.

Since Marcellin's time, Marists have been convinced that to follow Jesus in the way of Mary is a privileged way of bringing our Christian journey to fullness. For Marist spirituality, Jesus is the human face of God. Marcellin taught the first Brothers:

"To make Jesus known and loved is the aim of our vocation and the whole purpose of the Institute. If we were to fail in this purpose, our congregation would be useless."⁷ In all this, Marist spirituality has a growing awareness of Mary as our sister in faith, a woman who has a down-to-earth and practical faith, a woman who was disturbed and puzzled by God, who was challenged to trust and give without knowing all the answers, whose life of faith is a journey of prayer and trust. Marist spirituality, by looking to the person of Mary as a model for our Christian life, brings to the Church a desire that people can experience the maternal face of the Church.⁸

Marcellin's unique spirituality is not something that came to him in a single moment of revelation. It was nuanced through his familial upbringing in a region that had a long history of devotion to Mary, his spiritual reading, his spiritual directors, his time growing up in a rural village and then being a priest among them, his training and living with the early Brothers, his dreams for the Society of Mary, and through the experience of living through the tumultuous social, political and religious upheaval of his time. It was the experience of a lifetime spent in prayer and in the pres-

⁷ Br Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Life*, p. 330.

⁸ This is the text of a letter that is reported in Br Jean-Baptiste Furet's *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, Bicentenary Edition, Rome: Marist General House, 1989, p. 187-188. This letter is not to be found as one of the original 339 letters that the Brothers have still from Fr Champagnat in Br Paul Sester's collection. However the incident is supported in *Origines Maristes Extracts*, doc. 71, p 156; doc. 170, p.462

ence of God. In other words his spirituality was chiselled into the core of his being by being forged in the furnace of God's love.

2. THE 'FRENCH SCHOOL' OF SPIRITUALITY

2.1 Origin in Spanish Mysticism

In the latter half of the 16th century, France was torn by the violent religious wars between the Catholics and the Protestant Huguenots that left the country broken and devastated. Peace finally came to France with King Henry IV embracing Catholicism and issuing the Edict of Nantes in 1598 that extended religious tolerance. France had survived the threat of Calvinism but the overall religious condition of the country called for much needed reform and renewal. Most of the clergy were simple country folk who were untrained theologically or often enough lax in their living out of an exemplary moral life.

The spiritual awakening of the Spanish counter-Reformation in the 16th century, through the spirituality of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola, became a source of inspiration for the dawn of a new encounter with the divine within Christian France. Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), together with a number

of other saintly persons, was drawn to this spiritual revival and, in the void that had been left, began to formulate a new way of living the Gospel message in the French context. This French school of spirituality had its unique expression and many historians see that, over the next three centuries, this Bérullian 'current' came to dominate the way 'spirituality' was articulated and practised.

Around the same time as Cardinal de Bérulle, Francis de Sales (1567-1622), born in the Duchy of Savoy, now part of Haute-Savoie, France, was a vital figure in this 'spiritual awakening', even though he is not regarded officially as part of the Bérullian 'school'. Educated in Paris by the Jesuits (1583-1588), he then attended the University of Padua where he received his Doctorate in Law and Theology (1592). He met Bérulle a number of times in Paris and for a time was Madame Acarie's confessor. De Sales was also a close friend of the Olier family, anointing the then Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, as a youth.

Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God* are two books that had a strong influence on the development of a search for personal holiness. Both of these 'classics' in French 'spirituality' were among Marcellin's Champagnat's personal library.⁹ Hence, to

⁹ For a list of the books in his personal library at the time of his death see Romuald Gibson, *Father Champagnat: The Man and His Spirituality*, Rome: Marist General House, 1971. Appendix 1.

enable one to have a deeper understanding of Marcellin's 'spirituality', one must give consideration then to any differences between the Bérullian 'school' and the spirituality evident in the writings of St Francis de Sales.

One final comment in this historical context is the important role of women in the development of this French spiritual tradition. Madame Acarie with Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle; Mother Agnes de Jesus with Jean Jacques Olier; Marie des Val-lées for St John Eudes; St Louise Marillac with St Vincent de Paul; Claude de la Colombière with Mother Margaret-Mary Alacoque; St Francis de Sales and St Jane Frances de Chantal and later on Fr Colin with Mother St Joseph (Jeanne Marie Chavoïn). The role of women in shaping the spirituality of this period is an important aspect of the down-to-earth, balanced, open-minded, compassionate approach used by the French School in developing and maintaining the faith life both of individuals and the wider community in a rapidly changing world. A number of these women were involved in the apostolic mission of the Church which gave to the populace a face to faith lived in action. It is also a possible strong factor in the important place that Mary assumes within this spiritual renewal.

2.2 Spiritual Characteristics of the Bérullian School of Spirituality

Central to the Christian tradition is the greatness and goodness of God: both his transcendence and immanence. Through the Middle Ages and Scholasticism, the Roman Catholic tradition was strongly theocentric in its emphases. There was an emphasis on the Word incarnate – a theocentric approach that clearly focused on God's benevolence in becoming human in the person of Jesus. There was a clear emphasis, up to the time of the Reformation, on the reality that it is to God that we must look and not ourselves. The Reformation and its call for a greater reliance on Scripture rekindled an awareness of God's immanence and not just his transcendence.

It was at this point that the Christocentrism of the French school took hold especially through the event of the Incarnation. For the practitioners in the French school, the revelation of the invisible God is ultimately knowable in and through the Incarnate Word who is Jesus. The French school in some way christified Neo-Platonism's '*exitus-reditus*' pattern. We have come from God (*exitus*) and we find our being's fulfilment in returning to our origin (*reditus*) through the deifying work of the Spirit. Our life reflects Christ, "we are

made in the image and likeness of God” (*Gen 1:26*). It is also Trinitarian as it looks at the unity of the divine persons. The divine ‘unity of essence’ is revealed to be a ‘unity of love’. In the event that is the Incarnation, ‘God who is unity leads everyone to unity, and through distinct degrees of unity comes and descends toward man that he might ascend toward God. God, creating and forming all things, refers them and relates them all to himself ... a movement more intimate to the creature than his own being itself.’¹⁰ It would appear that the more people meditated upon the mystery of the Incarnation the more it moved them to the experience of the presence of God as love, real and active. This was the origin of the ‘mystical’ element of the French school. As Thompson explains: “Corresponding to the Christological-soteriological accents of the French school is a view and practice of the Christian spiritual life as one of a struggle between attuning to our deepest being and the opposing failure to remain so attuned...With this arises the sense of our ‘nothingness’ when we are separated from God.”¹¹

Our wounding in life through sin deepens our need for Christ; and our return to God is through the mediation of Christ’s Paschal mystery. Now for all of humanity, Jesus Christ is

God’s unsurpassable revelation. As such, there was an acute awareness of our human nature as a creature, fragile apart from God. As a consequence, there arose a preoccupation with, and anathema to, the reality of human sinfulness. The denial of the body was a means to engage in the rescuing of one’s soul from the sinfulness of the body. Thus the theme of ‘adherence to Christ’ in this tradition takes on great importance. A Christian adheres to Christ by seeking consciously to conform his or her whole life to the interior life of Jesus in the various states of the Incarnate Word.

For Bérulle, these states were those moments in which the earthly life of Jesus was in unison with the Divine will; the birth, infancy, life, death, resurrection and appearances of Jesus. Each event or mystery in the historical life of the Incarnate Word involves an action that is finished and will not be repeated. Speaking of these mysteries Bérulle wrote:

“They are past in execution, but they are present in their virtue: and neither will this virtue ever pass nor the love with which they were fulfilled. For the incarnation of the Word is the basis and foundation ... of the deification of all the states and mysteries sharing in the life and earthly voyage of the Son of God upon earth...

¹⁰ Pierre de Bérulle quoted in *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings, The Classics of Western Spirituality*, edited by William M. Thompson, New York: Paulist Press, 1989, p. 33.

¹¹ William M Thompson, *Bérulle*, p. 39-40.

Jesus... wishes that we have a unique share in these various states, according to the diversity of his will for us and our piety towards him."¹²

Whereas the Spanish contemplated both the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the French School places the accent upon how the divine Son shines through the human state. The French School shows that we are involved, not in a flight to the Transcendent One, but in an ecclesial movement to the interpersonal life of the Trinity through the mediation of Jesus Christ. The School's Trinitarianism brings the loving, interpersonal reality of God, a love that shatters human defences with its beauty. As already implied, if the Bérullian current can accent our nothingness and sinfulness, it can also celebrate our grandeur. For as we have seen, humanity is ultimately tending toward God and thus in our very being we reflect the Trinity.

Another clear aspect of the spirituality and theology of the French school is a concern for the spiritual and theological renewal of individuals and with it the clergy. There is clearly an accent on the individual's own personal and intimate growth in interiority. Yet as Thompson states succinctly: 'For Bérulle, one could not separate theology from spirituality and one needs to look at how they understood the reality of sin and the

Christ event to full appreciate its spiritual praxis.'¹³

The heightened stress upon the interior depth dimension of the states of Jesus, and our own interior appropriation of them laid the modern foundation for a Christian articulation on the nature of the human person against the rise of the forces of humanism. The French school paved the way for the wider Church to articulate the universal call to holiness that so much epitomised the mission of Jesus. Jesus was a man of prayer that enabled him to connect with the source of his being. Yet it was also this prayer that drove him out to mission to all persons who were open to God's word or in need of spiritual or physical healing. It has brought about the challenge to wed a deep spirituality to ecclesiology and ministry especially in the way that the wider population experienced the sacramental life of the Church.

2.3 The Spirituality advocated by Francis de Sales and the Berullian Current

An initial consideration of these two currents shows that they held much in common, particularly the preference for a Christocentric over a theocentric focus: an immanent

¹² Pierre de Bérulle, "Discourse on the State and Grandeurs of Jesus", in William M. Thompson, *Bérulle*, p.116.

¹³ William M. Thompson, *Bérulle*, p. 35.

Christ to the transcendent Creator. Yet there are three ‘subtle’ differences that can be identified in their spiritual outlooks.

First, there was a clarification of the difference between apostolic and contemplative spirituality. Traditionally contemplatives follow a passive way of discipleship. It involves a person’s longing for God and the effort to make oneself present to and aware of the total presence of God. This search for God is lived in solitude or through religious communities and usually involves a separation from ordinary society. Apostolic spirituality is, by contrast, an active way of discipleship. At the heart is the assurance that one has been sent into the world to announce, both in word and deed, the saving power of God. One is urged to find God through the ordinariness of the world.

The French school had been decidedly more contemplative in its outlook. It was St Francis de Sales (1567-1622), a contemporary of Bérulle, who in his seminal work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, re-established the primordial belief of the apostolic church, the universal call to holiness:

Almost all those who have written concerning the devout life have had chiefly in view persons who have altogether quitted the world; but my object is to teach those who are living in towns,

at court, in their own households and whose calling obliges them to a social life who are apt to reject all attempts to lead a devout life under the plea of impossibility ... [these] can find a wellspring of piety amid the bitter waves of society and hover amid the flames of earthly lusts without singeing the wings of the devout life.¹⁴

However, both approaches share a common understanding that authentic Christian spirituality will necessarily be *both* contemplative and apostolic. Both approaches reverence the mysterious otherness of God and recognise God’s Spirit and presence at the heart of all life. Both embrace God’s design and purpose for the life of the world, manifest especially in the ministry of Jesus.

The second issue was that within the approach to the spiritual life there was clearly a change from an apophatic to a kataphatic spirituality. Apophatic spirituality affirms the absolute unknowability of God and rejects all conceptual attempts to name, symbolise, or speak about God in concrete images. It is the way to God through negation and abandonment of images, through darkness and surrender to the unknown. Kataphatic spirituality affirms that God the creator can be known by way of analogy, through images, symbols, and concepts drawn from human experience in the created world. At the heart is the belief that

¹⁴ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Vintage Spiritual Classics, New York: Vintage Books, 2002, p. XXXVII.

God is a revealing God who seeks to make known the divine Self to the world.

Bérulle and the French school were clearly more apophatic in their outlook. Over time, this strand led to the development in France of a strongly ascetical spirituality. An over-emphasis of this approach led to two extreme forms of spirituality, both of which were condemned by the Church. First, Quietism, which was an extreme form of spiritual passivity, that surrenders all human faculties to the divine, leading to the negation of the role of human action in salvation. Second, Jansenism which brought with it a strong moral rigorism recognising that in one's nothingness and sinfulness in the presence of God, one can only be relieved through seeking maximal purity of moral effort.

The spirituality of Francis de Sales was more kataphatic in its outlook. In the tradition of de Sales it is a spirituality of love more rooted in the visible world. It is a practical, down-to-earth spirituality to be found in the living out of the ordinariness of the everyday. Here a heart ablaze with the love of God is essential, a love fuelled by prayer and the participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Every form of communication – preaching, teaching, writing, spiritual guidance,

daily exchanges – is potentially a medium through which heart might speak to heart, and the love of God be kindled. We find here again the Pauline longing of the heart when he identifies the gifts of the spirit. “The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these.” (*Gal 5:22*) for as St Paul states: “Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (*2 Cor 3:17*)

A third consideration is that, while Bérulle and de Sales are similar in their theological outlook, in their assessment of the nature of the human condition a major difference can be delineated. In the Bérullian current there was little attraction toward a spirit of humanism and this is manifested in their pessimism about human nature. They believed that a spirit of abnegation would lead one to have a very low estimate of all created things, and especially of oneself, and a very high idea of God. The Bérullian current possessed an emphatic sensitivity to humanity's fragility apart from God. “The state to which we have been reduced by the sin of our first father ... is deplorable ... For in this state we possess rights only to nothingness and to hell, and we can do nothing but sin, and we are but a nothingness opposed to God.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Pierre de Bérulle quoted in *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings*, p. 47.

The position of Francis de Sales contracts with this pessimism. There is a strong spirit of optimism in his entire outlook. He was well aware of human weakness and frailty, but his emphasis was much more on our restoration in Christ. The love of God was the foundation of his own life, and he sought to bring that love of God to life in the hearts of the people he encountered from all walks of life. As de Sales states:

'Although our human nature ... is now gravely wounded by sin, nevertheless the holy tendency is still ours to love God above all things as well as the natural light which shows us that His sovereign goodness is more lovable than anything else. Nor is it possible that a man thinking attentively about God, will not fail to experience a certain 'élan' of love that arouses in the depth of our heart.'¹⁶

Central to the optimistic spirituality of de Sales is that human beings are created by and for the God of love and endowed with a desire to return in love to God. This God-directedness is discovered in the heart – the dynamic, holistic core of the person.

Both the Bérullian current and de Sales sought to lead ordinary Christians to a full and fervent interior life that would provide sustenance for their daily living. However, de Sales in

his '*Introduction to the Devout Life*', sought to extend the pursuit of perfection far beyond the monastic context or to the intellectual and educated elite. True devotion is simply the true love of God that 'not only leads us to do well but also to do this carefully, frequently, and promptly.'¹⁷ This life of devotion is possible for any person but 'the gentleman, the worker, the servant, the prince, the widow, the young girl, and the married woman exercise it in different ways... It must also be adapted to the strength, responsibilities and duties of each person.'¹⁸

3. THE LINK BETWEEN THE SPIRITUALITY OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT AND FRANCIS DE SALES

The hallmark of a saint is one who can appropriate those elements of the rich tapestry in the spiritual life of the Church down through the centuries and make it uniquely their own. Their awareness of God's love enables them to live authentically their unique vocation and in response move out in mission to further the kingdom of God among people of all nations. Marcellin Champagnat was trained at St Irenée Seminary and was no doubt exposed to and

¹⁶ St Francis de Sales, *The Art of Loving God*, Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1998, p. 37.

¹⁷ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p.4.

¹⁸ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 7.

formed in the Sulpician tradition. Yet he was exposed to and made aware of other spiritual traditions. He had a great devotion to St John Francis Regis SJ to whose shrine in Lalouvesc he made a number of pilgrimages. The whole Lyon area was one that always had a strong Marian tradition. The books in his personal library when he died reflect an acute appreciation of the spiritual masters. From his life experience there are three aspects of St Marcellin's spirituality that were even more strongly deepened by his exposure to, and reflection on the writings of St Francis de Sales: the Incarnation leads us to the presence of God; a love for the Eucharist and a commitment to both individual and communal prayer. It is to these three aspects that this essay now turns.

3.1 Incarnational: The Presence of God

Chapter V, Part 2, of the *Life* of Marcellin Champagnat is entitled, "His spirit of recollection and the care he took to keep himself in the presence of God." This theme, which runs through the whole of Christian spirituality, became particularly important from the XVII century onwards. Charles Healey remarks that, around 1650, the prestige of the

practice of the presence of God became so great that the spiritual life became identified with it. It became the 'simple practice' and 'short route' for reaching perfection. It would come to be seen as an integral part of contemplative prayer, seeking a more direct pathway to God than that of ideas. For this reason, the presence of God would come to be envisaged as the object of a hazy perception, 'simply gazing', neither 'real presence' nor imaginary presence, but a vague sense that one is known and loved by God.¹⁹

Presence is inconceivable without relationship. Human consciousness can only conceptualise and describe the experience of God by analogy. In this context, thought alone will not allow us to encounter God. We know God only through love. 'The unloving know nothing of God, for God is love.' (1 John 4:7). Francis de Sales in his *'Introduction to the Devout Life'* outlines that the basis of the relationship is in true devotion. He states: 'It is most important that you should thoroughly understand wherein lies the grace of true devotion; and that because while there is undoubtedly such a true devotion, there are also many spurious and idle semblances thereof; and unless you know what is real, you may mistake, and waste your energy in pursuing an empty, profitless shadow.'²⁰

¹⁹ See Charles J Healey, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction to the Heritage*, New York: St Paul's, 1999.

²⁰ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 1.

Marcellin Champagnat, like Francis de Sales, recognised that a large variety of ways had been recorded by the saints for performing one's actions well in order to acquire virtue – those gifts given by the Spirit as an ally on the journey to love experienced through the presence of God. Marcellin, troubled during a retreat, approached the preacher and asked could all the varieties of methods for performing one's actions well be replaced by the exercise of the presence of God. The preacher advised Marcellin with the words of de Sales. 'Consider, I ask you, those spiritual misers; they are never satisfied with the exercises offered them... They never cease to be in quest of some new means of gathering all the sanctity of all the saints into a single sanctity that they would like to have; the result is that they are never happy, especially as they have not the strength to hold on to everything they try to seize, for he who grasps all loses all.'²¹

Furthermore, de Sales states that "God has not made perfection consist in the multiplicity of acts that we do to please him but in the way we do them, which is nothing more than to do the little things we are capable of doing by vocation, doing it in love, through love and for love."²² This is echoed in the words of Marcellin to

those who wished to undertake too much at a time: "Go slowly for virtue does not consist in promising too much, or in undertaking great things, but in being faithful to our ordinary duties." However, the practice of the presence of God was central. As the *Life* attests: "[Fr Champagnat] use to quote the sayings of St Francis de Sales that the presence of God ought to be the daily bread of pious souls. By this he meant that just as we nourish the body by a combination of bread and many sorts of dishes, so for the nourishment of the soul, there is no action and still no more religious exercise that should not be accompanied and sanctified by recalling the presence of God."²³

Marcellin Champagnat's way of practising the exercise of the presence of God consisted in believing with a real and firm faith that God is everywhere present. In his instructions and his meditations he would often comment: "It is in God that we live and move and have our being." (*Acts: 17:28*). This is evident in a letter to Br Francois: "When am I leaving Paris? I have no idea; whenever God wills. If it is for God's glory that I should die in Paris, may his holy will be done and not mine. I am still determined to see it through to the end. Fr Chanut is leaving; here I am all alone with my dreams ... what am

²¹ St Francis de Sales, *Oeuvres*, X, 211 Ed Annecy p. 401. Quoted in Br Jean-Baptiste Furet's, *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, p. 313.

²² St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 36.

²³ Br Jean-Baptiste Furet's, *Life*, p. 316.

I talking about? One is never alone when one is with God.”²⁴

The presence of God kept his character in unvarying peace and tranquillity despite the many challenges he faced both personally and in the formation of the Institute. It was for him a means to avoid sin, to bear with the difficulties that may arise and to rejoice in the sheer gift of life and creation. To a Brother who wanted an explanation of the little progress he made in piety he writes: “I know of only one cause; that is your lack of recollection which makes you oblivious to God’s presence; all your faults stem from the ease with which you lose sight of God.” St. Francis de Sales echoes these thoughts when he writes in his *‘Introduction’*: ‘First, one must have a realisation that His Presence is universal; that is to say, that He is everywhere, and in all, and that there is no place, nothing in this world, devoid of His Most Holy Presence, so that, even as the birds on the wing meet the air continually, we meet with that Presence always and everywhere. It is a truth which all are ready to grant, but all are not equally alive to its importance and so readily lapse into carelessness and irreverence.’²⁵

Marcellin’s experience of the French Revolution and for Francis de Sales, the effects of the Reformation, showed both saints how low humanity can fall. Yet by presenting God’s goodness and Christ’s love as the *raison d’être* of humanity, they challenge humanity to give themselves up to love. Both emphasised that the presence of God must be fed by optimism in the face of human sinfulness. As Marcellin noted:

“Man is so weak that it is dangerous to show him only his frailty and the dark side of his soul. To raise him up and to give him strength to combat his bad inclinations, it is necessary to speak to him of his good qualities and the virtuous dispositions that Providence has placed in him; to teach him how to cultivate these and to have him understand that they are given him as a remedy for his defects. Put aside all fears and troubles and think only of a loving God”.

For de Sales, the devout life embraces every aspect of life; the devout life finds the ideal in the ordinary. For him, there are four virtues that are common to everyone, no matter what his or her state in life, namely gentleness, temperance, modesty and humility. They are not to be seen as anything less than the foundation of the love of God put into action.

²⁴ See Letter 175, 7th March 1838 in *Letters of Marcellin J.B. Champagnat Volume 1 Texts*, Edited by Br Paul Sester fms, trans by Br Leonard Voegtli fms, Rome: Marist General House, 1991.

²⁵ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 50.

The call to live in the presence of God requires neither more nor less than a sense that one is loved totally by God. It is not just a mental belief, but one that consumes the heart and the soul. God invites and gives us the inner power necessary to live out the demands required. As Marcellin said: “St Thomas teaches that when God entrusts a mission to anyone, He gives to them, at the same time, the graces needed to fulfil it properly.”

What grounded this was his awareness of the presence of God and the need to bring that love into the lives of the simple country folk so profoundly affected by the excesses of the revolution. For him this presence of God is imbibed through prayer and participation in the sacramental life. It is here that we see so strongly the influence of St Francis de Sales.

3.2 Love of the Eucharist

St Francis in his *‘Introduction’*, Part 1, Book 5 and in his *‘Treatise’*, Book IV, outlines that the beginning of the journey to love must be a recognition of our sinfulness – those actions that ultimately lead to a breakdown in our relationship with God. The first step is to purify the soul and to do this one must be led

to participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He also strongly urges that one must take on a spiritual director. In Part 2 of the *‘Introduction’* de Sales talks about the necessity of prayer and devotions such as the rosary, the Divine Office or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as a means to allow the soul to encounter God’s unrequited love. These practices are advantageous but for him the ultimate source was the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is ‘the Sun of all spiritual exercises – the very centre point of our Christian religion, the heart of all devotion, the soul of piety – that ineffable mystery which embraces the whole depth of Divine Love.’²⁶

Brother Jean-Baptiste, in both *‘Avis, Leçons, Sentences’* and in Part 2 of the *‘Life’*, dedicates no fewer than 10 chapters to these two issues: first, the need to recognise one’s sinfulness and to have an openness and preparedness to change, and secondly, to the centrality of prayer and participation in devotions, particularly the Eucharist. De Sales saw presence at Eucharist as a priority;

“Strive to your utmost to be present every day at this holy Celebration, in order that with the priest you may offer the sacrifice of your redeemer on behalf of yourself and the whole church to God the Father. If any imperative hindrance prevents your presence at this Sovereign Sacrifice

²⁶ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 68.

of Christ's most true Presence... choose some morning hour in which to unite your intention to that of the whole Christian world, and make the same interior acts of devotion wherever you are that you would make if you were really present at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Church".²⁷

If the thought of the presence of God stirred Marcellin to love, he was more deeply moved by participation in the Eucharist. He called the Eucharist the source of grace, the first and most necessary of all devotions. He saw it as the source of all the virtues particularly the Marist virtues of humility, simplicity and modesty. He is reported to have said:

"A Brother who has the spirit of faith will consider it an enormous sacrifice not to be able to attend Mass every day. If a Brother were to miss through his own fault, in order to give time to study or anything else not absolutely necessary, he would show he has no zeal for his perfection and that he does not love Jesus Christ. Holy Mass, Holy Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament; there you have the source of grace, there you have the first and most indispensable of all devotions".²⁸

For Marcellin, the Lord of the Eucharist was a lover who delighted in their company, flooding their hearts with strength and unbounded joy. He had no patience with the idea of a remote and distant God, and in this he was markedly anti-Jansenistic; any-

thing that threatened to separate humanity from God was the great temptation. His care to carry out the liturgy with dignity, his attention to the cleanliness and decoration of the Church, his evident devotion when saying Mass, his desire to say Mass daily even when at great inconvenience, his care and perseverance in instructing children at first Holy Communion, and his frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament all testify to the ardent love for Christ in this sacramental presence.

3.3 The Centrality of Prayer both Individual and Communal

Overarching this participation in the sacramental life of the Church was for both Francis de Sales and Marcellin Champagnat the commitment to prayer. In de Sales we find: 'Prayer opens the understanding to the brightness of Divine light and the will to the warmth of heavenly love – nothing can so effectively purify the mind from its many ignorances, or the will from its perverse affections... Believe me there is no way to God save through this door.'²⁹ Marcellin echoes this with his own analogy: 'Prayer is as indispensable for our soul to preserve the life of grace, as food is for our body to preserve our

²⁷ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p.68.

²⁸ Br Jean-Baptiste Furet's, *Life*, p. 306.

²⁹ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction*, p. 48.

health and natural life.’ Further he states at one of the Brothers’ retreats:

“We can feel sure about the virtue of truly Christian persons, no matter what danger he is exposed to, if they are faithful to mental prayer, examination of conscience and reception of the sacraments . . . All those who become bored with their state, all those who lose their vocation, or who, by their disedifying conduct, deserved to be treated as useless individuals, reach that position only because they neglected these exercises of piety. We must be firmly convinced that praying is one’s normal condition, his first duty, his greatest need, his only resource, his greatest consolation.”

The objective behind every conference Marcellin gave on prayer was to inspire confidence in God. ‘The more graces we ask of God, the more we obtain. To ask much from men is a sure way to receive nothing, you ask them for little, if you hope to receive something. With God we must proceed differently: it is a tribute to his power and goodness, to make great demands on him.’

The dearest wish of his heart was to inspire his Brothers with a love of prayer to lead them to understand its importance and benefits. Each Brother was required to participate in frequent interviews in which he was required to give an account of his meditation and of his success in all the other religious exercises. For

Marcellin, pious Brothers are the pillars of the Institute and no matter what may be their talents in other respects, no matter what their strength and their health, they spread God’s spirit of love.

For Marcellin, mental prayer and sin cannot exist together. Experience showed him that indeed those who practice mental prayer do not fall easily into God’s disfavour; and if they unfortunately happen to fall, provided they persevere in prayer, they soon enter into themselves and return to God. Prayer became a safety net that filtered out pride and filled one with a calm resignation to the will of God. He states clearly: ‘I could never undertake anything without having long recommended it to God; firstly, because it is easy to be deceived and to mistake the views of one’s own mind for plans inspired by God; and secondly, we can achieve nothing without the help and protection of heaven.’³¹

One final connection between Francis de Sales and Marcellin Champagnat was a strong belief in the communal power of prayer. Prayer is both personal and communal and in this context one connects with the wider Church. It also connects with Jesus’ proclamation: “I tell you solemnly again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted by my Father in

³⁰ Quoted in Br Jean-Baptiste Furet’s, *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, p. 300.

heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them.” (*Mt 18:20*)

De Sales confidently writes:

“Moreover there is always more profit and more consolation in the public Offices of the Church than in private acts of devotion, God having willed to give the preference to communion in prayer over all individual action. Be ready to take part in activities of the Church... this will be pleasing to God... it is always a work of love to join with others and take part in their good works. And although it may be possible that you can use equally profitable devotions by yourself as in common with others – perhaps even you may like doing so best – nevertheless God is more glorified when we unite with our brethren and neighbours and join our offerings to theirs”.³¹

Marcellin echoes this call when his Brothers are challenged about their devotion:

“I am convinced that the Office of the Blessed Virgin far from being an aggravation of their laborious task, is a consolation and a relief for the Brothers... they have the consolation of being united to so many other religious and so many of the pious faithful who pay this tribute to Mary. As to the objection that they don’t understand Latin, I agree they don’t, but God does, and their prayer is no less pleasing to him, provided the interior spirit and a genuine heart inspire it”.³²

4. CONCLUSION

For both Francis de Sales and Marcellin Champagnat the love of God was the foundation of their lives and they sought to bring that love of God to life in the hearts of people they encountered from all walks of life. In both, there was a strong spirit of optimism; yet they were well aware of human weakness and frailty. In the Incarnate Word ordinary Christians could find meaning and inner strength. They sought to lead ordinary Christians to a full and fervent interior life that would manifest itself in all aspects of their lives which would lead to an encounter with a God, real and present, in their daily lives through experience of family, sacrament and community. It was a message for all people, religious and lay.

As saints of the Church, they leave a charism, a gift from the Holy Spirit, which can enliven the hearts of the faithful who are open to the mystery that is God’s call. The call to come to know God through being present to his love in prayer and the Sacraments, living in the way of Mary and the first apostles, provides a paradigm for a new model of Church. It enables ordinary people to come to live out their faith vocation knowing that, at the moment of the ‘*eschaton*’, God will reward those whose hearts did not rest until they rested in him.

³¹ St Francis de Sales, Introduction, p. 70.

³² Quoted in Br Jean-Baptiste Furet’s, *Life*, p 301-302.

Marcellin Champagnat was a man of his time. He lived through the excesses of the French Revolution and the impiety it fostered. As with many of his contemporaries, his early schooling was inadequate, but with faith and determination built on the foundation of a loving relationship with his God, he was able to overcome numerous obstacles, both personal and communal, to provide a legacy for the Church. This legacy sees his Institute educating millions of children and inspiring many Marist lay men and women to rekindle the fire of their faith by coming to experience through their Marist spirituality, God's unfathomable mystery and love.

Marcellin was formed strongly by the Bérullian current of spirituality. Yet his own experience of Christ allowed him to deepen his formation by being open to the spiritual message of St Francis de Sales. His focus was on an apostolic spirituality formed by contemplative practice, a reversal of the Bérullian outlook. His Christocentric approach to spirituality that had at its centre a contemplation of the Incarnate Christ by a continual presence to 'the Crib, the Cross and the Altar' enabled him to temper the

more ascetical devotional outlook of the Bérullian current. Finally, in Francis De Sales optimism about the human person, in contrast to the more pessimistic view of human nature in the French school, Marcellin found a means that through a love of prayer and the Sacraments one can encounter the presence of God. Living in the presence of God one learns to love, and be loved, unconditionally by God.

God loves all humanity. This is why Jesus, Mary and Joseph were so central to Marcellin's spirituality. Through the faithfulness of their lives, as human beings they came to experience the profound love of God that opened for them the mystery of the divine heart. Each Christian's words and life must make this proclamation resound: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me...I am the way, and the truth and the life.' (Jn 14:1,6) Marcellin's character was slowly chiselled out in the political, social and religious complexity that was post-revolutionary France; one could further say, that his uniquely Marian spirituality was forged through the furnace that is God's love.

HOW A FOUNDER IS FORGED? (Part 2)*

The Formation of Marcellin in the Major Seminary



Manuel Mesonero
Sánchez, fms

"Teaching that impacts is not head to head,
but heart to heart
Howard G. Hendricks

Marcellin entered the major seminary in Lyon¹ in November 1813. He was 24 years old and had consolidated his earlier turnaround. The years spent at Saint Irénée were to be the more fruitful ones of his formation as a priest. During these years, he prepared himself in a responsible way for his ministerial vocation. Moreover, he felt the call to be a founder of a teaching institute:

"Before leaving the Seminary in Lyon ... I seriously thought of creating a society of teachers which I believed was my duty to consecrate to the Mother of God".²

A principal source for this article is the *Le Manuel du Séminariste*, since

it offers us inside information regarding the life and formation of the seminarians of the time.³

In addition, we cannot overlook the social context: the Restoration. With the exit of Napoleon from the political stage, the Church began to organise itself and again to foster a climate of popular religiosity. This situation was enthusiastically embraced in the seminary in Lyon, since the seminarians were indispensable for this immense task. The general objective was the re-Christianisation of society, since the Revolution had diminished the Church in rural areas. This widely embraced sentiment resulted in an explosion of new religious institutes which in the

* This article is a continuation of the previous one of the same name published in *Marist Notebooks* 36

¹ In 1811, the Society of Saint Sulpician was suppressed with the result that the Founder received his formation from quite young priests, but who still "faithfully followed the Sulpician traditions". Cf. ALONSO, Luis, *La formación intelectual del Jn. Cl. Colin 1813-16. Dissertation Lateranum*, Rome, 1977, p. 26-7

² Letter 34

³ 'The Seminarian's Manual'. In 1815 the *Manuel à l'usage des séminaristes* by Bochart was published. It was a traditional manual. It only contained the plan of studies and method. DE PINS later later published, in 1824 and 1833, a *Petit Manuel* of the Seminary of Saint Irénée, Gaston de Pins Edic. Lyon, Rusand. "We can be certain that this manual indicated the regime of life" of the seminarians of the time of Champagnat" Cf. ALONSO, Luis *op.cit* p. 27

space of just a few years would assume a role similar to that of the great religious orders of the past.⁴

Marcellin lived in Lyon within this highly charged religious milieu, and surrounded by companions who were urging one another to take their places in the immense task of a new evangelisation for all of France.

1. PROFESSORS AND COURSES

The first and most important influence on a seminarian is typically that of his formators. This was certainly the case for Marcellin since his professors were the principal members of the seminary's faculty. In the main, they were a team of young men, intelligent, marked by a spirit of faith and dynamism, and formed in the Sulpician tradition.

The Rector was Philibert Gardette (48 years old).⁵ Lacroix was the Director of Studies. Other professors in-

cluded: Simon Cattet, who taught Dogma; Jean Cholleton (25 years old) who taught Moral Theology, was Marcellin's spiritual director, and later became a Marist himself; Jean-Marie Mioland (25 years old), the future Bishop of Amiens and Archbishop of Toulouse, who taught Liturgy; and Mathieu Menaide, who was the Econome.

The spirituality of the Seminary was typical of the "French School"⁶, but refracted through a Sulpician prism. For this reason, we can say that his formation was Sulpician.⁷

One way into the subject of this article would be to look at the courses taught at the seminary in Lyon at that time, analysing their contents and the theological currents of the period. Dogma was taught from a text by Bailly that had little Biblical foundation and was quite apologetic. In moral theology, which was considered quite important, the prevailing discourse at the time was rigorist, with a notable Jansenist influence.⁸ Cholleton,⁹ who

⁴ The more evident sign that such a pervasive social and ecclesial environment was present in the seminary of Lyon is that several founders of religious institutes came from it. Among these was the Society of Mary, and within it the Marists of Marcellin.

⁵ During the Revolution (1793), he was arrested and deported to the French Guyana, and he had already been Superior of the Minor Seminary of St. Jodard.

⁶ The French School, in the strict sense, refers to the teaching of Bérulle and his more important disciples. The sense is of "a typical manner of understanding and living the Gospel", Cf. DEVILLE, R., *The French School of Spirituality*, EP Roma 1990 p. 15. The Society of St Sulpice identifies itself with this spirituality.

⁷ The Society of priests of St. Sulpice started on June 25, 1642, in the Parish of St. Sulpice (Paris) where Jean-Jacques Olier was parish priest. He founded a community for the spiritual formation of future priests who went to study at the Sorbonne

⁸ BAILLY, L. *Theologia Dogmatica et moralis ad usum Seminariorum*, 8 vol., en - 12, Lyon 1810. Cf. LFI, 40

⁹ An ongoing mentor for Marcellin in later years

was formed by the Sulpicians, took a more liberal approach, but one that did not go as far as the probabilism of the Jesuits or the balance of Alphonsus Ligouri.¹¹ The Blessed Virgin enjoyed a special place in the formation programme, shaped by the particular Marian emphases of Bérulle and Olier.

To go down this doctrinal and theological path, however, would not be the best course to take principally because teaching that has an impact is “not from head to head, but from heart to heart”.¹¹ Personal experience teaches us that the influence of formators comes more from who they are than what they teach. This view is supported by the observation that Marcellin’s later writings lacked any definitive doctrinal line and did not reflect the content of what he was taught.

Our way of proceeding will therefore be quite different. We will unpack the kind of formation given in the Seminary of Saint Irénée. We will also look at the teaching methods advocated by the formators. **Then we will offer evidence of the lat-**

er educational approach adopted by Marcellin, especially that which became constitutive of Marist spirituality and life.

2. THE SEMINARY TIMETABLE AND USE OF THE TIME

The following of Christ through a regulated life and the making use of all available time, so typical to the spirituality of Saint Marcellin, have their origin in his formation at Saint Irénée where spiritual exercises were ordered by the sound of the bell. In order to develop good discipline, the formators stressed the importance of “punctuality, silence and the good use of time”.¹²

A look at their daily schedule can help us to understand this influence better. They rose early and at the first sound of the bell. Then followed morning prayer and meditation together, and Mass.¹³ Then there were breakfast and classes where silence, attention and obedience were demanded. The morning finished with an examination of conscience.¹⁴

¹⁰ It is a question of two currents of moral theology which put freedom of conscience before doubt or the laws which were not clear

¹¹ Phrase of Howard G. Hendricks (1924-2013) – distinguished professor and president of the Center for Christian leadership in the Theological Seminary of Dallas, Texas.

¹² CARD. M. J. H. *op.cit.* p. 30

¹³ In discernment with his spiritual Director, each Seminarian determined the frequency with which he received Communion. MANUAL, p. 89

¹⁴ In this examen they would evaluate their principal defect, MANUAL, p. 89

During the day, there were two visits to the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁵ In the early evening there was spiritual reading; then supper, followed by night prayer,¹⁶ the reading of the meditation for the following day, and bed.¹⁷ In this daily rhythm, great importance was put especially on silence, prayer, self-examination, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The professors demanded faithful and strict adherence to this regimen.¹⁸

A passion for work, which characterised Marcellin and which became a trait of Marist pedagogy and life, is sourced in making the best use of time. A favourite expression of the Founder, “never be idle”,¹⁹ contrasts somewhat with today’s preference for free time:

“I am going to send Brother Marie-Jubin to learn at the school for deaf-mutes. When I can, I think of going myself also. It is essential that we do not waste time.” (Letter 176)

When writing to Brother François from Paris, Marcellin insisted in that

“nobody be idle”.²⁰ He himself expressed his desire not to waste his time in Paris when he wrote that he wanted to make use of an opportunity to learn how to educate the hearing impaired.²¹ A disciplined life suited the Founder; having a daily schedule played an important role for him. We can see this in an expression from the last days of his life, one which could very well have been from his life as seminarian:

“I follow the regulations of the house in everything that my going out allows me. I rise at the first strike of the bell, go to meditation and to the other spiritual exercises, to meals, to recreations.”²²

3. PRAYER PRACTICES: A POPULAR AND AFFECTIVE PIETY

The way of living and expressing faith has changed very much in our society. At the time of Marcellin, a major way it was lived was through

¹⁵ The first after recreation in the middle of the day, and the other one before going to bed, MANUAL 102

¹⁶ They did another examination of conscience, MANUAL 67

¹⁷ ZIND 1, N° 126, January 1976, pp. 6-7

¹⁸ In La Valla, and then at the Hermitage, we see similarities to this schedule, such as rising early, the practices of piety at the beginning of the day, the visits to the Blessed Sacrament or the prayers before and after dinner.

¹⁹ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, p. 77 “Never be idle”

²⁰ Letter 67

²¹ Letter 176

²² Letter 183

²³ “True and living devotion, Philothea, presupposes love of God ... In last instance, devotion is nothing more but agility and spiritual liveliness, by means of which charity exercises its action in us, and we, through it act promptly and fondly.” St Francis De SALES. *Introduction to Devout Life*. BAC, Madrid 1988, p. 22

devotions.²³ Marcellin's spiritual life did not change when he left the seminary. The prayers he used in the seminary came to be integrated into the community prayer of the Brothers, and subsequently became part of the section on prayer in the Rule of 1837. We see this, for example, in Marian prayers such as the Hail Mary,²⁴ the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*,²⁵ the *Angelus*,²⁶ the Rosary,²⁷ the *Memorare*,²⁸ the Litanies of the name of Mary,²⁹ or the prayer, *O Jésus vivant en Marie!*³⁰

If we compare the morning prayers from the seminary with those in the "Manuel de Pieté"³¹ of the Marist Brothers, we see that they are the same.³² One of the ones that was emphasised was the prayer *O Jésus vivant en Marie!*³³ The text ex-

presses a plea to the Lord so that the Brothers could say like Mary and like Saint Paul: "It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me". (Gal. 2:20). The title of this prayer in Rule of 1837 clearly expresses this meaning: "Prayer to Invoke in Me the Life of Jesus"³⁴. Immediately after this prayer, the Brothers recited two other prayers used in the Seminary: "O, Mary, Holy Virgin!"³⁵ and "Ave Joseph"³⁶. Two other prayers that are typical of Sulpician piety and that the Brothers said daily were the Litanies of the Names of Jesus and of Mary.³⁷ They represent the way of expression of the devotion to Jesus and Mary of this school of spirituality. These names were to be said with respect; there was even to be a bowing of the head, as it is done in

²⁴ Among other moments, at the beginning of the class. Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, R. 37, 2, 40 p. 26

²⁵ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 2, 40 p. 26

²⁶ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 2 19, p. 21

²⁷ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 2, 29, p. 23

²⁸ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 2, 40, p. 26

²⁹ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 4, 15, p. 37

³⁰ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 2, 40, p. 26

³¹ This book of piety of the Brothers, published in 1855 contains with some modifications the prayers of the Rule of 1837... Cf. M.P. p. 149 and following

³² The variations refer only to the moment of the day or to the language (from the Latin of the seminary to the French of the Hermitage)

³³ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT. Rule of 1837, 2. 40, p. 26. This prayer was said in the whole of France but with important variations. The Rule of 1837 has it with the same redaction as that of the Seminary of Saint Irénée. Cf. DE PINS, p. 9. In the Seminary, Marcellin would have recited it each morning and in the evening after the examen.

³⁴ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT R. 37, p.104

³⁵ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, R. 37, 2, 40, p. 26 and in DE PINS p. 243 recited in Latin

³⁶ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, r. 37, 2, 40 P. 26 and in DE PINS, P. 121

³⁷ These prayers were recited in the afternoon prayer, on alternate days: one day the Litanies of Jesus and the other day the Litanies of Mary. Marcellin put them in the Morning Prayer. Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, 4, 15, p. 37

naming the Trinity, according to Marcellin.

In addition, the devotions that the Brothers had to inspire the children also had their origin in the practices of the seminary. This is what happens with those to Saint Joseph, their Guardian Angels and their Patron Saints.³⁸ Devotion to Saint Joseph comes “after that of Mary”³⁹. In order not to neglect this saint, the Founder proposed that the prayer “*Ave Joseph, gratiae plene*”⁴⁰ after the nightly examen.⁴¹

In addition, we have two practices that were features of the Sulpician tradition: celebrations associated with the anniversary of one’s Baptism and that of one’s priestly ordination.⁴² In the case of Baptism, we know that Marcellin observed this this custom from at least his time as a seminarian, as is evidenced in his resolu-

tions.⁴³ Regarding the anniversary of his ordination, Marcellin put into practice the advice received in Saint Irénée: “It is the habit of all good priests to mark the anniversary of their ordination, and to renew the ecclesiastical promises.”⁴⁴

We short, we can say that the tradition of Marist piety was marked at the time of its origin by oral prayers which came from the seminary, and which had their roots in popular piety. They were prayers that were strongly affective in their style, and were expressed in devotions adapted to our distinctively Marist spirituality.

4. MEDITATION AND ITS METHOD

To oral prayer we can add meditation, something else that was important in the seminary. Since Mass

³⁸ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, C.M.8.3.01. p. 78. Cf. DE PINS, p. 113 and following. Rule of 1837 4. 14. P. 37. The devotions to the Virgin, to Saint Joseph, the Guardian Angels and the patron saint are proposed to the seminarians, even in the same order, than those mentioned in the Rules. Cf. DE PINS P. 113 to 122

³⁹ Devotion to Saint Joseph at the time of Marcellin is considered as “a necessary consequence of the devotion that we have for Mary because of the close relationship which he has had with the divine Mother”. This devotion was practised in the seminary, during the visit to the Blessed Sacrament DE PINS. O. C P.119

⁴⁰ Cf. Letter 238

⁴¹ CHAMPAGNAT, Rule of 1837, p. 106

⁴² Cf. DE PINS, p. 128 and 133

⁴³ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, C.M.R. p. 87. Proposals made on the anniversary of his Baptism in 1815 and CHAMPAGNAT C.M.R. p. 109 for the proposals of 1821

⁴⁴ Cf. DE PINS, p. 134 “Renewal of the clerical promises and of the anniversary of ordination”

⁴⁵ SALES F. *Introduction à la vie dévote*, Brignon, Lyon 1821. In the last pages of this edition, these prayers appear for Mass. This section bears the title of “Spiritual Exercises during Holy Mass”, p. 402 ff.

was Latin and unintelligible to many, it became filled with pious practices;⁴⁵ meditation became the prayer to which much importance was given, for practical reasons rather than theological ones⁴⁶.

At this time, the classical method of meditation, followed not only in seminaries but also in the religious institutes, was a three-step process. The Brothers had a room for this purpose. Brother Jean-Baptiste portrays the Founder as a true master of it.⁴⁷

The meditation method taught by the Founder comprised three parts, with each part subdivided into three sub-parts. These were: THE PREPARATION. (1: place oneself in the presence of God; 2: ask the Spirit for enlightenment; 3: composition of place). THE MEDITATION. (4: understand the truths; 5: express aff-

fections to the Lord; 6: make firm resolutions). THE CONCLUSION (7: give thanks for what has been received; 8: offer resolutions; 9: ask for the grace to be faithful). The meditation ended with a spiritual bouquet, which consisted in the choice of a good thought related to the theme of the meditation and which could be repeated as a short prayer during the day.⁴⁸

Marcellin saw prayer to come from a need of the heart.⁴⁹ Just as a small child needed a close and affectionate relationship with his or her mother, a Brother needed prayer to be with the Father. This orientation to prayer comes straight from Francis de Sales: “children, just by hearing their mothers singing to them, learn to speak her language”⁵⁰ quite naturally. In another figurative expression, he wrote that, just as the fish cannot live out of water; neither can a Brother live

⁴⁶ In the *Life*, first edition of 1856, the theme of the Mass occupies 16 lines, while the commentary on meditation occupies 133. Cf. FURET, p. 314 and 315. Meditation, together with the letter on obedience of Saint Ignatius and the account of conscience are the only points that the Rule of 1837 explains doctrinally.

⁴⁷ An example of this image which he gives of the Saint is the talk with Br. Laurent who “had forgotten the theme of the meditation given the previous night” Cf. FURET, p. 320

⁴⁸ In this way of making meditation, Champagnat stands out because of his simplicity and the balanced integration of elements of the different schools, which enrich the method of the Seminary. De Sales takes what characterizes him the most: the presence of God, at the beginning of it as well as during the day as a remote preparation, the importance given to affections and to the spiritual bouquet. From Saint Ignatius he assumes the reading of the theme the previous night and the importance given to silence during the time of rest, which precedes it.

⁴⁹ Make them feel (the children) that without virtue, **without piety**, without the fear of God, they will never **be happy**” Letter 45

⁵⁰ For a comparative study of methods of meditation, the following works can be consulted: DE SALES, F. *Introduction to Devout Life*. BAC Madrid, 1988, 2, 1 p. 67 LIGUORI, A. *The true spouse of Jesus Christ that is the holy nun, by means of the virtue proper of a religious*. Part II Bassano. 1842, p. 45 ANONYMOUS *Meditations according to the method of Saint Ignatius*. Pelisse frères, Paris 1837, p. 1.

his religious spirit faithfully without meditation.⁵¹ It was important not only to do it, but to draw fruit from it. For this, there was nothing better than having a good method. At the time of the Founder, meditation was always done in community.

5. SPIRITUAL READING AND THE INFLUENCE OF FRANCIS DE SALES

The spiritual reading books used at Saint Irénée proved to be a valuable legacy for Marcellin. When he was ordained priest, he purchased books for his personal library that were almost one hundred per cent from those recommended by the seminary. In turn, he passed them on to be read by the Brothers.⁵²

Le Combat spirituel; Perfection chrétienne;
Introduction à la vie dévote;
Esprit du christianisme; Guide des pécheurs;
Traité de l'amour de Dieu;
L'esprit de saint François de Sales.⁵³

Looking at these we can see the significance influence that Saint Francis de Sales had in the formation offered at Saint Irénée. Three of the first seven books on this list are from de Sales. In addition, we know that one of the young seminarian's bedside books was *Le directeur spirituel des âmes dévotes et religieuses* written de Sales (1802 edition).⁵⁴ It was the Founder himself who recommended the books of de Sales to the Brothers and his works were read in the dining room.⁵⁵

"In reading or listening to the reading of the life of Saint Francis de Sales, Founder of the Sisters of the Visitation, and that of Father Champagnat, Founder of the Little Brothers of Mary, how many comparisons can be made! Let us not understate them. Both priests have the same spirit and almost the same Rules."⁵⁶

Brother François compared Marcellin with de Sales, to the extent of seeing him as a disciple. This is because both spiritualities are similar in

⁵¹ "... you know better than I that the fish cannot live a long time outside the water. Only the retreat and the meditation of the great truths can maintain the religious spirit" Letter 45

⁵² For a comparative study one may consult the Annex of the Library of Father Champagnat and the books recommended by Br. François at the end of his work, and those presented by DE PINS p. 320 and ff. Rodriguez appears as the first one among those recommended. Champagnat includes it as a fully trustworthy book for the reading of the Brothers. Cf. CHAMPAGNAT Rule of 1837, 2.37, p. 25

⁵³ DE PINS p. 327

⁵⁴ DE SALES F. *Le directeur spirituel des âmes dévotes et religieuses*, Girard, Lyon 1802 - The spiritual director of devout and religious souls - The book signed by Marcellin as a sign of his ownership is kept in the Archives in Rome

⁵⁵ Br. François also had a signed copy of this same book but of a later edition. The Founder himself recommended the books to the Brother.

⁵⁶ FRANÇOIS, p. 115

their emphases on a strong unity between the human and the spiritual, action and contemplation, and the interior and exterior life. This integration is at the nucleus of Marist simplicity.⁵⁷

“If Jesus lives in our heart, he will also live in our actions; he will be seen in your eyes, mouth, hands, even in your hair.”⁵⁸

6. THE PRAYER OF THE HOUR

The presence of God, a significant element of Marcellin’s spirituality, was exemplified in the practice of the prayer of the hour which was followed in the first schools. The prayer of the hour had been recited during classes in the seminary and Marcellin later ensured it became a custom of Marist classrooms. The children commenced with the same prayers: the *Veni Sancte Spiritu*, and the Hail Mary.⁵⁹

Brother François later composed this prayer to explain the intention of these prayers at the beginning of the class:

“In reciting the *Veni Sancte* and the Hail Mary at the beginning of class, I have the intention

of telling you to come to occupy my place, to guide my hands, my feet, my lips, my whole person, in such a way, that I am only the instrument with which you act”⁶⁰.

The person at prayer asks Mary and the Holy Spirit to occupy his place, which implies an attitude of docility and spiritual indifference. In this way, the freedom of action of the Spirit is embraced. For this, it is necessary to renounce ourselves. It is similar to the attitude advocated by Saint Jean Eudes.

“Saint Jean Eudes . . . repeatedly suggests, for example, that we raise our heart to Jesus at the beginning of our actions to tell him:
1st that we renounce ourselves, our self-love, our own spirit . . .
2nd that we give ourselves to him, to his Divine Spirit, and take on his dispositions and intentions”⁶¹.

The prayer of the hour was an effective means not only of being mindful of the presence of God, but also a practical example of docility to grace. It is about “surrendering ourselves at the beginning of our tasks,”⁶² so that the Spirit of Jesus will be the one to guide us in everything. Education is more the work of the Spirit than of the educator.

⁵⁷ For this argument see, CORRIGNAN F. o.c.p.86ff

⁵⁸ COTTIGNAN F. *op.cit.* p. 87

⁵⁹ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT R. 37, 6, 4, p. 48. And for the Sulpician confront with ICARD o. c. p. 238

⁶⁰ BALKO 1. P. 165

⁶¹ DEVILLE, R. *op.cit.* p.100

⁶² DEVILLE, R. *op.cit.* p.110

7. THE EUCHARIST AND VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Marcellin, like every seminarian, received a formation directed to developing his priestly vocation. In this vocation, the Eucharist occupies a central place. His appreciation for the Eucharist can be seen by the impression he gave when celebrating Mass:

“Of all the priests that I have seen at the altar – I am 76 years old – there is no one who has left me a memory of such a living faith and of such an ardent love as Father Champagnat did.”⁶³

The Eucharist was his preferred place for remembering people in prayer. Here he was united to the love to Christ and to people in such a way that that these people are loved in the Lord. The Founder saw the Eucharist as an affective place where he was mindful of the Brothers and prayed for them. He often told the that he remembered them “every day”⁶⁴ in this Sacrament. This is how he does it in this letter to Brother Jérôme:

“I never go up to the holy altar without praying for you”⁶⁵.

This text is not an isolated example.⁶⁶ Praying for the Brothers was a daily practice of the Founder. This is how he expressed it in his Circular of January 1836:

“My heart remembers you every day and I bring all of you to the holy altar of the Lord”⁶⁷.

Daily Eucharist was for him a necessity, and he went to great lengths to be able to celebrate it: “I saw him walk five or six leagues in order to be able to say Mass. Certainly, many examples could be given of this.”⁶⁸

Now we have to ask ourselves if this love for the Eucharist, something proper to his own vocation as a priest, was something he passed on as a legacy in the spirituality of the Brothers. His biographer affirms that it was, giving to this Sacrament one of the first three places in our spirituality. The Founder’s notebooks attest this, telling the Brothers that it was necessary to hear Mass every day, including when one travelled, if time permitted it:

“Note: 1st when one travels, it is necessary to hear Mass always, whenever it is possible.”⁶⁹

⁶³ P. Pierre-Louis Mallaure. SUMMARIUM. Witness n° 18. P. Pierre-Louis Mallaure

⁶⁴ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, Letters 14, 180, 144, 249

⁶⁵ Letter 244

⁶⁶ Cf. Letters 14, 63, 79, 180, 244, 249

⁶⁷ Letter 63

⁶⁸ SUMMARIUM. Witness n° 5, Br. Jérôme.

⁶⁹ CHAMPAGNAT, C.M. 8, 3,02 p. 99

The Rule of 1837 speaks of the custom in the Institute of receiving Communion twice a week, and the possibility of receiving it one other day with the permission of the Superior.⁷⁰ To the requests of the Brothers to receive Communion a third time, Father Champagnat never gave a negative answer.⁷¹ In this way, the Founder accepted and aligned himself with the directives of the Council of Trent which advised “frequent Communion”.⁷² He gave only one reason for not receiving Communion: the advice of the confessor:⁷³

“They will have a special appreciation for Holy Communion; they will never dispense themselves from it, if it is not on the advice of the confessor.”⁷⁴

Marcellin also offered his disciples “a practical way to follow the Mass.”⁷⁵ This was a few simple orientations for

contemplating the mysteries, and some necessary attitudes for different parts of the liturgy.⁷⁶

In the spirituality of the time, love for the Eucharist the spirituality of that time was extended through the visits to the Blessed Sacrament⁷⁷. Marcellin, as a legacy of his formation, maintained this devotion after he left the seminary, considering it as a practice of piety in which he showed his love of Jesus and Mary. In the Seminary, the practice had been fostered and great importance given to it:

“Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is, no doubt, one of the stronger devotions, greatly pleasing to God, and of greater advantage for us. Among the practices of this devotion, second to receiving Communion itself, the one that is most useful and recommended is that of making frequent visits to Jesus Christ, present in this Sacrament of his love.”⁷⁸

⁷⁰ They will receive communion on Thursday and Sunday... “CHAMPAGNAT R. 37, 4, 2 p. 34

⁷¹ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, Letters 24, 49, 247

⁷² The term comes from the Council of Trent which sees the presence of Christ in this Sacrament to “be eaten” DENZ 1641, 1656. Quoted in RODRIGUEZ A.A. Theological dictionary of consecrated life, Ancora, Milan 1994, p. 719. Sales has good arguments on this theme, Cf. CAMUS p. 306.

⁷³ The biographer expresses the “infinite loss” which supposes to leave communion, and the “immense good” that it supposes to receive it and he exposes the different arguments for its practice, supporting himself on authors of that time, Cf. FURET p. 338

⁷⁴ CHAMPAGNAT, C. M. 8, 304, p. 132. Notebook of the Rules of the Saint.

⁷⁵ Cf. CHAMPAGNAT, C. M. 8, 303, p. 122 Way to hear Mass

⁷⁶ This way of following the Eucharist was current within the Christian people, before the lack of understanding of the Mass celebrated daily in Latin. Two examples are Sales, p. 402 and following and LIGUORI, VUSITES, p. 183 and following. The Brothers also have these prayers in M. P. p. 184 s-

⁷⁷ Beginning with the balanced theology of Saint Thomas, this devotion rapidly flourishes. Saint Teresa “strengthens” the thanksgiving of communion as a mystical moment. DE SALES favours the Eucharistic experience. The real Presence gives liturgy respect and solemnity. The spiritual life reflects this presence in the visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Cf. VILLER *Dictionnaire de spiritualité. Beauchesne, Paris 1961. T. IV, p. 1606*

⁷⁸ DE PINS, p. 81

His Resolutions and the Rule of 1837 contain echoes of this sentiment. One of them is his two-fold custom of visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Virgin: "During the day I will always go to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin."⁷⁹ He then incorporated his approaches to devotion of the Blessed Sacrament into the Rule of 1837, thus converting them into a characteristic practice of the Marist spiritual life. In the Circular of 1828, asking for prayers for the success of the Marist priests on their trip to Rome, we can see this two-fold practice that he himself used.⁸⁰ Another circumstance for making visits to the Blessed Sacrament was when undertaking a trip or going on an outing:

"The Brothers will always make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament before going out, as well as when they return, as soon as this is possible."⁸¹

A further example is the advice that the Founder gave in one of his Circulars to convoke the Brothers to their annual holidays at the Hermitage.⁸² The first of his five points of advice is precisely not to forget, on ar-

rival at the Hermitage, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

These texts present the making of visits to the Blessed Sacrament as a way to renew a sense of the presence of God during key moments: in the middle of the day, and in activities that brought distraction such as travelling or outings. Once again, the examples are numerous, as also are reports of the deep impression that Marcellin left when people saw him praying during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament:

"Some neighbours of the Hermitage have declared that whenever they could they would join him in his visit at 11.30am to hear him recite the prayer: 'Nous te saluons, douce Vierge Marie, etc.' in which he showed such feeling that it reached the soul." (Witness of Brother Romain)⁸³

8. LOVE FOR MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

Marcellin's formation influenced the way that he approached devotion to Mary and love of her as our Good Mother, particularly in her unity and harmony

⁷⁹ CHAMPAGNAT, C. M. R. 1, p. 113

⁸⁰ "As soon as you receive our letter you will recite the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, with the children, during nine consecutive days, at the end of the morning class or during the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, asking for a happy trip of the Bishop and for those accompanying him". Letters 10

⁸¹ CHAMPAGNAT, R. 37, 8, 1, p. 55

⁸² I refer to Letter 62. In this circular, the Saint gives five advices related with the stay in the Hermitage: the schedule and the work. The first one begins like this: "1st. on arriving, visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Superior or the one replacing him, to whom is presented the account book"

⁸³ SUMMARIUM, Witness n° 2, Br. Romain

with her Son. This can be captured by the expression: Marcellin always found Mary together with Jesus. The Bérullian teaching of the seminary insisted that “to speak to Mary is to speak to Jesus”⁸⁴ since as Mother she “has a special union with her Son; God is her only love.”⁸⁵

This approach is not found explicated in the writings of the Founder but only because Marcellin did not develop a comprehensive written body of doctrine. His thinking is, however, clearly in evidence in the way he always put the names of Jesus and Mary together in his letters.⁸⁶ For example, the typical formula with which he concluded his letters was: “I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.”⁸⁷ A more complete and significant expression of the Marian worship of the Founder is in this letter:

“Mary, yes, only Mary is our prosperity, for without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have

everything because Mary always has her adorable Son either in her arms or in her heart.”⁸⁸

This shows that Mary is always to be contemplated “from the perspective of her maternity.”⁸⁹ It is not possible for a mother to stop being mother and, therefore, she remains completely attentive to her Son, whether she is with him or far away.

Besides, graces given by Mary are, in reality, graces from Jesus. The facility to obtain them is because of the union between the two. This relates to the mystery of the Incarnation, which is inseparable from the mystery of Mary’s maternity. Why is Mary presented as the locus of Marist prosperity? Because she always has her “adorable Son” with her. This is precisely the argument of Olier: “To the Blessed Virgin, nothing will be denied ... He always wants what she wants, and desires what she desires.”⁹⁰

⁸⁴ BÉRULLE, *Œuvres Complètes, Vie de Jésus*, Migne, Paris 1856, p. 458 .

⁸⁵ DANIELOU, *Marie dans la spiritualité française. Etudes Mayo*. 1954, Paris p. 152-3. Olier adores the mystery of the life of Jesus in Mary in such a way that “it becomes the principal object of his contemplation.” GRISON, M. *Monsieur Olier de la Très Sainte Vierge*. Nevers, Paris 1945, p. 10. In fact, during the time of pregnancy “He had only one life with her.” GRISON, M. *op.cit.* p.10

⁸⁶ The sixth chapter can be consulted, in number 7, *Mary always has Jesus*.

⁸⁷ Saint Jean Eudes has commented better on this union of hearts, “Jesus lives and reigns in such a way in Mary, that He is the soul of her soul, the spirit of her spirit, the heart of her heart, in such a way that it can be said that the heart of Mary is Jesus, EUDES, *Jean Oeuvres complètes* Vol. 1, Vannes Lafolye, 1905 , 11, p. 130

⁸⁸ Letter 194

⁸⁹ LETHEL F. *Theologie de l’amour de Jésus. Ecrits sur la theologie des saints. Carmel Venasque*, 1996, p.115. The phrase refers to Grignon de Montfort and it can also be applied to this text of Champagnat.

⁹⁰ GRIGNON M. O. c., p. 16

9. THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, DIVINE MODEL

The Seminary of Saint Irénée taught that to follow Christ was to imitate his actions. This way of understanding following has its origin in the New Testament: “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1). *Le Manuel du Séminariste* proposed some “easy means to imitate him”. These means are nothing else than “the recalling of the actions of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ.”⁹¹ The priests of the Oratory saw Jesus as “the divine model.”⁹²

Saint Marcellin seems to have absorbed this approach from his formation. He proposed as principal objective for the Brothers the same imitation of Jesus, using an expression identical to the Sulpician tradition:

“Yes, very dear Brothers, religious and sons of Mary: to imitate and to follow Jesus Christ... I yearn and desire that following the example of Jesus Christ, our divine model, you may have a tender affection for the children.”⁹³

One example of this imitation, both in the Sulpician tradition and among the early Marists, is conversation

during the time of recreation. Marcellin addressed this topic over the years. He wanted the Brothers’ recreation to be marked by two principles: to imitate the ease of relationship that Jesus and Mary enjoyed between themselves, and to maintain charity⁹⁴. The Sulpicians had the same objectives and as is evidenced in this extract from the *Manuel*:

“The Fathers of the Oratory indicate three intentions which should be had in the conversations at recreation:

1. Model your conversations on those of the Son of God with Mary, Saint Joseph, the Apostles and people ...
2. Maintain charity and the spiritual affections of one another ...
3. Take a bit of relaxation and rest.”⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

The formation received by Marcellin as a seminarian, so rich and well assimilated, was grace for him. It helped to shape an integrated spirituality, especially through the influence of Saint Francis de Sales. It was characterised by elements such as: love of work and a favouring of popular and affective piety; the continuous presence of God; solid, methodical,

⁹¹ DE PINS p. 104 *Petit Manuel* names up to twenty-five of the actions of Christ.

⁹² DE PINS, p. 103

⁹³ Letter 63

⁹⁴ It is a question of an argument already explained in the conclusions to the second part, I n number one

⁹⁵ MOLIEN A. *Le Cardinal de Bérulle. II*. Beauchesne, Paris, 1947, p. 362

affective and effective meditation; the central place of the Eucharist in his daily life and that of the Brothers.

Love of Mary, so characteristic of the Brothers, was present from seminary days. She was for Marcellin *la bonne Mère*. But for him it was incomprehensible to have Mary alone without the presence of her Son. Jesus was to be closely followed by the imitation of his actions and of his attitudes.

We can say that some fundamentals of Marist spirituality are sourced in the influences that Marcellin experienced in his long seminary formation. Other distinctive aspects of his spirituality such as the *Nisi Dominus*, simplicity, and trust in God, came to us as Marcellin matured spiritually. His formation gave him the means to become the founder of the Brothers, and through spiritual discernment his charism grew.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY AT CHARLIEU in 1824 and 1829

The Curé of Perreux and Fr Courveille



André Lanfrey,
fms

The Annals of the houses of the Province of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage contain an entry on the school at Perreux, a market town located quite close to the city of Roanne, in the north of the Department of the Loire.¹ In it Brother Avit relates how the school came to be founded in 1837, as a result of the pressing entreaties of the parish priest, François-Fleury Moine, Madame du Bretail, a benefactress, and the Commune (town council). In it he provides a copy of a letter written by the parish priest to Father Champagnat, dated 26 April 1837, which recalls links from earlier days with the Colin brothers, Pierre and Jean-Claude, and Fr Courveille. This letter has, moreover, been

published already as Letter 118 in French/Portuguese in *S. Marcelino Champagnat, Cartas recebidas, Editoria Universitaria Champagnat*, Brazil, 2002, by Brothers Ivo Strobino and Virgilio Josué Balestro.

1. AN ECCLESIASTICAL CAREER IN TROUBLED TIMES

Thanks to various Marist documents,² we know the curé Moine (1761-1838) rather well. Born in the canton of Perreux, and ordained before the Revolution, he went into exile in Italy on 26 August 1792.³ He returned to France in 1797⁴ taking ad-

¹ The rural commune of Perreux, the administrative centre of the canton, counted 2,436 people. The town is situated on a slope, to the east of and 5 km from Roanne, 18 from Charlieu, and 85 from the Hermitage via St Etienne (*Annales de Perreux*).

² Letters Vol. II Alphabetical Index, Rome 1987, p. 404, and notice on Perreux in the *Annales*.

³ As indicated in the administrative register of the district of Roanne: "F. Fleury Moine, ex assistant priest of Boisset (3-8 September 1792), Municipality of Renaison - place to which he went: Savoy".

⁴ Moine was probably in the Roanne mission which comprised 31 priests (Charles Ledré, *Le culte caché sous la Révolution*, Bonne Presse, 1949, p. 96). In his letter he further details that he had been at Perreux since 1797.

vantage of the period of calm that preceded the coup d'état of Fructidor (4 September 1797). During this second terror he carried out a clandestine apostolate in the region of Perreux, as a missionary of Vicar General Linsolas. An account by Vicar General Courbon in 1802 speaks in his praise: "Former parish priest of Boisset, a native of Montagny, about 46 [42, in fact, according to his date of birth], good moral conduct, average intelligence, great zeal and piety, submission, humility, much ability as a teacher, very good character, very good health." He would remain as parish priest of Perreux "esteemed and loved by everyone" (*Annales de Perreux*) from 1802 until his death in 1838.

The *Vie de Madame de Bavois*,⁵ foundress of the Benedictine monastery of Pradines, close to Perreux, relates that, during his stay at Pradines in August-September 1813, Cardinal Fesch asked Fr Moine to hear his confession:

"The other (Fr Moine), absolutist in politics and rigid in moral matters, would gladly have declined the honour; but it not being correct to recuse himself, his first concern was to protect his own conscience by

reassuring himself of the Archbishop's dispositions with regard to the Emperor and he counselled him at the start to 'renounce his family'. Fesch argued the Divine Will in this family tie from which no man could withdraw, and Fr Moine enjoined on His Eminence to explain himself 'on the nature of his attachment to the Emperor': 'Be without anxiety', the Cardinal assured him, 'I love the Emperor as my nephew, but I disapprove of him as the persecutor of the Church.' The curé, it seems, showed himself to be satisfied with this declaration. The incident may perhaps be remembered as a sign of discreet defiance."

It was at the end of his life that he wrote to Fr Champagnat, since he died on 17 March 1838, before the foundation of the school. His parish already had a school for girls run by the Sisters of Saint Charles. For the boys a seminarian, sent by Fr Cholleton,⁶ had taught Latin to the altar servers, "which had facilitated for a good number of young men the means to consecrate themselves to the ecclesiastical state".⁷ As for the inhabitants (close to 3000): "All generally are asking for Brothers and urgently. And according to the opinion of our Superiors, it is your good Brothers for whom they are clamouring."⁸ In fact, two principal factors were motivating this foundation: the Guizot Law (1833),

⁵ D. Buenner OSB, *Madame de Bavois, abbesse de Pradines de l'Ordre de Saint-Benoît (1768-1838)*, Emmanuel Vitte, 1961, pp. 380-381.

⁶ Claude Cholleton, uncle of Jean Cholleton. During the Revolution he had been head of the mission at Gumières in the Loire. He became Vicar General and died 25 November 1807.

⁷ This type of institution, called by various names such as "manécanterie", "pédagogie" and "petit college", rubbed some of the rough edges off young boys before they entered the seminary by providing a basic education which included Latin.

⁸ The Little Brothers of Mary was a diocesan congregation of Brothers, strongly supported by the archdiocesan authorities.

⁹ His letter makes no allusion to any previous relations.

which made it obligatory for each commune to have a school for boys; and the financial contribution of Madame de Bretil.

2. MEMORIES OF HIS RELATIONS WITH THE COLIN BROTHERS AND J-C COURVEILLE

Moine did not know Champagnat.⁹ On the other hand, he recalled his relations from earlier times with key people from the Society of Mary.

"I know both Messrs Colin particularly well, and [...] I would be grateful if you would kindly remember me to them and offer them my humble respects, and also inform me of their address so that I can write to them. I had been urged by M. Courveille to join him at the time he was speaking of his foundation (at St Antoine¹⁰). He even wanted me to go to Rome, since I knew the place and the language. If I had known then that the Messrs Colin were founding a similar establishment¹¹, I would have greatly regretted not having entered it.¹² But I shall be compensated by your good Marist Brothers, when we have them. I beg Mary, our

tender Mother, to see to it that we have two of her beloved children with us by the Feast of All Saints."¹³

Moine must therefore have known Pierre Colin at the time the latter was parish priest at Coutouvre, the parish bordering that of Perreux, from 1810 to 1814. And his younger brother, Jean-Claude Colin, at that time a seminarian, must have spent time with his older brother.¹⁴ They had not spoken to him about the Society of Mary since he had learned only later of their major role in its foundation. The contact must have been broken by the departure of Pierre Colin for Salles in the Beaujolais 1814-1816, and then to Cerdon from 1816. On the other hand, he refers to relations he had with Courveille in 1824, when Courveille was planning a Marist establishment at Charlieu,¹⁵ a town less than twenty kilometres to the north of Perreux. What he knew of the Society of Mary before 1836 had therefore come from Courveille, whose rupture with the Marists he seems not have known about. He thought furthermore that the Hermitage was an annexe of the work of the Colin brothers.

¹⁰ The consultation of *Cartas recibidas* [Letters to Champagnat] and a check carried out by Br Colin Chalmers, the archivist in Rome, has shown that the allusion to the abbey of St Antoine was an unwarranted addition on the part of Br Avit, who only knew of this establishment that was created in 1826-1829.

¹¹ By "establishment" we must understand "Society of Mary".

¹² A somewhat unclear sentence. Moine means that had he known of the project of the Colin brothers it would have been to them that he would have gone. He had therefore believed that Courveille was the sole founder and superior of the Society of Mary. Even in 1837, he was unaware of the role of Champagnat.

¹³ This vocabulary suggests that Moine knew something of the Marist tradition.

¹⁴ There would be nothing surprising in this, but to my knowledge, there is no mention of it in any Marist document.

¹⁵ OM1/75, n.13. Report of the inspector Guillard in 1822. Courveille boasted that he was the Superior General of a foundation having establishments at La Valla, Cerdon, in the Dauphiné "and other places".

2.1 The founding of the Brothers' school at Charlieu

This letter by the curé Moine invites us therefore to re-examine the story of this foundation which is known to us in detail through a report written on 26 November 1824 by the Mayor of Charlieu (OM1/120)¹⁶.

From 27 October 1824 Archbishop de Pins' Council had been examining a letter from the Mayor requesting "a house of teaching Brothers, from the novitiate of M. Champagnat" (OM1/113) and had decided to write to him "to know what his proposals were on this matter." In fact, when the letter was presented in Council, Fr Cholleton, Vicar General, had already made arrangements with La Valla, because on 28 October he wrote to the Mayor that three Brothers would be able to leave as soon as the town council and Fr Créatin¹⁷ (chaplain to the hospice, who seems to have been the one corresponding with the Archdiocesan office), had come to an agreement to or-

ganise the school. But before the letter had reached its destination, "in the first days of November the three Brothers arrived with M. Courveille, the founder of this congregation."¹⁸ As nothing was ready, temporary arrangements would have to be made to house the school, and the Mayor would inform Fr Cholleton of the solution arrived at.

At first Fr Courveille threatened to depart with his Brothers, then he presented the Prospectus of the congregation to serve as a basis for the negotiations. The parish priest¹⁹ and the curates, as well as the majority of the members of the Council, having declared themselves in favour of the project, the school was rapidly opened, under the direction of Brother Louis Audras, in a section of the buildings of the former Benedictine abbey. By 28 November the school already had some hundred pupils.

The improvised and rushed character of the foundation at Charlieu gives the impression that Fr Cholleton

¹⁶ The relationship between Frs Courveille and Moine may have begun in the course of the years 1819-1824, when Fr Courveille was priest in charge at Epercieux, near Feurs, around 20 km to the south of Perreux.

¹⁷ In the *Annales de Charlieu* Br Avit mentions this gentleman several times as a supporter of the Brothers' work.

¹⁸ Br Avit details that the first director was Br Louis in 1824-1825. From 1828 to 1831 he had as successors Br Augustin then Br Cyprien. Both of these were among the group of Brothers who had come from the Haute-Loire in 1822-1823. The first, Matthieu Cossange, a native of Bas-en-Basset, who came to La Valla 5th August 1822, seems to have been the director at Charlieu from 1825 to 1829. Br Cyprien, Jacques Furet, was the brother of Br Jean-Baptiste (OFM2/143.1). He no doubt left the congregation in 1831. Were these then the Brothers who came with Fr Courveille? It seems likely in the case of the first.

¹⁹ Champagnat's correspondence in 1829 (Letters No. 13) indicates that the Parish Priest had taken out a lease with M. Hugand, proprietor of the former Benedictine abbey, to set up a school there.

and Fr Courveille had come to an agreement to hurry things along. And it seems that the Archbishop's Office had not informed the parish priest, Fr Terrel.²⁰ For the Brothers of La Valla it was a foundation more than a hundred kilometres from their centre; and a town (3,424 inhabitants in 1832) with a spirit rather different from that of the small towns and villages (Bourg-Argental, St Symphorien-le-Château) where the Institute was already established.

2.2 A very tense diocesan context

Circumstances can in part explain this haste. On 18 February 1824 Archbishop Gaston de Pins had taken possession of the diocese as Apostolic Administrator, but many of the priests were opposed to this appointment, which seemed very political. Fr Bochard, loyal to Cardinal Fesch, withdrew to his property at Ménestruel (Ain).²¹ Fr Champagnat, having found an ally in de Pins, devoted his efforts from May to October to the construction of the Hermitage. Fr Courveille, who on 12 May had been invited to come and help him, resided at La Valla from the months of June-July from where he occupied himself with relations with the Archdiocesan authorities. They seem to have recognised him as Superior in the Prospec-

tus of 19 July, but they had declared Champagnat to be "principal founder" of the Brothers of La Valla on 28 July 1824 (OM1/110). Not wishing to take sides between the two men, the Archdiocese just asked them to respond to urgent educational needs.

Now, for the Apostolic Administrator and his Council the situation in Charlieu was a matter of urgency. The report of Inspector Guillard in the spring of 1822 (OM1/75) informs us that at Charlieu he had found M. Grizard, the teacher in the commune school, forming novices "in the manner of La Valla." In the spring of 1823 Inspector Poupar (OM1/86) found that Grizard's Brothers, affiliated with Fr Bochard, were also established at Feurs and Panissières.²² Less than a year therefore before the arrival of Archbishop de Pins, the congregation of the Brothers of the Cross of Jesus had been gaining strength in the northern part of La Loire.

Bochard's opposition had provoked the departure of Grizard in the June or July of 1824 (OM1/120, nn. 5 and 16). The Archdiocese had therefore to provide for the replacement of a school teacher in a town where Bochard's influence had manifested itself with a real success. The choice of Fr Courveille to take over as the successor to Grizard was not without its logic for he was perhaps known in

²⁰ Letters of Champagnat – Listed References, p. 470. Claude-Philibert Terrel (1762-1830) had been a Sulpician before the Revolution. He had been parish priest of Charlieu since 1803.

²¹ Where he would found the Brothers and Fathers of the Cross of Jesus.

²² A town 14 km to the north west of Feurs.

the region as a founder of a group of Brothers. The presence alongside him of Brother Louis, who up to that time had been Master of Novices at La Val-la, suggests that a continuation of the Grizard novitiate was being envisaged, even if what the Archdiocese had in mind was nothing more than a school.

3. THE SOCIETY OF MARY PROJECT AT CHARLIEU

Fr Courveille had not stayed long at Charlieu.²³ But, through Fr Crélin, chaplain to the hospice, he proposed to the Municipal Council “to make arrangements with His Lordship the Archbishop Administrator of this diocese [...] to establish there, besides a primary school, a novitiate for the Little Brothers of Mary, and a group of missionary priests intended to help [...] the various parish priests or priests in charge of parishes who might desire them.”

The project had already caused a certain stir since the Mayor reported “that a parish priest from a neighbouring canton – who could be M. Moine himself – had already offered one hundred feet of pine trees for the construction and repair work required for the setting up of this establishment.” The Municipal Council showed itself well disposed towards this vast project, but the Diocesan Council put

an end to it on 25 August 1825, requesting Fr Courveille to “limit himself for the moment to the work of his Brothers of Mary, anything beyond that being viewed as untimely.”²⁴ Moine’s mention that Courveille had intended to send him to Rome, reveals an aspect of the project hitherto unknown.

3.1 Courveille and attempts at contact with Rome

This project at Charlieu is not as strange as it looks if we link it with the policy being followed by the Colin brothers and Courveille with a view to recognition by Rome of the Society.

In November 1819 the Marist aspirants had sent a letter to Cardinal Pacca in Rome, which had remained unanswered. A second letter addressed to Pius VII, on 23rd January 1822, and signed by Courveille and the two Colins, obtained a response in Latin dated 9th March, addressed to Courveille and inviting him to contact the Nuncio in Paris (OM1/69, 74). The Colin brothers took the letter from Courveille “because of the imprudent use he was making of it.”²⁵ He may have shown the original or one of its copies to Fr Moine to encourage him to go to Rome.

²³ On 26 November the Mayor stated that he had been gone for some time (OM1/120, n. 14).

²⁴ OM1/141.

²⁵ OM4 pp. 254-255, the biographical notice on Courveille. OM1/74.

The bull *Paternae Caritatis* of 6th October 1822, which restored the diocese of Belley, now complicated the situation for the Marist aspirants, under threat of shortly being split up between two dioceses. In November 1822, however, it was Jean-Claude Colin who went to the Nunciature in Paris to present the rule of the Society of Mary, marginalising the role of Courveille in the negotiations with Rome and even with the diocese of Lyon, for in 1823, after a second trip to Paris by Jean-Claude Colin, the Nuncio handed over the dossier to Mgr. Devie, the new Bishop of Belley. In the diocese of Lyon the project of the Society was not unknown and Archbishop de Pins had favoured it to a certain degree by inviting Fr Courveille in 1824, then Fr Terrailon in 1825, to move to the Hermitage, Fr Champagnat²⁶ being more or less openly considered by the diocesan authorities to be the initiator of the Society of Mary.

Up to the end of 1824 the Marists had retained the hope of remaining as one group in one of the two dioceses, preferably Lyon. But at the end of the month of November an interview between Jean-Claude Colin and

Mgr. de Pins, Administrator of Lyon, ended in failure.²⁷ The Apostolic Administrator did not wish to release the Marists who were in his diocese, and likewise Bishop Devie wanted to keep his. It was on 29 November 1824 (OM1/122, so just after his return from Charlieu, that Courveille learned from Colin of the failure of the attempt to keep the Marists together in the one diocese.

His project at Charlieu, at the start of the same month, can be explained in such a context.²⁸ And, between November 1824 and the end of August 1825, Fr Courveille would be trying to bring about a decision in favour of a Society of Mary in Lyon.²⁹

4. THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE HERMITAGE

This business made the situation of the Hermitage singularly complicated. In the draft of a letter to Fr Terrel³⁰ in 1829, Champagnat was to state: "I was in an awkward position at Charlieu, and there was nothing I could do about it." (Letter 13, draft B). And the Bourdin memoir³¹ alludes to it but

²⁶ OM1 pp. 8-9: Chronologie des origines maristes.

²⁷ OM1/121-122: Letters of Jean-Claude Colin giving an account of his interview to Bishop Devie and to Fr Courveille.

²⁸ He did not consider the Hermitage, the construction of which was nearing completion, to be fully in conformity with the spirit of the Society of Mary. Fr Terrailon, who arrived at the Hermitage in 1825, thought the same as Courveille.

²⁹ As the Bourdin memoir says (OM1/754, n.33), that was when "Fr Courveille started confusing matters."

³⁰ Letters of Champagnat, Vol. I, letter 13. In fact, two drafts of letters with no date.

³¹ OM2/754 n. 33. Around 1830 this Marist Father sketched the outline of a historical account of the origins of the Marist Brothers.

confuses Charlieu with St Symphorien:³² “Fr Courveille muddled the business at St Symphorien; he wanted to pull the Brothers out,³³ Fr Champagnat went to St Symphorien with a Brother.”³⁴ And Chapter 13 of the *Life* mentions a “second journey”³⁵ by Champagnat in the autumn of 1825, shortly after his election as Superior of the Brothers, the aim of which seems to have been to see for himself the situation with the school and, probably to the great displeasure of Fr Courveille, to put a stop to the very attractive project of a mission centre.³⁶

5. DIVERGING VIEWPOINTS REGARDING THE SOCIETY OF MARY

One contribution of Fr Moine’s letter then is to remind us that at the origins of the Society of Mary there were three rival approaches: the Colin brothers (Rule, missions, appeal to Rome), Champagnat (priority of the Brothers’ branch supported by the diocese³⁷), and Courveille (Brothers,

Sisters, missions, appeal to Rome). Courveille, at first associated with the Colin brothers, rapidly lost his leadership role, and the creation of the diocese of Belley contributed further to his isolation.

Nevertheless, from May 1824 to September or October 1825, at least a section of the Council, and in particular Fr Cholleton, seemed to have been backing Courveille as Superior of the Brothers rather than Champagnat. Hence his intervention at Charlieu, and his attempt to have himself elected Superior, which would have given him the standing needed to have the Hermitage recognised as a mission house. We will see that this strategy, which failed in 1825, would be taken up again successfully, without Fr Courveille, in 1827-1830.³⁸

The parish priest of Perreux was only aware of bits of these complicated events.³⁹ His relationship with Fr Courveille must have been brief and superficial, even if he recognised that he had supported his project.⁴⁰

³² The confusion between the two places comes no doubt from these two schools being so far away. St Symphorien could also have been a staging post on the road to Charlieu.

³³ In fact, the Mayor indicates that he was intending to depart with the Brothers.

³⁴ The *Life* speaks of a workman (Philippe Arnaud) who accompanied him. See the *Annales de l’Institut*.

³⁵ It is very unlikely that Champagnat would have made an earlier journey.

³⁶ The return of Br Louis to the Hermitage at the end of 1825 is the sign that there was no longer any question of a novitiate at Charlieu.

³⁷ Fr Séon would later take Fr Champagnat to task over the same matter.

³⁸ OM1, pp. 470-480, docs. 195-208.

³⁹ Courveille had not spoken to him about the role of the Colin brothers nor that of Champagnat; which speaks volumes about his pretensions to be the founder.

⁴⁰ In speaking of the Marist Brothers as ‘beloved children’ of Mary, he shows a certain familiarity with the spirit of the Society of Mary which could go back to Courveille.

5. THE MARISTS AND CHARLIEU IN 1829

In the month of May Fr Séon came to join Fr Champagnat.⁴¹ Not long afterwards, he took Champagnat to task (OM2/625) for being too much occupied with the Brothers and giving up on the branch of the Marist priests in the diocese of Lyon. At his instigation, the drive to recruit aspirant Marist priests began: Bourdin, Pompallier, Chanut, Forest, and others. Between 1828 and 1830 the Hermitage came to be recognised by the Archdiocesan authorities as a mission house. But Archbishop de Pins had no intention of going any further:⁴² the Society of Mary had to remain a diocesan missionary society.

The idea of setting up a Marist mission centre resurfaced in 1829, as is suggested by the entry on Charlieu (OM4, p. 387):

“On 8 July 1829, the Econome of the major seminary rented buildings [belonging to the major seminary] to the Parish Priest of the town, M. Terrel, and to M. Champagnat, for nine years. This is where the Brothers’ school moved to at All

Saints. At the same time, Etienne Séon was sent to Charlieu as curate in place of M. Pompallier but also as chaplain to the Brothers, and it is possible that at that time plans were toyed with once more for an establishment for the priests. At least, M. Colin would seem to have said so at the end of his life, attributing the failure of the project to the death of M. Terrel (24 June 1830) and the July Revolution which occurred a few weeks later.”⁴³

5.1 Setting up a Marist centre at Charlieu

The shifting of the Brothers’ school at Charlieu was what triggered this project. Brother Avit (*Annales de Charlieu*) admits he does not know why Fr Terrel came to an agreement with M. Hugand, the proprietor of the former abbey where the school was housed, to move the school to the building belonging to the seminary of St Irénée, while undertaking to pay the cost of fitting out the building and the rent.⁴⁴ Brother Avit (*Annales de Charlieu*) gives the conditions of the nine year lease agreement which was entered into on 8 July 1829 between Fr Plasse, Econome of the Major Seminary, Fr Champagnat and Fr Terrel,

⁴¹ Notice on Séon, OM4, p. 351.

⁴² In a letter of 18 December 1828, Champagnat asked Fr Cattet to give his support to the establishment of the Society of Mary in the diocese (OM1/185). Following a second request on 18th February 1830, Fr Cattet informed Champagnat that the diocese did not wish the Societies of Mary in Lyon and Belley to form a union.

⁴³ Doc. 819 n. 33: “In 1829 there was a plan for a new house of the Fathers. Fr Thérél, parish priest of Charlieu, offered to hand over for that purpose the vast abbey of the Benedictines which is in that town. Fr Séon went to take possession of it and spent the year there”... Fr Colin had his own way of interpreting the relocation from the abbey to the building belonging to the seminary.

⁴⁴ Letters of Champagnat, Vol. I, letter 13, which refers to the two contracts. Judging that the curé Terrel was the one responsible for the situation, Champagnat asked him to cover the costs involved in the change of domicile.

parish priest, as well as the contract entered into with Fr Terrel for the school:

“The holy founder agreed (to the conditions of the foundation) based on the minimum conditions at that time, i.e., a one off payment of 400 francs, an annual salary of 425 francs and a furniture allowance of 500 francs, in kind or in cash, for each Brother. M. Terrel and M. Guynault (Guinot, the Mayor) made the first payments. The town allocated 500 francs for the annual salary; the school fees were supposed to make up the rest, but they could only be obtained with sword drawn.”

All this was supposed to have been concluded in the month of September 1829.⁴⁵ But this house was not destined for the Brothers only, for (Letter No. 13) Fr Champagnat’s plan was for Fr Séon to go to Charlieu in the capacity of assistant priest. And, in his account in *Origines Maristes* (OM2/265), Séon himself reveals that the plan had been for Fr Pompallier to go to Tarare as curate, but as his Marist vocation would have been in serious danger there, he had offered to replace him, without explaining why it was at Charlieu that this replacement took place.

5.2 Resistance from Fr Terrel

By 22 October Fr Séon had not yet got settled in at Charlieu since “given

the difficulties mentioned by Fr Champagnat” (Doc. 202) caused by the lack of action on the part of Fr Terrel, who had not made the necessary arrangements, the Council asked him to examine the state of the buildings: “The Little Brothers of Mary will be established only after his report and what it has to say, if there is room. The parish priest will be informed.”

But the result was disappointing, since the Diocesan Council on 28 October 1829 called on Fr Mioland, “superior of the missions” (of Chartreux) and a member of the Council, who was willing, to “enjoin on Fr Terrel, parish priest of Charlieu, to undertake the commitments necessary for the Little Brothers of Mary to be decently and securely provided for and equipped.” (Doc. 203)

Finally, Fr Séon on 10 November 1829 took up the position of second curate (Doc. 625, note 1, p. 450). The Archdiocesan office, however, on 20th November, (Doc. 206) simply gave him the title of “chaplain to the Little Brothers at Charlieu.” What appeared at first to be a simple transfer from one place to another had become a veritable refoundation calling for different contracts: one for a missionary enterprise destined for the north-west of the diocese, of which Fr Séon would be in the advance guard, and the other for a school under the responsibility of Fr Champagnat.

⁴⁵ In a letter of 31/09/1829 (Doc. 198) Fr Cattet, Vicar General in charge of religious communities, would reproach Fr Champagnat with having been “too generous with the price for the location at Charlieu.”

5.3 From Charlieu to Valbenoîte

This time, the agreement between the Society of Mary, represented by Fr Champagnat, and the diocese became a reality. Fr Colin's explanation was that the collapse of the project had been due to the death of Fr Terrel and the Revolution of 1830 (Doc. 819, n. 33). The first reason is possible, but the second (July 1830) is certain. An even more determining factor was the union of the Societies of Mary of Lyon and Belley that had been effected between 10 September and 22 October.

Nevertheless, the attempt to create a new Marist centre was not abandoned. Fr Séon, officially withdrawn from Charlieu on 21 December 1830, did not go back to the Hermitage. On 30 December 1830 he was appointed curate to Fr Rouchon in the parish of Valbenoîte. A little later he became the Superior of the Marist priests regrouped in this place where there had been a Brothers' school in operation since 1827. This was somewhat more than a transfer of the Charlieu project, since the Fathers at Valbenoîte would be under Colin's authority and not that of Champagnat. Fr Moine had obviously been unaware of this Charlieu affair in 1829-1830.

5.4 Charlieu and Courveille in 1829?

So had Courveille's Charlieu project of 1824 finally been realised without him, first at Charlieu and then at Valbenoîte? We are not at all certain, however, that he was not still around.

There are some troubling coincidences of dates which need to be taken into account. During March-April 1829 Courveille, whose enterprise at Saint Antoine was in a state of collapse, made a long journey around France, passing through Nîmes, Toulouse, Limoges and Clermont-Ferrand.⁴⁶ On 8 July 1829 (OM1/195), the very day the contract for the renting of the seminary buildings at Charlieu was drawn up, Archbishop de Pins' Council was planning to give him an exeat, which moreover he would not have been requesting. Again on 5 November 1829 (Doc. 205), the Council refused permission to the parish priest of Chénereilles⁴⁷ to employ Courveille temporarily to help him out during the Jubilee. Courveille seems to have given up on the idea since in December 1829 he was at Bourges (OM1/407). But, although he had been admitted into the diocese, he left again. And Marist sources say: "Fr Courveille actually dared to come to Belley around 1829 or 1830 when Fr Colin was Superior of the minor sem-

⁴⁶ Celebret at Nîmes 21 March; at Toulouse 24 March; at Limoges 1 April; Clermont 3 April 1829. (OM1/156)

⁴⁷ A small village in the south-west of La Loire, between Montbrison and Apinac.

inary. He was turned away for reasons that are known.”⁴⁸

Obviously, Courveille had spent the greater part of his year during 1829 searching for a place where he could settle and reconnect with his former relationships. And why not Charlieu? Would Fr Terrel, the parish priest, and M. Hugand, the owner, have been willing to make the abbey buildings available for him to set up his project again? ⁴⁹ In July 1829, informed of his presence and having taken a firm decision not to employ him, the Diocesan Council would have arranged for Charlieu to be taken over by the Society of Mary of Lyon.

5.5 Fr Séon, mediator between Champagnat and Courveille

This hypothesis is not without some foundation. First of all, in the account of the beginnings of the Society

(OM2/625) inspired by Fr Séon, Fr Mayet notes (n. 18) a strange business:

“The ownership of the house of the Marist Brothers at the Hermitage was in the name of M. Courveil. The question arose of having the property made over to M. Champagnat and of winning over M. Courveil. M. Séon took on this delicate matter, he went to visit M. Courveil, demonstrated much esteem and affection towards him and got him to consent to go with M. Champagnat on a given day to the office of a notary. There the contract was signed, and they were the last dealings the Society of Mary had with M. Courveil.”⁵⁰

It is true that, by means of a document dated 21 May 1830, Fr Courveille, then residing at Apinac, had ratified transactions carried out in his name by Fr Champagnat (Doc. 217)⁵¹ and that this declaration had put an end to an embarrassing situation: even though he had granted authorisation to Champagnat to sell the property he owned in La Valla, Courveille had, in 1828, granted authorisation to one M. Mouton to sell the Bonner house at La Valla in his

⁴⁸ OM3/819, n. 78, Memoir on the origin and foundation of the S.M.1869-1870 and various statements by Fr Colin. See also Doc. 820 n. 30 and 821 n. 11 which, written in the first person, are no doubt closer to the words of Fr Colin, who adds the detail that it was in connection with a gathering of the Marists. See also Docs. 840 nn. 129-130 and 845 n. 14. As this visit is not attested to in other documents, some doubt remains as to its reality. It could not have taken place before 3 May 1829 (OM1/193), date of the official appointment of Fr Colin as Superior of the minor seminary. A note in OM (OM3, Doc. 819, p. 274, note 4) envisages two possible dates: July 1829, the moment the diocese of Lyon was planning to give Fr Courveille an exeat; and November-December of the same year.

⁴⁹ The *Annales de Charlieu* note: “When the 1829 lease expired, the Parish Priest did not wish to renew it, and the Brothers had to return to the abbey.”

⁵⁰ This cannot be referring to the arrangement entered into in 1826 between Champagnat and Courveille in regard to the property they owned in common at La Valla and the Hermitage (OM1.166-167): at that stage Séon had not yet entered the Society of Mary. These words refer to “some later arrangement”. (OM2/625 note 2, p. 449)

⁵¹ This was by a simple declaration and not one made before a notary.

name.⁵² Could Fr Séon have acted as mediator in the resolution of this conflict? Most likely not. In fact, Champagnat had bought back from Courveille his share in the property of the Hermitage in 1826 (OM1/166), and at that stage Séon was still in the seminary.

This mediation would more likely have been concerned with Charlieu, with Fr Mayet having made a mistake with the place.⁵³ Furthermore, in 1829 Champagnat had entered into new contracts with regard to Charlieu and, in order to extinguish the previous contracts, needed the consent of Courveille, who had founded the school in 1824 in his capacity as Superior of the Brothers.⁵⁴ In any case, all these negotiations of Courveille, Séon and Champagnat need to be situated between the end of 1829 at earliest and the end of 1832 at latest, since Courveille's final departure from the diocese occurred at the beginning of 1833.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

At the end of 1824 Fr Courveille founded a school of the Brothers of La Valla in Charlieu, after having presented himself to the civil and eccle-

siastical authorities as their founder. The Brothers' school was set up on a temporary basis in a part of the buildings of the former Benedictine abbey. A lease agreement – co-signed by the Parish Priest, the owner M. Hugand, and Fr Courveille – anticipated in addition the creation, with the approval of the Archdiocesan authorities, of a Brothers' novitiate and a house of missionary priests. According to Fr Moine, there were even plans to obtain approval from Rome. Having become Superior of the Brothers in the autumn of 1825, Fr Champagnat had to assume responsibility for a foundation he had not made, after the Archdiocese had forbidden Courveille to pursue his plan for a mission house.

The problem re-emerged in 1829 because the parish priest Fr Terrel wanted the Brothers to move out of the abbey buildings. The diocese intervened to house the Brothers' school in buildings belonging to the seminary. A contract was entered into between Champagnat and the Econome of the seminary for the use of these buildings, with the costs being paid for by Fr Terrel. Fr Séon had been sent to Charlieu both as the agent of the diocese and the advance guard in the plan for a Marist mission

⁵² This one was sold to Jacques Couturier on 5 February 1829.

⁵³ The hypothesis that Fr Séon was involved in the Charlieu matter is reinforced by the fact that the paragraph following his account is devoted to his replacement of Fr Pompallier.

⁵⁴ M. Hugand (Letters No. 13 pp. 46-47) was the proprietor of the abbey where the Brothers taught 1824-1829. A lease agreement was certainly entered into with him by the parish priest, Fr Terrel, and Fr Courveille.

⁵⁵ He arrived at Bourges in February 1833 (OM1/407).

house. Fr Champagnat entered into a new contract for the school with the parish priest, cancelling the previous contracts made with Fr Courveille. This therefore was not the renewing of an earlier foundation but a new foundation. And, in order to head off any attempts by Fr Courveille, Fr Séon would have requested him to cancel the lease agreement that had been entered into in 1824. The 1830 Revolution and the constitution of an inter-diocesan Society of Mary resulted in the priests' project being moved from Charlieu to Valbenoîte. The Brothers' school at Charlieu, once it lost the financial support of the commune in 1830, was to experience some difficult years.

Over the years 1824 to 1829 Fr Courveille pursued the plan for a Society of Mary along the lines of the model formulated at Charlieu. Fr Séon shared his thinking, which is why he was sent to Charlieu, and why there is a certain connivance between the two men which permitted some questionable contacts and arrangements, most likely in relation to Charlieu.

Among all the actors in these affairs Fr Terrel, who had been parish priest since 1803, is the most enigmatic. Had he been a supporter of Cardinal Fesch,

only grudgingly accepting the Apostolic Administrator?⁵⁶ That Grizard had established in his parish a novitiate of teachers devoted to Fr Bochard; that in 1824 the diocese had not dealt with him when establishing a school of the Brothers of La Valla; that in 1829, he shifted the Brothers' school and was very reluctant to let them move into the seminary buildings: all this suggests that he may have been at odds with the Archdiocesan authorities. Could he have even been trying to favour a relaunch of Courveille's project in 1829? The alignment of dates, the intervention by the Archdiocesan authorities, and the installation of Fr Séon at Charlieu, would tend to favour such an interpretation.

The letter of Fr Moine, and the various documents consulted, have at least been a reminder to us that Charlieu was not simply just one of the first schools of the Institute, but also the location for two successive projects for founding a Society of Mary in Lyon, concurrent with those at the Hermitage and Belley. The union of the Fathers of Belley and Lyon, and the installation of the Marist Fathers at Valbenoîte, closed this chapter on plans for a close union of the Fathers and Brothers, and for diocesan Societies of Mary.

⁵⁶ J.A. Gillibert, who had in the beginning been in contact with the Marist group, became parish priest of La Madeleine at Tarare in 1820, and was considered to be the leader of the opposition to Archbishop de Pins, to the point where was placed under interdict by the latter in 1831. (OM4, pp. 288-290)

BROTHER LOUIS AND HIS CONCEPT OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

Essay on our origins from the companions and followers of Marcellin Champagnat



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As would be expected, Brother Jean-Baptiste focusses his *Life of Father Champagnat* mainly on Marcellin himself, even though we do learn much about his companions. Although the book emphasises the charismatic nature of his project, it also reveals a good deal about the ups and downs of its early progress as a religious institute. The reader should remember that for almost a century, and especially during the beginning years, the Institute was not structured according to the prescriptions of Canon Law. Therefore, we need to be careful with what is meant by certain titles and functions which may have been used less precisely at the time than we would understand them today. This is true of

terms such as “superior”, “director”, “master of novices”, “novitiate”, and others.

For example, the biography of Brother Bonaventure carries some surprises. Born in 1804 at Pelussin, Antoine Pascal, a household servant at Ampuis, was received into the novitiate on the 31 May 1830¹ and took the habit on 9 October 1830 after a little more than three months as a postulant. It was a time of anti-religious sentiment following the 1830 Revolution. Sent to Sorbiers, his virtue won the admiration of Brother Cassian.² On 12 June 1831 he took temporary vows for three years but as soon as 12 October in the same year he had made perpetual profession.³

¹ In the book *Biographies de quelques Frères*, the date is given as 27 June 1830. His arrival followed closely the departure of five novices of whom one who came from Ampuis and had spoken unfavourably of the Hermitage. But we can ask ourselves if these departures were attributable to the highly charged atmosphere that was generated by the July Revolution of 1830. Brother Jean-Baptiste, in support of his naming Bonaventure as “the Substitute” for the defections, may have been flexible with the chronology of events. In any case, Bonaventure does not seem to have entered before 27 June.

² His stay poses a chronological problem identified by Br Paul Sester (*Letters*, Vol.2, p.99) because, in 1831, Louis Chomat and Césaire Fayol had not yet taken the habit.

³ In his statement made for his profession, Brother Bonaventure indicates this was 2 October 1831.

The reason for the rushed second profession is given by Brother Avit (*Annales* 1830, #147): “He made profession in 1831 and replaced Brother Louis as Master of Novices.” Certainly, his determination to enter religious life at a particularly difficult time must have impressed Fr Champagnat and the community, given that in 1831 he was 27 years old. Nevertheless, it does seem strange that a Brother with a rushed formation would have been able to take on such an important task, one that made him the successor of the first follower of Fr Champagnat.

First of all, we must be attentive to the dates. Although it was true that Brother Louis was sent to Charlieu in 1831, Brother Bonaventure could not have succeeded him until closer to 1833, after his appointment at Sorbiers.⁴ But the main point lies elsewhere: we should not confuse the novitiate house, namely the Hermitage, with the novitiate proper. The latter comprised the young men in formation, and for whom religious formation was accompanied by secular disciplines such as reading, writing, grammar and arithmetic.⁵ It was an “*ecole normale*” as much as a reli-

gious “*noviciat*”.⁶ Even though he had completed some religious formation, Brother Bonaventure was not qualified to teach secular subjects. His task as ‘Master of Novices’ was to be a model for the young men in formation and their supervisor, but not their spiritual director. As Brother Avit states:

“Brother Bonaventure became an excellent Master of Novices. He formed them as much by his example as by his words.”
(*Annales*, 1831, #153)

And that is what he was to do “for almost twenty years” until 1851.⁷ He would then spend the last twelve years of his life in charge of the farm at St Genis Laval where he would die on 20 October 1865 (*Letters*, Vol.2, p.99). interred with veneration by his confreres (*Biographies*, pp120;129). Given the nature of his final appointment, he could hardly be seen as a learned man or as one of the leading Brothers. Thus when we use the term “Master of Novices” for him, we should be alert to the anachronistic use of the term; it was only in the Constitutions of 1903 that the title took on a precise canonical meaning.

⁴ On this matter, see OFM/104, dated 1827-28

⁵ This is the opinion of Br Paul Sester in his biographical notes on Br Bonaventure (*Letters* Vol.2)

⁶ The FSC novitiates of this time included some “novices” who were laymen who had come for teacher training.

⁷ The letter of convocation to the General Chapter 17 April 1852, names him among the eligible Brothers as the “former master of novices”. His successor was Brother Pascal (*Biographies de quelques Frères*, p.364) in 1852. He was named as Assistant in 1854, but he was not to have long in that role.

1. THE DIRECTORS OF NOVITIATES

Brother Bonaventure finished his time as Novice Master shortly before the publication of the Rules of Government in 1854. Chapter 3 of this document contained the “Rules for the Brother Director of Novitiate Houses.” The first section dealt with the “Master of Novices”. He was needed to have nineteen qualities to a high degree, including, for example, “a lively faith” (1), “a spirit of prayer” (2) and “exemplary behaviour” (12), but also “sufficient instruction for teaching subjects the Brothers would need to master” (18) and even “wide experience on teaching methods used by the Institute (19).” While Brother Bonaventure did possess most of these attributes, he would have been weak in the areas of knowledge and pedagogy.

The seven other areas address reception of postulants, the taking of the habit, and their appointment to a school; they describe how the “Brother Director of the Novices is responsible for moral formation.” But the ninth section, entitled “Conduct required of the Brother Director in the directing of his house” leads us to understand that the Director was not only responsible for the novitiate but also the administration of the house. Then there was more: “He will be able to appoint Brothers from houses dependent on the novitiate (...) he has a measure of authority over all the Brothers of the Province,” even to hearing their manifestations of conscience. At each retreat he assessed

the financial and temporal condition of the houses dependant on his novitiate. In short, he was almost equivalent to a Provincial and clearly more than a Master of Novices. He was effectively the Director of a Provincial House.

In the organisational structure of the Institute in 1854, the responsibilities of the Master of Novices are therefore assumed by the Director of the Novitiate House, who delegated to a “Master of Novices” the day-to-day care of those in formation. Even though by that year they were more qualified than had been Brother Bonaventure back in 1833, they had no official status.

2. A TRADITION FROM LA VALLA DAYS

This prompts us to go back before 1833 and to ask this question: Did Brother Bonaventure really succeed Brother Louis, and to what extent was he Master of Novices or Director of the Hermitage?

This question takes us back to the year 1819 when Brothers of Jean-Marie Granjon was elected as Director (*Life*, Ch. 6). The account of his event, although somewhat idealised, conveys a good idea of expectations of the Director of a novitiate house: “Always to the fore, he was the leader of the Brothers and everywhere provided the example of regularity, piety and all the religious virtues.” Chapter 7 of the *Life* Brother Jean-Baptiste de-

scribes the approach of Fr Champagnat from the moment he took up lodgings with his Brothers. Although the Superior, he was not aloof from the Brothers: "Just like a good shepherd he was always at the head of his small flock. He would work with the Brothers whether it be in tilling the soil or making nails." The Brothers revered him but did not feel distant from him." He did not encroach on the role of Brother Jean-Marie: "He conferred on the latter the management of all household business, giving him complete freedom to act." In short, there was a clear distinction between the Director entrusted with daily management of the community and the Superior who took on the spiritual guidance of each Brother,⁸ and also relations with the Archbishop, the parish priests and the parishes.

Subsequent chapters show how this form of dual-headed government worked. At the end of 1821 (Ch 8) Br. Jean-Marie, who "demanded from others the same perfection as he himself",⁹ was sent to Bourg-Argental and was replaced by Brother Louis who would assume the joint role of Director and Master of Novices which the Constitutions of 1854 would re-establish.

The escapade of Brother Jean-Marie to Aiguebelle in the Spring of 1822 upset the new arrangement because Brother Louis had to replace him at Bourg-Argental in 1822-23. However, he certainly took care of the formation of Brother Stanislas and the postulants from Haute-Loire during the summer of 1822 and did not arrive at Bourg-Argental until the end of 1822.¹⁰

Which Brother could have undertaken the role of Director of the Novitiate from the end of 1822 through 1823? Br. Jean-Marie Granjon returned to La Valla with the title of Director but to what degree was he capable of exercising this function?¹¹ The first recorded letter from Fr Champagnat written on 1 December 1823 allows us to throw some light on the situation. From the feast of All Saints, Brother Jean-Marie was director at St Symphorien-le-Château, a place quite distant from the centre of the congregation.¹² Granjon was then simply a local Director. Fr Champagnat, while taking care with his health, keeps him informed on developments in the congregation.

We learn that Brother Michel at Bourg-Argental "is doing very well".

⁸ Br Jean-Baptiste says precisely "il mangeait seul", that is to say he ate at a separate table.

⁹ *Life*. Ch.8, and *Biographies de quelques Frères*, p.21

¹⁰ This would explain the sympathy of Br Jean-Baptiste who entered at the end of March 1822 and who was under his direction until he took the habit in October 1822.

¹¹ On this matter, see *Mémoire Bourdin* (OM1/754) which suggests a quite long crisis.

¹² In the region of Les Monts du Lyonnais, well to the north of the Gier valley. It is perhaps at the same time a removal and the occasion for Br Jean-Marie to make a new start.

Had Br Louis returned to La Valla? It is likely, even though Brother Jean-Baptiste (*Annales* of Bourg-Argental) informs us that he stayed two years (1822-1824) at that place.¹³ But in 1823 Brother Louis registered in the Confraternity of Sacré-Cœur, La Valla – evidence that he was present in the parish by the end of that year. The same letter informs us that Brother Jean-François (Etienne Roumézy) had been withdrawn from Saint Sauveur-en-Rue despite his misgivings; the *Life* tells us that Fr Champagnat “had called him to the motherhouse to entrust him with management of daily business” (*Life* Ch 14). But this term “care of daily business” did not mean simple material and administrative tasks. In fact, Brother Jean-François would become the Director of the Novitiate which had recently received an influx of novices, poorly educated and very young, as described in Fr Champagnat’s letter.

The presence of Brother Louis appears justified by the influx of novices from 1822 without us knowing how Fr Champagnat coordinated the roles of the two in charge. Chapter 12 of the *Life* offers us a possible explanation because in 1823 the construction of what would become the Hermitage was anticipated. “With two of the principal Brothers, he looked around the surrounding region” in order to find a suitable location. It is clear these Brothers were Jean-François and Louis were the

ones at La Valla who would rank as the “principal Brothers”.

We need to take into account the arrival of a third person, Brother Stanislas, who entered in February 1822 and took the habit in October. According to his biography “he wanted to serve Fr Champagnat and look after the domestic duties.” Brother Stanislas quickly became the right hand man of the Founder, taking care of his room and performing all sorts of services which Fr Champagnat did not have the time to do himself. Furthermore, his biography clearly states the care he took of postulants and novices as if he were playing the role of an assistant master of novices.

We should acknowledge that in 1823-1824 there existed a hierarchical structure in the group of Brothers which operated like this:

- Fr Champagnat: ecclesiastical superior officer and founder but also curate of the parish.
- Brother Jean-Marie, elected as director general but stationed some distance away at St Symphorien-le-Château
- Brothers Jean-François and Louis jointly sharing the direction of La Valla and assisting the projects of Fr Champagnat.
- The other directors of schools
- A group of Brothers, in particular Brother Stanislas, at the service of the Founder and assisting him in

¹³ He was replaced by Br Barthélemy

other areas, especially the care of novices.

We need not be too influenced by the account of Brother Jean-Baptiste who focuses solely on Fr Champagnat as the one enlarging the house and preparing the construction of the Hermitage while fulfilling his work as curate. In fact, he had to work with an elected director and rely on a number of assistants capable of assuming the daily running of a group including Brothers in different locales, novices, and boarders.

3. EMERGENCE OF THE PRIESTS' BRANCH AND AN INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

The building of the Hermitage and the arrival of Fr Courveille in the summer of 1824 were to upset the emerging group, particularly at La Valla where Courveille imagined himself to be the superior while Fr Champagnat was occupied in the construction of the Hermitage with a majority of the Brothers. Nothing is mentioned about the relationship of Brothers Jean-François and Louis with Fr Courveille. We do know however that the novitiate and the boarding school continued at La Valla since, during the construction of the house, a boarder

was abused by a postulant – a scandal which Fr Champagnat, acting as superior, came to intervene strongly (*Life*, Vol. 2, Ch.13)

At the beginning of December 1824 Fr Courveille, commissioned by the Archbishop, moved to Charlieu, 100 kilometres to the north of the Hermitage, to establish a school.¹⁴ And the head of the three Brothers who accompanied him was Brother Louis.¹⁵ The choice appears logical: La Valla did not need two Brothers in charge in addition to Fr Courveille and the foundation in a town far from the centre of the society required an experienced man. Furthermore, the teacher whom the Brothers replaced was forming novices while Fr Courveille envisaged founding a missionary house as a novitiate for Brothers. Brother Louis succeeded in starting a school under testing circumstances and directed it from December until October 1825 which seems a rather short time to establish the work.

We are not sure of his whereabouts during the critical time from the end of 1825 to the end of 1827. He was certainly not at Bourg-Argental as Fr Coste assumed.¹⁶ Quite probably he was at the Hermitage where Fr Champagnat, newly elected as Superior, had need of him. But how to explain the silence of Brother Jean-

¹⁴ M. Grizard, a follower of Bochard, the former Vicar General, had to be replaced.

¹⁵ Courveille envisaged founding a Brothers' novitiate

¹⁶ The annals of Bourg Argental give the list of Directors: Br Barthélemy (1824-26) then Br Antoine

Baptiste, who was well disposed towards Brother Louis,¹⁷ concerning the quarrels between the senior Brothers and Courveille in 1826?

Furthermore, who was the Superior of the Hermitage house? Did one exist? The arrival of Fr Courveille in 1824 and Fr Terraillon in 1825 had rendered the previous structure confusing. In addition, matters were exacerbated by the increasingly erratic behaviour of Brother Jean-Marie Granjon. The situation had completely changed: it was now a matter of re-organising the Society of Mary with one branch of priests and one of Brothers, with the first governing the second.

From 1824 there was a sharing of tasks between Courveille, who regarded himself as Superior General, and Champagnat, who looked after the day-to-day business while still exercising the functions of a superior.¹⁸ One gets the impression of a repetition of 1819: a superior and a director, except that the two roles were taken by priests. The only roles left to the Brothers were that of house manager and Master of Novices, the first performed by Brother Jean-François and the second by Brother Louis, un-

der the authority of two priests who were in some degree of discord.

To put an end to this duality of leadership of the Society,¹⁹ Courveille attempted to have himself elected as Superior by the assembled Brothers in October 1825.²⁰ They elected Champagnat. This shows clearly that the influence of the senior Brothers remained strong and that the narrative of Champagnat's founding the Institute at La Valla in January 1817 was already well established. But this election, as the account of Brother Jean-Baptiste shows, challenged Champagnat who reluctantly found himself Superior, with Courveille relegated to the level of Director. His authority was not completely diminished since he was still in charge of the novitiate and in direct control of the Hermitage.²¹ As important as the choice of Fr Champagnat by the Brothers was in theory, in practice his position was weakened by Courveille.

And so the Society remained governed by three priests,²² with the Brothers relegated to subordinate roles. Disappointment was felt especially by those who had occupied responsible roles before the arrival of the priests and now found them-

¹⁷ It is he who wrote his biography (*Annales de l'institut*, 1847, #42).

¹⁸ His treatment of this scandal at La Valla is well known. In October 1824, he gave the Brothers a "*petit écrit*" (*Life*, Ch.12)

¹⁹ Terraillon acted only as chaplain

²⁰ It was not from ambition solely, but a desire to establish a Society of Mary in the diocese of Lyon and to clarify the situation at the Hermitage

²¹ Hence his high demands of formators and numerous referrals of candidates (*Life*, Ch.13)

²² Terraillon acting only as chaplain

selves under the direct control of Courveille. They had a crisis of confidence towards Fr Champagnat who, in wanting to integrate the priests, had changed what the Brothers had considered to be the nature of the original concept. Each dealt with the consequences of this in his own way.

4. A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE AMONG THE PRINCIPAL SENIOR BROTHERS

We know that Brother Jean-François left Fr Champagnat at that time to help to start a school at Larajasse²³ and that in March the Archbishop noted his refusal to return (Letters, Vol. 2, p.290). Brother Jean-Marie Granjon had stayed in St. Symphorien-le-Château for only a year. Having returned to the Hermitage he displayed eccentric behaviour, as recounted by Brother Jean-Baptiste, before being sent away.²⁴ According to Bourdin's memoir (*OM1/754*), Granjon had taken to living alone in a small hut, making nails.²⁵ Because

Jean-Claude Bonnet, admitted to the Hermitage on 2 September 1826, took the habit on 2 December 1826 under the religious name of 'Jean-Marie', Granjon must have left some time before. The departure of the only elected Director marked a definite rupture from the La Valla period.

As for Brother Louis, this was the time he was tempted to join the priesthood. Brother Jean-Baptiste is vague on this matter,²⁶ focussing on the obedience of Brother Louis. Nevertheless, the text states clearly that Brother Louis had entertained this idea despite Fr Champagnat's contrary view. As Brother Louis (1802-1847) did not participate in the first taking of final vows on 11 October 1826, it is evident that at this stage the crisis had already begun. His taking final vows in September 1828 marks the end of his hesitations. It is obviously a deep crisis, based, as in the case of his two companions, on a dual crisis of confidence in Champagnat and the Society of Mary. It would have surfaced by 1825, which explains that, when Champagnat falls ill towards Christmas 1825, there is a

²³ In the region of les Monts du Lyonnais. He was drawn there by M. Colomb de Gast, the curate at Larajasse whom he had known at St Saveur, or certainly met there. (*Notice biographique, OM4 ##246-247*).

²⁴ *Letters* Vol.2. See also *Life* Ch.15 and *OM1/754*. The *Life* seems to mix up two phases: at La Valla 1822-23 and at the Hermitage 1825-26, perhaps because his eccentricities re-appeared at St Symphorien.

²⁵ This is a winter activity that he could have done between January and May 1826. He seems to have been in the house until the retreat of October 1826. The Brothers who came to the retreat asked where he was and were encouraged not to visit him (*OM1/754*). See also the *Annales de l'Institut* 1825, #9.

²⁶ Did he want to leave the Society of Mary or to change its internal structures? In any case, Matricon, former pupil of Fr Champagnat and future chaplain of the Hermitage, just a little younger than Br Louis and well known to him, received the tonsure on 23 July 1826 and was ordained priest on 31 May 1828.

shirking of responsibility among the senior Brothers because they are not holding positions of authority and are doubtful about the future of the project.²⁷

While the more senior Brothers went missing in action Br. Stanislas, until then a minor figure, emerged. He had several winning qualities. Received at La Valla in February, 1822, just before the arrival of the postulants from Haute-Loire, he displayed the maturity of a senior Brother; furthermore he bonded closely with Champagnat not only as his nurse but also as his spokesman. For all practical purposes, it was he who took on the role of director of the Hermitage at a time when Champagnat was too ill; the senior Brothers were not to be seen and the other young Brothers were in need of a guide. He is representative of a group of Brothers who had an affection for Champagnat and an attachment to him personally rather than to the Society as an institution.

5. REFOUNDING OF THE BROTHERS' BRANCH

By November 1826 Champagnat was the uncontested superior. While he had not rejected the idea of a Society of Mary with priests, he was un-

sure how it would happen. Of the three original Brothers there remained only one – Brother Louis – and he had his doubts. In contrast, the list of nine Brothers who were the first group to take final vows gives us a good idea of those who had lined up behind Brother Stanislas who had unexpectedly become the leader of the refounding: Brothers Antoine Couturier, Laurent Audras, François Rivat, Stanislas Fayol, Joseph Ponset, Paul Préher, Etienne Poinard, Damien Mercier and Jean-Pierre Deville. They were all second-tier Brothers, including Brother François who was only eighteen. But which Brothers would be able to support Champagnat? Brother Louis, who did not take final vows in 1826, had made public his reservations about the re-founding the Society of Brothers.²⁸ Even though he was not inactive, he was improbable that he was caring for the novices. Additionally, very few took the habit that year. Brother Stanislas was certainly assuming the role of leader of the Brothers and, more or less, that of novice master. Champagnat's letters to ecclesiastical authorities in 1827 are clear. He is alone.²⁹

We know that from 1827 some young priests came to support him. In that same year, Brother Louis left for Saint Paul-en-Jarret to replace the Director who had drowned in July. In

²⁷ Br Jean-Marie Granjon, in building his little hut at the Hermitage, symbolically expressed this rebuttal in reproducing the kind of work undertaken in the first winter of 1817

²⁸ How did the Brothers feel about his refusal to take vows in 1826?

²⁹ The only priest (*OM1/173*)

taking his final vows on 8 September 1828, he committed the new order of things, but there were now priests assuming the main responsibilities. This is clearly indicated in a letter sent by Champagnat to Fr Cattet in December 1828:

“The Society of Brothers cannot be considered as the work of the Society of Mary but only as a subsequent branch of the Society.”

This statement indicates not only that the foundation of the community at La Valla was a project subsequent to the consecration at Fourvière on 23 July 1816 but also that the true foundation of the work of the Brothers dated from 1826. Champagnat added: “We will still need someone the good governance of the project of the Brothers which has begun to move forward.”³⁰ Champagnat requested a priest to act as economer because he “cannot devote sufficient time to the running of the house.” Then he provided a list of priests who exercised certain tasks:

- M. Seon who “attends to the spiritual domain,” the making of ribbons, and pastoral assistance in nearby parishes.
- “M. Bourdin has the supervision of the novices’ classes in writing, arithmetic and singing, books for the schools, and care of the small chapel.”

- Champagnat, occupies himself with “overall progress”: visits to the houses, correspondence, ... and “the reception of novices.”

It is quite clear that the Hermitage was a novitiate house for Brothers and was administered by priests, with Champagnat as superior of the two branches. If Brother Louis exercised the role of master of novices it was under the direction of Fathers Champagnat and Bourdin. In any case, the biography of Brother Bonaventure informs us that in 1830 Brother Louis was “director of the novitiate”³¹ in the sense of being a model and a supervisor for the novices, as Brother Bonaventure would also be.

6. TWO VIEWS CONCERNING THE SOCIETY OF BROTHERS

One tradition of the Marist Fathers, which comes from Fr Séon, leads us to believe that Champagnat was having doubts about the future viability of the Society of priests. I suggest, rather, that in the period 1825-1830 his emphasis was on developing a Society of Mary in which the Brothers were to be under the direction of the Fathers. The founding of the Brothers at La Valla on 2 January 1817 was a

³⁰ A telling expression [“commencer à marcher” in the original French] ten years after the commencement at La Valla

³¹ It is necessary to interpret this expression as equivalent to “master of novices”

preliminary phase, but its time had passed. Brother Louis had difficulty in accepting this development. Or, can we go so far to imagine that, aware of the conceptual change taking place, his desire to become a priest was sourced in his wanting to play a part in the new team of directors?³²

When he took final vows at the end of 1828 he was aware that the Marist Fathers were little pleased with their role of as formators and directors of the Brothers, and were moving towards being missionaries with Father Colin. The Revolution of 1830 was a catalyst for this process of separation.

7. DISTANCING FROM THE MARIST FATHERS AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ELITE OF BROTHERS

The situation at the novitiate changed quickly at the end of 1831 because Fr Bourdin, who had been at the Hermitage since the summer of 1828, received permission in September to go to Belley. It was probably in October in the same year that Brother Louis was sent to Charlieu where he would remain until 1836. This appointment came about because, following the Revolution of 1830, the Brothers at Charlieu were in difficulty and Fr Champagnat had immediate need of a strong Director there. In contrast to his

previous appointments that were also some distance from the centre – at Bourg-Argental, Charlieu in 1824, and St Paul-en-Jarret in 1827 – this one lasted for some time. Clearly, Champagnat was no longer depending on Brother Louis's presence at the Hermitage, for indeed he had at his disposal Brothers who were more attuned to his spirit. These were, among others, Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Jean-Marie who would take the place of previous leadership group. Brother Bonaventure is best situated among this new elite, at least in an ancillary capacity.

These changes partly took things back to the structure that existed prior to 1824 when, unable to rely on the diocese or Marist priests, the Founder had to turn to Brothers to manage the Hermitage and the growing number of establishments. Paradoxically, Brother Louis, who would have been considered capable of again taking on important responsibilities, was located elsewhere, as if there might have been some tension between him and Fr Champagnat.

8. EVIDENCE FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF BROTHER FRANÇOIS

We know through the Letters of Fr Champagnat that from 1836 Brother François became his right hand man

³² The practice of proposing priesthood to the most capable of the Brothers was common in religious congregations. The the priests at the Hermitage, for example Fr Terrailon, had encouraged Br Louis in this direction.

at the Hermitage, albeit without an official title. Residing at the Hermitage since his final profession in 1826, for some time he taken on had numerous numerous tasks. His notebook, *Notes Retraites* (No 302) begun in 1819, indicates that from 1828 he was the formator at the Hermitage, as these words recorded from a conference given by Fr Champagnat show:

"The class here³³ must be a model for all the houses. Any abuses committed here would have serious flow-on effects by the influence they could have on the other houses. Do your best and have a limitless trust in Jesus and Mary. 18j"³⁴

He declared, probably in April 1829:

"Pray to obtain discernment which to me is so vital. Always consult the Lord and the persons appointed by him to in order to apportion punishment, praise, blame, etc ...

He quoted the words from a conference given on the 15th of May:

"A master of novices must involve himself intimately in the spiritual life of each novice, in order to get to know their struggles, their anxieties, etc ... whether it be for their discipline or for their vocation."

And he added a little further on:

"If the Brother who is in charge of novices is a saint then the novices will be also: we are reproduced in those we form."

In July he stated more clearly:

"It is as if I am on a pedestal. All the eyes of my Brothers are on me. What regularity, what piety, what modesty! Bad example is imitated more than good."

A little later (pp.159-62) he outlined a kind of programme dealing with formation:

"Areas to improve: negligence, lessons, reading, writing, visits, proscribed penances, prevention of quarrels, work and emulation. Areas to practise: prudence, stability of character, energy, good example and charity. Those who resist the will of God draw condemnation on themselves. (Romans, 13). The Lord has burdened me with a heavy cross. I must bear it for the love of God, with courage, firmness and constancy for the salvation of my Brothers. (Conf.³⁵ 7 Sept.)

Between 1828 and 1830, Brother François had charge of the novitiate class and exercised the role of novice master, perhaps under the direction of Brother Louis. From 1831, he increased his reflections on leadership:

"The highest honours are pedestals, great burdens, real servitude, honourable tortures which discredit unworthy men. You remain where you are (...) Those who govern are like heavenly bodies which radiate much light and never rest. (Blanchard: Ecole des mœurs, Vol.3, pp.329-36)³⁶

"There is so much to read, to say, to write and to examine. I cannot study, speak or meditate. My God,

³³ Of the novitiate

³⁴ The letter 'j' in superscript means January

³⁵ 'Conf.' means Confession

³⁶ Added in the line-spacing above

inspire me, instruct me, direct me, transform me and heal me. Prayer for the Archbishop (Heures de Lyon) applied to the Superior.”

“The paths of kindness, of empathy and of religion are the most effective in winning the hearts of young people (...) If someone is to speak let it seem that it is God who speaks through his lips. If someone performs a ministry let him do it as if acting only by the virtue God gives him; in order that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4).”

In Notebook 303, begun in 1831, he continued to include many quotations from the spiritual masters on direction, particularly of novices. It appears that in 1832 (*Carnet 303*, p.318), the year in which the Marist Fathers leave the Hermitage, he rose to the highest level of Director, perhaps already Director of the house. “What am I doing in this position which so many holy religious, pious missionaries and especially our venerable founder have occupied!”

9. DIRECTING THE HERMITAGE

Fr Champagnat’s first extant letter to Brother François is dated 28 August, 1836. Appointed during the Founder’s absence to be in charge, François had to ensure good order among the Brothers. There were three priests (Servant, Matricon and Besson) who were charged with “overall supervision” [*la haute surveillance*] but it was François who headed a council comprising Frs Matricon and Besson, and Brothers

Stanislas and Jean-Marie. In fact, even if unofficially, Brother François was Director of the Hermitage.

In Paris on 20 June 1838 Champagnat sent a letter to François in which, after mentioning the two chaplains – Frs Matricon and Besson – he greeted, in order, Brothers Louis, Jean-Baptiste, Jean-Marie, Stanislas, Hippolyte, Jean-Joseph, Theophile, Pierre, Pierre-Joseph, Etienne, Bonaventure, and “all the novices”. It provides a good summary the state of the administration: the first three Brothers named are, after François, the general administration of the Institute. The next named Brothers are the managers of the various services in the house.

Brother Avit (*Annales de l’Institut* 1838, #385-87)) details the roles of the three leaders:

- Brother Jean-Baptiste “assists Brother François in government” and gives talks to the Brothers and the novices.
- Brother Jean-Marie acts as economer and general supervisor.
- Brother Louis is the librarian, the master of ceremonies, and gives lessons on etiquette.

As for Brother Bonaventure, the “master of novices”, “he forms more through his example than by teaching.”

In effect, the leaders were discharging governance, formation and administration in much the same way as did the priests at the Hermitage back in 1828. Ten years later the

ministry of the chaplains had been restricted to the spiritual domain.

10. FROM ONE DIRECTOR GENERAL TO ANOTHER (1819-1839)

The election of a Director General and two Assistants³⁷ in October 1839 only formalised what was already evolving from shortly after 1830.³⁸ Brother Louis, despite being the first disciple and a central figure up until 1831, had fallen from favour.³⁹ Certainly, Brother François was not yet Fr Champagnat's successor; he was only Director General, re-claiming the role which Jean-Marie Granjon had in 1819. However, Fr Colin, who presided over the election in 1839, did not see himself as Superior of the Brothers until after the publication of Champagnat's *Spiritual Testament* a few days before his death. By the time Brother Louis died in 1847 the autonomy of the Brothers was assured and Brother François began to use the title of Superior General. We can therefore distinguish a number of discrete phases in the story of the foundation of the Hermitage.

- The time at La Valla (1817-1824): that of a partnership between Fr Champagnat and the Brothers – a partnership with considerable am-

biguity because the former saw a Society of Mary with the priesthood at its base while the latter envisaged the society of Brothers as something autonomous, standing on its own.

- The time at the Hermitage prior to 1830 when Fr Champagnat put the Brothers under the authority of the priests, despite their strong resistance.
- The period 1830-1840 which saw the priests separate from the Hermitage and Fr Champagnat came to be supported by a new elite headed by Brother François, with Brother Bonaventure in highly valued support of him.

Brother Louis was the only person to have lived through the three periods. He was not only a faithful disciple but also a clear-thinking companion who was sometimes critical of Fr Champagnat. He paid the price for that. It is through the fate of this deeply spiritual man that we have a window into the controversy surrounding the identities of key roles: superior and director; priest and layperson. This debate would only be resolved in the Constitutions of 1854 which accorded the title of Superior General to a layperson. In a certain sense, this represented the posthumous victory of Brother Louis

³⁷ In fact, the sondage of the Brothers was confirmed by the Fathers.

³⁸ Br Louis-Marie, who entered in 1832, was to replace Br Jean-Marie who several years later became the Director of the novitiate at St Paul-Trois-Châteaux

³⁹ In 1839, he only received a few votes.

and the spirit of the early years. It was not by accident that Brother Jean-Baptiste in 1856 would come to devote a large section in the *Life of Father*

Champagnat to Brother Louis before paying him a double honour at the beginning of *Biographies de quelques Frères* in 1868.

HALF A CENTURY OF MARIST COMMUNICATIONS

Notes on the history of communications
in the Institute over the second half
of the twentieth century



Antonio Martínez
Estaún, fms

The physical legacy of the Institute's formal communications can be found on the shelves of the Marist library in four categories: the *Circulars of the Superiors General*; the *Bulletin d'Institut*; the various newsletters and reviews that succeeded the *Bulletin*; and the major publications of the Institute that appeared during this time. In addition, there is a fifth invisible deposit: the large digital archive "in the cloud".

Over of the second half of the twentieth century the *Circulars of the Superiors General* have continued in a similar vein. The *Bulletin*, however, underwent significant changes as it came to be replaced by other instruments of communication such as, *FMS*, *FMS Echo*, *FMS Message*, *FMS Latest News*, *Marist News*, and so on.

Through these pages, I will focus on communication initiatives that the

Institute has taken during these years. In doing so, I will treat digital communications only briefly, despite the attraction I personally have to advances in this new domain of information and communication technologies. As digital communication has taken off in the Institute, however, there has been a hybrid arrangement which has continued to rely on hard-copy back-up.

In the article, I offer an overview of the technical and human resources that the Institute has invested, through its Superiors, for fostering the identity and unity of its members, continually adapting to the needs of the moment. For further information on topics that I address through these pages, I refer you to the research done by Brothers André Lanfrey and Michael Green in the recently published *History of the Institute*.¹

¹ See *History of the Institute*. Vol. 2, Chapters 13, 16, 17 and 32, Vol.3, Chapters 2 and 3.

1. FIRST MEANS OF COMMUNICATION: THE CIRCULARS

The story of communications in the Institute begins with the Circulars that Father Champagnat sent to the Brothers. Brother François continued the tradition of Father Champagnat and, after him, all the Superiors General have maintained the custom of communicating with the whole Institute through this means. Today we have a heritage of 419 Circulars gathered in a collection of 32 volumes.

The publication of the twelfth volume of the Circulars (2009-2017) contains Nos. 412 to 419. Brother Emili began his first Circular with these words: “This Circular, which is the 412th of those written since the beginning, takes its place in a tradition which goes back to Saint Marcellin Champagnat. Over that time, with styles suited to each person and to each time, we have been left thousands of pages filled with family news, information, mandates, recommendations, and reflections on our life and mission ... Through it all, they are the expression of our will to build a family united around what is of our essence”.²

The objective of “maintaining a united family” has been a common purpose of the Circulars. The ways for pursuing that goal have varied, in con-

tent as well as style. It was during the Generalate of Brother Charles Raphael Major that changes to the type of content in the Circulars began to be seen.

1.1 Mandate of Brother Basilio Rueda

If there was a change in the content of Circulars with Brother Charles Raphael, those of Brother Basilio Rueda also brought a change to how they were presented. The publication of Brother Basilio’s Circulars broke traditional moulds in their content as well as in their format, preparation and distribution. There has not been in the history of the Institute a time when writings of a Superior General were so prolifically published than during the two mandates of Brother Basilio Rueda. This personal style of Brother Basilio had a flow-on effect also to the other official communications of the Institute.

The brief period of time of the between the two sessions of the 16th General Chapter, from 28 October 1967 to 1 September 1968, was a highly active and productive time for Brother Basilio. He who wrote a Circular of 524 pages in five instalments, the last of which was published on 12 September 1968, once the second Chapter session had begun. To this we have to add the Cir-

² *Circulars* Vol. 32, p. 6, Circular letter of January 2, 2012

cular on *The Missions* which appeared on 15 July 1968.

This heightened activity was accompanied with the translating of the text of each instalment into the four official languages of the Institute. Until 1968, the Circulars of the Superiors were written and published in French. Beginning with the 16th General Chapter (1967-1968) when the Generalate of Brother Basilio Rueda began, the Institute recognised four official languages (French, English, Spanish and Portuguese) and the Circulars were translated into these languages. This required the establishment of a translation service.

At the same time, it was necessary to make arrangements for the printing and distribution of the Circulars, since a copy of each one was given to each Brother. Beginning with the first instalment on 2 January 1968, those responsible for its production changed the size of the format, the type of letter, the presentation and the binding. So in 1968 a new format for presenting of the *Circulars of the Superiors General* began. The title would henceforth be given in the four languages, naming its theme, and indeed every Circular began to be known by its the-

matic title.³ What was also new about the Circulars of Brother Basilio was their length. The Circulars of Brother Leonidas and those of Brother Charles Raphael had averaged fifty pages. Most of Brother Basilio's were of book-length. Brother Basilio left the Institute more than 2,300 printed pages.

2. CRISIS AND CHANGE OF THE BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT

The *Bulletin de l'Institut* began its life shortly before the Institute celebrated its first centenary of foundation. There were 33 Volumes of this publication.

"The first issue of the *Bulletin de l'Institut* was published in January 1909. This means of communication was created to safeguard the unity among the Brothers 'dispersed in almost all the regions of the globe and sometimes separated by enormous distances'.⁴ It aimed to provide "a common bond among all the Brothers of the Institute".⁵ The publication would appear every two months. The type of content it carried would make the *Bulletin* "the unofficial organ of the General Council".⁶

³ There are Circulars written in the early years of the Institute which had a similar thematic emphasis, such those written by Brother François on the Spirit of Faith. But they did not have a thematic title, only a date of circulation.

⁴ *Circulars*, Vol. II, pp. 328-333. Circular of November 11, 1908 and introduction of n. 1

⁵ *Bulletin de l'Institut*, Vol. I, n. I, (January 1909), p. V

⁶ André Lanfrey, *History of the Institute* (2017), Vol. 2, chapter 16, p. 183

Brother André Lanfrey observes that in Volumes 24 to 29, which included the *Bulletins* from 1960 to 1967 when the editing was the responsibility of Brother Gildo (former Provincial of Italy), the content reflected an unfolding crisis. The selection of topics and material reflected the debates and new ideas of those years.

In July 1961, No. 183 appeared with 124 pages in French, and for the first time it was printed in Rome, by the publisher “Don Guanella” – S. Giuseppe al Trionfale and carried the line “Made in Italy – Imprimée en Italie”. This was a change of location for its editing, formatting, printing and distribution. The shift to Rome led at an improvement in the standard of production.

Volume 25, which began with No. 185 (January 1962) used superior quality paper and put the photo captions in three languages: French, Spanish and English.

Volume 28 which began with No. 208 (May 1968), besides including Portuguese for the first time in the captions of the photos, had each of the articles published in the language in which the author wrote it. A summary of each paragraph was included in the margin, using short sentences in the other three languages.

This editorial approach would be followed in all the issues of Volume 28. It is not clear where Volume 28 was printed. Judging from the typeface

used, it seems that from No. 211 it was prepared in other printing firms. Volume 30 indicated that it was formatted and printed by ‘Tipografia S. Pio X – Via degli Etruschi, 7 Rome.’

Volume 29, which began with No. 211 (June 1970), published for the first time a full article in the four official languages, dedicating a column for each one. Volume 29 modified this presentation of the publication of the articles in four languages using the format introduced in Volume 28, which summarised the contents of each paragraph with phrases on the margin in smaller typeface.

After 1971, Nos. 215-222 (Vols. 30-31) ceased to publish the full chronicle of the Institute to give priority to specific events and to key questions. In Volume 30 (December 1972 – June 1976), the articles were published in the language in which the author wrote them but they were accompanied by a brief summary in the other official languages of the Institute.

After the 16th General Chapter the *Bulletin d’Institut* began to undergo substantial change, both in form and content. It survived from 1971 to 1984, but with increasing fragility. By 1975 its demise seemed likely. Around the time of the 17th General Chapter (1976) there were signs that people were not clear as to what needed to be published. The content reflected an environment of disorientation from former structures and patterns of life. In 1977 no issue of the *Bulletin* was published.

The quality of the themes, whether spirituality, statistics or history, is indisputable. But, at a time when the Institute's Bulletin seems to publish solid and original works, we arrive in December 1984 with n. 222, whose extreme thinness (50 pages) indicates that there is not enough material. The Institute's Bulletin has not been deleted: it has simply died out. In total, 222 issues were published in 31 volumes, the last one covering the years 1978-1985. Three years later, in February 1987, FMS Message No. 1 was published with the subtitle "Bulletin de l'Institut", but with a more modest focus.

3. FMS

One of the greatest challenges for publication of the *Bulletin* was the actual printing process, because this involved increasingly complex technology and rising costs. To address the gap that now existed for sharing news, it was decided to put out a simple newsletter, one that could be easily and inexpensively produced. To this end, some in-house, low-cost technology was needed.

The publication, which aimed to fill the void left by the slow dying of the *Bulletin*, was a modest newsletter of several loose sheets called *FMS*. The first issue appeared in 1972 and the last one in 1985: thirteen years of life

and sixty issues published. This newsletter was distributed in addition to the *Bulletin* during its final years. Its Director was Brother Julio Llanillo who "in 1973 was called to our General House to be responsible for the 'Bulletin' *FMS*"⁷. The news in *FMS* was brief, almost telegraphic, and kept a privileged place for the news of the General House. *FMS* was almost a copy in outline of the *Bulletin d' Institut*, but without its thematic depth or breadth.

4. THE CONCLUSION OF 17TH GENERAL CHAPTER

Each General Chapter leaves for the Institute its own legacy of printed communications. This is what happened after the conclusion of the 17th General Chapter. Number 19 of *FMS* which appeared in January-February 1976, changed the cover and front page and the format of the paper (21 x 29.8 cm.) and instead of listing the canonical name of the Institute in 20 languages, as it had done in previous issues, there were the names of the 68 countries where the Marist work was present. The number of pages would be 12. This change coincided with the proclamation of the year 1976 as the "Year of the 17th General Chapter". Four issues were published with this format, which included information of the Chapter.

⁷ *FMS* n. 52, (May – August 1982), p. 771

Number 24 began a new period for the *FMS* news bulletin. The header was reduced to one-third of a page, and even though it would maintain the same dimensions, the contents would change every year. The publication concluded its life with the issue of November-December 1985. It had been at the service of the Institute for thirteen years with sixty issues published.

5. THE COMMUNICATION DURING THE MANDATE OF BROTHER CHARLES HOWARD

Between 1985 and 1987, there was a void in Institute-wide communications, something which is explained by the commencement of 18th General Chapter in Rome in September 1985 and the need to wait for the new General Council to determine the policies and procedures for communications. Before turning its attention to communications, however, the Council needed to consider other more vital and urgent topics.

"The new General Council elected by the 18th General Chapter (1985) formed a Commission at the beginning of 1986 with members who had experience in the field

of communication and whose charge would be to study the topic of publications.⁸

This Commission presented two proposals.

The first was to propose a new periodical review which would be pitched midway between treating broad, far-reaching and serious topics, so characteristic of the Bulletin of the Institute, and being a general Marist news bulletin with events of the life of the Brothers and their works in the world, such as was the task of *FMS*.

The General Council accepted the proposal and this is how *FMS Message* came into existence. The second suggestion asked that at least one Brother be named to dedicate himself exclusively to the coordination of all the publications and communications of the General Administration. The Council also approved this proposal and we are grateful to Brother Raoul Goffinet from the Province of Belgium for taking on this responsibility".⁹

5.1 FMS Message

In the month of February 1987, the first issue of *FMS Message* was published. This publication was used for the diffusion of information between 1987 and 1997. Two phases can be distinguished in this time, the first one

⁸ "Members of this Commission were the Brothers: Yves Thénoz, Secretary General; Richard Dunleavy, General Councilor; Jean Dumortier, editor of "Presence Mariste"; Ignacio Pérez, Director General of the Marist publishing firm "Luis Vives" of Zaragoza; and Brother Antonio Sancamillo, from the Marist Province of Italy". *FMS Message* n. 1 (February 1987) p. 1

⁹ *FMS Message* n. 1 (February 1987) pp. 1 and 2.

from 1987 to 1992 and the second between 1993 and 1997. In the first phase, twelve issues were published in black-and-white with an insert of four full-colour pages. The editing was done in Rome but the composition and printing was done in the by the publishing firm Edelvives (Zaragoza). Number 13 covered the preparations for the 19th General Chapter. The Chapter logo was on the cover, as it was in No. 14 which marked the transition to the next phase. This phase began with the commencement of the 19th General Chapter (1993) and concluded with number 23 (July 1997). Ten issues were published over the four years. The particular characteristic of this second stage was a change of logo and the preparation of several issues on single themes.

The proposal of the commission which was formed at the beginning of 1986 imagined a new look for the review. This included the heading with the initials 'FMS', four pages in full colour, some photographs and graphics in offset, and printing on glossy paper. The original 'FMS' banner lasted from February 1987 to July 1993. This was then changed to the logo of the 19th General Chapter.

Now that *FMS* was professionally prepared by the publishing firm Edelvives, its cutting-edge technology meant a high-quality publication. There were, however, some final proofing challenges that arose due to

distance from where the editing occurred (Rome) and where printing took place (Zaragoza).

5.2 FMS Echo

During the month of January 1988 the first issue of *FMS Echo* appeared. This was designed to be a "bulletin for communicating rapidly with the Brothers concerning current happenings in the Marist world". It had a different purpose from *FMS Message*.¹⁰

With the introduction of *FMS Echo*, the subjects previously treated by the defunct *Bulletin de l'Institut* were in practice now covered by two different publications: *FMS Message* which tended towards treating single themes, and *FMS Echo* which circulated the news more rapidly than the old *Bulletin*. In No.11 (March 1991) a change of Director was announced. Brother Germán Tosti, from the Province of Lujan (Argentina) who had been the Director of the review since 1988 was replaced by Brother Máximo Aguirre Asurmendi, from the Province of Norte.

6. MARIST NOTEBOOKS

In June 1990, the first issue of *Marist Notebooks* was published. Its purpose was to spread knowledge of Marist spiritual patrimony and the history of the Institute. This publication has been growing in quality con-

¹⁰ *FMS Echo*, n. 1 January 1988)

tributions and suggestions and in the variety of collaborators. Its format and presentation were improved from No. 28. Thirty-six issues have been published, and have included contributions from members of the International Commission of the Marist Patrimony. It is more a research journal than one concerned with communication. A survey of its pages provides an interesting chapter of research in the Institute.

6.1 Mandate of Brother Benito Arbués

FMS Message

When Brother Benito Arbués began his mandate, he did not make any major changes to the means of communication. There were, however, important changes as to whom the communication was directed, changes that already begun to occur under Brother Charles Howard.

The 19th General Chapter (1993) welcomed a group of laypeople to participate in some Chapter sessions for the first time. Brother Benito, the newly elected Superior General, published a "Chapter Report"¹¹ in which he included "a message and some accompanying Chapter documents

which addressed the discussions of the Chapter". The Report was addressed, for the first time in an official Chapter document, to more people than only the Brothers. There was one precedent for this when his predecessor, Brother Charles Howard, addressed his Circular of 15 October 1991¹² to "some laypeople" whom he describes as "friends".

Brother Benito broadened the horizon: "This first publication we offer both to you laypeople and to us brothers. Other later communications will be directed particularly to the brothers. It has also been anticipated that the General Council, will address a letter to people who share closely in our mission. In the past, the concerns of General Chapters seemed to have been something exclusive to the brothers and of little interest anyone else. Today we see things differently and we are progressing towards a more ecclesial vision, one based on communion and in sharing the same faith in Jesus, through our shared Marist spirituality ... During the preparation and development of the Chapter, we have felt the interest and prayer of many laypeople who have lived this event as their own. This is why I offer you this Report as a mark of gratitude."¹³

¹¹ *FMS Message* n. 14 (November 1993)

¹² *FMS Message* n. 14 (November 1993)

¹³ "Perhaps it will surprise you to see this Circular letter addressed to 'Friends' and not to the 'Brothers' which is usually the custom. Certainly I write to the members of the Institute as in all Circulars, but the basic theme of the present Circular also presents interest for others" Circulars, Vol. 29, p. 355 laity

Brother José María Ferré managed *FMS Message* from September 1988 until the end of 1989. From the start of that year, he was replaced by Brother Máximo Aguirre Asurmendi, from the Province of Norte.

FMS Latest News

“*FMS Latest News* came into existence in February 1995 ... The General Council presided over by Brother Benito gave birth to this publication which was for current news that was best not left for *FMS Message*, *FMS Echo*, etc.”¹⁴ This new publication appeared under the initials FMS, similar to the previous ones, with this sub-heading “General Government. Rome, Volume 1, Number 1”. Its editorial address was named as “Piazzale M. Champagnat, 2 – C.P. 10250 – 00144 Roma, Tel. (39) 06 545 17279 – Fax (39) 06 545 17 217 – Email: publica@fms.it”.

Coming out bimonthly, “this two page publication will be sent by fax to all the Provincials and District Superiors”. It was envisaged that they would photocopy it and send it to the communities of their Province or District, and reproduce the contents in their Provincial newsletters.”¹⁵

The novelty was that the General House was adapting itself, even if a little timidly, to the new technologies of digital communication using fax and internet. The limitation was that, in many Provinces, technology was not at the same stage of implementation. The system for producing the information was centralised but its distribution only partly successful because of these local technical problems. It was only with the setting up of a website a year later (www.fms.it) that *FMS Latest News* could be delivered directly via email. *FMS Latest News* benefited from the development of email. The internet allowed it to reach the most remote Marist places. This means of communication moved from being a curiosity to become “a bond of fraternal communion and of family life”.¹⁶

“No. 27 began the theme of the canonisation by naming a team. From No. 40 it had a new logo. No. 33 introduced a new banner and a new design which has continued up to our times. Beginning with No. 36 a list of deceased Brothers was published, and from No. 37 a list of the Brothers who have made perpetual profession.”¹⁷ *FMS Latest News* lasted until it was transitioned into *Marist News* in 2007.¹⁸

¹⁴ *FMS Latest News*, n. 100 (December 2001)

¹⁵ *FMS Latest News*, n. 1 (February 1995).

¹⁶ *FMS Latest News*, n. 100 (December 2001)

¹⁷ *FMS Latest News*, n. 100 (December 2001).

¹⁸ *FMS Latest News*, n. 100 (December 2001)

**A new moment for
FMS MARIST ECHO
(MARCH 2000)**

FMS Echo, edited in four languages, had come into existence in the time of Brother Charles Howard. No.30 (February 1999) marked an end to this stage of *FMS Echo*, coinciding with the announcement of the canonisation of Marcellin.

The canonisation of Marcellin was a “gift, message and challenge”¹⁹ also for communications. *FMS Echo*, which had been using a particular format until February 1999, gave way to a new publication with the same name “to which the word *Marists* is added to express its identity better.” It had started “in January 1988 with the objective of providing news of the Marist world to the Brothers” and with the intention of “being a publication totally open to its recipients”.²⁰ Now it had broadened the horizon as to who its recipients were.

The Director explained in a small editorial placed on the first page that there was a “general review of publications” in the Institute. “Three significant facts invite us to give them a new orientation and a new start. The

creation of new channels of communication, such as “*FMS Latest News*”, the Marist website, and adjustments to *FMS Message* have demanded a global review of our communications.

A better understanding of the role of the laypeople in life of the Church and of the place of religious life was opening horizons of collaboration within our charism that respected the respective vocation of each. In these same pages Brother Benito, our Superior General, invited us to *walk together*.

“Saint Marcellin has ceased to be in the exclusive possession of the brothers. His canonisation has opened him to ownership of the whole Church and of society. Many laymen and women also want to participate in his spirituality and his mission.”²¹

Beginning with No. 31 (March 2000) *FMS Marists Echo* became a legally registered publication.²²

Things moved along also with the renewal of the management teams. Brother Germán Tosti (1988-1991)²³ left the direction of *FMS* in the hands of Brother Máximo Aguirre Asurmendi (1992-1998).²⁴ He passed the baton to Brother Lluís Serra (1999-2003)

¹⁹ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 30 (February 1999), p. 2

²⁰ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 31 (March 2000), p. 1

²¹ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 31 (March 2000), p. 1

²² N° 31 – March 2000 – Year 13

²³ *FMS Echo*, n. 11, (March 1991).

²⁴ “Br. Máximo Aguirre has been the director of the publications during these last six years”, *FMS Echo*, n. 29 (September 1998)

who began the publication of *FMS Marist Echo* in 2000. He was advised by “a commission, formed by three Councillors: Brothers Séan Sammon (Chair), Claudino Falchetto and Pedro Marcos.”²⁵

FMS Marist Echo stayed in service under the leadership of Brothers Lluís Serra and Onorino Rota up to No.49, which appeared in 2005. It contributed approximately 400 full colour pages with an abundance of photos, and maintained a very similar format in all issues. Pages 4 and 5 always carried some ideas for group reflection on current major themes, and were aimed both brothers and laypeople. Its continuance was influenced by the variety of publications at that time, especially *Latest FMS Latest News*, and the development of a website for the Institute.

7. THE WEB

The Marist Brothers registered the domain *www.fms.it* in April 1996 mainly to be able to exchange messages by email. During the preparation for the 20th General Chapter, it was decided to use the new technologies to share information and communications that were to come

from the General Chapter. “The Publications Office is thinking of creating a web page for the Institute”,²⁶ which “will be fully functioning at the end of next August”.²⁷ “Brothers and communities, as well as laypeople and Marist friends who desire it, can follow the development of the 20th General Chapter through internet: *www.champagnat.org*. This information space will offer the more important Chapter news through texts and photos ... A free subscription will allow you to receive the bulletins in your mail box; they will include the documents that the Central Commission of the Chapter judges helpful to share.”²⁸

The Chapter bulletins stopped on November 30, 2001 with No.50, once the Chapter sessions had concluded. This digital bulletin was concerned primarily with Chapter; it was created to share news of the Chapter and ended at the close of the event.

The first version of a web page for the Institute of the Marist Brothers opened with the domain name *www.fms.it* and the second version with *www.champagnat.org* which continues to this day. The first version could not use the domain name *www.champagnat.org* because someone else had registered this

²⁵ *FMS Echo*, n. 29 (September 1998)

²⁶ *Latest News*, n. 34, November 1, 1998, p. 2

²⁷ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 17 (September 2001)

²⁸ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 17 (September 2001)

name independently of the Institute and without notifying the Marist Brothers. Later it was necessary to negotiate with that man through a Brother who was an administrator in the Province of Bética (Seville) to buy the right to domain name from him.

After the General Chapter, between 1 December 2001 and 31 August 2002, the Chapter's website was transitioned to a website of the Institute.²⁹

In 2003, Luiz Da Rosa began his services as webmaster. The second website began with him.³⁰ The beginning was announced in *FMS Marist Echo*. The second version of the "official website" of the Institute of Marist Brothers will open its door beginning in the middle of next month of January 2003. People interested in our spirituality and mission will be able to have it on their computer screens. It will replace the webpage dedicated to the 20th General Chapter. It will present its contents in the four official languages: Spanish, English, French and Portuguese. It will continue to provide

the *Marist Bulletin*, which has already gone over 100 issues and which is very well accepted among our readers. Our website intends to provide current news on Marist life and to offer visitors different information³¹ of the Marist presence in the world.³²

New changes were soon introduced. "The new Marist website began its journey on the internet last 18 April 2004, the fifth anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Marcellin Champagnat".³³ It is presented in the four official languages and contains current news and numerous interesting documents."³⁴ The fourth version, as we know it at present, began in 2011. Work is already being done on a fifth version adapted to new technical capacities.

8. MARIST BULLETIN

"Beginning in December 2001, a new means of electronic communication came into existence: the *Marist Bulletin* edited in the General House in the four official languages of the In-

²⁹ *Marist Bulletin*, n. 1 (December 2001)

³⁰ Editions WEB: <http://www.champagnat.org/000.php?p=82>

³¹ The Communications Office, as well as the website, has created the *Intratext Marist Library* with the objective of placing at the disposal the more significant Marist documents on the internet. Among others, it is possible to consult the Constitutions and the recent Circulars of Brother Superior General. Its address: www.inratext.com/fms. *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 33 (September 2000). It also offered access to "photographic collections of Marist events. They have just been published in: www.community.webshots.com/user/champagnat" *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 34 (December 2000).

³² *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 46 (December 2003), p. 8

³³ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 48 (June 2004), p. 6

³⁴ *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 47 (March 2004), p. 8

stitute: English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.”³⁵ “It is born in a very special moment, after celebrating the 20 General Chapter,³⁶ ... The objective of this publication is to share Marist life without borders ... This Bulletin is distributed free of charge by email to everyone who has subscribed or can subscribe via the website: www.champagnat.org.”³⁷

CONCLUSION

The various publications of this half-century of the Institute’s history, in spite of the modest resourcing and makeup of some of them, represent a huge collection of documents, dates,

names and places. They describe day-to-day Marist history through the second half of the twentieth century. Today we can access them to find accurate references of the chronology of the more outstanding events of the Institute during that time. It was easy to produce all the issues of the various publications of this half century of Marist history. I hope that all this effort of the Institute, perhaps not well enough known, will be appreciated for the value it can offer.

And now, thanks to the digital age and its emerging technologies, a new chapter is opening in how the Institute can generate and share what it needs to communicate.

³⁵ *FMS Marist Echo*, Number 38 – Year 14 – December 2001

³⁶ “A magnificent acceptance of the information contained in the Chapter Website: www.champagnat.org has permitted us to follow minute by minute the principal events of the 20th General Chapter, held in Rome from 4 September to 13 October. More than one thousand daily visits have taken place. A daily Bulletin received by more than 1,700 subscribers, hundreds of photos, and an abundant number of texts and documents which have been a help for many people who have followed the discernment process step by step. The visits have been high especially on the election days. The deepest and hidden places of the five continents have not remained at the periphery of this history but have lived it directly. The option for life has enthused and continues to enthuse many people close to the charism of Saint Marcellin. Laypeople have warmly appreciated that they are also Marist Family. *FMS Marist Echo*, n. 38, (December 2001)

³⁷ *Marist Bulletin*, n. 1 (December 2001).

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER of FR CHAMPAGNAT (1837) concerning the Foundation of the School at La Voulte



André Lanfrey,
fms

Brother Louis Richard recently found a small fascicule of twenty pages entitled *Les Petits Frères de Marie à La Voulte-sur-Rhône* (Ardèche) [The Little Brothers of Mary at La Voulte-sur-Rhône (Ardèche)] printed at Privas in 1903. Its author was Auguste Roche, at that time parish priest of La Voulte, a small town in the Ardèche, on the right bank of the Rhône, south of Valence and to the north of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux.

In it the author defends the Brothers at the time of the great offensive against the religious congregations. Thanks to a file of documents no doubt kept at the presbytery, he was able to trace the history of the school, detailing in particular the period of its foundation. Among the numerous letters he cites, is a previously unknown one from Father Champagnat (on page 8), addressed to the parish priest, Father Pleynet:

“V.I.M.I. – Notre Dame de l’Hermitage, 28th November 1837

Monsieur le Curé,

I am sending you three Brothers, the energetic perseverance of M. Genissieux¹ having finally triumphed over every obstacle: you for your part have neglected nothing in order to ensure the success of this enterprise. I therefore address myself to you and recommend to you in a very special way these three Brothers who are accompanied by a fourth who will help them² to get set up and who will then return. You will be, M. le Curé, their counsel, their support, in their various difficulties. They will consider you to be their father and I beg of you to consider them as your children. It is my great wish that you will be pleased with them; that they will support you in your zeal in forming children to virtue. It would have been a very great pleasure for me to accept the excellent M. Genissieux’s kind invitation to be present at the installation of your Brothers, but I am unable to do so. Please accept the assurance of my devotedness, etc.

Champagnat, superior.”

¹ The industrialist who founded the establishment.

² The writer draws attention to an element of French grammar. His correction has been incorporated into this translation.

This letter, which gives the names of the principal persons involved in the foundation, announces the arrival of a community and recommends the Brothers to the good care of the parish priest, appears *a priori* somewhat banal. We do not possess the original but there is scarcely any doubt as to its authenticity because our Marist sources³ have several items of correspondence concerning this foundation to which the Bishop of Viviers, Bishop Bonnel, and his Vicar General, Fr Vernet, were firmly opposed. Without claiming to have a good knowledge of the history of the Diocese of Viviers, I believe I can identify several key reasons for such opposition, which are sourced in the strategy rebuilding the spiritual vitality of dioceses after the Revolution.

Each bishop was in effect trying to organise not only his secular diocesan clergy formed in the seminaries, but also congregations of Sisters and Brothers who could each be centred around a diocesan novitiate. There was nevertheless some contrast between the congregations of Sisters and Brothers: the first were very numerous, (Sisters of Saint Charles, Sisters of Saint Joseph, and so on) whereas a diocese that had a thriving novitiate of Brothers was a rarity. This is why Archbishop de Pins con-

sidered the Marist Brothers as his congregation, extending his special protection to them but also expecting them to give priority to the Diocese of Lyon when founding schools.

The Diocese of Viviers had the Sisters of the Presentation of Bourg-Saint-Andéol, founded during the Revolution, at Thueyts, by Anne-Marie Rivier. She was aided by Fr Vernet who was the Administrator of the diocese, and who was to be until his death in 1843 a prestigious and active Vicar General. The Annals of the house at Aubenas relate for us the history of the project of the founding of the Brothers of Viviers who would in 1844 join up with the Marist Brothers.

“Seeing that the work of Mlle Rivier was succeeding, M. Vernet conceived the plan for a congregation of men to instruct young boys and take care of orphans, and prevailed upon M. Boisson to hand over the buildings of his college for this project. That was in 1803. The congregation did not develop, until M. Boisson was named chaplain to Notre Dame de Bon Secours, where he took his few novices in 1817. He came to lend his support to the respected priest Richard who was charged with the ministry of this shrine ...”

“M. Boisson made considerable efforts to increase the number of the Brothers. He received few subjects and most of them quickly became discouraged.

³ Letters of Champagnat, vol. I pp.270-277, letters 148-150; *Cartas recibidas*, Edição Brasileira, 2002, cartas 143, 145; *Annales de l’Institute*, Vol. I, 1837, nn.286-291; *Annales de maisons: Aubenas ...* See also Alain Delorme, “Father Vernet and his defeat in the foundation of the Brothers”, in *Marist Notebooks*, No. 19, June 2003, pp. 3-18.

He had at first received little support from the Bishop of Mende, on whom the Diocese of Viviers had depended since the Concordat. Mgr Molin, having been named Bishop of Viviers, gave stronger support to M. Boisson and obtained the legal authorisation of the new congregation from the government on 10 March 1825.”

In fact, Fr Boisson was employing the Brothers in the service of the shrine and placing a certain number of them as schoolmasters in the parishes. The annalist, Brother Avit, tells us that towards 1832 there were only four Brothers remaining:

“... up to then they had had no Rule, nor a proper novitiate, nor any well-defined principles. Quite a large number of young men had entered, and had subsequently become discouraged. M. Boisson, preoccupied with the needs of the shrine, was not able to pay adequate attention to the Brothers whose work he seemed not to have understood as anything other than something ancillary.”

In fact, there was no congregation as such. The title of “Brother” was used in its traditional sense of being any layman occupied with parish matters (for example as a schoolmaster, sacristan, or catechist) under the direction of the priests. It was like being a domestic servant, but with a religious overlay. The clergy in the Ardèche saw little need to found an

independent body of laymen dedicated to the single purpose of education of boys.⁴ Perhaps the Revolution of 1830, however, had disrupted understandings of this old form of pastoral ministry.

Whatever be the case, we are told that:

“In 1832 M. Boisson sold the Brothers’ property to the Vicar General, M. Gervais. M. Vernet, still Vicar General and Superior of the Major Seminary, then began to think of ways to focus the project of the Brothers. In the month of April 1834 he sent ten young men whom he had gathered from around the diocese, to the novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at Avignon, to be formed in the religious virtues. At the end of three months, so as not to get into too much debt, he called them back to Bourg-Saint-Andéol, gave them a few rules of conduct, religious names and a costume, somewhat similar to that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools but without the large cloak, and he gave them a rabat which was blue. He then sent them to Notre Dame (de La Blachère) proposing to guide them later to make vows ...

The diocesan authorities in Aubenas were thinking then of abandoning their previous pastoral model in order to attempt the creation of a congregation of Brothers that was conceptually a mix of the traditional schoolmaster and a typical nineteenth century congregation. But they had been

⁴ Pierre Zind in his thesis *Les nouvelles congrégations de Frères enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830* speaks at length about this foundation but does not deal with the period which concerns us. Brother Avit, in his *Annales de la maison d’Aubenas*, gives a full account of this history up to their union with the Marist Brothers in 1844. drawing his inspiration from the manuscript written by Brother François Boudet, who was at first a member of the Brothers of Viviers before becoming a Marist Brother.

somewhat tardy, and hybrid models like this were not proving to last very long. The diocese also had another problem: in its central region there were many groups of Protestants whose presence prompted caution concerning Catholic pastoral initiatives. This was because the 1830 Revolution, strongly liberal and anti-clerical, seemed to be favouring aspects of Protestant thinking.

It was in such a context that from 1831, the parish priest of La Voulte, Archpriest Pleyne, thought of founding “a Christian school”. He had sought advice regarding his rights to found a private school from M. Nicot, Rector of the Academy of Nîmes⁵ who had reassured him on that point. It was no doubt in order to thwart his intentions that the Municipal Council which, in its formal session of 4 February 1833, had given its strong support to the incumbent teacher, M. Baud, and his wife. The former was teaching 40 boys and the latter 45 to 50 girls. They used the simultaneous method, the same as that of the Brothers, not the mutual method which was judged to be suspect by the clergy. The Council meeting ended with the passing of a motion that a request be made to the Ministry of Public Instruction for a silver medal to be presented to these worthy teachers.

This official support nevertheless concealed a problem: the number of children at school in a commune of 2200 inhabitants seemed particularly low. Even though, the significant Protestant community had its own private school, it is clear many children were not being educated in either school. Another problem was that M. Baud, the teacher, was not from the Ardèche nor was he even French, but from Savoy.⁶ And in 1834 he would have to request letters of naturalisation in order to retain his post. Having been a La Voulte for nine years (1825), he was no doubt originally one of the itinerant teachers who used to come from the region of the Alps.⁷ Being a foreigner he was certainly teaching without his *Brevet* [Teaching Certificate]. The Mayor stressed that the competence and dedication of M. Baud and his wife matched by “the purest of moral principles”, but nothing is said concerning religious instruction.

All this debate took place just before the promulgation of the Guizot Law on 28 June 1833, which was to require each commune to have a school for boys and to provide a salary of 200 francs for the school teacher. This law, which was a response to an ever-growing desire in public opinion for primary education, contributed towards a weakening of

⁵ Fascicule pp. 1-2, letter of 20th March 1832.

⁶ Born in 1802, he was therefore a little over 30 in 1833. Savoy did not become part of France until 1860.

⁷ Nothing is said as to the origins of his wife.

the position of the Municipal Council of La Voulte, apparently rather conservative in matters educational, and encouraged the parish priest Pleynet.

In a letter of 24 May 1835, two years after the Guizot Law, addressed to “M. le Superior” of the Brothers of Viviers, that is to say to Fr Vernet, Fr Pleynet explained his position. In his eyes “the education of boys leaves much to be desired” but “the difficulties of the times” [the consequences of the 1830 Revolution] and “the lack of resources” had forced him to keep silent and to wait. However, “a highly estimable person⁸ has caused us to hope for some funding to help a Christian school at La Voulte” in a year’s time. He therefore requested from Fr Vernet two of his Brothers to take charge of a fee-paying school

“as long as the Commune keeps out of this business.”

Fr Pleynet had certainly not remained as silent as he says in his letter. In 1835, the position of the Municipal Council had not changed and the parish priest was planning the creation of a private school in competition with that of the Commune, his hope being that it would eventually become the Commune school. This was not an unusual strategy; we find numerous examples in the Annals of the houses. Still Fr Pleynet had to find capable teachers who could deliver victory in this tussle. But the reply of Fr Vernet on 26th May reveals that the congregation of the Brothers of Viviers, still in its early stages and with an uncertain future, was unable to respond to his project:

“Viviers, 26th May 1835

Monsieur

I would hasten to respond to your wishes if it were possible. But it is only a year and a half since we got started: we still do not have any novices. We must give them the time to be well formed in every respect, and to obtain their teaching certificate. And then the best of them need to remain in the mother house to form the others.

I do not know if we will be able to extend ourselves very much: that depends on the parish priests, who have been invited by Monseigneur to give us aspirants and to assist us with our expenses. We are in no hurry. We are very happy with the subjects we have. Kindly mention these matters in your meetings for the conferences.”

Fr Pleynet would therefore be reaching an understanding with not only M. Genissieux, manager of the Foundries and Forges Company of the Loire and

Isère, but also with the superior of the Marist Brothers who were running the school for boys established by that firm at Terrenoire, near St Etienne. Having

⁸ Certainly M. Genissieux.

established a branch of his industrial activity at La Voulte, M. Genissieux was ready to set up a school there as he had done at Terrenoire.

But there was a major difficulty: La Voulte was not in the diocese of Lyon and Fr Champagnat could not accept to found a school there without the agreement of the ecclesiastical authorities of both the Dioceses of Lyon and Viviers. He was furthermore overwhelmed with requests to start schools and that is why a letter of M. Genissieux to Fr Pleyne dated 31st October 1836 declares: "We will not be able to have Brothers this year." In 1837 Fr Champagnat certainly had not abandoned the plan, for on 26th July, on his way to St Paul, it was from La Voulte that he wrote to Fr Mazelier (Letters Vol I, 122) to inform

him that an indisposition obliged him to return to the Hermitage. But a letter dated 20th October 1837 from Fr Vernet, Vicar General and founder of the Brothers of Viviers, to Fr Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon, requested him in the name of Bishop Bonnel to forbid the Marist Brothers to establish any houses in the diocese of Viviers.

This letter has not survived but we know its principal contents by references Fr Champagnat made in several of his letters, and particularly that of 1 November (Letters Vol. I, 150) in which he informs Bishop Bonnel, Bishop of Viviers, of his submission to the decision taken. It is worth reproducing *in extenso*⁹ as it brings out clearly the background to the problem and appears to reply point by point to the letter sent to Fr Cattet.

Monseigneur,

I consider myself fortunate that Providence offers me this opportunity to express to Your Grandeur my respectful homage and to assure you of my total devotedness. It would doubtless have been more satisfying for me to do so for more pleasant reasons, but since it has pleased God to ordain otherwise, you will at least allow me the satisfaction of explaining to Your Lordship the uprightness of our intentions by letting you know our feelings.

Fr Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon, has just sent us a letter from Monsieur Vernet, dated 20th October 1837, in which M. Vernet asks him, in the name of Your Grandeur, to forbid the Brothers of the Hermitage to open establishments in the diocese of Viviers. We have no doubt, Monseigneur, that M. Vernet decided on such a step only for praiseworthy motives, and so we hasten to subscribe to them with the most respectful submission, only too happy to be able thus to contribute to good order in your diocese. If the presence of our Brothers in the diocese of Viviers could have resulted in an unpleasant clash which would be a disgrace to religion, we ourselves are deeply upset by it. It would be, alas,

⁹ Brother Avit has given a copy of this letter in the *Annales de l'institut* (Vol. I, 1837, nn. 289-291), and in the *Annales de la maison provinciale d'Aubenas*, with some variations.

extremely distressing if at a moment when Protestantism is sacrificing its dearest interests, and rallying on all sides, to take over the education of youth at all costs, we should happen to hinder the work of God in a diocese whose wise administration is so advantageous to both of us.

According to M. Vernet's letter, Your Grandeur would not be displeased if, at a time when we cannot answer the multiplicity of requests which come to us from all over France, we ordered our Brothers in Peaugres and Boulieu not to reopen their schools until we received a quite formal authorisation from Your Grandeur.

You will be tolerant, Monseigneur, if I take this opportunity to inform Your Grandeur about the spirit of the society. It is a principle of our Constitutions that we act always and everywhere and in everything, only with the help and under the benevolent protection of their Lordships the Bishops, of whom we glory in always being the most submissive and devoted servants. Therefore, when it shall please Your Grandeur to honour us with your confidence, we shall rush to obey your orders, which it will always be a pleasure and a glory for us to fulfil.

Please accept"

The argument put forward in the letter to Fr Cattet is particularly harsh: the Marist Brothers, by their desire to expand into the diocese of Viviers, would create a division very prejudicial to Catholic interests in a diocese where the Protestants were numerous and active. Fr Vernet would certainly have reminded him also that, since the diocese of Viviers had its own congregation of Brothers, it should have priority in matters of school foundations. This is why Fr Champagnat replied that in the diocese of Lyon, both he and his superiors had a less narrowly territorial vision of the educational mission, especially since the promulgation of the Guizot Law. But the last paragraph of the letter probably gives us the principal reason for his letter. Bishop Bonnel, and certainly Fr Vernet and a good number of the clergy of the Ardèche, were very unhappy with a planned opening at La Voulte

which would flout the rights of the episcopal authority and give to founders coming from outside the diocese more than was their due.

The internal situation of the congregation of the Brothers of Viviers, who seem by this time to be gathering in strength, certainly played an important role in this manoeuvre, as is suggested by Brother Avit (*Annales d'Aubenas*):

"In the month of September (1837), the Brothers, novices and postulants did their retreat at Viviers. They numbered 60. It was then that M. Vernet wrote to M. Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon. He strongly requested him to persuade Archbishop de Pins, Administrator of the diocese, to prohibit Reverend Father Champagnat from placing his Brothers in the diocese of Viviers; his letter was dated 30 October. His Grace the Archbishop communicated it to our holy founder, for whom he had a high regard, but without imposing

on him the prohibition requested, contenting himself with advising him to sort out the matter in the best way possible.”

Fr Champagnat showed great respect to Bishop Bonnel but he suggested that it was Fr Vernet who was responsible for the accusations brought against the Marist Brothers. By declaring himself ready to withdraw the Brothers from Peaugres and Boulieu¹⁰ or “not to reopen their schools until we have received a very formal authorisation from Your Lordship”, he was obliging Bishop Bonnel to clarify his position.¹¹ On the other hand, by leaving his Vicar General to make the intervention, Bishop Bonnel had avoided compromising himself too much and had left the door open to further arrangements. This is obviously what Fr Champagnat had understood; he would refuse all foundations in the diocese without the written authorisation of the Bishop, but he would not withdraw the Brothers from schools already founded.

The foundation at La Voulte then was the occasion for conflicts on several levels: between dioceses; between congregations of Brothers;

between parish priest and municipal council; and certainly between Catholics and Protestants. In the end, the industry set up by M. Genissieux attracted new populations and changed the economic and social balance of the place; the quarrel over schools was also a consequence of economic change.

We should stop here and dwell a little on Fr Champagnat’s comments on Protestantism, described as “sacrificing its dearest interests, and rallying on all sides to take over the education of youth at all costs”.¹² We can see here reference to both local and diocesan situations; the Catholics should be forming a bloc to support their school, as the Protestants had done for theirs. But Fr Champagnat no doubt had a more general viewpoint. For him the Reformation (freedom of inquiry, etc.) was mother to the revolutionary spirit (the free thinkers, and their ilk), and he would willingly have included the Revolution of 1830, the liberal offensive and Protestantism, along with the mutual method, reputed to be of Protestant origin, which was experiencing a return to favour after the 1830 Revolution. And he considered

¹⁰ See Letters Vol I pp. 290-291 the explanations for this decision. Fr Champagnat therefore invited the parish priests of Boulieu and Peaugres to forewarn the Mayor that he would have to provide another teacher and was going to ask the Brothers not to start classes “unless your Bishop gives written authorisation.”

¹¹ It is true that the foundation of a new school was delayed. On 30 November again, Fr Champagnat wrote to Fr Fustier, parish priest of St Félicien, to tell him that Fr Vernet’s letter had obliged him to put their plans on hold. It was not taken up again until after the death of the Founder and the school started in 1841.

¹² The writer suggests a grammatical change more in keeping with current French usage, which has been followed in this translation.

the Guizot Law – which ironically helped his work to develop strongly – to be an initiative of liberal and Protestant inspiration. This was not untrue, even though Guizot's opinions went well beyond that.¹³ In 1837 he had additional personal reasons to distrust a Minister who was opposed

to private educational societies, and who was unwilling to grant him the legal authorisation which he so much needed.¹⁴

But let us return to the plan for a local foundation which M. Genissieux was making every effort to unblock:

“Terrenoire, near St Etienne, 7th November 1837.

Monsieur le Curé,

I have received at this very moment the letter from M. Champagnat that you will find enclosed.¹⁵ I had first thought of writing directly to M. Gervais¹⁶, but for fear¹⁷ that the reply would not be the one desired by M. Champagnat, I am having recourse to your very great kindness to beg you to once more go to Viviers, and to yourself request from the Bishop of Viviers or from the Vicars General an authorisation of sufficient weight that M. Champagnat can produce at the Archdiocese of Lyon, and which will permit him to then give us the Brothers he has promised. I would be much obliged if you sent me this document as soon as possible and I will then get it to Monsieur Champagnat. If you are able to send it to me here on 13th or 14th of this month, kindly address it to me in Lyon, at the offices of the Compagnie de fonderies et forges, rue St-Dominique, no. 14 – M. Vautro¹⁸ will be able to give you a horse, a carriage and a servant to take you to Viviers.”

¹³ M. Guizot was both a liberal and protestant. In his *Histoire générale du protestantisme* Vol. III, p. 244, Emile G. Léonard tells us that “The educational situation of Protestantism made [...] remarkable progress thanks to Guizot” through the Law of 1833 and the new favour accorded to the mutual method.

¹⁴ In a letter of December 1836 to Bishop Devie (Letters Vol.I, 75) he attributes his refusal of legal authorisation to the statutes of the Marist Brothers to confessional causes: “The principal cause of the delay we are experiencing comes, I believe, from the fact that M. Guizot, being a Protestant, does not view with pleasure an association totally dedicated to Mary.”

¹⁵ It has not been preserved but its content is easy to guess: no Marist Brothers at La Voulte without the written authorisation of the Bishop.

¹⁶ Fr Gervais was the Vicar General in Viviers.

¹⁷ Again an updating of the French grammatical construction which is incorporated into this translation.

¹⁸ M. Vautro was the Director of the factories at La Voulte.

A letter of 17 November 1837 to Fr Champagnat gave us the result of this approach since M. Genissieux included with it “the authorisation you

wish to obtain from the Diocese of Viviers” granted by the Bishop on 13 November.¹⁹

*“Pierre François Bonnel, by the mercy of God
and the grace of the Holy and Apostolic See, Bishop of Viviers.*

As the establishment of the Marist Brothers at La Voulte had been stopped because of the letter of M. Vernet to the M. Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon, it will be of great satisfaction to me to see this establishment prosper and distinguish itself by its quality;²⁰ and I likewise request M. l'abbé Champagnat to send to La Voulte the Brothers he had promised to M. Genissieux. The piety of this excellent Christian is too greatly deserving of encouragement for me to appear to be opposed to his views.

Viviers, 13 November 1837.

† P. François, Bishop of Viviers“

The letter plays adroitly on the dates in order to justify an exception and to preserve the future: no installation of the Marist Brothers without prior authorisation. In fact, since the Brothers of Viviers did not manage to increase, this authorisation prepared the way for their merger with the Marist Brothers, which took place under the new bishop, Bishop Guibert. Fr Vernet had died in 1843 and Bishop Bonnel in 1844, having had resigned in 1841. (Letters Vol. II, p.100)

Still in a hurry, because the opening of the school year was upon them, M. Genissieux asked in the same letter (*Cartas recibidas* no. 145,

pp. 286-288) for the Brothers to arrive at La Voulte before the end of the month. Everything was in readiness and their luggage could be rapidly transported down the Rhône at the company's expense. The Brothers would therefore have a few days to get organised before the start of classes. M. Genissieux himself intended to go to La Voulte at the start of December “to be present at the official opening of the school and the religious ceremony with would probably take place to bless it”.

It is here that we must situate the letter, hitherto unknown, from Fr Champagnat to the parish priest of La

¹⁹ “*Cartas recibidas*” no. 145, Letter of M. Genissieux (AFM 129.44).

²⁰ The writer renders in contemporary French an expression in the original which is now archaic.

Voulte on 28 November 1837, which in effect brought the whole affair to a conclusion by announcing the arrival of the Brothers.²¹

The fascicule give us the content of the report of the installation of the Marist Brothers dated 5 December 1837. In a commune of 2189 inhabitants, comprising 1700 Catholics and 500 Protestants, the number of enrolments stood at “one hundred and seventy children as many Catholics as of the Reform religion”.²² After the Mass of the Holy Spirit “the clergy, the Brothers, the children and a large number of the faithful among whom were several from Lyon who were members of the administration of the foundries and forges with their families, went in procession into the classrooms which had been blessed.” Then follow the signatures of the distinguished guests, which, except for the parish priest, all seem to be members of the company. Neither the Mayor nor any of the Municipal Councillors of 1833 signed the report of the day’s proceedings. Apparently, there was no representative from the Diocese and Fr Champagnat had declined the invitation of M. Genissieux.

Thus it was the relatively discreet inauguration of a private school. There are two points on which this founda-

tion departs from the norm. The diocesan authorities had scarcely any involvement in it; and by mixing Catholic and Protestant pupils together in the same school, it seems the traditional equilibrium between the two religions was disrupted, whilst the commune was being left completely out of the arrangements. From this there resulted numerous later comings and goings of which the fascicule speaks, as do also the *Annales* of the school at La Voulte. But that would be another story.

Meanwhile, we can observe that this foundation represented an emerging educational trend in its bringing together zealous clergy, a specialist teaching congregation, and a social Catholicism which was probably legitimist (supporting the Bourbon monarchy) while being at the same time economically liberal. Importantly, teaching was becoming a matter for the laity and influenced by two factors: first, congregations of Brothers were introducing an activist Catholicism independent of the secular clergy; second, the Guizot Law, by creating teacher training colleges, had begun to prepare a body of teachers dependent on the State. The semi-traditional system exemplified by the Brothers of Viviers had been shown to be non-viable.

²¹ “*Cartas recibidas*” (no. 147, AFM 129.46) quotes for us the letter of M. Genissieux of 29 November 1837 in which he announces his departure for La Voulte the next day. He certainly had not in the meantime received Fr Champagnat’s letter since he did not know if the latter had yet sent the Brothers. But he was very much counting on finding them there.

²² According to the fascicule, in 1836 La Voulte had 1700 inhabitants Catholics and 500 Protestants.

ANNEXES TAKEN FROM THE FASCICULE

1. EXTRACT FROM THE LETTER OF M. NICOT, RECTOR OF THE ACADEMY OF NÎMES, TO M. PLEYNET ON 20 MARCH 1832

“Formerly the number of school teachers was proportional to that of the population. The allowance was for one teacher, male or female, per 1,000 souls, and it was not permitted in any way to go beyond that. This system did, it is true, render the position of the teachers more stable; they could live with security. But also many communes, where mediocrities had been imposed on them, bemoaned the fact that they could not choose someone more capable! How many complaints were aroused by this monopoly, especially when the teacher either charged too high a price for his or her lessons or cut them short, etc.²³ “In 1830 a principle was proclaimed: that of free competition. This salutary principle could only bring about rapid improvements in primary education, the teacher was obliged to redouble his zeal and devotedness, if he wanted to see his school well attended and preferred to another; on another side, the right to have a school was not granted to anyone who asked for it or who already had one, as was the case under the Empire with its unlimited freedom, and as in Belgium; but to the one who gave guarantees of good moral behaviour and capacity.”

²³ This vision of things seems to allude in a somewhat fanciful fashion to the monopoly held by the University (over all teaching in France) and to sing the praises of the liberalism of the July Monarchy in matters educational. In fact, in terms of primary education the University's monopoly was very much theoretical.

ANNEXE

2. DELIBERATIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF LA VOULTE IN FAVOUR OF ITS TEACHERS

"4 February 1833. The Municipal Council of the Commune of La Voulte met in ordinary meeting in the ordinary meeting room of the council buildings. Present were Messrs Valantin (Mayor), Frédéric Fuzier, Biré, Curinier, Vignal, Boissier, Marquet the younger, Métras and Mitiflot.

One municipal councillor drew the attention of Council to the two primary schools operating in the commune, namely: the school for boys, conducted by M. Joseph Baux, and the one for girls conducted by Madame Marie Célestine Ladoux, wife of the aforesaid M. Baux, a 1st degree teacher. . . .

The Mayor then gave to Council all the information he had gathered on this subject. He had several times visited these two schools. The boys' school numbers around forty pupils; the number of girls who attend Madame Baux's school is forty five to fifty. The simultaneous method is employed in these two schools with equal success; the progress being made by the pupils is remarkable and the Mayor had found it to be noticeable with each visit he had made to these two schools, visits which he had however repeated fairly often. [...] He added that love for the public good is the one vehicle which guided M. and Madame Baux, and that personal gain does not enter at all into their daily efforts . . . [...] Council, sharing entirely the thinking of His worship the Mayor in regard to M. and Madame Baux [...], concluded unanimously:

A silver medal will be sought urgently from the appropriate authorities, for each of the said Baux, husband and wife, in the name of the Municipal Council of the commune of La Voulte as a body. [...] Finally, a notification to this effect will be transmitted to M. and Madame Baux as proof of the high esteem of Council."

ANNEXE**3. LETTER FROM FR PLEYNET TO FR VERNET 24 MAY 1835**

Monsieur le Supérieur,

Since I have been at La Voulte I have become aware that our schools for boys leave much to be desired. The difficulty of the times and the lack of resources had imposed on me the necessity of sigh in secret over the gravity of the evil, and to abstain from any action which would have had any result other than to compromise me. Today I am beginning to see that this state of affairs could be improved.

A person of more than estimable worth has given us hope of funding to help a Christian school at La Voulte. Although this help will only come to us in a year's time (it is based on more than just a possibility), I am asking you to from this moment to place the parish of La Voulte at the top of all those where Brothers would be very greatly needed and in a reply, with which you will have the extreme kindness to honour me, to please give me some information on the Brothers you would propose to procure for the diocese, and on the conditions under which you would be able to provide them to the parishes. Here we would need two and, as a matter of necessity, we would need also that they, or a third person, would be able to collect the fees during the months the schools are open. We are not in a strong enough financial position to aim for a non-fee paying school, as long as the commune keeps out of this business."

ANNEXE

**4. REPORT OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE BROTHERS' SCHOOL AT LA VOULTE**

"Today, the fifth of December one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven, there took place the installation of the Marist Brothers, who will run the schools of the parish of La Voulte. These good Religious have been received in this town with the most lively eagerness. On the day of their installation, which was also that of the opening of the school year, there were seventy children enrolled as many Catholics as adherents of the Reformed religion. In that, the population has shown that it could not be more grateful towards the founders of this precious establishment, and that it is ready to benefit from such and excellent gift. After the Mass of the Holy Spirit, the clergy, the Brothers, the children and a great number of the faithful, among whom were several visitors from Lyon who were members of the administration of the foundries and forges with their families, went in procession into the classrooms which had been blessed.

Signed:

*Garnier: Pauline Terret; Garnier née Aynard; Terret;
Genissieu son; Pleyne, parish priest."*

SOME POINTERS FOR DISCOVERING “MARIST PLACES” IN ROME well known to Brother François



Antonio Martínez Estaún, fms

“On September 26 2018 Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, the Postulator General, led a group of senior Brothers from the Spanish/Portuguese ‘Amanecer’ group on a pilgrimage to ‘Marist places’ in the city of Rome. They visited places whose significance comes from their being well known to Brother François Rivat. Leaving the General House, their first visit was to the Church of *Santo Nome di Maria [Holy Name of Mary]*, situated in the Forum area near Trajan’s column”.¹

The initiative was prompted by a study of Brother François’s written account *Voyage à Rome en 1858* contained in his Notebook No.2 which bears the title *Notes religieuses* (AFM 5101.305). This Notebook has 173 pages (13.5 x 8 cm) plus 14 additional pages with *diverse notes* in which

he expresses his personal observations about what was happening in Rome. The rest of the Notebook (232 pages in all) is mostly blank.

Brother François travelled to Rome in 1858 with Brother Louis-Marie to submit the first Constitutions of the Institute to the Holy See. These had been prepared by the second General Chapter, in order that they be presented for approval.² While Louise-Marie had to return to the Hermitage after ten weeks, Brother François remained in Rome for 194 days. According to what he recounts in his journal, during this prolonged stay in the city, being a man from the mountains well accustomed to long walks, he went through the city on foot visiting more than 200 churches. The church he visited most often was *Santo Nome di Maria* (35 times). In each

¹ The news was published on 05/10/2018 in www.champagnat.org accompanied by some photos

² For more on this matter, see my earlier work: Antonio Martínez Estaún, *Historia de las Constituciones de los Hermanitos de María, [History of the Constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary]* – Curitiba 2015, pp. 61-90. Published in <http://www.champagnat.org/510.php?a=6a&id=4313>

of these churches, he would complete some exercises of piety, honour the saints and martyrs, and study the history of the place.

In some churches, he had quite special experiences. From the concrete information that is in his journal, we can reconstruct some specific walks that Brother François made and discover something of his personality.

In order to be able to carry out this study, a preliminary task was to translate Brother François's original *Voyage de Rome* into Spanish; Brother Louis-Richard had already put the original manuscript into digital format. Using that material, a book was prepared entitled *Diario del viaje a Roma del H. François en 1858*³ with the original French on left and the Spanish on the right.

1. THE STATISTICS

Brother François remained in Rome 192 days, 74 of which he was accompanied by Br. Louis-Marie, and 118 alone.⁴ During this time, from what we can glean from his journal, he made 641 visits to different places in the city. Of these, 577 were to basilicas, churches, shrines or chapels in Rome; on the other 64 he got to know and enjoy various places and monuments around the city, the ruins of Imperial Rome, and also green spaces such as the hills of Rome, parks, piazzas and gardens.

During his stay in Rome he averaged 3.3 visits per day to churches. The table below shows the day and the number of business-related visits he made. It can be seen that the days followed different rhythms. At the beginning, he took care of some

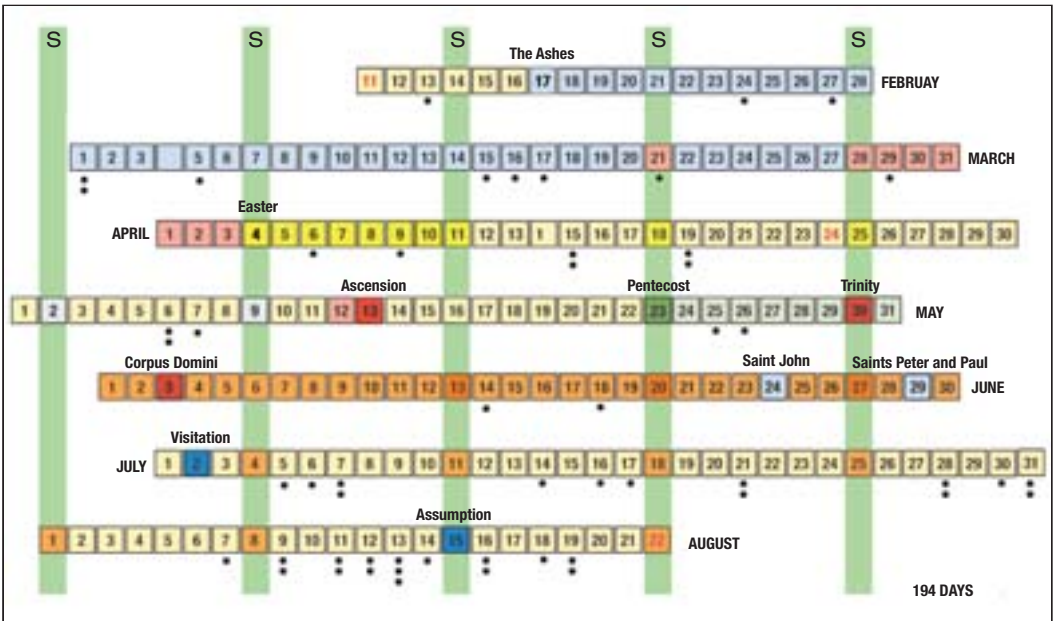
³ See: www.champagnat.org/510-php?a=6a&id=4711

⁴ Brother Louis-Marie was with Brother François for 74 days of the 194 that François was in Rome. During this time, Louis-Marie accompanied him to carry out together their business with the authorities. But nowhere in his journal does François make any reference to the presence of Louis-Marie in his visits to churches, and his processions, pilgrimages, excursions, and devotions. Did they organise their prayer lives separately? That would not seem to match up with their profession to communal religious life or their common acceptance of the same Rule of life. However, in his journal, there is no explicit reference to acts of piety carried out together. It seems that in the first visit to Saint Peter's Square, the day after they arrived to Rome, they were together.

business, then there was a period of waiting before the pace of these visits picked up speed again towards the end of his time in Rome.

Liturgical calendar lived by Brother François in Rome

The black points indicate the day and the number of business-oriented visits that by Brother François made.



2. HOW AND WHY HE APPROACHED THE WRITING OF HIS JOURNAL

We have only one written reference from Brother François regarding his approach to writing his journal. It is a very simple entry, on 31 May. There he mentioned that there was a

moment of the day which he allocated to complete his journal: “Notebook”. 31/5.⁵ It is very probable that he always did it more or less at the same time each day, given that François was a highly ordered and systematic person when it came to organising his time. There is just one day when he referred to something that happened the day before (5/7).⁶

⁵ This abbreviation refers to the day and month of the diary of Br. François.

⁶ This abbreviation refers to the day and month of the diary of Br. François

Brother François does not explain anywhere the reasons which led him to write the details of his trip to Rome in 1858. However, we can readily guess it, knowing his practice of recording personal notes about daily events that we have in others of his notebooks. Nevertheless, the way he structured his daily entries for the Roman trip seems to imitate an account of the trip that M. Gaume made to the city in *Les Trois Rome*, a book which the Vicar General Pagnon lent him in Lyon, and which accompanied François on his trip. The difference was his was briefer in his descriptions of the places that he visits, usually reducing the information to a brief summary.

From an analysis of the structure and content of his writings, it can be concluded that his main intention for writing was to recount the way he went about his business with the Vatican to obtain approval for the Institute. This conclusion is clear from comparing the amount of space that he devoted to explaining in great detail the interviews, meetings and audiences he had with the Roman authorities with the rest of his activity – which actually occupied far more of his time. This treated only lightly. The journal presents itself as a work that could be later used as an index for preparing a more extensive report. Every day he faithfully records his visits to churches, basilicas and other places of worship, but the majority of the time the writing is concise, without extensive explanations. He did not put very much in this notebook about his spiritual experiences. There are a few sentences, mostly taken from

spiritual books. They refer to the motives that led him to each visit, but there is very little of his own experience.

Although the journal is devoted almost entirely to recounting his dealings with the Vatican Curia in considerable detail, and his visits to religious sites, there are some exceptions. The entry for 20 April, for example, is mostly concerned with cultural visits. There is almost nothing spiritual or related to his personal spiritual experience for the day, except two words of a particular intensity: “commitment to baptism and contrition”. The remainder describes the cloister of *Santa Maria degli Angeli*, the cemetery of the Capuchins in *Santa Maria della Concezione*, where the relics of Saint Crispin of Viterbo and Saint Felix of Cantalicio are kept; the Vatican Palaces with their library and, finally he concludes the day in Villa Pamphili, 20/4. The whole entry is concerned with cultural content rather than his usual visits to Vatican officials and churches.

We can see the same thing in the entry for 22/4, where he does not mention any visit to a church, chapel or basilica. However, these two break his usual pattern. The two entries for 20/4 (Tuesday), and 22/4 (Thursday) contrast with those from 2/5 (Sunday) where he recounts visits to seven churches, that of 6/5 (Thursday) where reference is made to six places where he prays and just two which are cultural visits, that of 12/5 (Rogation Wednesday) when he visits nine churches, and 2/8 (Monday) with seven visits to churches.

3. 'ROMERO' - PILGRIM FROM CHURCH TO CHURCH

François was a Roman pilgrim (a 'Romero') who went from church to

church, sepulchre to sepulchres, basilica to basilica, spiritually guided by his *devotio* and *pieta* – devotion and piety. The following is the list of the churches he visited in Rome:⁷

Angelo Custode	Camera di Sant'Ignazio	San Francesco d'Assisi (Minori Osservanti)
Aracœli	Gesù e Maria (Corso)	San Francesco de Paola ai Monti
Basilica presso Piazza Barberini (Basiliani)	Monastero di Campo Marzo	San Gal
Basilica Vaticana	Oratorio del Caravita	San Giovanni a Porta Latina
Battistero di Costantino	Ospedale militare del Quirinale	San Giovanni Calibita (Eremitano)
Cappella dei Padri del Preziosissimo Sangue (Fontana di Trevi)	Ospizio di Santo Spirito	San Giovanni Calibita all'Isola Tiberina
Cappella della casa	Quattro Santi Coronati	San Giovanni dei Fiorentini
Cappella della Pietà	Quo Vadis	San Giovanni Gualverto
Cappella della separazione dei Santi Pietro e Paolo	San Barnaba	San Giovanni in Laterano
Cappella Sistina	San Bartolomeo (Isola Tiberina - Francescani)	San Giovanni-Battista Decollato
Cappuccine del Quirinale	San Bartolomeo dei Bergamaschi (Piazza Colonna)	San Girolamo della Carità
Carcere Mamertino	San Bernardino da Siena (Monte Magnanapoli)	San Giuseppe a Capo le Case
Catacombe de San Callisto o di San Sebastiano	San Bernardino (Chiesa rotonda)	San Gregorio a Ponte Quattro Capi
Certosa di Santa Maria degli Angeli	San Bernardo (Cistercensi)	San Gregorio in Velabro
Chiesa della Missione (Lazzaristi a Montecitorio)	San Biagio (Armeni cattolici)	San Gregorio Magno (Celio - Camaldolesi)
Chiesa delle Cappuccine al Quirinale	San Bonaventura	San Isidoro a Capo le Case o Isidoro Agricola
Chiesa e collegio germanico	San Bonaventura (Palatino)	San Isidoro degli Irlandesi
Collegio romano	San Bonaventura dei Lucchesi	San Lorenzo fuori le mura
Colonna dell'Immacolata Concezione a Piazza di Spagna	San Caio	San Lorenzo in Damaso
Confraternita degli Agonizzanti a Piazza Pasquino	San Carlos ai Catinari	San Lorenzo in Fonte
Convento dei Domenicani (Minerva)	San Carlo al Corso	San Lorenzo in Lucina
Convento dei Francescani	San Carlino alle Quattro Fontane	San Lorenzo in Miranda (Foro)
Convento delle Oblate di Tor di Specchi	San Calixto	San Lorenzo in Panisperna (Clarisse)
Gesù	San Cesareo	San Luigi dei Francesi
Gesù (Casa professa dei Gesuiti-	San Claudio dei Borgognoni	San Malo in Colegio Germanico
	San Clemente	San Marcello
	San Crisogono (Trinitari)	San Marcello (Serviti)
	San Eloi dei Forgeroni	San Marcello dei Martiri ⁸
	San Francesco a Ripa	

⁷ The names of these churches of Rome are given in Italian. .

⁸ In Rome, no of that exact name Church actually exists. There is a San Marcelo martyr, but not *of the martyrs*.

San Marco	Sant'Anastasio dei Greci	Santa Maria del Carmelo
San Martino ai Monti	Sant'Andrea (Noviziato dei Gesuiti)	Santa Maria del Carmelo alle Tre Cannelle
San Nicola (Via Cesarini)	Sant'Andrea al Quirinale	Santa Maria del Popolo
San Pancrazio	Sant'Andrea della Valle	Santa Maria dell'Anima (degli Austriaci)
San Pancrazio fuori le mura	Sant'Andrea delle Fratte (Minimi)	Santa Maria della Concezione (Cappuccini)
San Pantaleo	Sant'Angelo in Pescheria	Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte
San Paolo alla Regola	Sant'Anna	Santa Maria dell'Orto
San Paolo alle Tre Fontane	Sant'Antonio dei Portoghesi	Santa Maria della Pace
San Paolo Fuori le Mura	Sant'Apollinare	Santa Maria della Pietà
San Pasquale Baylon (Francescani)	Sant'Atanasio dei Greci	Santa Maria della Quercia
San Pietro in Montorio	Sant'Eligio degli Orefici	Santa Maria della Scala
San Pietro in Vaticano	Sant'Ignazio	Santa Maria delle Grazie
San Pietro in Vincoli	Sant'Ignazio (Collegio romano)	Santa Maria della Vittoria
San Pietro uscendo de Roma (Fasciola)	Sant'Ignazio Casa professa dei Gesuiti	Santa Maria di Loreto (Foro di Traiano)
San Rocco a Ripetta	Sant'Ignazio, Cappella di San Luigi Gonzaga	Santa Maria di Montesanto
San Romualdo (Camaldolesi)	Sant'Urbano (via Alessandrina)	Santa Maria in Aquiro (Orfanotrofio)
San Salvatore	Santa Brigida a piazza Farnese	Santa Maria in Aracoeli
San Salvatore in Campo	Santa Caterina da Siena a Monte Magnanapoli	Santa Maria in Campitelli (Chierici della Madre di Dio)
San Salvatore in Lauro (Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane)	Santa Caterina da Siena dei Senesi	Santa Maria in Campo Carleo
San Sebastiano fuori le mura	Santa Caterina da Siena in Via Giulia	Santa Maria in Chiesa Nuova (Oratoriani)
San Silvestro al Quirinale	Santa Caterina dei Funari	Santa Maria in Cosmedin
San Silvestro in Capite (Clarisse)	Santa Caterina della Ruota	Santa Maria in Domnica alla Navicella
San Sisto Vecchio	Santa Cecilia	Santa Maria in Monterone
San Teodosio	Santa Ciriaca	Santa Maria in Monticelli (in repair)
San Tommaso in Parione	Santa Croce in Gerusalemme	Santa Maria in Traspontina
San Urbano	Santa Dorotea	Santa Maria in Trastevere
San Venanzio ⁹ , Martire	Santa Francesca Romana	Santa Maria in Vallicella
San Vincenzo	Santa Galla	Santa Maria in Via Lata
San Vitale	Santa Maddalena	Santa Maria Maggiore
Sant'Adriano al Foro	Santa Maddalena al Quirinale	Santa Maria Scala Coeli
Sant'Agnese a Piazza Navona	Santa Maria ai Monti	Santa Maria sopra Minerva (Domenicani)
Sant'Agnese fuori le mura	Santa Maria degli Angeli all'Esquilino	
Sant'Agostino	Santa Maria dei Martiri	
Sant'Alessio	Santa Maria dei Miracoli (Piazza del Popolo)	
Sant'Adriano al Foro		
Sant'Anastasia, ai piedi del Palatino		

⁹ A mosaic in the Baptistry of the Church of S. Giovanni (Chapel of S. Venanzio)

Santa Marta	(Convento delle religiose del Sacro Cuore)	Santi Quirico e Giulitta ai Monti
Santa Martino ai piedi del Campidoglio	Santi Abdon e Senen	Santi Vincenzo e Anastasio alla Fontana di Trevi
Santa Prassede	Santi Apostoli	Santo Nome di Maria
Santa Prisca	Santi Cosma e Damiano	Santo Spirito (presso l'Ospedale)
Santa Pudenziana	Santi Domenico e Sisto (Domenicani)	Santo Stefano Rotondo
Santa Rufina in Trastevere	Santi Giovanni e Paolo, martiri	Scala Santa
Santa Sabina	Santi Nereo e Achilleo	Sepolte vive (Quirinale)
Santa Susana	Santi Pietro e Marcellino	Stimate di San Francesco d'Assisi
Santa Trinità dei Monti, al Pincio	Santi Pietro e Paolo	Trinità dei Pellegrini

Other places

Besides these religious sites, Brother François also visited places of historical significance or having other importance in the city:

Ambasciata di Francia	Fonte di Ponte Sisto	Porta di Via Flaminia
Arco di Costantino	Fori	Quattro Fontane
Arco di Tito	Foro de Traiano	Quirinale
Campidoglio	Monte Palatino	Salita al Campidoglio
Cancelleria	Monte Romano	Sant'Angelo
Celio	Musei Vaticani	Teatro Marcello
Cimitero Colonna Traiana	Palazzo di San Giovanni in Laterano	Terme di Caracalla
Circo Massimo	Palazzo dei Cesari	Terme di Diocleziano
Colosseo	Palazzo Massimi	Terme di Tito
Corridoio Vaticano	Palazzo Torlonia	Trastevere
Corso	(Piazza San Marco)	Via Appia
Esquilino	Pantheon	Villa Borghese
Ferrovia Roma a Civitavecchia	Pincio	Villa Doria Pamphili

Using this information and considering the experiences that Brother François describes in his journal, we can name some places as “Roman Marist”, places that marked the spiritual journey of Brother François during his Roman pilgrimage. We have already highlighted the Church of the

Santo Nome di Maria. We can extend the list.

Brother François hopes that many Marist pilgrims will be able to come to discover the various places of the city that he visited. As they make this journey, he invites them to a spiritual experience.

RENOVATION OF THE CEMETERY AT THE HERMITAGE

Michel Morel, fms

The renovated cemetery at the Hermitage cemetery, which was formally re-opened on Saturday 24 November 2018, provides an opportunity to recall the history of this cemetery, so dear to every Marist, and to give an account of the celebration that marked its recent blessing and inauguration.

1. HISTORY OF THE CEMETERY

1.1 Introduction

For this first part, I am indebted greatly to the *Monographie de Notre Dame de l'Hermitage* written in the centenary of its foundation in 1925.¹

To introduce the subject I quote from what Brother André Lanfrey has provided to me:

“The creation of a cemetery is always a strong collective action which signifies the desire of a community to root itself in a particular place. For a monastic community it

is a normal part of the establishment along with the chapel and the infirmary.

The construction of the first stage of the Hermitage finished on 13 August 1825 with the blessing of the chapel by Fr Dervieux. To establish a cemetery, the Hermitage had to obtain the authorisation of the civil authority because a cemetery is a political-religious reality. Like the parish church and the town council, it symbolises the community itself, its past and present, its secular and religious dimensions. There needed to be compelling reasons to build one that was separate from the parish cemetery; the government did not readily grant such concessions because of the symbolism involved.

It was not so much its status as a monastery that allowed the Hermitage to obtain such authorisation in 1826 from Baron Chaulieu, Prefect of the Loire. It resulted rather from the interest of the General Council of the Loire to make the Hermitage the *école normale*

¹ Published in 1925 by C. Bordron, St Chamond

[teacher training college] for the Department. On 17 August 1826 it voted to make a grant of 1500 francs to the Hermitage. Brother Gabriel Michel has cited the deliberations of the Council of St. Etienne and the General Council of the Loire which saw “*les Freres de Marie*” as an educative body complementing that of the Christian Brothers of the Schools and deserving of support.² The authorisation to build a cemetery was an expression this support. The proviso was that there be no cost to the Department.

According to Brother Avit (*Annales* 1829) the visit of the Prefect to the Hermitage would have taken place before the decision to make the grant. The Revolution of 1830 put an end to this privileged arrangement – no more grants nor the project of the *école normale*. But the authorisation for the building of the cemetery, the document for which has not survived, was not abrogated by the Prefect despite strong anticlerical feeling. It was true that in 1830 the Hermitage was seen as a monastery rather than an *école normale*.

Concerning the visit of the Prefect of the Loire, M. de Chaulieu, to the Hermitage the *Monographie* gives the following details.

“Since Fr Champagnat was away that day, Fr Courveille welcomed the dignitary and showed him over the house and grounds. Charmed by the kindness and goodwill of the Prefect, Fr Courveille requested permission to establish on the property a cemetery for the Brothers. The response was favourable.

“But, Monsieur le Prefect,” added Fr. Courveille, foreseeing a difficulty, “you don’t have your seal with you to signify your permission; we will need to address our request to Montbrison.”

“Build your cemetery,” replied the Prefect. “It won’t be stopped.”

This raises the question whether there was or was not any written authorisation on the part of the Prefecture. In any case, no trace is to be found in the archives.

Until January 2014, to bury a Brother it sufficed to inform the town council. It was also the undertakers who made arrangements for it. New regulations then came into force meaning that, for the burial of Brother Henri Réocreux in January 2014, a burial permit had to be obtained from the town council. Furthermore, the Prefecture required a hydrological survey of the cemetery which was carried out by a specialist team. The Prefecture of the Loire in a decree 20 January 2014

² *Marcellin Champagnat et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes*, Vol. 1 p. 52-54. See also *Life of Champagnat*, Part 1, Ch. 17 p. 177

“has authorised the burial in the Hermitage cemetery of the body of Brother Henri Réocreux [following] the favourable assessment of the existing cemetery.” An attachment from the Prefecture added “This assessment could be of assistance for future burials in the congregation’s ground.”

It was now formalised that the Hermitage cemetery was recognised by the Prefecture and that it would not be necessary to request a burial permit each time.

1.2 The various cemeteries

1827 - The original cemetery (N°1, on the small map)

This was situated below the present one quite near the drain which took the water from the river to the meadow and the garden (the canal had not yet been dug). It was quite small, barely five square

metres.

“The community assembled at the new cemetery for the blessing which was conducted by Father Champagnat. Father Bourdin gave a talk befitting the occasion. The solitude which inspired contemplation, the river which marked the flow of time, and the rock which in its immobility represented eternity, all furnished pious and touching reflections.”

The first Brother to be buried in this cemetery was young Brother Côme, originally from St Sauveur en Rue. Following him, thirteen other Brothers were buried there in the space of six years. As the community grew, more and more Brothers were interred, many of them young. As a result, this small cemetery became inadequate after a few years. Given that it was too narrow and too close to the water, Father Champagnat decided to build another. This second one was put higher up and close to the rock.



The small map

**1834: The second cemetery
(N°II, on the small map)**

The new cemetery which, would be eight metres long and six metres wide when completed, required heavy work in building embankments. Father Champagnat and his Brothers constructed a high supporting wall on the side facing the river and enclosed it on the three other sides. Jean Champagnat, the five-year old nephew of Marcellin and son of his brother, Jean-Pierre, was the first to be buried there on 29 March 1834. Several relatives of Father Champagnat followed before he himself was buried there six years later on 8 June 1840.

**1841: The third cemetery
(N°III, on the small map)**

In 1841, a year after the death of Marcellin, the previous cemetery was enlarged to three times the existing area. The Brothers lengthened the sustaining wall facing the river by 19 metres and built a wall 17 metres beyond the previous one. This third cemetery measured 27 metres by 17 metres. The Brothers who did this work had to cut into the rock. It was surely a massive piece of work.

Brother Caste made a large iron cross. It is the one we still see today and which has recently been restored. This was erected in the middle of the cemetery as can be seen in a sepia-coloured photo dating from around 1890.

In the same year of 1841

The "... community gathered at the cemetery at the end of the retreat. In the presence of Father Colin, some chaplains and other priests, the coffin of Father Champagnat was taken from the tomb where he had been at first placed to carry it to the burial spot which had been prepared."

In 1842

A monument was placed over the tomb of Father Champagnat. Brother Avit records his description in the *Annales*:

"This square shaped monument sits in the middle of a tombstone which covers the tomb.

It consists of:

- A block of granite one metre wide and half a metre high adorned with three small mouldings
- A base also composed of three mouldings:
- A top adorned with a crown of sculpted marble with two funerary torches in relief 1.05 metres high and 0.50 metres wide.
- A cornice mounted on a quadruple fronton embellished with four horns in fleur de lis and finishing with a funerary urn mounted itself by a small cross
- Above the crown and between the two torches is engraved on the marble the following inscription: Here lies Joseph, Benedict, Marcellin Champagnat. Priest Founder and Superior of the Little Brothers of Mary. Born at Marlies on 20 May 1789. Died at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage Saturday 6 June 1840.

A little below these words is engraved:

Sit memoria eius in benedictione and above in the middle is engraved a thought.

It should be noted in passing that the first names of the pious founder are written in reverse on the inscription below. It should read: Marcellin, Joseph, Benedict according to his Baptismal certificate."

I have it found useful to reprint this description because, with the exhumation and transference of the remains of Father Champagnat, this monument seems to have been lost. The present base which on which the cross is mounted seems to be rather different.

In the month of July 1867 the bones of those who were buried in the former small cemetery were transferred to the larger one and buried between the iron cross in the middle of the cemetery and the memorial of Father Champagnat.

1877: Creation of a temporary cemetery and enlargement of the third one (N°V, on the small map)

In 1877 the third cemetery had become too small. To enlarge it the gate was moved five metres out and a section from the side of the mountain was dug out. While the Brothers were undertaking this construction, several Brothers were buried in a temporary cemetery situated beneath the large cross on at the entrance to the terrace with the plane trees.

1892: Work carried out on the fourth cemetery

In 1882, the cemetery underwent another transformation, but without being enlarged:

- The walls were consolidated by strong **plastering** with hydraulic lime
- A beautiful **Christ** figure in cast iron was attached to the cross in the middle.
- A grotto was built at the far end for a statue of **Our Lady of Montligeon** invoked as “liberator of the souls in Purgatory”. At the end of the nineteenth century, numerous grottos, recalling that of Lourdes, were constructed in France. The Statue of Our Lady of Montligeon was fully indicated in a cemetery.³



Statue of Our Lady of Montligeon

³ The shrine of Our Lady of Montligeon is located in the town of La Chapelle-Montligeon in the Department of Orne. It was constructed between 1896 and 1911. From the 1880s, Father Paul Joseph Buguet, the parish priest, promoted this devotion to Mary, under the title of Our Lady Liberator of the Souls in Purgatory.

- Finally, the discrete graves were marked out, each with a small wooden cross and funerary plate in cast iron in the form of a heart.

In **1882**, a small monument had been placed on the tomb of Brother François, on the left of that of Father Champagnat. At the right, another monument has a plate in cast iron where the names of all the brothers of the Province deceased until 1883 were inscribed.

In **1893**, the remains of the ten Brothers buried in the temporary cemetery were placed in one only casket and buried near the grotto of Our Lady of Montligeon. A cross and a heart, where the ten names are inscribed surmounted the common tomb.

2. THE RENOVATION OF 2018

2.1 Beginning of the project (October 2014)

One of the main drivers for this project was a need to have an easy way of maintaining cemetery now that there is no Brother to have charge of it. With new arrangements for the Hermitage as centre hospitality and its international community now in place, a basic level of care of the cemetery has continued



A cross and a heart, where the ten names are inscribed surmounted the common tomb

thanks to the group retired local men who volunteer one day a month to work on the Hermitage property. However, it was necessary to find a long-term solution.

A small team was given oversight: Brothers Xavier Giné (Province Bursar), Héribert Pujolas and Michel Morel. Mindful of an overriding imperative to preserve the originality and heritage value of the cemetery, the team also took the opportunity to give it a more contemporary look. The General Administration and the Province of the Hermitage financed the works; Brother Javier Espinosa, in the name of the General Council, was involved in the early discussions which resulted in the identifying of a set of guidelines for the project.

The agreed criteria for the project included:

- No exhumation of the bodies, and the possibility of future new burials of Brothers
- Preservation of traditional elements of Marist cemeteries, given that this is the first one in the Institute. One such feature is the heart-shaped funerary plates that are found in a number of Brothers' cemeteries, at least in France.
- Enhancement of the graves of Marcellin's early companions from Lavalla by construction of an awning and flowerbed. These are Brothers Louis (d. 1847) Laurent (d. 1851), and Stanislas

(d. 1853). A fourth Brother, Yves Thénoz, former Secretary General of the Institute, was buried at their side in 1994.

- Similarly, improvement to the look of the wall on the left by building a light metal structure with hearts bearing the names of all those who were buried in that cemetery, generation after generation.



Enhancement of the graves of Marcellin's early companions from Lavalla by construction of an awning and flowerbed.



Improvement to the look of the wall on the left by building a light metal structure with hearts bearing the names of all those who were buried in that cemetery



- A better integration of the cemetery in the whole property of l'Hermitage by reducing the height of the supporting wall and the removal of a pillar. This would give a better view of the original buildings and underline the continuation between the past and the present of this sacred space for Marists. So many people from all over the world come to this founding place to be renewed in the spirit of the origins.



A better view of the original buildings and underline the continuation between the past and the present



Creation of grassed surfaces that would be simple to mow; and of tinted concrete paths

- Ease of ongoing maintenance by the creation of grassed surfaces that would be simple to mow; and of tinted concrete paths. To the same end, the crosses have been suspended on fixed horizontal metal bars anchored concrete blocks, in order to ensure their stability and to maintain straight lines of sight.



A better coherence and general modernisation of appearance

- A better coherence and general modernisation of appearance, including the removal of the grotto of Our Lady of Montligeon, to be replaced by a hexagonal chapel-like structure.
- The choice of colours in the walls and other features lend a pleasing harmony to the whole. The pale yellow of the concrete of the walls picks up on the colour of the Rocher building; the brown of the bases of the crosses links to that of the railings around the property; the white-cream of the crosses on the graves, and of the

large cross, symbolise the light of the Resurrection; and the brown-red of the corpus on large cross, in contrast with the white of the dross itself, evokes the sacrifice of Jesus. Lastly, the contrast between the parts in raw concrete (the awning over the tombs of the first Brothers and the cover over the enclosing walls) and the yellow of the walls, give the whole of the area a very clean look.

2.2 The project under way

The architect

Brother Jésus Recalde San Martín⁴ of the Province of Iberica was invited by the team to study the project and to come up with a design in accordance with the set of guidelines that had been developed. At 80 years of age, in collaboration with his architectural firm in Pamplona, he drew up plans in June 2015. Back in 1989, it had been his plan that won an architectural competition for the refurbishment of the Chapel at l'Hermitage.



⁴ Brother Jésus Recalde San Martín (5 October 1935 – 19 July 2018) obtained his Diploma in Architecture, specialising in urban design, in 1976. From there until his death, he practised his profession with the architectural firm of Felix Zozaya, in Pamplona. (Mr Zozaya was the brother-in-law of Br Jésus.)

Sadly, Brother Jésus died on 19 July last year.

Project management and companies

M. William Villareale of Saint-Etienne was engaged as supervisor of works. The work began on 16 April 2018 and was finished on Friday 26 October 2018, marked by a formal handover to the proprietor by the supervisor of works. The demolition, excavation, and construction of the green spaces were carried out by the firm MTP of Saint-Jean Bonnefonds, under the supervision of M. Adrien Morel.

The masonry (in the structure over on the tombs of the first Brothers) was completed by the firm Fontimpe d'Andrézieux-Bouthéon, under the supervision of M. Thierry Vallot.

All the metalwork (the crosses, the hearts, the large cross, the gate at the entrance, etc.) was done by the firm SVS of La Ta-laudière, under the supervision of M. André Florentin.

The plan submitted by Brother Jésus was modified somewhat to reduce costs, but the essentials were respected. The hexagonal chapel – a small open structure for recollection, meditation, contemplation, in to replace of the grotto – is still to be built. Also yet to be added is an inscription of a quotation from Marcellin on the concrete stele at the entrance of the cemetery, something that will enhance the sense of the place:

“To love God and make him loved;
there you have the entire vocation of a Brother”.



From left to right: Br. Michel Morel, M. Adrien Morel , M. William Villaréal, Br. Héribert Pujolas, M. André Florentin.



3. OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

3.1 The participants

The Brother Provincial, Père Ferré, and his Council judged it opportune to mark this important renovation with an official ceremony. This took place on Saturday 24 November 24 2018, between 10.00am and Noon in two different stages, first at the cemetery and then in the courtyard of Saint Joseph. About seventy people accepted the invitation to be present. Among these were Brother Père Ferré, Brothers from the communities of the Provincial House in Lyon, Marlihes, Lagny sur Marne, La Vallée, Saint-Genis-Laval, Chazelle sur Lyon, M. William Villaréal and M. Adrien Morel, many volunteers who frequently assist in the reception of the office and in the maintenance of the

property, members of a Fraternity of the Champagnat Movement, and members of families of some of the Brothers buried in l'Hermitage (Brothers Paul Tisseur, Joseph Monnier, Antoine Vallet, Henri Réocreux).

3.2 Various speeches

The first part, at 10 o'clock in the cemetery

Address of Brother Michel Morel

Brother Michael welcomed everyone, emphasising the significance of this event for the founding place of the Marist Brothers. He spoke at length of the history of the cemetery of l'Hermitage. Then he thanked all those who had contributed to realising this project.

Here is an extract from his address:

"I would like to thank very sincerely the heads of the firms involved and the on-site supervisors. Now that everything is finished, we could have the impression that things were not too difficult to do. But I can attest that it was necessary to find solutions to many problems that we did not envisage at the beginning. They were careful to do things well. They took time to understand the spirit of this particular project, since we were concerned with cemetery. They brought all their competence to carry

complete things as well as possible, to the smallest details, including the choice of colours in the various elements. A very special thank you, also, to Brother Héribert Pujolas who made a valuable contribution in keeping track of the location of the Brothers' graves, removing then replacing the hearts on the crosses in the correct places, and also for cleaning the surroundings of the cemetery. Equally, we thank our volunteers who helped in the preparatory work on the hearts and then helped to place them back the crosses."



Address of M. William Villaréale

M. Villareale spoke of his personal interest in taking on this project, which was not a customary construction site since it was a cemetery. He appreciated the spirit in which the work was done by the various firms and the Brothers, particularly during the on-site meetings.

Address of Brother Père Ferré, Provincial:

These were his main passages:
 "In the first place I want to express my thanks to all those who worked to make possible that Cemetery of Note Dame de l'Hermitage has this new face. Thanks also to the Community and to the volunteers who have cared for the property

and the cemetery up until now, and who are going to continue to do so in the future, no doubt, in a simpler and easier way. It is thanks to you that this place (including this cemetery) comes to life.

A few days ago, I had the occasion to watch the film “L'école buissonniere” in which the protagonist was an orphan child. This is part of a dialogue between him and his adoptive mother:

- When you die, where do you go?
- To Heaven, of course!
- Then, why are dead buried under ground?
- It is like when they are alive, they need a house. Graves are the houses of those who have died, with their name engraved on the top. And we go there quietly to think of them”.

Indeed, we need a place to remember those who have left and to honour their memory.

Today, we can ask ourselves the question: why be concerned about the deceased if we were founded to have a mission with the young? In the first place, because those who are buried here were young, but also because they invested the best of themselves in the service to the young. I do not see any contradiction. In fact, it is said, “The person who loses his origins, loses his identity.” Moreover, the cemetery is the great reliquary of our family: the place that connects us with our origins.

We, the Brothers, during our retreats, very much like to spend some peaceful, calm time in this place, to walk around, to look at the names, rekindle some memories, to recall images and moments with those people with whom we have lived a part of our journey.

We have a long history of deceased Brothers. The first Marist Brother to die was the young Jean-Pierre Martinol, on 29 March 1825. He was buried in Boulieu where he was the director of the school. Sharing memories of our deceased



Brothers frequently occupies our conversations and, in this way, makes them present.

Often, perhaps because of the influence of movies, we can think of a cemetery as a dark place, sad, marked by fear, solitude, by terror. In fact, it is not like that. It has meaning for us to be in this beautiful cemetery: open, green, well looked after. It invites us to hope and to a grateful memory. May it continue to be for us a sign of fraternity, of hope, and of love.

I do not know who it was in our Marist history who came up with the idea to make heart-shaped mortuary plates for our deceased Brothers. But it was a good one. It reminds us of our family spirit, since behind each heart, each name, we can put a face, an experience of shared life, some learning or lesson for each one of us.

Typically, good things are said about people at their funerals. This is good to do. However, being here today is also a call for each one of us, a call to

express our family spirit by speaking of the good of others. We are all human, with our strengths and our weaknesses, our sorrows and our joys. May we be able, while we are alive, encourage one another and help one other.

Marcellin Champagnat, our Founder, wanted us to be confident people with filial hearts towards Mary. He said, "How good it is to die in the family of Mary!" May our Good Mother continue to strengthen our fraternal life and our journey together."

3.2 The Blessing Ceremony

After the speeches came the Blessing Ceremony. Father Gabriel Perret, a diocesan priest and the current chaplain at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage presided over this

Blessing. One of his brothers, Joseph, a Marist Brother, is buried in this cemetery.

After the entrance hymn, "Tenons en éveil la mémoire du Seigneur, gardons au cœur le souvenir de ses merveilles" [Let us keep alive the memory of the Lord, let us remember his marvels in our hearts] Father Gabriel offered the following prayer of blessing:

"God, from whom comes all comfort,
You have established in your justice
that our mortal bodies,
formed from the earth,
would return to the earth,
but in your mercy, you changed
this law in a witness of love.
You granted Abraham, the Father of believers,
a burial place in the Promised Land;



you praised the dedication of Tobit in burying his brothers; you wanted your only Son to be placed in a new tomb from which he would rise victorious over death and pledge of our future resurrection. Behold, Lord, why we pray to you: By the power of your blessing, may this renovated cemetery for receiving mortal bodies be a place of rest and of hope; may the bodies of the deceased rest in peace in this place until the day when they will rise immortal at the glorious coming of your Son; may the eyes of the living be lifted in this place toward the hope of eternity; may prayer for those who rest in Christ rise from this place toward you, to celebrate your endless mercy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

All were then invited to move different spots in the cemetery, close to the graves of the Brothers of their choice. Father Gabriel then sprinkled holy water on all the graves and those present.

All then re-gathered around the large cross for the hymn “Tu nous guideras au sentier de vie, tu nous ouvriras ta maison, Seigneur” [You will guide us to the path of life, you will open your house for us, Lord], which was followed by the final prayer:

“Lord, Most holy Father, you willed that the cross of your Son be a source of every blessing and the cause of all grace. Turn favourably on us who look to this renewed cross as the sign of our faith, and grant that we remain united here below to the mystery of the Passion of Christ and in this way find the joy to share forever in his resurrection. He who reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.”

Following the Marist tradition of singing the *Salve Regina* at the graveside of a Brother, Brother Michel Morel invited the assembly to sing this hymn. Thus ended ceremony marked throughout by simplicity, fervour and hope.

4. GLASS OF FRIENDSHIP

Brother Maurice Berquet, Superior of the Community at l’Hermitage invited all the guests to share a glass of friendship in the courtyard of Saint Joseph. In a heart-warming and friendly gathering, conversations continued, memories were shared, and fraternal bonds were strengthened.

Three quotations to conclude

“The person who loses his origins, loses his identity. And the cemetery is the great reliquary of our family: the place that links us to our origins.” **Brother Père Ferré**

“There is something stronger than death, it is the presence of the absent in the memory of the living.” **Jean d’Ormesson**

“God gave a sister to memory and he called it hope.” **Michel Ange**

BROTHER LOUIS RICHARD (1931-2018)

Br. André Lanfrey, fms

On 12 November 2018, the funeral of **Brother Louis Richard** was celebrated at St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux. It is appropriate that his memory be honoured *Marist Notebooks*, not because he wrote a great deal on Marist history and spirituality himself but because, in a kind of modern expression of the old Benedictine tradition, he dedicated long years to putting into electronic format an immense number of historical Marist documents. Among these were ones that had been difficult for most people to access. Thanks to him – and to other dedicated Brothers – Marist researchers can now have on their computers a wide range of primary source material, from our early history to more recent times. However, before dedicating himself to this task, Brother Louis lived a very full life.

He was born on May 20, 1931 in Valliguières (Gard). His father was a viticulturist. His mother took care of the family – two boys and two girls – and was fully involved in the life of the parish (in youth movements, as a catechist and as an organist). In 1943, Louis and his older brother, Jean-Pierre, went away to boarding school at *l'Immaculée Conception d'Aubenas* (Ardèche), a long way from their little hometown. It was

there that Louis's Marist vocation was born.

He entered the juniorate at La Valla in September 1945, continued his initial formation in Ferrières-sous-Aubenas and at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. In 1948-1950, he did his postulancy and novitiate at N. D. de Lacabane, at Corrèze, followed by a year's scholasticate at Saint-Genis-Laval. Louis began his teaching career at Séverac-le-Châteaux, in l'Aveyron, and then he went to Lebanon (Jbell, Saïda) for two years of military service. After this, he returned to teach in Marseilles, then in Aubenas. He was head of a school for two periods of six years, first in Marseille, then in Bourg-de-Péage. Between these two appointments, he had the opportunity of several months of Marist renewal in Italy, at Velletri, not far from Rome. He returned to Marseille in 1980 as teacher of philosophy and catechist in the senior classes. In 2001, incapacitated by a chronic illness, he was appointed to the Brothers' retirement community at Saint Paul. There he taught Biblical courses for adults and took on the role of organist. His main service, however, was to dedicate innumerable hours to the true Benedictine-like work mentioned above.

In 2009, I asked Brother Louis to give a summary of what he had been doing. His words enlighten us on the origin of his vocation as a copyist:

“At the end of my career in 1996 I was a teacher of philosophy in Marseille and, at 65 years of age, it was mandatory for me to retire from State-remunerated employment. Retirement does not mean that one needs to stop working. I gave myself some time until the beginning of January 1997 to look into activities that could skill me to be useful for others. I participated in a two-month course in Rome and it was there that the General Archivist of the time, Brother Paul Sester, came to give us a talk about his work.¹ He mentioned that he would be very pleased to have some people who could assist him ... He told me to get a computer so that I could type up documents in digital format. I had never even seen a computer, except in photos, ... but with the help of former colleagues in Marseilles who had computing expertise, I began using this form of communication. One summer during my scholasticate, I had taught myself to how type properly using an old Remington typewriter and a how-to-type manual that I found under the stairs. That skill was to serve me well for my entire professional life, but even more after I retired

“The first documents that the archivist entrusted to me were photocopies of the personal letters of Brother Jean-Baptiste. Then came the retreat notebooks of Brother François. With these, it was necessary to get accustomed to the very small handwriting of our first Superior General, and to his habit of writing up to the very edge end of the page. The end of some sentences got lost in the darkness of the binding and, sometimes, it was necessary for three of us to get together in the Archives, with a magnifying glass to study the original in order to decipher certain passages. Finally, there were works of the Archives themselves which were entrusted to me.”

In this same account, Brother Louis gave a list of the projects he had completed. We can list the principal ones. Among the handwritten primary source material there are: the letters of Father Champagnat in modern French; the Circulars of Brother François and his twenty-two notebooks on spiritual and secular themes; seventeen collections of administrative letters of Major Superiors, from the beginnings through to those of Brother Léonidas; the Minutes of the General Council from the beginning until the 1950s. From printed sources we have: the four large volumes of *Origines Maristes* by Fathers

¹ In a recent article of the Marist Notebooks (n° 35, May 2017, pp. 139-142), Brother Paul Sester, summarising the history of digitalisation of the Roman archives, also mentioned this meeting.

Coste and Lessard; the collection of the Circulars of the Superiors General from the beginning until the twenty-first century; the full collection of the *Bulletin d'Institut* from 1909 to 1982; several early works of the Institute, such as *Le Manuel de Piété* (1855), *Les Principes de Perfection* (1866), *Le Directoire de la Solide Piété* (1875 edition) the ten volumes of obituary notices beginning with *Biographies des quelques Frères* (1868).

Brother Louis's activity slowed following of a stroke which left him handicapped in his left hand. Recently, having become too ill to remain at Saint Paul, he was transferred to

Saint Genis-Laval where he had hoped, despite of his declining strength, to take up again his work as copyist.

Louis was a tireless worker in an often thankless and hidden domain. However, those who involve themselves in the study of our Marist spiritual and intellectual patrimony know that they are in enormous debt to him for how he has enriched knowledge of our tradition and the facility for them to undertake much further research. In adapting somewhat the words of Psalm 85, I would say that Louis, brought love and truth together in serving his spiritual family.

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