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Editor-in-Chief:

Patrimony Commission
Allan de Castro
André Lanfrey
Antonio Ramalho
Colin Chalmers
Dyogenes Philippsen Araujo
Michael Green
Omar Peña
Patrício Pino
Vincent de Paul Kouassi.

Director of Communications

Luiz da Rosa

Translators

Aloisio Kuhn, fms
Anthony Hunt, fms
Carlos Martín, fms
Dina Hajje
Gilles Hogue, fms
Jeff Crowe, fms
Joseph Chalmers
Manoel Silva, fms
Marta Graupera
Miro Reckziegel, fms
Moisés Puente, fms
Rogerio Mateucci, fms
Ralph Arnell, fms
Roque Brugnara, fms

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TIPOCROM Srl - Guidonia (Roma)

Editing and Administrative Centre:

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

Editing by:

Institute of the Marist Brothers
General House – Rome

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Contributors to this edition:

André Lanfrey, fms
Antonio Martínez Estaún, fms
Eric Perrin
Lourdes Yvonne Schutte Alarcón
Spes Stanley Ku

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Spes Stanley Ku



andrelanfrey@orange.fr



schutte1608@gmail.com



amestaun@fms.it



ssku@beghelliasia.com

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Eric Perrin

Cover photos: Marist life in China (1893 - 1905)

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Moisés Puente, fms
Rogerio Mateucci, fms
Ralph Arnell, fms
Roque Brugnara, fms



Antonio Ramalho, fms
Coordinator of
the Patrimony Commission



André Lanfrey, fms
In charge
of this issue

EDITORIAL

This issue No.38 of *Marist Notebooks* is the work of a new Patrimony Commission appointed by the General Council for the period 2019-2021. Its leader is now Br Antonio Ramalho. It includes former members (Brs André Lanfrey, Michael Green, Patricio Pino, Colin Chalmers, and Allan De Castro) and new members (Br Vincent de Paul Kouassi – West Africa, Mr Dyogenes P. Araujo – Brazil, and Br Omar Peña – Guatemala). In the production of *Marist Notebooks*, the team works closely with the Communications Office, headed by Mr Luiz Da Rosa, which provides translations and all the technical work associated with layout and publication.

In publishing issue No.38, the Commission is seeking to continue established practice. At the same time, it directs readers to the other means that exist for dissemination of research and articles. For example, the majority of previous issues of *Marist Notebooks* can be accessed digitally on the champagnat.org web-

site. Additionally, while this four-language journal is published only once a year, and limits itself necessarily to relatively short articles, the champagnat.org website can host longer works as well as research that has not yet been published or translated. This is already the case for a number of contributions, notably by Brs Antonio Martínez Estaún and André Lanfrey.

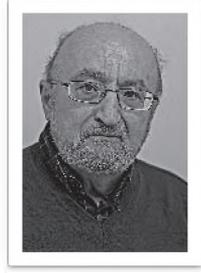
While such work has the disadvantage of being only in the language of its author, sites offering online translation now allow those who are not fluent in that language to get a basic understanding of the text. These sites are continually getting better. It seems to us, therefore, that this complementarity of modes of dissemination, while still in its infancy, can be refined in the years ahead. The website could serve as a something of a resource bank of research from which *Marist Notebooks* could publish the contributions deemed to be the most interesting, possibly after some further editing by their authors.

Marist Notebooks No.38 may be seen, therefore, as a transition issue: it marks the transition from one editorial team to another, and foreshadows an expansion of means of dissemination. Unlike some previous issues, it does not focus on a particular theme, even though there is an indirect connection be-

tween two articles on the history of the Constitutions. We believe that the major contribution of this issue is the discovery by Mr Eric Perrin of a new letter from Fr Champagnat. This sheds particular light on the environment and the atmosphere in which his work at the Hermitage unfolded in the years 1825-27.

A STRONG POINTER TO THE IMPACT OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

More than 450 Brothers
received the habit
between 1817 and 1840



André Lanfrey, fms

In *Annales de l'Institut* (1840, #657), written between 1884 and 1891, Br Avit claims that in the 23 years from 1817 to 1840 'the holy founder attracted 421 professed and novices, of whom 92 had left and 49 had died.' Recognising that 'we have no means of verifying this number precisely', he estimated that there were between 280 and 300 Brothers in the Institute in June 1840.¹

Br Avit explains to us how he arrived at his figures:

The Register of receptions of the habit states that from 2 January the Venerable Founder had given the religious habit to 401 novices. But this Register was only composed in 1829 and the names of those who had already left do not feature. We can, without departing from the truth, lift the number of novices receiving the habit from the good Father to 421.

From today's vantage point, such figures may not appear to be anything out of the ordinary. But let us not forget that many congregations of brothers founded during the Restoration grew minimally or indeed failed. We have good examples in the Brothers of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux and those of Viviers who were to be absorbed in 1842 and 1844 by the Marist Brothers who, despite the recent death of their Founder, had lost nothing of their dynamism. Fr Champagnat succeeded not only in gathering a huge number of disciples but in retaining a significant number of them. Br Avit has given us a numerical estimate, the accuracy of which cannot be wholly verified. In the *Annales de l'Institut*, where he records the annual list of Brothers receiving the habit, he bases his claim on a Register of receptions of the habit which no longer seems extant.

¹ He estimated that, taking out the deceased, the number of Brothers still living on 6 June 1840 should be 391, which implies that he estimated the number of receptions of the habit to have been 441 and that of the deceased at 50. He fixed the number of Brothers who left the institute at 92, probably because he first assessed the total of the Brothers at 299. See *Annales* Vol.1 1840 # 299, footnote 81.

FOUR REGISTERS COMPOSED AROUND 1829

Volume III of *Origines des Frères Maristes* (Rome 2011) includes a Register of those receiving the habit (OFM3, docs 497-505), making temporary vows (docs 569-574), making final vows (doc 575-580), and also the Register of Deaths (docs 599-601). Here is what Br Avit has to say of this (*Annales* 1829, #97):

Up until this year [1829] no register had recorded the taking of the habit and the profession of vows. To fill in this gap Fr Champagnat began three registers: one for taking the habit, another for profession of temporary vows, and the third for profession of final vows.”

The way he described these registers being filled out seems unlikely:

Each Brother, as far as we can tell, was invited to record personally his reception of the habit, his temporary vows, or his final profession in one of the registers. Several of those who had been defrocked were no longer there to do this.² Others were pleased to record their receiving the habit and their temporary vows in the respective registers, but their names are not featured in the clothing register.³

When our successors read these three registers they will see more fog⁴ than a neat chronological order.

The date of the commencement of the registers (1829) is probable for it was the year when Fr Champagnat introduced major changes in the Brothers’ branch – the sewn soutane, the cloth stockings, and the new method of reading. These changes provoked a revolt in that same year, 1829. Before these official registers started, however, there were certainly lists of clothing ceremonies and professions from which the registers of 1829 drew. The death register, moreover, began before 1829.

Br Avit stressed that the introduction of the registers in 1829 did not arouse more interest than the other changes; the records of clothing ceremonies and professions were consigned to particular occasions, perhaps at the time of retreat, and in one or other of the registers. That is why before 1829 the Register of reception of the habit contained very few ceremonies. For example, the reception of the habit by Br Stanislas Fayol on 25 October 1822 was only recorded when he professed final vows on 11 October 1826. Br An-

² That is, they were no longer present to enter their names. Br Avit estimated that 20 had left the Institute before 1829 (see p.316).

³ The original expression in the *Annales* seems awkward. Clearly, he means that some Brothers recorded their reception of the habit and their profession in one register only.

⁴ The word in the original French is ‘brouillard’, which can be taken to mean unclear, unreliable information, but also in the somewhat archaic sense of ‘brouillon’ (‘draft’), that is to say a sketch needing many improvements.

toine Couturier (OFM3, p.244), who took final vows on 11 October 1826, stated that he was admitted to the novitiate on 1 January 1819 and took the habit on 15 August in the same year, but he wrote nothing in the Register of receptions of the habit. We are ignorant of the dates of the taking of the habit of a large number of temporary and finally professed Brothers who are noted in the records of temporary and final vows at least until 1833 for, from then on, the records of vows cease to mention the entry date and the reception of habit. Starting from 1836-38, with the increasing number of Brothers, the individual records of the separate registers were replaced by aggregated lists.

It is possible to see through some of the ‘fog’ deplored by Br Avit by cross-referencing the registers and so locating Brothers who entered the Institute before 1829. However, Br Avit is correct on one point: many Brothers had taken the habit without leaving any trace in the registers since they left the Institute quite suddenly. And, certainly, oth-

ers who remained for some years departed without trace because they never took the trouble to record their time of involvement, be it receiving the habit or even making temporary vows. In many cases, the existence of Brothers is known only from a death certificate.

As suggested above, Br Avit himself was not a model of clarity for, in the *Annales de l’Institut*, he claimed to use a Register of clothing ceremonies showing 401 receptions of the habit. But the Register that we currently have only has 352. Clearly, he has used more than one source. Yet it is he who gives the most complete list on reception of the habit from 1817 to 1828. I have put together a comparative table of lists contained in the *Annales* and registers which I include as an appendix so as not to encumber this article. I will content myself with the table below, which gives the yearly number of receptions of the habit listed in the *Annales*, those in the Register of reception of the habit (RH), of temporary vows (TV) and perpetual vows (PV).

Year	Annales de l’Institut	Register – RH	Register – TV and PV
1817-1821	9	0	5
1822	10 vêtements (#35)	0	4
1823	3 ⁵ (#36)	0	1
1824	4 (#76)	1	3

⁵ Br Avit thinks that there were other novices whose names have not been kept.

1825	10	2	13
1826	4 (# 5)	0	3
1827	10 (# 70)	1	13
1828	7 (# 85)	2	8
Total 1817-1828	57	5	50
1829	10 (# 99)	8	4
1830	10	9	7
1831	12	10	11
1832	22	25	21
1833	14	17	3 ⁶
Total 1829-1833	68	69	46
Total 1817-1833	125	74	96
1834	11	11 + 2 mélangés à l'année 1835	
1835	46	44	
1836	29	31 ⁷	
1837	40	40	
1838	58	58	
1839	17 + 22 + 22 = 61	22 + 22 ° 17 = 61	
1840	31 (Champagnat)	31	
Total 1834-1840	275	278	
Overall total	401	352	

This table has the number of 401 receptions of the habit given by Br Avit, coming from his own annual count in the *Annales*. The total of habit receptions taken from the reg-

isters is almost zero for the period 1817-1828 but if you take, rather, the number making vows, then you come to a total close to 400 receptions of the habit.

⁶ After these three perpetual vows, the register does not mention more taking of the habit.

⁷ But two are doubtful: no other notes with the name.

THE NUMBERS RECEIVING THE HABIT ACCORDING TO BR AVIT

We know that from 1817 to 1821 recruitment of the first Brothers was very difficult: averaging barely two per year. After that, between 1822 and 1834, there was a modest but relatively regular increase with 127 receiving the habit over 13 years, an annual average of almost 10. That is an impressive number considering internal difficulties such as the building of the Hermitage, the sickness of Fr Champagnat, and the Revolution of 1830.



However, it is certain that a large number of receptions was not registered and that the average number of them has been underestimated. After 1835, the congregation saw a massive recruitment: 265 received the habit in five-and-a-half years, at an average of about 48 per year. This was largely an effect of the Guizot Law which was a catalyst for universal education and favoured those groups already working in that space, of which Fr Champagnat's was a leading example. This

success is all the more remarkable given the Founder had not yet obtained legal recognition.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGISTER OF DEATHS

Br Avit was aware that the figure of 401 Brothers receiving the habit was lower than the true number and he revised the total up to about 421. But he made no reference to the Register of Deaths begun perhaps from 1825, the first entry being the death of Br Jean-Pierre Martinol who was buried at Boulieu (Ardeche) on 29 March that year. This Register gives us 48 names of Brothers and novices who died before June 1840, 30 of whom appear in no other register. On the other hand, Br Avit has retained 18 in the list in the *Annales*. Accounting for the dozen who had died and who had not featured in the *Annales* or the registers, the total of those receiving the habit needs to be raised to about 412. This brings the likely number to slightly more than 430. There is, however, a register composed well before those of 1829 and the *Annales* which Br Avit seems not to have consulted: the Register of Entries begun in 1822.

THE REGISTER OF ENTRIES (OFM2, DOCS 142-147)

Fr Champagnat began this Register when the postulants from the Loire arrived in March 1822. It is a

source independent of the *Annales* and other registers. It began on 28 March 1822 and showed the day of entry to the novitiate, the name of the postulant, his town of origin, and the financial arrangements to cover his stay. Here is the text of the first enrolment: '28 March 1822. Claude Aubert from St Pal-en-Chalancon. Paid 100 francs for his novitiate plus 60 francs for his habit.' Starting from 1825 the notes become more standardised. For example: '21 April 1825, Jean Chomel, from Boulieu, aged 15 years, entered as a novice.'⁸ Then followed financial arrangements and, of note, his religious name was featured in the margin: 'Br Dosithée'. Thanks to religious names being added to many entries, we learn that the entry has been followed by reception of the

habit for which the register does not give the date. Clearly, its reliability is not absolute: the notes are often confused, some entries have been omitted, and numerous religious names have not been recorded. In spite of these limitations, this register is the most complete source of information on the entries and the taking of the habit between 1822 and 1840.

ENTRIES TO THE NOVITIATE AND RECEPTIONS OF THE HABIT IN THE REGISTER OF ENTRIES

The figures in the table below should not be accepted exactly but they are close to reliable.

Years	Entries register. Commencements of the novitiate	Entries register. Receptions of the habit	Receptions of the habit in the <i>Annales</i> and the registers RH/TV/PV
1817-21 ⁹	12 ¹⁰	9	8
1822	13	10	10
1823	05	3	2
1824	11	9	5
1825	18	8	13
1826	18	13	4
1827	20	11	15
1828	20	8	10
1829	18	13	10
1830	10	7	10
Total 1817-30	145	92	87

⁸ Some came in as boarders. I have left them out of the statistics.

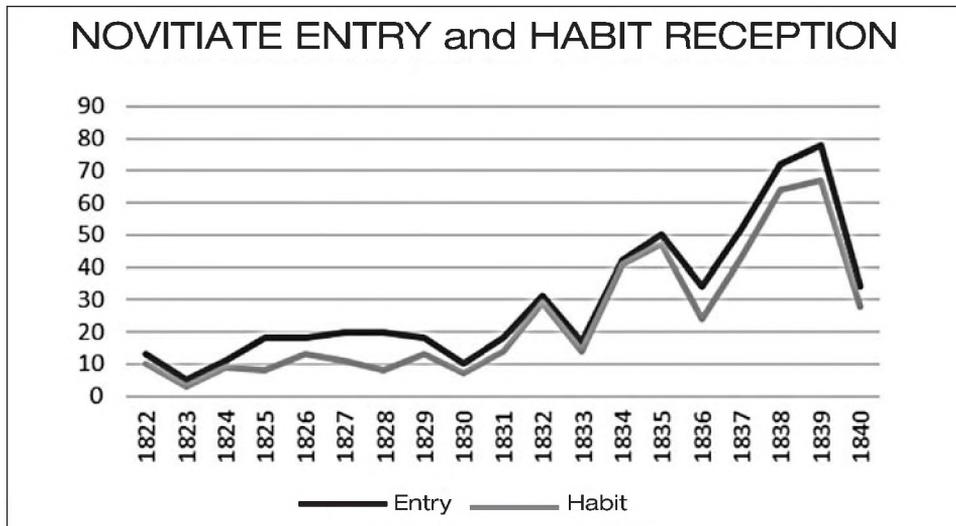
⁹ The Register does not record the years but I have put them in the table so that the entries from this period can be counted.

¹⁰ The first Brothers included some postulants indicated by Br Avit.

1831	18	14	13
1832	31	29	25
1833	17	14	17
1834	42	41	11
1835	50	47	47
Total 1831-35	158	145	113
1836	34	24	29
1837	52	43	40
1838	72	64	57
1839	78	67	61
1840	34 ¹¹	28	31
Total 1836-40	270	226	218
Total 1817-40	573	463	418

If the Register of Entries from 1817 to 1840 is to be believed, Fr Champagnat would have welcomed to the novitiate close to 600 young men, of whom more than 450 would have received the habit. The differ-

ence between the number of entrants and the number receiving the habit, which is about 110, would represent the departures or dismissals in the short time between their entry and the clothing ceremony. Our



¹¹ The last clothing ceremony in 1840, after the death of Fr Champagnat, is not taken into account.

numbers are quite higher than those of Br Avit who estimates the total of receptions of the habit to have been between 401 to 421. If we take the number Brothers still present at the time of the death of Fr Champagnat to have been 300, the rate of perseverance in relation to the total of entries would be a little more than 50% and the rate for those having received the habit would be 65%. This proportion of about a third of the Brothers departing between 1817 to 1840 after reception seems somewhat optimistic, but in any case it is more realistic than that of Br Avit who estimated that 92 Brothers out of 401, 'fewer than a quarter', had departed.

In short, the calculations of Br Avit understate the number of receptions of the habit and the extent of departures and dismissals. As for the figure of 460-470 receiving the habit, is this too optimistic? I offer the hypothesis that it is too high, and that the actual figure was probably a little above that of Br Avit, around 440.

THE DATES FOR THE TAKING OF THE HABIT: REVEALING THE STORY OF THE INSTITUTE

While examining the lists of receptions of the habit, my attention was drawn to the surprising variations between the annual number of entrants to the novitiate and those who went on to receive the habit. This occurrence is particularly evident in the year 1834 where I noted 42 entrants to the novitiate but only 11 receptions of the habit that year. To study this occurrence more fully, I have drawn up below a quick sketch of the dates of habit receptions according to the registers.

I have listed the reception of the habit in tri-monthly intervals. The dates are recorded according to the particular month (e.g. 3/20 signifies the 20 March). The figures given in brackets indicate the number of references found in the registers. But this method of calculation gives us only an indication; it cannot claim to be definitive.

Year	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Annual total
1817	03/30 (2)				1
1818					
1819			08/15 09/08		2
1820					
1821					

1822				10/25	1
1823				10/11 10/20 11/01	3
1824	03/25			10/22	2
1825	03/25	04/03	08/03	10/18	4
1826				10/11 12/02 12/25	3
1827	03/25	04/22	08/15	10/14 10/18/ 10/26	6
1828	03/25	05/25 (Penecost)	09/08	10/08	4
1829			08/15 09/08 09/24	10/ ?	4
1830	01/18 03/25 (7)	06/27	08/15 ?	10/09	4
1831	02/02		08/15	10/02 (4) 11/01	4
1832	01/01 (5) 03/25 (6)		08/15 (4)	10/07(9) 12/02	5
1833	02/02 (4)	06/14 (4) (Sacred Heart)	09/08 (3)	10/06 12/08 (6)	5
1834	02/02 (2)	04/07	07/13 (9)		3
1835	01/06 (19) 03/25 (21)	05/28 (3)	07/26 (14)	12/20 (2)	5
1836	03/25 (10)		07/03 (13)	10/23 (6)	3
1837	01/03 (8)	04/03 (11) 06/21 (2)	08/15 (8)	10/29 (11)	5
1838	01/01(15)	05/13(12)	08/15 (16)	12/08 (15)	4
1839	02/02 (22)	04/08 (22)	08/15 (17)		3
1840	01/06 (13) 02/02 (6) 03/25 (12)	Death of Champagnat 06/06/1840			3

So, in 23 years there were about 73 clothing ceremonies. Many were linked liturgical feasts: the Circumcision of Jesus (1 January), the Epiphany (6 January), the Chair of St Peter (18 January), the Presentation of Jesus (2 February), the Annunciation (25 March), the Assumption (15 August), the Birth of Mary (8 September), the Immaculate Conception (8 December). Other ceremonies were linked the Easter Season. So, for example, 25 May 1828 was the date of Pentecost. However, the large number of clothing ceremonies in October reflects the significance of the annual retreat, at the end of which many Brothers received the habit and made their profession.

In a normal year there were between three and five clothing ceremonies: more or less one per trimester. But particular events could influence the number and timing. This appears to be the case during the sickness of Fr Champagnat in 1826, and the conflict between the Brothers and Fr Courveille. While four clothing ceremonies were spaced at regular intervals the previous year, the three ceremonies in 1826 took place at the end of the year: the first in October and the other two in December. In 1829, there was no ceremony before 15 August. Could this be due to the conflict over the silk stockings? In 1830, did the July Revolution pre-

vent the holding of a ceremony on 15 August? Br Jean Baptiste states that on this date Fr Champagnat gave the habit 'to some postulants who were in the postulancy' an act which the Archbishop would have considered as daring and praiseworthy. I have found no evidence of this clothing ceremony in the registers and neither does it seem there was any ceremony on 8 September. Only the ceremony in October is mentioned. Much later in October 1839 the election of Br François disrupted the routine of the clothing ceremony, which was transferred to the Epiphany of 1840. And the sickness of Fr Champagnat without doubt precipitated the holding of the ceremonies on 2 February and 25 March, for by tradition they were held in the presence of the Founder.

THE PROBLEM OF 1834

In general, it is too difficult to explain the dates and the frequency of the taking of the habit. The absence of a clothing ceremony in October 1834 has raised a question for me because it came at a complex time. In 1833, the Archbishop was putting pressure on Fr Champagnat, who had not succeeded in obtaining legal authorisation, to affiliate with the Clercs de Saint Viateur.¹² But, by the beginning of 1834, this amalga-

¹² See *The Life of Fr Champagnat* (Ch.18, p.192) Br Jean-Baptiste is very critical of 'M. P(ompallier)' and he attributes to him manoeuvres that more probably from came Fr Cholleton who did not have a high opinion of Fr Champagnat.

mation plan had been abandoned. There was also the Guizot law of 28 June 1833 which posed two serious issues: the obligatory brevet for schoolmasters and the dispensation from military service (*Annales de l'Institut*, 1834, #2). Fr Champagnat took steps to comply with the legal authorisation but did not undertake a trip to Paris at this time.

The most likely cause of the absence of a clothing ceremony in October 1834 was the attempt to secure approval of the Society of Mary in Rome. J.C Colin, accompanied by Chanel and Bourdin left for Rome on 29 August 1833 to obtain recognition of the Society of Mary in its four branches. But the Roman authorities did not approve of such a complicated project. Fr Colin returned from Rome in February 1834 (OM1, docs 306-307) knowing that he needed to present a new plan. He remained fairly optimistic, and expected some message of encouragement within a few weeks. As this was held up because the pontifical administration was undergoing full restructuring in the summer of 1834,¹³ the Marists grew anxious. On 13 August J.C. Colin wrote to Cardinal Oldescalchi, the new Prefect for Bishops and Regulars, to remind him of the Marist cause (OM1, doc 317). It is perhaps in this context of anxious waiting that we

must situate the Circular of 10 August 1834 (*Circulars*, Vol.1 p.4) in which Fr Champagnat declared to the Brothers, 'We intend to leave for Rome shortly. It is important that the whole Society contributes to its success through prayer and a redoubling of fervour.'¹⁴ In the *Letters of Champagnat* this Circular has been dated as occurring in 1833, the date of 1834 being considered as an error since the Circular seems to declare the imminent departure of Fr Colin and his companions at the end of August 1833. Personally, I do not believe an error has been made regarding the date. A new trip to Rome had possibly been envisaged for 1834 since the Marists needed to know the reasons for the silence from Rome, and their desire to present a plan of the Society more acceptable to the authorities there.

Through to the autumn of 1834, the matter of Rome's approval was still causing disquiet among the Marist Fathers, as the letter from Colin to Champagnat on 10 October shows. The letter implored him to attend the Marist Fathers' retreat beginning on the 15th: 'I strongly urge you to come; I believe even that it is essential for you to be here.' (OM1, doc 325). As this unscheduled convocation happened at the time of the Brothers' annual retreat, the most likely explanation is the usual

¹³ For this tangled matter, see especially OM1, pp. 681-693.

¹⁴ The 'We' here does not necessarily mean that Fr Champagnat would be part of the new group going to Rome, but neither does it exclude it.

ceremony was perhaps postponed because of a new plan of a trip to Rome or at least a rushed trip to Belley. What remains certain is that after the retreat, around 20 October, the strategy concerning the Rome situation had been rethought, and the plan for a trip there had been abandoned. It is, however, somewhat surprising that the postponed clothing ceremony did not take place until January 1835, perhaps suggesting a prolonged absence by Fr Champagnat had prevented it from taking place sooner.

In any case, this example illustrates the fact that Fr Champagnat remained a significant player in the organisation of the Society of Mary at the time when it was becoming established in the Diocese of Lyon and when it was struggling with the reticence of the authorities in Rome. The idea of a trip to Rome by Fr Champagnat appears much more likely because the difficulty of recognition is essentially concerned with the issue of the adjunct branches of the Society, that of the Brothers being the most important. This study of the taking of the habit reveals that Fr Champagnat was involved more than first thought in the dealings of the Society with Rome.

The main concern of this article remains with quantitative data: Fr Champagnat welcomed into his novitiate close to 600 young men of whom approximately 450 received

the habit. This figure gives a good indication of his impact, onto which Br Avit has provided a somewhat underestimated window.

TAKING OF HABIT CEREMONIES AND FINAL PROFESSIONS

While this huge number of receptions of the habit and the total number of between 280 to 300 Brothers at the time of Fr Champagnat's death are significant, these are less important than the number of perpetual professions. This is a truer measure of the capacity of the Founder to keep his disciples. In October 1836, 70 Brothers renewed their perpetual vows or pronounced them publicly for the first time. In 1837 there would be 26 more, and 27 more in 1838. Their average age at profession was about 28. It rose to about 110 in October 1839 at the time when 92 of those 'professed' elected Br François as Director General.¹⁵ They formed the solid core of a work of which about 200 novices and temporarily professed made up an outer layer – one that was much less homogeneous.

The raw quantitative data on the taking of the habit open questions of a more qualitative nature. For example, it is clear that taking the 'blue habit' in 1820 did not mean the same thing as taking the sou-

¹⁵ The others were in Oceania or did not come.

tane in 1829 or 1836. How was the meaning of taking the habit unfolding? What was the nature of commitment that was made? In particular, was there a link between taking

the habit and the 'promise' that our sources describe as an anticipation the vows, without our knowing when this promise was made or by whom. That is the subject of another article.

RECEIVING THE HABIT AND THE FIRST 'CONSTITUTIONS' OF THE MARIST BROTHERS at La Valla and l'Hermitage (1817-1826)



André Lanfrey, fms

On the first page of the Register of Perpetual Professions (OFM3, doc. 575), Br Louis presents us with

his curriculum vitae as a Marist and gives a kind of summary of the early history of the Brothers' branch:

I, the undersigned, Br. Louis, born Jean-Baptiste Odras, legitimate son of Jean-Marie Odras, deceased, and of Jeanne-Marie Poyeton, who is living, native of the parish of Lavalla, 27 years old, swear and declare that, by the grace of God, I was admitted on the second of the month of January 1817 into the house of Lavalla, the first novitiate of the society of Mary; that towards the thirtieth day of March in the same year,¹ I had the honour of being clothed in the holy religious habit of the Brothers of the aforementioned Society, after having made the humble request to Reverend Father Superior. Following the permission of the same superior, also undersigned to certify this permission, on the eighth day of September 1828, in the chapel of N.D. de L'Hermitage, having received Holy Communion at Holy Mass, I made the three perpetual vows, secretly but voluntarily and freely, of poverty, chastity and obedience to the superiors [sic] of the aforementioned Society of Mary, according to its statutes and goals; in witness whereof, I have signed this act in the presence of Br Jean-Pierre and Br Lucien who have also signed. Dated the sixth day of October 1828 at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage.

Br. Louis, Br. Jean-Pierre, Br. Lucien²

¹ 30 March 1817 was Palm Sunday

² Even though the presence of Champagnat was announced in the register, his signature does not appear there.

From 1826,³ the Brothers had made perpetual profession, and made written record of it. But some parts of these records are problematic. In particular, what did it mean to take vows 'to the superiors' of the Society of Mary?

Before this date, there were two stages to the commitment process: the entry into the novitiate and the reception of the habit. Our knowledge about these two stages is incomplete and at times inconsistent. For example, what was the early ritual for the taking of the habit? Of what did the request to the superior consist? Did the taking of the habit include the 'promise' of which the Biography of Br Louis speaks?⁴

After two years of novitiate,⁵ in order to put an end to human inconstancy and to confirm the vocation of these first Brothers, he [Fr Champagnat] proposed to them to make a promise of fidelity to God. By means of this promise, the Brothers committed themselves to work for their own sanctification, to teach children, particularly the poor, to obey their superior, to preserve their chastity, and to give everything to the community.

Chapter 15 of *The Life* furnishes us with the full text of this 'promise of fidelity' for five years. Since Br

Jean-Baptist tells us that this promise was made before vows were first taken in 1826, we are tempted to think it was part of taking the habit up until then. However, I will attempt to show that this 'promise' was, in fact, the first constitutional text of the Marist Brothers.

RECEIVING THE HABIT BEFORE 1826

I am not going to focus on the entry process to the novitiate. From 1822, Fr Champagnat wrote in the Register of Entries (OFM3, doc. 105) the name of each postulant and his place of origin as well as the amount of money given or promised in payment for his novitiate. With regard to the receiving the habit, prior to 1826 this signified the joining of a lay association. After that time, reception of the habit was the stage before making vows within a religious congregation. The colour and the form of the religious habit were visible signs of these changes. In the *Annales*, Br Avit (1822, #35; 1826, #51) tells us that between 1822 and 1826 the novices 'wore the blue costume [frock coat].'⁶ In 1827, the novices 'wore the religious habit', that is to

³ Even though he was the first to be written into the register of perpetual professions, Br Louis was not the first to make his vows. An earlier profession of nine Brothers took place on 11 October 1826. I will explain later the reasons for the delay.

⁴ *Biographie de Quelques Frères*, first edition p. 11. Br. Louis died in 1847 and it may be that this biography was written earlier than *The Life of Fr Champagnat* (1856) which reports in Chapter 15 almost exactly the same words.

⁵ That is in 1819.

⁶ However, he does not state that this was the first time.

say, the black soutane.⁷ However, the colour and the form of what the Brothers wore are less significant than the rite for taking the habit which is mentioned in the *Annales* (1822, #35).

There was nothing special about the ceremony used for the clothing at that time. It was very simple. The ceremony took place in the little room which served as an oratory and at the altar on which these were placed. There was no register for the inscription of these clothing ceremonies or the names of those who were given the blue suit. This register was not started until 1829. Each of the novices himself wrote out the act of his taking of the habit in the register according to the following formula: 'I the undersigned, N ..., born the at ... aged ... swear and

declare that by the grace of God, I have been admitted to the novitiate on the ... that I have taken the holy habit on the ... after having made the humble request to the Reverend Father Superior, who has also signed below to certify his permission. In witness whereof I have signed this act in the presence of the Brothers ... who have signed as witnesses.⁸

Br Avit evokes for us the time in Lavalla (1817-1824), when the taking of the habit was held in the oratory of the house. He says nothing about the first years in the Hermitage when the clothing ceremony certainly took place in the chapel. He cites a standard report that is older than the reports about the clothing from 1829. (OFM3, doc. 497)

Formula in the Annales (1822 #35)	Receptions of the Habit Register
Each of the novices himself wrote out the act of his taking the habit in the register according to the following formula:	Report of the clothing of Br Régis Cavier which took place in 1824 but formalised in 1829.
I, the undersigned, N..., born on the ... at ... aged ..., swear and declare that	"I, the undersigned Br Régis, born François Cavier, legitimate son of Pierre Cavier, native of the parish of Bossuet, aged twenty three, swear and declare that
by the grace of God, I have been admitted to the novitiate on the ...,	by the grace of God, I have been admitted on the twenty seventh day of the month of March 1822 in the house of Lavalla, into the novitiate of the Society of Mary.

⁷ It is possible that those who made profession in 1826 had already been given the black robe. On the other hand, it is not sure that before 1822 the novices had worn a blue habit. The inspector Guillard who visited Bourg-Argental on 23rd April 1822 (OMI/doc 75) tells us that "their apparel consisted in a black frock coat with a large mantle".

⁸ The ending of the formula is as follows: "in the presence of Brother X and Brother Y who have also signed, dated" The expression "as witnesses" is never found.

that I have taken the holy habit on the ... ⁹	That on the 25 th of the month of March 1824, I had the honour of being clothed in the holy habit of the religious of the Brothers of the Society, ¹⁰
after having made the humble request to Reverend Father Superior, who has also signed to certify his permission.	After having made the humble request to Reverend Father superior (here), who has also signed to certify his permission.
In witness whereof I have signed this act in the presence of the Brothers ... who have signed as witnesses ¹¹	In witness whereof I have signed this act in the presence of Br Jean-Baptiste and of Br Antoine who have also signed here on the thirteenth day of October 1829 at Our Lady of L'Hermitage. Br Régis, Champagnat, Br Jean-Baptiste; Br Antoine

The two texts mention the same stages. However, concerning the habit and the meaning attached, the difference is great: 'the holy habit' has become 'the holy habit of the religious of the Brothers of the Society'. Br Avit reveals to us the formula for taking the blue habit before 1826, while Br Régis uses the new formula adapted for the clothing in the soutane. We know almost nothing about the request to be clothed in the habit or the permission of the

superior.¹² As for the ceremony itself, contained in the Rule of 1837, it is certainly inspired greatly by the original ritual.¹³

DEVELOPMENT OF TAKING THE HABIT: THE PRELIMINARY DIALOGUE

In 1837, the ceremony of taking the habit happened before the Mass and began with the hymn *Veni*

⁹ That is the blue habit.

¹⁰ In 1824 it was not yet the religious habit.

¹¹ The end of the formula invariably says: ... in the presence of Br X and Br Y, who have also signed, on the ... However, the expression, "as witnesses" is never found.

¹² An inquiry from 1828 (OFM1, doc. 104) classes the Brothers according to religious and moral criteria (piety, submission, character, catechism, regularity) and the profane subjects (science, grammar, arithmetic, writing). Material questions such as the payment of the pension or for the habit had to be important.

¹³ We find it also in the *Manuel de Piété*, which was the catechism used by the novices. It was the forerunner of the *Principes de perfection*, published in 1855, in 'Prières diverses pour sanctifier la journée' (pp. 263-267).

Creator. Then the priest blessed the habits that he referred to as ‘a protection on the road to salvation, a principle of holiness, and an assured defence against the wiles of the enemy’. There followed a ritualised dialogue between the postulants and

the celebrant which was perhaps the famous question of which the reports concerning the taking of the habit or the vows speak. There exists a version from 1834 that seems closer to the original than that of 1837.¹⁴

Dialogue of 1834	Rule of 1837
Question: My dear children, what have you come here to ask of me before the altars raised in honour of the Mother of God? ¹⁵	The celebrant: My dear children, what do you seek?
Response: My dear Father, we come to ask you for the poor habit of the Brother of Mary	The Postulants: Father, we ask you for the habit of the Brothers of Mary.
	The celebrant: Are you resolved to wear it devotedly, to live and die in the exact observance of the rules that are prescribed for the Brothers of Mary?
	The postulants: Yes, Father, we are fully resolved to do this
Question: The request you are making is of very great importance for the salvation of your soul. It is in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, at the foot ¹⁶ [sic] of Jesus Christ, whose Sacred body reposes here ... Do you come here following a mature consideration?	
Response: We have considered it carefully. We know that it is before God and at the feet of Mary that I ¹⁶ [sic] ask to be clothed in the livery ¹⁷ [sic] of the Society	

¹⁴ Br J. Pedro Herreros, *La Regla del Fundador. Su fuentes y evolución*, doc 33 pp. 442-443.

¹⁵ The plural (altars) is strange. If it is not an error of a copyist, it may refer to a particular place.

¹⁶ The singular is perhaps a vestige of a previous formula for a single novice.

¹⁷ The livery [*Les livrées* in French] is the uniform worn by the servants of a great personage.

Question: In order to be clothed in the habit which you eagerly seek, it is necessary to die to the world, to your families, to your friends and to yourselves, in order to live only in Jesus and Mary.	The celebrant: To become true children of Mary, you must, my dear children, die to the world, to your parents, to your friends and to yourselves, in order to live only in Jesus and Mary.
Response: We ardently desire that Jesus and Mary be all to us and the rest be as nothing.	The postulants: This is what we desire with all our hearts, so that the world be as nothing to us and that Jesus and Mary be our all.
	The celebrant: Therefore, do you wish immediately to renounce the world, with all its pomp and its vanities, in order to take the poor habit of the Brothers of Mary?
	The postulants: Yes, Father, for a long time we have desired this and we beg you not to withhold it from us.
Superior: On these conditions alone, I consent very willingly to clothe you in the poor habit of a Brother of Mary. Go now, my dear children.	The celebrant: I am very happy, my dear children, and I desire that you be received into the Society of the Brothers of Mary. So, take off the vesture of this world with all its vanity, and clothe yourselves in the poor habit of Jesus and Mary. Go now, my dear children

It is easy to see that the text of 1834 is more sober in its expression. In the formula of 1837, the question concerning fidelity to the Rule was certainly something new. The postulants then left in order to put on the religious habit. The docu-

ment of 1834 signalled an important rite that the Rule of 1837 did not retain: 'The celebrant gives each one his name in religion'. Once the habit was put on, the dialogue between the superior and the novices continued:

Dialogue of 1834	Rule of 1837
Question: Now you are dead to the world, my dear children: are you content?	The celebrant: Now you are dead to the world, my dear children: are you content?
Answer: We are overcome with joy	The postulants: Yes, Father, we are overcome with joy, and our hearts are alive with happiness.

<p>Question: You have good reason to be satisfied as, from this moment, Mary becomes in a very particular way your own good Mother and Jesus Christ the spouse of your soul.</p>	<p>You have good reason to be satisfied; so, from this moment, by a special grace, you become in a particular way the children of Mary, the special charge of St Joseph, and the brothers of Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>Answer: We hold this favour far above all other things. The world has nothing that might please me¹⁸ [sic] any more. We have nothing more to ask of God than perseverance in this holy state which we have embraced completely voluntarily.</p>	<p>It is a grace which we esteem more than all the goods of this world; the great advantages which we have allow us to leave behind with joy our parents, our friends and all the vanity of this age, and we ask of God the grace to persevere even until death in the vocation of the Brother of Mary which we embrace this day.</p>

The two texts have some notable differences: in 1834, Jesus Christ is ‘the spouse of our soul’ but, in 1837, the reference to the Holy Family takes over; in addition, the notion of vocation, which is barely present in 1834, where it is only a question of ‘this holy state’, it is clearly affirmed in 1837.¹⁹In both cases, there is the reasoned request to take the habit and the explicit authorisation of the celebrant. The postulants ask for ‘the poor habit of the Brother of Mary’, considered also as ‘the livery’ of those who belong to Mary. It is at the same time a renunciation of the world, under the patronage of Jesus and Mary. Before this ritualised questioning was introduced, was there a more personalised approach used? The *Manuel de Piété* (1855, p. 279) contains a ‘Petition to be admitted to vows’ which might

have served for the taking of the habit before 1826.

I, the undersigned, Brother N, aged ..., entered the novitiate on the ... after having prayed and reflected seriously in order to know the will of God, desiring to give myself wholly to Our Lord, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to bind myself to the institute of the little Brothers of Mary, to which I believe that I have been truly called, humbly entreat the Reverend Father Superior General to admit me to the vow (of obedience, or to the three perpetual vows of Religion or to the vow of stability).

One can plainly see in this formula the development of the dialogue for the taking of the habit. Then, only the entry into the novitiate is mentioned, as if the formula previously used for the request to take the habit had been adapted when the making of vows was introduced in 1826.

¹⁸ Once again, the singular form suggests an origin from an individual version of this dialogue.

¹⁹ In the *Manuel de piété* from 1855, the dialogue is more developed and the expression “Brothers of Mary” is replaced by “little Brothers of Mary”.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE NOVICES

After the postulants' formal request and the favourable response from the superior, he invited the novices 'one after the other' to pronounce 'a public declaration' of fidelity 'to God and to the Holy Virgin' which essentially expanded on the substance of the dialogue.

Eternal and all powerful God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God in three persons, I consecrate myself entirely to you, sacrifice to you everything that I possess on this earth, and all that the world loves and seeks; I desire and ask for nothing else than to do your most holy will and that of the most holy Virgin, who deigns, despite my unworthiness, to receive me into the number of her children.

Ah! Holy Virgin, my good and tender Mother, I choose you as my loving Sovereign, and I consecrate myself to you in a very particular way; I swear to you, who are the best of mothers, never to permit what would make me unworthy of your protection and your favours, so that I might have the happiness to increase the number of your faithful servants in the abode of eternal blessedness.

This is a Trinitarian and Marian consecration, exactly the same as that of the Marist Sisters who took the habit on December 8, 1824.²⁰ The first two Brothers who received the habit in March 1817 perhaps used this prayer which did not make any

mention of the Society of Mary, even though it is full of Champagnat's spirit. In particular, we find the themes of Mary as Mother and 'the children of Mary'. The final prayer of the celebrant which is, in my opinion, also from the early years, seems to be a little more explicit on the nature of the Society as it speaks of 'the holy habit of Blessed Mary'. This is the blue habit, which was the sign of consecration to Mary:²¹

God, all powerful and eternal, who for your infinite goodness, have rescued your servants here present from the stormy sea of this world, and have received them so mercifully under your protection, we pray that, taking off the clothing of this perishable world, they might be reclothed in the holy habit of Blessed Mary, the Mother of God, as their garment of salvation, and they might merit to be included among the number of her faithful children. We pray that they might walk constantly in her footsteps and so, after the brief space of this life, be reclothed in blessed immortality and sing your praises together with her.
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.²²

Entry into the society of the 'Brothers of Mary' is therefore conceptualised as being akin to a retreat from the world, reception of the habit being the symbol of this. However, this commitment was purely spiritual, as it consisted in the entrance into a confraternity through which a pious layman com-

²⁰ OM1, doc. 124

²¹ The young Br François wore a blue suit after his consecration to Mary by his mother. The Marist Sisters wore a blue habit.

²² There was an identical prayer for the Marist Sisters.

mitted himself to a fervent Christian life without explicitly mentioning an apostolate. Therefore, the famous ‘promise’ mentioned by Br Jean-Baptiste in his biography of Br Louis in *Biographies de Quelques Frères*, and in *The Life* in Chapter 15, did not form part of the ritual for taking the habit.

THE VOWS QUESTION THE PRIMITIVE STATUTES OF THE BROTHERS

As I have previously stated, it is at the beginning of Chapter 15 of *The Life* that there is a question concerning the vows started in 1826 and of an earlier promise. In Chapter 14, we are reminded that the Hermitage saw the departure of Brothers Jean-Marie Granjon and Etienne Rouméty while Br Louis, the second disciple, was tempted by the priesthood. Chapter 15 presents the vows as a necessity to ‘bind the Brothers to their vocation ... by means of an irrevocable commitment’ even though ‘from the beginning he [Champagnat] had the Brothers make promises of fidelity to God and to their vocation.’ It is rather contradictory, but the author wants to remove as much as possible the idea that the start of the taking of vows brought the original constitu-

tions of the Brothers into question. The reports of the first nine perpetual professions, however, reveal very much what the real problem was:

... On the 11th day of October 1826, ... secretly but voluntarily and freely, I made the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to **the superiors of the aforementioned Society of Mary, according to its statutes and goals ...**²³

The use of the plural (‘to the superiors’) shows that the Brothers’ branch was now dependent on that of the priests who had not yet settled on a single superior. They were not received by Champagnat alone who had been, nonetheless, elected by them in October 1826. Fr Courville had already left and Fr Terrailon would shortly do the same. This would leave Fr Champagnat as the only priest at the Hermitage.²⁴ Another problematic element is that the vows were taken according to the statutes and the goals of the Society of Mary but what exactly were these?

It is easy to understand why the principal Brothers from the time at La Valla were cool on Fr Champagnat’s idea of a Society of Mary governed by the priests, in which Champagnat did not even consider himself as a superior. He expressed his position clearly in a letter (num-

²³ OFM3, doc 575.

²⁴ It is not until after the election of Fr Colin that the Brothers made their vows to the superior of the Society of Mary, in 1836.

ber 11) to Fr Cattet on 18 December 1828: 'The society of the brothers cannot be regarded as the work of Mary on their own, but only as a branch, adjunct to the whole Society.'²⁵

FR COURVEILLE AND THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE ORDER

The letter sent from Aiguebelle by Fr Courveille on 4 June 1826 (OM1, doc. 152) clarifies for us the question of the 'statutes and the goals' of the Society of Mary. He in fact deplored 'the difference of opinions on the purpose, the form, the intentions and the spirit of the true society of Mary' (para.13). He hoped that his successor 'does not in any way deviate from the purpose of the institute and of the true intentions of the divine Mary' and 'that he does not go against the law of God, the faith of the Holy Roman Church, the constitutions of the order, and the good as well as the effectiveness of the Society of Mary.' He admits his own incapacity to lead the establishing of 'the constitutions of the order' which had not been abolished (para.14-15). Fr Champagnat proved to be more adept in ensuring that a monastic interpretation of the

Society of Mary would prevail, but not without difficulty. Brothers Jean-Marie Granjon, Etienne Roumésy, Louis, Jean-Baptiste and several others were opposed not only to Fr Courveille but also to Fr Champagnat who shaped a Society of Mary like a religious order composed of Fathers and Brothers.²⁶ But Brothers Louis and Jean-Baptiste eventually came to accept this by 1828, and the 'statutes and goals' of La-valla were supplanted by those of Fourvière.

THE STATUTES AND GOALS OF THE MARIST BROTHERS AT LA VALLA, 1819-1826

The famous 'promise' of which Br Jean-Baptiste speaks was the Brothers' first constitutional text. We are in possession of two versions: one is in Chapter 15 of *The Life*, which has certainly been reworked by Br Jean-Baptiste, and the other, dated 1826 (OM1, doc. 168), is conserved on an anonymous sheet of paper, and is by far the more reliable. Its date is not without significance since it is from the time in which Fr Courveille and Fr Champagnat attempted to put this original text aside.

²⁵ In the first part of *The Life*, Chapter 19, pp. 202-204, Br Jean-Baptiste reports almost the same words.

²⁶ The register shows that Brothers Hilarion, Régis and Cyprian (Furet) were delayed in making their perpetual vows.

Version 1 The 'promise' of 1826	Version 2 The 'promise' in The Life, Ch 15
<p>We the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, attest and guarantee that we consecrate ourselves for five years from this day in 1826, freely and completely voluntarily, to the pious association of those who consecrate themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the Christian instruction of the children of the countryside.</p>	<p>All for the greater glory of God and for the honour of the renowned Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>We, the undersigned, attest and declare that we consecrate ourselves to God for five years, beginning from this day, ... freely and completely voluntarily, in the little association of the Little Brothers of Mary with the goal of working ceaselessly, by means of the practice of all the virtues, for our own sanctification and for the Christian education of the children of the countryside.</p>
<p>We intend:</p> <p>firstly, to seek nothing but the glory of God, the good of his Catholic Church which is both Apostolic and Roman, and the honour of the august Mother of Our Lord J(esus) C(hrist).</p>	<p>So we intend:</p> <p>1. To seek nothing but the glory of God, the honour of the august Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the good of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.</p>
<p>Secondly, we commit ourselves to teach for no payment the poor whom the parish priest presents to us for education. We will teach: 1. The catechism; 2. prayer; 3. reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to parents and to the legitimate princes.</p>	<p>2. We commit ourselves to teach freely all the poor children whom the parish priest will send to us along with all the other children who have been entrusted to us. We will teach the catechism, prayer, reading, writing and the other parts of primary education, according to their needs.</p>
<p>We intend, thirdly, to commit ourselves to obey our superior without argument and also all those who will be put in charge of us by his order.</p>	<p>3. We commit ourselves to obey our superior without argument and also all those who will be put in charge of us by his order for our guidance.</p>
<p>Fourthly, we promise to maintain chastity.</p>	<p>4. We promise to maintain chastity.</p>
<p>Fifthly, we hand everything over to the community.</p>	<p>5. We hand everything over to the community."</p>

In the first version, the name of the association is imprecise while the other version gives the name of

the Little Brothers of Mary. Above all, the second point of Version 2 makes precise the original objec-

tive: it is necessary from that point on to assure not only the instruction but the Christian education of all children and not only of the poor. The programme is greatly expanded and updated: not only reading but also writing and the other disciplines. On the other hand, the respect due to parents and to the legitimate prince disappears from the programme of instruction as it is too reminiscent of the political-religious ideal of the Restoration. Br Jean-Baptiste adapted this promise for his readers in 1856 but he preserved the structure.²⁷

The collective nature of the contract ('We, the undersigned, ...') is a spiritual connection with the consecration at Fourvière, using the same introductory phrase of the Marists' pledge there, but not going as far as legitimising the name 'Marist'. It is also a private contract in law, something that was frequent at that time among pious people and those of humble origin who had decided to live in a community that was both apostolic and involved in work. This was the case for the 'béates' and the many communities of religious women, including the Sisters of St Joseph in La Valla. The future Brothers Cassien and Arsène also practised this form of community at Sorbiers.²⁸ Such a contract was well suited to local communities but it was a little anachronistic and less suitable for larger groups.

A CONFUSION IN BR JEAN-BAPTISTE'S ACCOUNT

In attempting to show that the vows of 1826 were nothing more than making official the earlier promise that Brothers were deemed to have made, but with basically the same obligations, Br Jean-Baptiste actually leads his readers astray by misrepresenting what had occurred:

Each Brother signed this promise on his knees and before the assembled community.

It contained in principle all the obligations of the religious life and it is what Fr Champagnat never failed to declare to the Brothers when he allowed them to make this contract.

He then describes for us in effect the ritual through which each Brother joined with the collective enterprise of 1819: 'We, the undersigned ...'. In fact, the original constitutional text of the community would be terminated, in October probably, in order to permit the election of a Director (Br Jean-Marie Granjon), and the coming in of Fr Champagnat as Superior. In employing the imperfect of the verb ['signait', in French] to sign instead of the simple past tense ['signa'], Br Jean-Baptiste gives us to understand that each new novice did this at the time of his clothing ceremony. However, we have seen that the reception of the habit did not include this type of

²⁷ One must not forget that the biography is addressed to all the public and Br Jean-Baptiste conforms the text to the idea of education prevalent around 1856.

²⁸ See *Biographies de Quelques Frères*.

promise. It is not completely wrong, however, because between admission to the novitiate and the clothing ceremony, the postulants were introduced to the constitutions of the community of the Brothers and they knew precisely what they were committing themselves to when they received the habit.

Br Jean-Baptiste tells us about an incident with Br Louis which he situates in 1818 but which fits better in 1826:

The first time there was a question of making this commitment in 1818, Br Louis who had an extremely timorous conscience, and who was rightly a scrupulous observer of what he had promised to God, was afraid of the obligations which he was about to contract and he refused to sign, despite the advice of Champagnat and the friendly invitations of the other Brothers.

Br Jean-Marie was astonished and scandalised.

He reports then a conversation between the troubled Br Jean-Marie and Fr Champagnat who reassured him of Br Louis's fidelity.

Another reading of the text is possible, situating this incident not in 1818-19 but later.²⁹ Br Jean-Baptiste was speaking more probably of the years 1826-28, for it is very un-

likely that Jean-Marie Granjon or Fr Champagnat had revealed to him a conversation that had taken place in 1818. The 'Br Jean-Marie' who was scandalised and troubled was not Jean-Marie Granjon but Br Jean-Marie Bonnet,³⁰ who entered the novitiate on 2 September 1826, and took the habit on 2 December of the same year. He made his perpetual vows at twenty-three years of age on 8 September 8 1828 at the same time as Br Louis and Br Jean-Baptiste Furet.

A BIASED PRESENTATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHARTER OF THE MARIST BROTHERS

Despite this confusion, Br Jean-Baptiste reveals to us the Marist Brothers' foundational text, which was finalised in 1819 during what might be called their first general chapter. Seeking to avoid commentary on disagreements concerning the nature of the Society of Mary, he did not draw attention a document that had been made obsolete by the re-foundation of 1826. Nonetheless, even though he set it out in such a way as to change the sense, he did not hide it. When he entered the In-

²⁹ The move of Br Louis to Marlies in 1818-1819 gives a certain weight to the hypothesis of a misunderstanding with J.M. Granjon and Champagnat at this time.

³⁰ When *The Life* appeared in 1856, Br Jean-Marie Bonnet, who had become the Provincial Director of St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, was still alive. The Brothers who read *The Life* at that time certainly did not mix him up with Jean-Marie Granjon. For a modern day reader it is easy to fall for the confusion.

stitute in 1822, he had contracted himself to the early 'constitution' of 1819, and he resisted the introduction of the vows in 1826. But later, like Br Louis, whom he describes very favourably, he came to make his perpetual vows in 1828. On this subject, therefore, Br Jean-Baptiste was conflicted.

BENEFITS STEMMING FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF VOWS

The introduction of the vows was, in effect, a re-foundation of the Brothers, albeit that the break with the past was not complete since four Brothers still took the blue habit in 1826 (*Annales* 1826, #69). The crisis that was occasioned by the change ended with the perpetual vows of Br Louis on 8 September 8 1828 'to the superiors of the aforesaid Society of Mary, according to its statutes and goals'.³¹

Having the Brothers' as a branch of the Society of Mary had its advantages. The request to take the habit became simpler because it constituted only a first step towards joining and it gave time both to the superior and to the candidates before a commitment was contracted between the parties. This would become one of the key elements assisting the rapid development of the congregation after 1826. From

then, aspirants knew that they were entering into a proper teaching congregation and would wear the habit of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine. Previously, the name 'Blue Brothers' carried a certain degree of doubt about the nature of Champagnat's project. Nonetheless, even though the debate of the years 1826-28 did not trouble the majority of the Brothers, who were more attached to the person of the Founder than to a constitutional text, there were the specific issues of the cut of the soutane, the method of reading, and the wearing of cloth stockings, which ended in a revolt in 1829. Certainly, these gave pause for thought as the crisis continued around the taking of vows according to the statutes and goals of the Society of Mary.

The crisis of 1826-29 during which Fr Champagnat was confirmed as a resolute founder was, however, only resolved provisionally with the integration of the Brothers within the Society of Mary, with the quite monastic style of life, and with being directed by a priest. The problem of the relations between the Brothers and the Fathers would continue to surface intermittently until the 1860s. The years 1817-1826 were foundational years for the Marist Brothers, testified spiritually by the taking the habit, and institutionally by the constitutional compact of 1819, the importance of which has been undervalued.

³¹ The Society of Mary did not have "a centre of unity" until 1830 with the official election of Fr Colin.

MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT AND HIS APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



**Lourdes Yvonne
Schutte Alarcón¹**

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to put into the hands of readers some research that may contribute to the quality of processes of human resources (HR) management in Marist works.

Through study of the material in Marcellin Champagnat's letters and other writings, it has been possible to identify the main HR approaches that Marcellin used so skilfully. Let us remember that the 1800s was a time when personnel management was totally a trial-and-error affair, where there was no information to guide effective management; manuals, procedures, rules had to be created.

Without diminishing in any way the mystical dimension of Marcellin, his heartfelt love of Christ or his holi-

ness, we can consider his leadership from another perspective; we can look at aspects of it that, although less frequently acknowledged, remain valid today. HR management is planned and organised according to the needs of each organisation and seeks to develop processes in line with its organisational culture, traditions, history and values. From this perspective, we can find similarities and differences between the HR processes used in the Marist founding period and those employed today.

In Marist schools, it is not only an educational service that is offered. Its educational services are imbued with the Marist charism that we have inherited from Marcellin, one that leads us to live out the love that Jesus and Mary have for each person and that impels us to pass

¹ Former Marist Student, Human Resources Officer, Marist College Manuel Ramírez Barinaga. Member, Human Resources Team and Loans Sub-commission of the Sector of Peru, Province of Santa Maria de los Andes. Master of Industrial Relations, University of St Martin de Porres. Postgraduate in Human Resource Management, Pacifico University. Diploma in Marist Patrimony, University of Marcellin Champagnat.

this on to others: among adults, to children and young people through evangelisation. Schools are places where a Christian orientation to life is proposed as the way to release human potential and shape character; an integral education, then, where the Gospel is alive.

MARCELLIN AND HR PROCESSES

Personnel management was part of Marcellin's mission from the beginning. Through his hard work and commitment, he explored the main processes of HR management. In his proactive management approach, Marcellin was ahead of his time. Perhaps without knowing exactly why, he made use of a management style focussed on concern for the individuals for whom he was responsible; today this is called Human Resources management. The attention he paid to the art of leadership, and his mastery of it, was not limited to his perspective as a religious; he had an eye for what would work and a natural sense for what would allow him to get to where he wanted.

The sources let us clearly identify eight aspects of HR management used today: workplace health and safety; quality assurance; recruitment; HR administration; training;

remuneration and professional development and wellbeing.

Let us begin our overview of some of today's common processes to get a closer view of the leadership skills of Marcellin Champagnat.

MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Marcellin was always concerned that the classrooms had the infrastructure necessary for guaranteeing the health and safety of the adults and children using them.

In Bourg-Argental Br Michel is doing really well; the school is not going too badly. Although it has only about 90 children, everyday someone else arrives. They are very poorly accommodated; also, they have been stopped from using the vegetable garden which is a great inconvenience.

I am not annoyed about this. I spoke with M. Deplain and M. Sablon; I made them see that the building is not suited to be a school, that something better needs to be arranged for the future. They made promises but I do not know what they will do.

They are taking their time to make any payments.²

His persistence is evidenced in his letters and in his firmness when he decided to not send or to withdraw the Brothers if the premises did not satisfy basic requirements.

² Br. JEAN MARIE GRANJON; Saint-Symphorien-le-Château; 1823-12-01; PS 001; ch110001.doc; Hand-written Original: AFM 111-1; Edited in CSG 1, 139, and, in part in *Life* pp. 343-344, AAA p.53.

Our request in each place is for a large house, one that is in good condition and well-ventilated, with rooms big enough for the number of students, a garden for the Brothers to cultivate in their free time, 2000 francs for furniture and 100 francs each year for its maintenance.³

Marcellin gave the matter the importance it deserved, including making personal visits to inspect possible places for schools. Every so often, these led him to declare some infrastructures to be at risk, what today authorities call unsuitable premises. He frequently spoke up about repairs to be made to places where the Brothers were staying to make them conform with what was set down in contracts; he had a sharp eye and resolute attitude when it came to appraising the infrastructure he visited, and was clear in his consequent demands.

The rooms should always be adjacent; the door joining them should have a pane of glass and there should be openings in the walls or partitions so that the teachers can see one another easily while seated.⁴

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Over time and given the social circumstances in France, Marcel-

lin ensured that the Institute had Brothers with the required training to be ready for their teaching-evangelising work with children. In this respect, he needed constantly to make an exhaustive analysis of the Brothers (workers) who were trained and available for particular assignments against the number of Brothers (workers) requested in different parts of the country.

So we will need someone for the good administration of the Brothers' branch that has already begun to develop. May I remind you here, in parenthesis, of the promise you made to me to provide all the personnel needed for our work, who moreover would not request more than food and clothing ...⁵

Studying personnel needs, then, became a never-ending task of assessing and covering those that were the most urgent and convenient in the short, medium and long term.

Thus, he would look for replacements when the situation merited it or create new positions when strictly necessary. It would seem that Marcellin was clear in his ideas about staffing requirements, focussed on having the personnel at his disposal who had appropriate training needed for any given position. This

³ PARISH PRIESTS OF ANNECY; HAUTE SAVOIE; 1828; PS 009; ch110009.doc; Minutes copy AFM 132.2, pp. 173-174.

⁴ Fr. GEORGE; PARISH PRIEST OF SURY-LE-COMTAL, LOIRE; 1837-11; PS 161, ch110161.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, p. 16, n° 17.

⁵ Fr. SIMON CATTET, V.G., LYON; 1828-12-18; PS 011; ch110011.doc; Hand-written Original, AFM 132.2, pp. 174-175; edited in: Life, pp. 234-235; OM, 1, pp. 451-453.

involves a technique of organising people with the aim of meeting needs, knowing full well that a lack of personnel as much as overstaffing can be prejudicial. There were times when it happened that Champagnat had more requests than Brothers available, times when he had to make quick decisions, the best possible in the circumstances, and give his word regarding deadlines that, after a quick assessment, he thought he could meet.

RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

The process of selecting personnel, because of its impact on HR management, can be considered key for ensuring continuity in the mission of any organisation.

From the frequency with which it is mentioned in Champagnat's letters, it can be seen that this second process [of selecting personnel] was the one he most used, notably around 1838. This was a time of intense activity for him due to, among other things, his untiring efforts to gain formal approval for the Institute, Brothers being sent off to military service, and replying to Brothers' requests. Marcellin's concern was evident since postulants had to comply with the requirements as

stipulated in standard criteria (e.g. age, social situation) and those mentioned in documents of that period such as his Circulars to the Brothers. In the latter, for example, postulants needed a certificate of good behaviour; what is required today of people who seek to work in a Marist institution is exactly the same as this document which must be attached to applications, only the name has changed: police clearance, certification of previous employment, etc. Moreover, references are sought by telephone about their past employment and especially about competencies the person will need to have in the position applied for.

... 2. A certificate of good conduct from the local Mayor.⁶

Marcellin sought and supplied references readily and honestly; he had no qualms in saying things as they were. This was the case with Louis Fouet, a carpenter, for whom he gave a very good reference. In the same way today, the selection process is intended to ensure that employees are people of integrity, a highly important characteristic in an educator.

... Louis Fouet, a carpenter from Sougraigne, a municipality in the department of the Aude. He has faith, piety, zeal and can lead a school. I consider him a reliable person when it comes to habits and honesty.⁷

⁶ CIRCULAR TO THE BROTHERS; 1833-08-10; PS 029; ch110029.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA, 1, p. 8; edited in CSG 1, p. 4.

⁷ Fr. FRANÇOIS MAZELIER; SUPERIOR OF THE BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION; 1838-07-16; PS 198; ch110198.doc; Original, AFM, 112.10.

Despite difficult circumstances, Marcellin observed the requirements when it came to requests for Brothers.

... I have already warned you that, at the present time, you could have a Brother with his certificate of competence.⁸

On the other hand, it is also interesting and makes a lot of sense in regard to religious formation to see that Marcellin asked for a copy of a postulant's Baptismal Certificate.

During the selection process, at least one interview was required in which the postulant sat face to face with a member of the Institute who was responsible for checking on how well he measured up to the required profile.

Champagnat was rigorous in his own selection process of candidates. He had a questionnaire that they had to answer prior to being admitted to the novitiate. The questions asked about specific facts about them, their family, their social situation, sacraments received, previous work experience, reasons for leaving employment, family history, state of health etc. A brief extract from this questionnaire:

[4] Questionnaire to be answered by the candidate before being admitted to the novitiate:

1. Where do you come from? What is your family name and Christian name? The names of your parents, their occupation, age and address?
2. Are you legitimate?
3. What is the status and situation of your parents? Can they get by on their own or do they need you as their son to survive?⁹

Still, in all personnel selection processes there are directives, policies and laws to follow. Among these in Peru, for example, there is the General Law on Persons with Disabilities N° 29973, in which any act of discrimination affecting their rights, any distinction, exclusion or restriction arising from their disability, is held to be invalid. In this regard, it is no surprise to see the insight Marcellin had into the core of all laws: an approach that was compassionate and hopeful towards others, an approach that went to the heart of every human being and his or her right to work. This can be clearly seen in the account of a Brother in formation who had lost sight in one eye.

... he contracted a type of tumour that caused him to lose his sight in one eye almost completely. We wanted him to continue teaching. So, after some training, he was able to offer good service as a teacher.¹⁰

In every institution, personal situations arise that lead to people's temporary absences: health issues,

⁸ Fr. FRANÇOIS FLEURY MOINE; PAISH PRIEST OF PERREUX, LOIRE; 1837-12-12; PS 163; ch110163.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 74-75, n° 81; edited in CSG, 1, p. 238.

⁹ Fr. JEAN CLAUDE COLIN; BELLEY, AIN; SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY; 1835-03-29; PS 055; ch110055.doc; Hand-written Original, AFM 113.6.

¹⁰ M. HIPOLITE JAYR; PREFECT OF LA LOIRE; 1837-11; PS 154, ch110154.doc; Draft, AFM 113.19.

death of close family members, emergencies, or simply unplanned things that happen. When someone is absent from work and this situation is prolonged, it is necessary to find a replacement or way of covering the gap. Fr Champagnat was quite familiar with this type of problem. He even anticipated such events by preparing some Brothers just in case situations came up where replacements were needed.

... About Br Flavien, don't even think about sending him to us (at the Hermitage); it would be impossible for us to replace him right now. Treat this Brother with great respect.¹¹

Obviously, such a scenario can also be talked through with senior managers, and hence the importance of identifying those with leadership talents. Moreover, this also allows for the growth of teamwork, among other things.

... Fr Matricon continues to be with me and I am very happy about that. He has a real love of the Brothers and a keen sense of judgement. Br François is my right arm; when I am away, he keeps the house running as if I was there. Everyone obeys him without any major problems.¹²

Selection processes include other areas as well as sub-processes: staffing needs, staff recruitment and/or search, pre-selection, quantitative and qualitative assessment, designing contracts, induction, follow-up and orientation. When new personnel are needed, potential applicants should be clear about which competences are important.

We will happily receive the young man you are speaking of, if, as you say, he has the qualities you have described.¹³

After close observation, Marcelin described the settling-in process of one Brother this way:

P.S. Br Marie Jubin, after being a bit disoriented at the start, is beginning to settle in and be a success.¹⁴

This shows his commitment to keep an eye on and mentor the Brothers when they were going to new places (and jobs). His concern to keep their evangelising mission always in focus is clear from his words:

Above all, we are to be good catechists, but we try at the same time to be competent teachers.¹⁵

¹¹ Br. DIONISIO, DIRECTOR OF ST. DIDIER-SUR-ROCHEFORT, LOIRE; 1838-01-05; PS 168; ch110168.doc; Hand-written Original AFM 111.29.

¹² BISHOP JEAN BAPTISTE FRANÇOIS POMPALLIER; VICAR APOSTOLIC OF OCEANIA; 1838-05-27; PS 194; ch110194.doc; Hand-written Original held in the Provincial House of the Marist Brothers in Sydney; photocopied en AFM, 113.13.

¹³ Fr. JOSEPH MARIE DUMAS; PARISH PRIEST OF SAINT-MARTÍN-LA-SAUVETÉ, LOIRE; 1837-10-12; PS 142, ch110142.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, p. 61, n° 64.

¹⁴ BROTHER FRANÇOIS NOTRE DAME DE L'HERMITAGE; 1838-02-04; PS 172; ch110172.doc; Hand-written Original AFM 111.32; edited in CSG 1, p. 247 y AAA p. 232-234.

¹⁵ CIRCULAR TO THE BROTHERS; 1840-01-10; PS 313; ch110313.doc; Copies AFM 111.57; edited in CSG 1, pp. 32-35 and in AAA pp. 302-303.

This points to a clearly defined profile of a Marist educator. For any job, the profile is a fundamental aspect in beginning the process of staff selection.

Finally, it is important to point out that Marcellin was concerned from the outset not to have just any adult in charge of children. This is today set out with great precision in Child Protection Policies in the context of Marist schools; in these policies there is a serious responsibility to screen staff and the area of Human Resources has charge of this.

It would be good for there to be in the Brother's room a small communication window to allow him to see and supervise the children in the dormitory.¹⁶

HR ADMINISTRATION

In his letters and other writings, the process of staff administration appears with greatest frequency and focus around the year 1837, a busy and stressful year of management for Marcellin. In spite of difficulties, he managed to organise the human group for which he was responsible with the guidelines it needed, as was his custom, being strategic in his use of administra-

tion. First, his writings indicate the need he saw for supervision (control) of the network of schools and the Brothers through a schedule of visits. He was clear about this and specific about their frequency:

It will be necessary to visit our schools every two months at least, to see if everything is going well and to make sure that no Brother has developed any dangerous relationship.¹⁷

Second, it was important to him to define his own role and communicate this. In effect, this constitutes a description of an executive role, specifically that of a supervisor of schools.

As for me, I am responsible for the school visits, testing the children entrusted to our classes, correspondence, matters to be taken up with the local authorities, changes in the appointments of Brothers, receiving the novices who arrive; in a word, for the overall running and in particular for new schools. The time available to me to devote to the temporal aspect of the house is quite insufficient unless I cut back on time for the schools, where there is a challenge to make ends meet.¹⁸

This makes us realise that, for Marcellin, role clarity constituted a key factor in management to achieve goals. Even if it was not spelt out in a document as such at that moment,

¹⁶ Fr. GIRE; PARISH PRIEST OF SAINT-PRIVAT D'ALLIER, HAUTE-LOIRE; 1840-01-21; PS 315; ch110315.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 169-170, n° 213.

¹⁷ Fr. SIMON CATTET; V.G. LYON; 1827-05; PS 004; ch110004.doc; Hand-written Original AFM 132.2, p. 166; edited in OM 1, 434.

¹⁸ Fr. SIMON CATTET; V.G., LYON; 1828-12-18; PS 011; ch110011.doc; Hand-written Original, AFM 132.2, pp. 174-175; edited in: Life, pp. 234-235; OM, 1, pp. 451-453.

we can see the elements of what we would see in a staff handbook containing organisational charts and position descriptions.

Third, and not the least important but simply following the order of published letters, he showed a particular interest in the wellbeing of his Brother-workers; he made frequent mention of holidays and the relevant dates, looking to schedule and manage them well. Marcellin left no doubt that those holidays were to last for one month exactly and gave a precise date for all to be back at work.

We are now in holiday time, a precious time no matter how you look at it, that is, for both body and soul.¹⁹

Specific statements progressively constituted an internal rule, especially those in Circulars that he sent the Brothers, setting out norms to be followed faithfully, and sanctions for when they were not. For example, he defined the granting of permissions for absence on work-days and the correct procedure for obtaining these.

[08] Brothers should not be absent from their workplace without prior notice to the Parish Priest

from whom they should seek a blessing before leaving. If the class schedule has to be interrupted, they should inform the Mayor.²⁰

Another topic related to human resource management was his awareness of building up a profile for particular positions. In the available documents we find an impressive clarity in his ideas about the personal requirements and qualifications that a Brother (worker) must have. For example, he produced a profile of a school director with details about the type of person he should be and how he should exercise his role.

We are looking for a man who is alert, who can lead everything in my absence, who can attend to those who come and go, who is loving, who understands the importance and benefits of the position, a director who is pious, well-educated, experienced, prudent, firm and reliable.²¹

He was also concerned to present a transcendent vision of a role, in all its beauty. Marcellin modelled a profile that went well beyond any list of demanding human qualities. He invited Brothers to see their lives as a great challenge, that of evangelising wherever they went, and so laid out a profile for a Marist educator.

¹⁹ CIRCULAR TO THE BROTHERS; 1833-08-10; PS 029; ch110029.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA, 1, p. 8; edited in CSG 1, p. 4.

²⁰ 1837 RULE. ch141100.doc. LYON. PRINTERY OF F. GUYOT, BOOKS, Grande rue Mercière, 3g., *On the Theological Virtues*. 1837. This remained in force until 1952. Appendices: 1841, 1842 and 1844; Circulars of Br François, 15 January, in those respective years.

²¹ BISHOP GASTON DE PINS; APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF LYON, RHÔNE; 1835 (Lent); PS 056; ch110056.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, LC. 1, 177-178 edited in OM 334.

On the other hand, to work in our schools we are careful to choose those Brothers of whose morality we are sure.²²

Between 1835 and 1837, Marcellin lived through periods of intense activity. He had to handle the demands of the day, find places for schools, seek help, respond to requests, follow up matters, seek funds, work long days, and continue his efforts to get legal recognition. While all this was going on, the reputation of his schools and the education they offered was growing in the wider community. In this context, he gave his attention to very concrete matters as needed, such as the teaching certification of the Brothers, and incoming and outgoing correspondence. He was constantly concerned that they received the best preparation possible so as to be able to gain certification.

The lessons given to our Brothers includes everything prescribed by the law for primary teachers.²³

TRAINING

Champagnat usually used the term 'training' ['formation' in French] when referring to all the different ways of acquiring knowledge and

skills, habits and personal improvement. It should be noted that the instructors, in this regard as in other processes, were young religious.

Training is such an essential part of the process of professional preparation that some organisations consider it an area that should remain somewhat independent of them, given its importance.

Marcellin focussed his attention on getting his Brother-workers able to give their best in their lessons, building on the solid bases they had acquired in their teacher training and human-Christian formation.

He had a knack for identifying those who were poorly prepared or only average for succeeding as teachers-evangelisers and took decisions for them to take immediate corrective measures. In the same way, he was sometimes pleasantly surprised and congratulated the successes and progress made in both academic achievement and religious formation.

Our dear Br Raphael, his health now much improved, is anxious to return with you to continue his studies to be able to gain his certificate at the next exam.²⁴

²² BISHOP JOHN PAUL GASTON DE PINS; APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF LYON; 1838-02-03; PS 171; ch110171.doc; Hand-written Original A.A.L., Marist Brothers file 1818.

²³ MARIO FERNANDO PERES; NOTARY, CABANNES, BOUCHES-DU-RHÔNE; 1840-02-25; PS 324; ch110324.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 176-177, n° 220; edited in CSG 1, p. 315.

²⁴ Fr. FRANÇOIS MAZELIER; SUPERIOR OF THE BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION; ST. PAUL-TROIS-CHATEAUX, DRÔME; 1839-07-21; PS 260; ch110260.doc; Hand-written Original, AFM, 112.12.

It is important to be clear in our terminology. Formation is a broad concept used for education in general, including gaining new habits, internalising values, improving attitudes, ways of living one's spirituality, etc. In a number of countries, current training policies encourage each Marist institution to organise training and/or faith formation. Staff days, retreats and personal accompaniment are elements of the formation offered.

REMUNERATION

How Marcellin approached the question of remuneration gives us some insight into his role as a strategic manager. As such, he paid close attention to the financial stipends due to his Brothers for their work. This required vision, ability and people-skills that, from any perspective, Champagnat had in abundance.

Marcellin had a basic plan regarding remuneration: he knew what was negotiable and what was not. His criteria and rules for setting terms were directed at ensuring a sound financial base for the overall organisation he had created. Still, in financial dealings, there are always external factors that impact on plans.

...To reduce it further would, in my opinion, uproot them. I am not speaking of their miserable

wage for the most thankless and demanding job done by a citizen, but rather their poor and unappetising food.²⁵

In the area of remunerations, there was one aspect that Marcellin appreciated and wisely arranged for: he seemed to know only too well that a person's working life soon comes to its end. We know very well that Marcellin's workers were his Brothers whom he loved and he was concerned for them. It is just such concern that gave rise to laws for the protection of workers. From the time they joined the Brothers, they were looking to the future, specifically towards the time they would leave the workforce. For Champagnat, there were various ways this could happen: through retirement, through dispensation or being dismissed, through illness. And, as was to be expected, he was also thinking of ways of arranging for a financial settlement after years of work. In this regard, he started to request what the Law of 28 June 1833 provided for and what much later would be known as the pension [or superannuation in some countries], based on years of service. This refers to a percentage of the ordinary wage retained by way of compulsory saving and returned to the worker when he or she completed his employment. Thus, in those days, the law prescribed that a twentieth of the monthly wage for teachers be retained in savings and

²⁵ Mr. DEVAUX DE PLEYNE ALEXANDRE DIONISE; MAYOR OF BOURG-ARGENTAL, LOIRE; 1827; PS 008; ch110008.doc;; AFM 132.2 pp. 172-173; edited in AAA pp. 129-130.

provident funds, and when the time came, Fr Champagnat would request the relevant withdrawal.

... the strategy of offering the advantages of education at the lowest possible fee has reduced the salary of each Brother teacher to a bare minimum. In most schools the two payments that the law authorises as fixed monthly wages have been rolled into one amount, while retaining, as prescribed by law, a twentieth of the monthly wage for teachers be retained in savings and provident funds.²⁶

Marcellin could not avoid difficult financial situations. On many occasions, he was in debt owing to the wages and allowances he continually had to pay.

With experience over time in financial management, he was able to ensure that the Brothers were paid; when Brothers were requested, he was concerned to know the 'purchasing power' of the one requesting. So, he used to ask: What are your resources? He would send people his prospectus prior to taking the step of signing any agreement.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

This process was significant in 1837, being the second most frequently mentioned topic in Marcellin's outgoing letters. He was acting

out of his constant anxiety for the well-being of his Brother-workers. He demonstrated this in the way he managed to obtain the living conditions they needed, such as good accommodation, necessary furniture, the religious habit or uniform, and everything that could be grouped together under the phrase, 'non-monetary remuneration'.

Moreover, other than these payments, the Brothers are well accommodated, including the provision of the necessary furniture by the municipality.²⁷

On various occasions, he delayed the sending of Brothers until the basic living conditions he was requesting were in place.

For staff to trust an organisation it is necessary that they connect personally with the aims and values of the institution. In this way, their sense of belonging and commitment takes root. Identity grows when the dreams of the institution coincide with those of the workers and, moreover, when there is a genuine concern to improve the quality of life for all in many aspects. If, in addition, peoples' potential and skills are recognised and used, a lasting and strong bond is forged.

Marcellin had a strong sense of what is being described here, as he showed in his identifying the skills

²⁶ Mr. ANTONIO NICOLAS DE SALVANDY (CONDE); MINISTRY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION; 1837-06; PS 113; ch110113.doc; Minutes Copy, AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 43-44, n° 37.

²⁷ ACTS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF FEURS; SENDING THE BROTHERS AWAY; 1831-03-23; PS 021, as a footnote; FEURS.doc.

and weaknesses of his Brothers and his efforts to have them feeling comfortable in the places they were sent. His active concern for the well-being of his Brothers was also demonstrated in his setting limits on their workload. He did not allow them to give classes to adults in the evening since that would mean extra exhaustion to their assigned daywork. He also put on record that if changes were needed, he would not hesitate to make them, a strategy that we would term 'staff rotation' today. In this regard, he insisted that any changes that Superiors wanted to make should be requested beforehand.

I do not believe it is possible for a Brother, after having spent the best part of a day in regular classes, can turn around and begin another at night.²⁸

The spirit left behind by Marcellin leads to real care and attention for workers today and to reaching the point where a large section of the staff feel that they are achieving their dreams.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In other writings, the topic of the working environment is mentioned in second place by Marcellin. This was especially the case in 1837. The

ambience of the working environment was without a doubt something to which Marcellin paid a lot of attention and, still today, is a mark of differentiation between that which Marist staff enjoy and those of other institutions.

Marcellin was a master at putting into practice concepts such as assisting staff to settle into new positions, conflict management, and identifying the interpersonal relations at work in microclimates. He appealed to people to live with good will and mutual understanding. He was shrewd in noticing those whose genuine internal motivation stood out and those who were forever dissatisfied in their assigned tasks.

He constantly invited the Brothers to live with one heart and one spirit, a phrase that brings people together, that creates a sense of unity and binds them into a family. He took pains that work was not to the detriment of the health of the Brothers and wrote to them to exercise restraint if they were putting themselves at risk.

His interventions to manage conflicts were carried out with great prudence and equitable treatment of each party. He invited everyone to listen to one another and not to pre-judge. He knew perfectly well that in every human group there

²⁸ Fr. JOSEPH BENETON; PARISH PRIEST OF PERREUX, LOIRE; 1839-10-25; PS 287; ch110287.doc; Minutes copy, AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 142-143, n° 182.

are upsets, hurts and unpleasant experiences and so he appealed to them to bear up to difficulties as they cropped up and, above all, to prevent them from arising.

7. We have to be gentle towards others and treat all kinds of people in ways that befit a tender heart, full of Christian charity.²⁹

He well understood how difficulties in relationships could end up damaging an organisation. This is evident in a letter in which he pointed out:

If a Brother whom I have sent you cannot relate (to the others), nor persevere as a Religious, do not allow him to remain there to the detriment of your school.³⁰

Saint Marcellin gave personalised and warm attention to whomever needed it. He showed affection especially when someone was experiencing a difficult moment and, at such times, communicated his confidence in Jesus and Mary, as well as what it means to be a member of a family.

Marcellin's approach to managing personnel, which for him meant the Brothers, can today be extended to all who are long-term members of the family, including senior leaders and managers, teachers, coun-

sellors, administrative staff, maintenance and cleaning staff. It is worth our while to stay in touch with our origins.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual growth of an individual or a group of people does not have to be at odds with or distant from the development of competent management. Their integration can lead to a style of management that is bolder but more rounded at the same time.

Marcellin was ahead of his time in many respects and his management of human talents is one of these. His success in organising the Institute was the result of his personal talents. The process of organising somethings always originates in the will to put order into something. When such ordering happens, true north can be seen more clearly: God and evangelisation. External order is only a reflection of the internal order that Champagnat brought to hearts, to his ministry, and to his management.

The work of the HR Office in every Marist work has to be conducted in such a way that each process is aligned with the evangelising mis-

²⁹ REGLA CASA MADRE DE 1837. HERREROS, DOC 25, 249-280. Booklet of 285 x 190 mm, ninety-one pages, transcribed by various people. AFM 362.1. ch141019.doc.

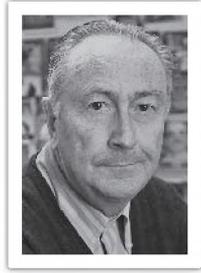
³⁰ Mr. JEAN BAPTISTE ANTOINE MERLA; MAYOR OF ST. SYMPOHORIE-LE-CHATEAU, RHONE; 1831-04; PS 022; ch110022.doc; Two drafts, AFM, LC 1, pp. 195 and 180; and minutes copy RCLA, 1, pp 5-6.

sion of the Institute. They need to adopt the simple features that Marcellin used in his management: clarity of communication; flexibility of approach and setting non-negotiables; knowing how to communicate the warmth and firmness each situation merits; appreciating differences through personal knowledge of the abilities and limitations of personnel. But our workplaces are much more than this: they are places of evangelisation where we are invited to live

with Jesus in the way of Mary. When we are feeling loved by God it is much easier to feel well within ourselves, to be at our best in getting our job done, and to feel charged to evangelise the young people and adults around us. Elements of this conclusion resonate with the advice that Marcellin gave to Br Antoine in Millery in 1838: *Together with your co-workers, whom I love very much; do your job; do it for the love of Jesus Christ; pray and get your children to pray.*

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

from their origins to
their approval in 1903 as told
through the *Circulars of
the Superiors General* (1° part)



Antonio Martínez
Estaún, fms

The different editions of the Marist Brothers' Constitutions have rarely been the object of study outside of the General Chapters of the Institute. Looking more closely at the various editions prompts a number of lines of study, one of the most difficult of which is content analysis. It is also interesting to look at the historical contexts from which they arose, and the contribution that they offer to the understanding of the Institute's history and structure. Recently within the Institute, a process of consultation has taken place for a new edition of the Constitutions. There has been much work done on the new text to prepare for its submission for approval by the Holy See, as the replacement for that approved in 1986. It seems timely, therefore, to write a history of the Constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary. For this, I have taken as a guide the texts of the Circulars of the Superiors General. In this article, I offer a summary of the article

that was published on the Institute's website in 2015, with the title *History of the Constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary*. In the following pages, I will limit myself to the first text of the Constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary from their drafting in 1854 up to their approval by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars in 1903. One of the first things to observe is that the Constitutions took forty years to be finally approved. What were the causes for this exceptionally long interval from the origin of the Institute to the approval of our Constitutions (1817-1903)?

The work of redacting Constitutions represented a conclusion to the foundational phase of the Institute with the aim of giving it a body of laws, which Fr Champagnat was not able to do in adequate detail. This project began twelve years after his death, during the three sessions of the General Chapter of

1852, 1853 and 1854.¹ The text proposed by the Chapter delegates started a process of drawn-out negotiations between General Chapters and Church authorities, through to the tenth General Chapter. These proved catastrophic, the Brothers finally ceding to the demands of Rome. After this, definitive approval was given.

FROM CIVIL TO CANONICAL RECOGNITION

The legal authorisation of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary by the French government was decreed formally on 20 June 1851,² eleven years after the death of the Founder. The proclamation of this decree 'put an end to seventeen years of effort, of blocks, and of deception'.³ Obtaining it was 'the great achievement of Br François' leadership, triumphing where Fr Champagnat had failed despite his many attempts'.⁴ In order to gain recognition, the Brothers needed to formulate a body of seventeen Statutes,⁵ the content of which would prove to be significant when it came time to

work out the text of the canonical Constitutions. This formulation was done by the General Council. By the summer of 1851, an important phase of the history of the Little Brothers of Mary was concluded.⁶

Once they obtained recognition from the civil authorities, the Brothers began to focus their efforts on acquiring canonical recognition from the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. 'For as long as this was not forthcoming, they were only a diocesan congregation',⁷ even though the Brothers were present and established in a number of dioceses. In order to obtain canonical recognition, the Institute would have submit their Rule to Rome.

The first major challenge for Br François, once official approval from the French government had been received, was the organising and directing of the Institute's first proper General Chapter (1852-1854). This Chapter had the task of consolidating the future foundations of the Institute's life and mission. It was of paramount importance because it had to put fully into operation the wishes of the Founder and establish

¹ Cf. The study in Spanish on the evolution of the Rule of 1837, by Br Pedro Hereros. Archives of the Marist Brothers in Rome and in Notre Dame de l'Hermitage.

² *Circulaires*, Vol. 2, pp. 449-452.

³ Chastel, Guy. *Le Frère François. Les Frères Maristes dans le monde*, Paris, 1948.

⁴ Lanfrey, A. *Observaciones criticas*, Chapter 26.

⁵ See, Annex number 1.

⁶ Gabriel Michel, *Frère François, 60 ans d'histoire mariste* (1996), p. 165.

⁷ Chastel, Guy. *Le Frère François. Les Frères Maristes dans le monde*, Paris, 1948.

firmly the legal structure of the Institute. François was doing this for the first time, without having any previous legislation on which to build.

THE EDITION OF THE RULE PRODUCED BY THE SECOND GENERAL CHAPTER (1852)⁸

The Chapter's first session in 1852, which comprised nineteen meetings, 'examined, evaluated and approved' the *Common Rules* which conserved the principles and the spirit of the Founder.⁹ 'These *Rules* were printed the same year of 1852 with the title of *Common Rules of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary*.¹⁰ Br Charles Raphaël, Superior General (1958-67), observed that 'these can be considered as our definitive rules since later modifications did not alter their essential content.'¹¹ He wrote these words on 8 December 1960. Two years later, the Second Vatican Council blew new winds through the life of the Institute.

The second session in 1853 worked on the *Guide des Écoles*, the foundational document that dealt with the corporate identity of the Institute and codified its pedagogical approach. It was not a canonical document as such but it was normative for the Institute's pedagogy. For over a hundred years, Marist educators learned to teach children and young people by studying this book, and applying its principles and advice.

In the third session, which took place in May 1854, the constitutions and statutes for the Congregation were approved, with the title *Constitutions et Règles du Gouvernement de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Lyon, 1854.¹² Thus, 'from the small, original text of the Rule of 1837, three distinct books emerged', but these were seen as a single body of legislation.¹³ For this reason, in the introduction to the Constitutions of 1854, all the work of the Chapter is described as a unity, and summed up in the one word, the *Rule*.

⁸ Canon Ponty gave the title of 'First General Chapter' to that which took place in 1852-1854: 'The first,' he says, 'to hold solemn sessions in our Congregation.' Ponty, L. *Vie de Frère François*, Emmanuel Vite, Lyon, 1899, p.147.

⁹ Br. François, *Circulaires*, Vol. 2, p.17. Circular from July 10, 1852. Charles Raphaël, *Circulaires*, Vol. 22, p. 496. Circular of 8 December 1960.

¹⁰ Charles Raphaël, *Circulaires*, Vol.22, p.496. Circular of 8 December 8 1960.

¹¹ Charles Raphaël, *Circulaires*, Vol.22, p.497. Circular of 8 December 8 1960.

¹² The book of the *Constitutions et Règles du Gouvernement des Petits Frères de Marie* runs to 244 pages. The size is 10 x 16.5 cm. It is edited in Lyon and printed by D'Antoine Périsset, Imp. De N. S. P. The Pope and His Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop, 1854.

¹³ L. Di Giusto, *Historia del Instituto de los Hermanos Maristas*, Rosario, 2004, 64.

ASSESSING THE INITIATIVES OF THE SECOND GENERAL CHAPTER

In the context of the difficult time in which the Institute found itself during the General Chapter of 1852-1854, one of the most sensitive issues was that to have a the Superior General elected for life. An important consideration of this question was the Chapter's determination to secure what had been gained by means of the legal recognition granted by the civil authorities in 1851. In those approved statutes, it was stated that the Institute be governed by a Superior General elected for life. Second, the assembly agreed to have a central government with a Superior General supported by Assistants, who would not reside in the Provinces, and to whom would be given extensive authority, without impediment. Third, some professed Brothers were to be excluded from important roles in the Institute and from attending the Chapter, these being open only to those Brothers with a vow of stability. The establishment of the vow of stability was a concession to the wish of some of the older Brothers since this vow created a real aristocracy in the Congregation of

which they would be the beneficiaries. François' principal achievement was taking the initiative to convene the Chapter, taking as his pretext the publication of a new edition of the Rule of the Founder. Also, it was a measure of success of the Chapter, and of Br François personally, that the Institute finally had some Constitutions. In other ways it failed, since it was peppered with difficult incidents and its decisions became the source of discontent for some Brothers.¹⁴

TOWARDS CANONICAL RECOGNITION

On 6 February 6 1858, Br François and Br Louis-Marie left the Hermitage for Rome. With them they took the text of the Constitutions which had been formulated by the Chapter. They had prepared for the journey meticulously. At the beginning of 1858, a *Memorandum* was printed by Périsset of Lyon which was intended for bishops in order to obtain from them letters of recommendation to the Pope.¹⁵ These letters in favour of the Brothers were to serve as a support for their petition for approval by the Holy See. Twenty-six bishops responded to the invitation to send a testimonial letter. Among

¹⁴ Was not the attitude of Br François to Br Athanase somewhat awkward? What about Br Avit's being marginalised because of his strong views. There was also a semi-disaster when only one Assistant was nominated and Br Paschal, a rather weak person, was elected. In this way, the strong and talented personality of Br Avit was kept out of the governance of the Institute.

¹⁵ APM 441, 23. These documents are edited in *Circulaires* T 2, pp.506-511

all of these there was an especially important one, that from Cardinal de Bonald, the Archbishop of Lyon who, on 6 January 1858, certified and approved the *Memorandum*, dated 22 December 1857.¹⁶ Fr Favre, the Superior General of the Society of Mary, personally entrusted his letter into the hands of the travellers as they passed through Lyon on 6 February 1858, which was the day that François and Louis-Marie left for Rome.¹⁷

THE TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTIONS IN ROME

Their friendly relations with the Marist Fathers, which the Brothers had maintained, encouraged the two travellers to go to the residence of the Fathers in Rome. Fr Favre, the Superior General of the Society of Mary, had notified Fr Nicolet about the arrival of the two Brothers into the Eternal City. When they got there, Fr Claude Nicolet received them and put them up in his house. He handled all the affairs of the Society with the Holy See.¹⁸ The Brothers found him to be a great support, since he knew the city and Roman customs, as well as the Italian language. At that time, François was fifty years old and Louis-Marie forty eight. Eight years on from achiev-

ing civil recognition of the Institute, both had a clear memory of all the business they had accomplished in Paris with the French Government. The eagerness to achieve their objectives in the Vatican as quickly as possible led them to follow a similar strategy.

The decisions of the Chapter of 1852-1854 were not supported by all the Brothers. As Brothers François and Louis-Marie were on their way to Rome, various messages of discontent found their way to the Holy See through various ecclesiastical channels. These messages were from some Brothers who were not in agreement with the new legislation that had been approved at the Chapter. On 22 February 1858, Br Marie Jubin, through the Archbishop of Lyon, had objected to the conditions in which the Constitutions had been formulated during the Chapter of 1852-1854. It seemed to him and to other Brothers that certain points had been approved under pressure from the General Council.

On the other hand, François and Louis-Marie, had visited the Archbishop of Lyon's office before their arrival in Rome, even if the Nuncio in Paris knew nothing about it. Because the objections presented by various Brothers required the Pope to seek some formal advice from

¹⁶ *Circulaires*, T 2, p. 506-511; *FMS Chronologie de l'Institut*, 1976, p.20

¹⁷ Bernard Bourtot, *Frères et pères de la Société de Marie sous le généralat de Frère François 1840-1860*. Saint Priest, Document SM n.53, Décembre 1999, pp.58-61.

¹⁸ J.F.F., 3; *FMS Chronologie de l'Institut*, 1976, p. 120

the Nuncio, progress with the petition had to await its arrival from Paris.

Through a long month in Rome, they discovered that Roman bureaucracy moved slowly. Seeing that the business could not be resolved with the desired rapidity and that time was getting on, it was decided that François would remain in Rome to see the enterprise through while Louis-Marie would return to the Hermitage where preparations were underway for the transfer of the General House to Saint-Genis-Laval. Br Louis-Marie returned to France on 24 April 1858.¹⁹ He had been away from the Hermitage for two-and-a-half months. François remained in Rome for a further four-and-a-half months until he returned to France on 21 August, without having anything to show for it. The answer to the petition was to arrive on 9 December 1859.

‘DECREE OF PRAISE’, BUT WITH MORE WORK TO DO: ‘OBSERVATIONS’ ON THE CONSTITUTIONS

This response from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars was based on a study of all the documentation sent in by the Brothers. Cardinal Della Genga, the Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops

and Regulars wrote a letter to Cardinal de Bonald on this date,²⁰ replying to his petition for approval of the Institute of Marist Brothers:

We have presented to our Most Holy Father Pius IX the petition of the Marist Brothers of Schools, ... which humbly sought approval of some articles of their Constitutions, and His Holiness entrusted us to transmit to you the following communication: ... In respect to the Constitutions, he orders that His Eminence and the Superior General of the Priests of the Society of Mary, established in your city, revise them carefully, correct them, and put them together into a single body of legislation, keeping in mind the observations, which the attached document contains. After this study, they are to be presented to the General Chapter of the Brothers, which on this occasion shall be presided over by the Superior General of the aforementioned priests, and finally they are to be sent to this Congregation with the approval of His Eminence and the vote of the General Chapter.²¹

This document said three important things. In the first place, it constituted the ‘Decree of Praise’ for the new Institute. Second, the Decree pointed out that the Constitutions had still not been approved because improvements were required. Finally, it demanded that the two redactors, Cardinal de Bonald (Archbishop of Lyon) and Fr Favre (Superior General of the Society of Mary) submit the new plan of the

¹⁹ JFF, 53; FMS *Chronologie de l’Institut*, 1976, p.121

²⁰ APM 441, 23. *Chronologie de l’Institut*, 1976, p.125. An analysis of the business with Rome can be found in Lanfrey, *Rome, une pierre d’achoppement*, p. 86-90. Some of the references cited in this article are taken from that work.

²¹ *Chronologie mariste*, Rome 2010, p.195

Constitutions for the consideration of a General Chapter of the Brothers. After that, they were to return the document to the Sacred Congregation with the approval of the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon and of the General Chapter.²²

De Bonald and Favre set to work immediately together with Br Louis-Marie. When they had finished the work, they decided to present it to a General Chapter.

THE CONSTITUTIONS IN THE SPECIAL THIRD GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1860

On 2 July 1860, a letter of convocation was sent out to the so-called 'stable Brothers', advising them of a 'capitular assembly'.²³ 'In effect, the delegates were not elected but the thirty-six stable brothers of the Institute were convoked.'²⁴ The Chapter did not, however, deal with the *Observations* of the Holy See regarding the Constitutions. In the *Chronologie mariste*, it is said that it studied and discussed nine articles of the Constitutions.²⁵ These were not articles addressed in the *Observations* sent by Rome but a proposal by Br

François to regulate some practical points of the life of the Brothers.²⁶

The time from 21 July 1860 to the month of February 1862 was a period of silence regarding what happened with the text of the Constitutions. This silence seems to indicate that it was a particularly uncomfortable time for Br François due to the difficulties he was encountering to resolve the issue. On 7 February 1862, Br Louis-Marie and Br Euthyme went to Rome in order to deal with the points surrounding the Constitutions. In the twenty days they were in Rome, they met with all sorts of people but they did not manage to get any concessions from the Roman authorities. This meant the convening of another special General Chapter to revise the Constitutions.

EVALUATION OF THE THIRD GENERAL CHAPTER

The third General Chapter took place within the new institutional ambience of the recently inaugurated General House at Saint-Genis-Laval. It began with an institutional crisis. The Chapter did not make any

²² RPC I, 104; FMS *Chronologie de l'Institut*, 1976, p.125

²³ François, *Circulaires*, Vol.2, p.440

²⁴ Bernard Bourtot, *Frères et pères de la Société de Marie sous le généralat de Frère François 1840-1860*. Saint Priest, Document SM n.53, Décembre 1999, pp. 58-61. See also: FM *Chronologie de l'Institut*, 1976, pp.126-128. *Avit Annales* 2, pp.420-424.

²⁵ *Actes Capitulaires* 3, pp.207-210. *Bulletin de l'Institut* Vol.24, pp.387-391. *Chronologie mariste*, Rome 2010, p. 199.

²⁶ *Circulaires* Vol.2, pp.403-404

reference to the letter of 9 December 1859, sent by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars to Cardinal de Bonald regarding the approval of the Constitutions. This topic was left aside. This is not the time to enter into this issue as it requires study and careful reflection. The interest of the capitular assembly centred on a new model for how the Institute should work suitable for the time, replacing the previous authority model. François presented his resignation as Superior General at the beginning of the Chapter sessions and he left office before the Institute took the *Observations from Rome on the Constitutions* into consideration. This work would have to wait for some months.

THE CONSTITUTIONS IN THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER (1864)

In the first session of the fourth General Chapter, which assembled on 22 April 1862, the subject of study was 'a plan for the Constitutions in seventy-two articles, divided into ten chapters'.²⁷ Br Louis-Marie had prepared this structure for the Constitutions, in agreement with Cardinal De Bonald and Fr Favre.²⁸

In the first session (1862), the Chapter studied the *Observations from the Sacred Congregation for*

Bishops and Regulars. The following modifications were introduced to the Constitutions:

- Regular convening every ten years of an ordinary General Chapter.
- Election of someone of at least forty years of age as the Reverend Superior General.
- Nomination of Brothers as Assistants for tenures of ten years
- Recourse to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars in order to depose the Superior General, create new Provinces, establish Novitiate Houses, increase the number of Brothers as Assistants etc.²⁹

These concessions did not eliminate all the discrepancies in the text. The Chapter opted to maintain certain differences from the proposals made the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. The Congregation proposed that the Superior General be elected for a period of twelve years but the Brothers proposed that he be elected for life. Rome desired that the General Chapter be convoked every four years while the Brothers supported making it every twelve years. According to the *Observations from Rome*, the Congregation wanted the Institute to be organised in Provinces governed by Provincial Vicars who resided in their own Provinces, but the Brothers wanted the Assistants living with the Superior General to govern the Province from the centre, as was the existing arrangement in the Institute. Rome re-

²⁷ Cf. *FMS, Constitutions présentées au Saint-Siège pour approbation*, in Brambila, pp.146-159

²⁸ *Circulaires* Vol.3, p. 107 – Act. Cap. 1862; *FMS Chronologie mariste* 2010 p. 204

²⁹ *Circulaires* Vol.3, pp.493-494.

quested that the novitiate be of two years, all of which should be spent in the novitiate house, while the Brothers wanted one of the years to be spent in school, as was the practice already. Finally, Rome proposed that at the conclusion of the novitiate, a temporary vow of obedience be made with a commitment to obey the Holy See, the Superior General and his representatives, but the Institute desired that the vow of obedience be to the Superior General.³⁰

The fourth Chapter unanimously approved the text entitled *Constitutions présentées au Saint-Siège pour approbation* without incorporating the majority of the *Observations* proposed by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.³¹

THE PROPOSAL OF THE FOURTH CHAPTER ARRIVES IN ROME

On 5 May 5 1862 'Br Louis-Marie set off for Rome to present the work done by the Chapter'.³² Br Euthyme accompanied him. Br Louis-Marie was received at the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars by Mgrs. Chaillot and Bizarri. It appears

that there was an irresolvable clash of opinion with Chaillot. Each position was defending a distinct model of organisation and for very different reasons. There were two issues with major differences of opinion: the nomination of a Superior General for life and the introduction of the new juridical figure of the Provincial who would substantially take over the role of the Assistants.

Within the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars there was the conviction that it was necessary to decentralise the governance of religious congregations. At Saint-Genis-Laval, such thinking was not even up for discussion. This was for pragmatic reasons: the nomination of a time-limited Superior General, which Rome wanted in the *Constitutions*, was unacceptable to the Brothers because it was in contradiction with the Statutes that had been approved by the French Government in 1851. In these, it was stated that the Superior General be named for life. The two things were mutually exclusive. A substantial change to this article may have jeopardised the continued legal approval of the French Government, and thus the Institute would have lost the Brothers' exemption from

³⁰ Cf. FMS, *Chronologie de l'Institut* 1976, pp.162-163; A. Lanfrey, *Une Congrégation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*, Rome 1997, pp.86-95. Anaya, JM, We have new wine, do we need new wineskins? Marist Notebooks n.28 Rome, 2009, pp.5-29.

³¹ FMS, *Constitutions présentées au Saint-Siège pour approbation*, in Brambila, pp.146-159.

³² FMS *Chronologie mariste* 2010 p. 204

military service and the other benefits derived from the recognition of the national government. The proposal from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars for decentralisation, which the nomination of Provincials would imply, seemed very dangerous to the Brothers.

ARRIVAL OF THE AWAITED DECREE

As a result of all the work Rome that had been laboriously pursued since 1857, finally the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars signed and published the Decree of Approval of the text of the Constitutions on 9 January 9 1863.

With this Decree, the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools, whose Mother House is in the Diocese of Lyon, has been approved and confirmed as a Congregation with simple vows, under the government of a Superior General ... Furthermore, the Constitutions, written below, as they are contained in this document, have been approved for a period of five years. Anything to the contrary has no validity.

ANALYSIS OF THE DECREE OF APPROVAL

The Decree of Approval of the text of the Constitutions of 9 January 9 1863 contained three important points:

1. the approval and confirmation of the Institute;
2. the temporary confirmation of the Constitutions for five years;
3. a new text of the Constitutions.

The Decree speaks of a new text of the Constitutions. The Holy Father confirmed 'the Constitutions written below, ... as they are contained in this document.'

To what does 'this document' refer? Parallel to the seventy-two articles of Constitutions, prepared by Cardinal de Bonald and Fr Favre SM, along with Br Louis-Marie, and which had been approved in the fourth General Chapter in its first session of April 1862, there was another text. This had been prepared by Chaillot and contained sixty-nine articles. It was the latter text which had been confirmed in the Decree of Approval. This text of the Constitutions, was called the Reformed Constitutions because Chaillot, when preparing his report, had modified those articles which were not in accord with his point of view. These changes concerned particularly the governance of the Institute, including the election of Superior General for twelve years, and the creation of the role of local Provincials.³³ It was the corrected text that was returned to the General Council from the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars to be put into effect on a trial basis for five

³³ The Bull by which Benedict XIII approved the De La Salle Brothers envisaged a Superior General for life (#3) and some Assistants General who lived with him and assisted him with the governance (#4). Cf. Benedict XIII, Bull *In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*, ##3-4, in FSC, Règles et Constitutions, 112.

years. The approved Constitutions changed some of the points which had been approved at the fourth General Chapter. The changes affected the mandate of the Superior General, which had been approved as a lifetime appointment in the Statutes by the French Government and thus jeopardised the benefits gained in France, for example exemption from military service. It was necessary to be cautious in publishing these points. Earlier it was mentioned that Mgr. Chaillot clashed with Br Louis-Marie.

REACTIONS OF THE INSTITUTE TO THE REFORMED CONSTITUTIONS

Br Louis-Marie, and with him, the whole General Council and the General Chapter, which never considered disobeying the Holy See, had to deal with a cruel crisis of conscience. Br Luis Di Giusto, in his *Historia del Instituto*, makes the following observations:

These were difficult moments for Br Louis-Marie, especially because of the attitude of Mgr. Chaillot, who was well known as a not very conciliatory character. He had to put the demands of the Sacred Congregation up against the position of the Superiors"³⁴.

The notification of approval of the Constitutions left a bittersweet taste with the Superiors. The reaction was expressed both as concern and as a prudent silence. It was this prudent silence that explains why Br Louis-Marie did not communicate to the Brothers the long hoped for news of the publication of the Decree, dated 9 January 1863, until 23 June of the same year. Six months later! This is evident also in the letter which he wrote to the Pope on 22 July 1863 to thank him for the Decree of Approval. On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 'the Congregation came to know of this inestimable appreciation'. Silence from 9 January 1863 until 29 June of the same year. Six months without letting the Brothers know about such a wonderful and long-awaited decision! Perhaps this was the fruit of the prudent silence which enveloped the news from Rome about the new text of the Constitutions. This might explain another detail of the behaviour of Br Louis-Marie. He did not include the text of the original decree in Latin and the translation into French until six years later in his circular of 2 February 1869. To publish it in the Circulars meant to give it publicity and an official status. Making official the Decree to the Institute through the Circulars took place six years after it had been signed by Rome.³⁵

³⁴ L. Di Giusto, *Historia del Instituto de los Hermanos Maristas*, Rosario 2004, p.89.

³⁵ Louis-Marie, *Circulaires*, Vol.3, pp.494-495. Circular of 2 February 1869.

The changes introduced by Mgr. Chaillot sparked a whole series of consultations and a great deal of work on the part of the Superiors.³⁶ Of course, it also meant a new meeting of the General Chapter.

CONSULTATIONS

Some aspects of the reformed Constitutions presented considerable difficulty to be implemented immediately. The Brothers of the General Council, needing to validate their own opinions and feelings, and also looking for some moral support, decided to consult with some diocesan authorities that knew the Institute from its beginnings. On 12 June 1863, Br Louis-Marie and Br Théophile visited Bishop Parisis, of Arras, to consult him on various points of the so-called 'reformed' Constitutions.^{37,38} The Bishop said that the reformed Constitutions were not imposed but simply confirmed, that is to say, they were approved as they had been petitioned as they had been experienced. 'Everything turns on the interpretation of the word 'trial' which indicates that things are permitted but not mandated; the word *confirmavit* differs greatly from *praescipsit* or *imposuit*. When a higher authority confirms a Rule, it is

in force from that moment. The true trial is played out by considering the close examination which has been made of the proposed Constitutions through the lens of their actual context.' (Signed. P. L. Bishop of Arras)'.³⁸

Some days later, on 27 June 1863, the same consultation was made with Cardinal de Bonald, who expressed the same opinion as that of Bishop Parisis.³⁸ The Cardinal was completely in agreement that the Brothers could not be implementing a trial on any aspect of the Constitutions which would be in contradiction with the Statutes which had been approved by the State in 1851. These Statutes assured the existence of the Institute and permitted it to have schools.

Therefore, if after a serious and thorough examination, some points are recognised to be impossible, because of time and circumstance, or because they are compromising for the Institute given dispositions of the civil authority, or too difficult to put into practice given the nature and the general history of the Congregations of teaching brothers, then you can, in conscience, without any diminution in your submission and adherence to the Holy See, suspend the practical trial of these points and regard them as already trialled, remaining always disposed to submit at an opportune time, through the Bishops, your humble observations to the Supreme Pontiff.

³⁶ (C III, 494-495 – AFM 351. 7, Constitutions) Circular on the necessity of Prayer. (C III, 129-158) *FMS Chronologie Mariste 2010*, p. 206.

³⁷ *FMS Chronologie Mariste 2010*, p.206. See also, Louis-Marie calls the Constitutions of 1863 "Provisional Constitutions" thirteen years later in his Circular of October 23, 1876, *Circulaires, Volume 5*, p.353.

³⁸ *FMS Chronologie mariste*, Rome 2010, p.207.

The *Observations* which had come from Rome refer to points of practical trial which, according to the judgement of the Ordinary of the Diocese, of Fr Favre, the Delegate of the Holy See, of the deceased Bishop of Arras, and of the whole General Chapter, were too difficult to implement. The Brothers of the General Council, with the agreement of the General Chapter and the blessing of Bishop Parisis and Cardinal de Bonald, decided to hide them from the Brothers in order not to have to implement them. 'The atmosphere of the Chapters until 1903 was greatly affected by this business'.³⁹

SECOND SESSION OF THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER, JULY 17 - 23, 1863

In his Circular of 29 June 29 1863, Br Louis-Marie communicated to the Institute the authorisation received from Rome. At this time, the General Chapter was re-convoked. The goal of this session was to ratify the elections of 1860 and to harmonise them with the reformed Constitutions.⁴⁰ Br Louis-Marie told the Chapter about the work that had been done and the consultations that had been undertaken concerning the difficulties for implementing certain articles of the

Constitutions. Before concluding the session, Br Louis-Marie, together with all the Chapter members, sent a letter of gratitude to the Pope. A few points from this letter can be highlighted. First, there is the acknowledgement that they have received official approval of the 'Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary' as a 'Congregation'. The letter does not mention the approval of the Constitutions. The letter also reveals certain discrepancies in the name of the Institute. The Decree of approval approved 'the *Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools* as a Congregation of simple vows under the authority of a Superior General, save for the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries'.⁴¹ The letter of Br Louis-Marie and of the Chapter speaks of the 'Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary'. Second, both Br Louis-Marie and the members of the Chapter, in their letter, give the impression to the Holy See that the Institute had been informed of what had happened. Third, the General Chapter has fulfilled the orders received and so from that time the Superiors hold authority that comes directly from the Holy See. The naming of Br Louis-Marie as Superior General and the other members of the General Council (Act. Cap. 1863, Vol. 3, 63) formed the first Council constituted with the approval of the Holy See.⁴²

³⁹ Lanfrey, A., *Une congrégation enseignante ch. VI*

⁴⁰ Actas capitulares 4, 63. *FMS Chronologie* p. 133

⁴¹ Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, *Decree of approval of FMS*, January 9, 1863, in AFM 351. 700-12.

⁴² *Circulaires*, T. 13, p. 463

From 18 July 1860, when Br François proposed to the Chapter, 'to vest our dear Br Louis-Marie with full and complete authority and with all the powers necessary for the administration and the general government of the Institute, as Vicar to the Superior General', until 9 January 1863, when Pope Pius IX provisionally approved the Constitutions for five years *ad experimentum*,⁴³ more than two years

passed. This was the time in which Br Louis-Marie was juridically the Vicar General. During these nearly three years, François continued to be the canonical Superior General. Brs. Louis-Marie (1860-1879), Nestor (1880-1883) and Théophile (1883-1907) exercised their mandate for life. The first Superior General who was elected for a mandate of twelve years was Br Stratonique (1907-1920).

⁴³ *Chronologie mariste*, Rome 2010, p. 206

THE SHORT STORY OF THE MARIST BROTHERS IN CHINA



Spes Stanley Ku¹

In 1890, there was a large move among the Brothers to spread the gospel to far-away missions. From February 1888 to October 1891, there were 29 departures of 120 missionary Brothers going to the different continents.²

The Vincentian Fathers had found a school called Collège de Nantang, in Peking (Beijing) when Bishop Delaplace was in charge. It began modestly but it became well established with time, and needed professional educators to operate it. At the same time, as the number of believers of the Vicariate was increasing each day, they needed more priests to cater for their spiritual needs. So, the bishop in Peking requested more hands to help with the new situation. The superiors of the Vincentian Fathers in Paris started to negotiate with the De la

Salle Christian Brothers, proposing to them to take charge of Collège de Nantang in Peking, so as to free the priests for missionary work. However, the De La Salle Brothers declined the invitation giving reason that the school was too far away. Failing to obtain the help of the these Brothers, they approached the Little Brothers of Mary with whom they had already been collaborating satisfactorily in the administering of St Benedict College in Constantinople. The Marist Brothers immediately accepted the offer.³

In those years, it was Br Théophile who was Superior General the Institute. He appealed for volunteers for the 'Missions', and the response to his call was encouraging. A good number of Brothers put their names forward. These were short listed to six: Br Marie Candide,

¹ Marist ex-student of St Francis Xavier's College, Hong Kong. Author of the book "Dawn of the Wordk. In Silence. The Adventure of the Marist Brothers in Asia" (2017).

² Ciculaires des Superieurs Generaux, Vol. 8(1890-1895) pp.53 84,,178-189

³ Annales de la Mission (Lazaristes) et de la Compagnie des Filles de la Charite. p. 230



The first six pioneers with Marist Brothers Superiors Nantang circa 1980s before it was destroyed by the Boxers in 1900

The Nantung French School was next to the Church, the right side of the photo



Director, who for the past six years had been in charge of the Juniorate at Saint-Genis-Laval, Br Aristonique, Sub-Director; Brs Antonin, Louis Michel, Joseph Felicite and Marie Basilius.⁴ The last four were 20 years old or younger. They had heard the call of the Lord, and with a generous heart, and most enthusiastically they followed his invitation. By the end of February, they gath-

ered at the General House at Saint-Genis, for the last briefing. A farewell ceremony for the missionaries was held on 1 March. The Brother Superior General and his Assistants were all present, and they were surrounded by some five hundred Brothers of different communities. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was celebrated, during which the missionaries renewed their vows

⁴ Circulaires des Superieurs Generaux vol. 8, p. 142.

and consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin.⁵

Then on 8 March 1891 the six young Brothers boarded the ship SS Yangtse and sailed off towards the Orient. The trip lasted about six weeks and they reached Shanghai on 18 April. They then boarded the SS Chung King and sailed northwards. The ship anchored at Takoo and from there they took a train to Tientsin. Finally on 23 April Br M. Candide and Br Aristonique set off for Peking by a cart and reached their destination three days later, on 26 April.⁶

Bishop Sarthou who succeeded Mgr. Tagliabue welcomed them and put them in charge of the *Collège Français de Nantang*. As mentioned earlier, this college had been founded some 30 years before, and was supervised by a Vincentian Father who was helped by two Vincentian Brothers and a few lay teachers. It was meant for one hundred students.

After the Brothers arrived, they found that the Bishop had wanted the Brothers to take over not only the Nantang school, but also to take charge of an English school in Tientsin, but the Brothers who had come to China were all from France and they were not able to conduct classes in English. The leader of the pioneers, Br Marie Candide then

informed Br Théophane, Superior General, who telegraphed to Sydney and two Brothers from Australia were recruited – Brs Cleophas and Marie Julian.⁷ Not long after, they sailed from Sydney and arrived at Tientsin, and the school was then entrusted to them. However, as the school catered mainly for foreign students, i.e. children of foreign traders, at first, only a few students were enrolled.

In 1913, a new school was built on another site. Then, as there were more European population in the city, the number of students slowly increased. Still later, Chinese families also started to send their children to the school, so that they could learn a foreign language that would facilitate their securing a better job. Also, once they have a fair command of the English language, they would possibly have a greater chance to go overseas for further studies.

Between the years 1893 and 1931, a number of schools was founded in various cities, because of 'Railway Fever'. The Government had plans to build railways linking important cities, and Missionaries wished to cash in on this by opening schools that taught foreign languages. However, often the railways were not built; the schools were too costly to maintain so they were closed. Another reason why the foundations

⁵ Circulaires Vol. 8 p.145

⁶ Marie Candide, Letter to Superior General 27 April 1891

⁷ Jean Emile, p.9

were short lived was because several of the Brothers were obliged to flee France on account of the anti-clerical laws there. They had to live precariously and set up schools hastily. It is hardly surprising then, that some of these foundations did not last. However, at about the same time, three schools were founded and lasted: the Municipal Schools in Shanghai, Hankow and Tientsin.⁸

St. Francis Xavier's College in Shanghai was originally founded in 1874, under Mgr Languilla, then bishop of Shanghai, and Fr Foucault, Superior of the mission. A decision was made to open a regular school. Fr Twrdy S.J. was appointed the first headmaster. On 8 June 1884, at the breakup before the summer holidays the Father Superior announced to the boys that they were to bid farewell to their cradle in the French Concession and migrate to the rather distant district of Hongkew. A site was chosen in Nanzing Road, opposite the Church of the Sacred Heart.⁹

MARIST CHINA MISSION BECAME AN INDEPENDENT PROVINCE

In 1908, seventeen years after the arrival of the first pioneer Brothers in China, the Marist mission in China

became an independent province. Br Louis Michel was nominated its first Provincial.¹⁰ Prior to that date, the China mission was a District attached to a Province thousands of miles away, something that was not all convenient. Practically all important decisions were made in France, and at that time the correspondence from Europe to the Far East took about two months. Moreover, the mother province later could not send any more Brothers. The China mission proved it was able to survive by itself both in terms of resources and personnel. To facilitate its administration, it was thought more advisable and reasonable that the Chinese sector should become its own Province.¹¹

BUILDING OF THE CHALA PROVINCIAL HOUSE

Plans for a vast building were drawn up, which for many years to come ought to be able to house the Provincial administration as well as training facilities. The building had a northern façade of 95 metres, with three wings running the south, the centre one being the Chapel. It was a three-story construction, including the ground floor, and was able to provide independence in living arrangements to the different com-

⁸ Jean Emile, p.13

⁹ Diamond Jubilee souvenir album of SFXC 1874-1934)

¹⁰ Circulaires, Vol. 11, p.310.

¹¹ Circulaires, Vol. 11, p.298

munities housed there. Though the building looks imposing, there was no element of luxury in its furniture and fittings. Trees that appear small in the original photographs had already reached imposing sizes, particularly the plane trees near the entrance gate. Large outdoor recreation spaces were available for the use of juniors and novices.¹²

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHINA PROVINCE: LOCAL VOCATIONS

Simply becoming independent, however, would not guarantee further development of the Province or its survival. It could not prosper without having a sufficient supply of personnel. A training centre for those aspiring to join the Marist life had to be established.

From the beginning, the pioneer Brothers were looking to recruit locally. In fact, in Br Marie Candide's very first letter to the Superior General, he expressed such intention: 'Before long, we hope to have some novices, which the Fathers have prepared for us from among the most intelligent...'¹³

Both the Vincentian Fathers who had invited the Brothers to China

and the Brothers themselves knew that it was essential to have local vocations to help them if they wanted to succeed in their work of evangelization. 'All the Fathers on his Council urge us to recruit novices ... as all agree that we must have Chinese Brothers,¹⁴ for they all realised that in order to have genuine results in their efforts to evangelise they must have Chinese Brothers.¹⁵ However, it was not opportune to commence on this hastily, for it entailed many issues. They had to ensure that they had enough funds as well as qualified personnel. The Brothers had been in China for barely a year, and needed to become familiar with the local culture and customs. Besides, up to 1908, before the Province became independent, they depended on their Mother Province for practically everything. So, much as they recognised the need of local vocations, and much as they wanted to start a formation house, they could not immediately do much. It was not until a year later that their dream would be realised.

The next year, Br M. Candide wrote to the Assistant General saying that, with Brother Superior General's permission and his support, he would try to get together some novices and would test them seriously and give them particular

¹² Jean Emile p.18

¹³ Marie Candide, A letter to Bro. Superior General 27 April 1891

¹⁴ Marie Candide A letter to Bro. Assistant General 19 July 1892

¹⁵ Ibid



St. Louis College,
Tientsin, 1930s



Sacred Heart College,
Beijing 1930s

St. Paul's College,
Chongqing, Sichuan



care.¹⁶ 'If you grant us permission, we will try to receive a few novices, one or two and perhaps three postulants.'¹⁷

Two months later, he wrote again, confirming the establishment of the novitiate.

'Our novitiate was finally established set up yesterday 15 August, with five excellent young men whom we have known for two years. They may not be eagles but, as far as I can judge, very pious, very simple, very straightforward.'¹⁸ 'Our novitiate is firmly and seriously established. In this regard, we have every reason to give praise to Divine Providence, which has permitted circumstances to unfold that delayed this important foundation until today. For more than a year, the novitiate question has arisen, and on more than one occasion we tried to bring it to a suitable conclusion; but it was all premature, and it could have failed. Now, all seems to promise success. With five novices who have today have been postulants for a year or more, you can easily understand that we are in a position to do excellent work. We know one another and we know what we want. We are going to try to find five more, and we will place them in the Collège

de Nantang, where we will observe them and train them....'¹⁹

By the year 1949, there were 215 Brothers working in the China Province. Of these, 109 were Chinese, and the others were missionaries from European countries such as France, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, but by far most of them were from France.

DIFFICULTIES FOR MISSION SCHOOLS

The Brothers were conducting more than twenty schools in many cities such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, Qingdao, Chongqing. But, the Good Lord had his own designs. Or as the saying goes, 'Man proposes, God disposes'. Everything seemed to be going on prosperously, with many local young men were aspiring to join the Brothers and dedicate themselves to evangelising the youth especially the underprivileged through education, all the schools functioning well, and plans for even further development in southern Provinces, when finally the civil war ended and a new government came into power. On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China was established.

¹⁶ Marie Candide A letter to Bro. Assistant General, 1 June 1892

¹⁷ Marie Candide A letter to Bro. Assistant General, 13 July 1892

¹⁸ Marie Candide, Letter to Superior General, 16 Aug 1893

¹⁹ Marie Candide, Letter to Superior General, 28 October 1893

²⁰ Andre Gabriel, *Les Freres Maristes en Chine, Petit Historique de leurs Oeuvres de 1941-1959* p. 73

In 1949, the policy of the new government towards schools run by religious was initially tolerant. No drastic measures were taken. But not long after, the government began to take over the schools step by step. First, the Directors of the schools were sent to designated centres to attend re-education courses for months. In certain cases, the Director was arrested or even imprisoned. Some were even sent to the extreme north of Manchuria or to other hard labour camps. Another measure taken was the assigning of an instructor of political science to each school. This instructor was to act also as a conscience director for both the students and teachers. He was to mastermind the eventual total takeover of the school when opportunity arrived. Eventually, the authorities interfered in the management of our schools in such way that it became clear that religious teachers could no longer continue their apostolate among the youth entrusted to their care. Finally, it became extremely difficult or even impossible for any religious to operate any schools. Really, it was a turbulent period full of future uncertainty.

THE EXODUS

As it was no longer possible to manage any of our schools, the Brothers had no choice but to consider abandoning their work and to go to other lands. We learn in the Bible, Paul and Barnabas fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in Lyconia and the surrounding terri-

tory. There they preached the Good News. Following the examples of Paul and Barnabas, then the Superiors planned to withdraw the Brothers from the schools in northern China, and the postulants in the formation houses, to send them overseas where there was still freedom to operate schools and to spread the Good News. Some expatriate Brothers from Europe who had gone to Europe earlier for long deserved home leave and who were ready to come back were advised not to do so. Then the old and retired were advised to return to the land they had come from. Some had never had a holiday since they bid farewell to their home regions. A few years later, a few of the expatriate Brothers were deported under all sorts of pretexts, while a couple of others who were heads of school or who had special skill had to apply for an exit permit in order to leave. Thus, many European missionaries who had been in China for years found their way back to Europe. Among those expatriate Brothers who had left China there was a number who had been working in Shanghai or Tientsin English schools, and they were all able to teach in the English language. So most of these opted to stay in Hong Kong, and a few others chose to go to Japan.

On the other hand, the Chinese Brothers who left the mainland were sent to such countries like Malaysia, Borneo, Indonesia and Singapore where ethnically Chinese communities formed a large part of the population.

NOVITIATE IN MACAU

On 9 March 1949, Br Gerard Ho and Br Marie Claudius Hui,²⁰ both natives of Canton Province and who had Cantonese as their mother tongue, were sent to Macau where Cantonese is spoken. At first, they worked around in Shiqi and Macau as auxiliaries to a certain Jesuit priest, (Fr Teng Yi Ming who later was appointed the Archbishop of Canton) either teach in his school or to give young children catechism lessons, and the kinds of work suited to the Brothers vocation. They were also commissioned to approach the Bishop of Macau to explore the possibilities of having a novitiate there and to find places for postulants, novices and young Brothers who were to leave the mainland. The two Brothers were warmly welcomed by Bishop Ramalho S.J. who kindly agreed to let the Brothers use the summer house of the seminarians as their novitiate house. The house was built on the Ilha Verde peninsula, and it served as the summer villa for the seminarians.

On 30 April 1949 Br Gerard Ho sent a telegram to the Provincial Superior who was still in Shanghai informing him that an agreement had been obtained from the Bishop of Macau to settle our novitiate in his Diocese.²¹

On 6 May 1949 Br Ange-Marie Lapp,²² a missionary in Shanghai, travelled to Hong Kong. He was appointed Visitor in charge of the sector outside of China, which included Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South East Asian countries of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. He was to find places for Brothers to stay and look for employment for them. If possible, he was to secure a foothold for the Marist Brothers in Hong Kong or anywhere in South East Asia.

Brother Ange-Marie's first undertaking was to set up the novitiate household at the Ilha Verde country house as almost immediately the first batch of novices began arriving in Macau in May and June 1949. The Brothers would use the house as the Marist formation centre until 1953, witnessing three ceremonies of the taking of the habit and four first professions. Between August 1949 and August 1952, twenty-eight young men took their habit and thirty-eight their first vows in Macau.

As soon as the young novices had completed their novitiate in Macau, steps had to be taken for them to obtain the necessary diplomas so they could teach in the new schools. In early 1949, contact was made with Br Thomas Austin, Provincial of the US Province, for sending young

²¹ Andre Gabriel, p.33

²² Ibid p.74

Brothers overseas to Marist College in Poughkeepsie. The quick answer came: 'Send as many as you like, and we will take care of their needs and their studies.' The Australian

Province also came to the Brothers' assistance, undertaking the training of nine scholastics, in addition to the splendid help it was already rendering to the Brothers in distress in Ra-



Catechism Class at Ecole Francaise (Fa Han), Hankow

At Chala-Eul Orphanage, circa 1893



St. Bernard's School, Yangkiaping (Trappists), 1948



Students of St. Francis Xavier's College, Shanghai, 1893



St. Francis Xavier's College, Shanghai 1930s

baul in the island-province of New Britain in Papua New Guinea. Two Brothers were taken in for university studies by the British Province, one to Dublin, Ireland, and another to Dundee, Scotland. Brother Paul Clet who completed his novitiate in 1949 was sent to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to study English.

Some of the young Brothers were designated to further their studies in Chinese. They were sent to study at Chu-Hai College, a private establishment in Hong Kong whose diplomas bore the stamps of the Ministry of Education, Taiwan. The diplomas awarded by Chu-Hai College were recognised by both Singapore and the Federation of Malaya to warrant the holder to teach in Chinese secondary schools.

As it was impossible to send all the young Brothers to study overseas, and even for those slated to leave for Poughkeepsie or Sydney, there was a need for a scholasticate where they could be trained until all

the arrangements for their departures were completed. In September 1950, a scholasticate was set up temporarily at a rented house in Liha Verde, which proved to be unsuitable for studying as it was dark and located in a small lane frequented by noisy hawkers. Bishop Ramalho again came to the rescue of the Brothers, offering a vacant Carmelite convent that the Brothers could share with the Jesuit Fathers. The residence on Colina da Guia (Beacon Hill), named Villa Flora, had light, air and space.

As the supply of novices from China had effectively stopped by 1951, there was a drive to start local recruitment in the schools where the Brothers were newly attached. A few students were being prepared in Hong Kong and Singapore for the juniorates that the Brothers were planning to open in those two cities. In 1953, a rich Chinese Catholic offered his country house in Singapore to the Brothers and the St Paul Juniorate was opened, with



Community of Nantang, 1935



Community of Chefoo (Yantai), 1935



The Provincial House at Chala, Beijing 1910



The first Chinese brothers taking of the habit, Chala, Beijing 1895



The Juniors and Novices, Beijing, 1905

nine juniors. With so few juniors, there was no need to run special classes for the new recruits so the

juniors followed the regular courses at St Martin's College (renamed St Francis Xavier's) in Hong Kong

and Catholic High School in Singapore. In 1955, the Province bought a piece of property on Flower Road in Singapore and construction of a building was completed in 1957. It was large enough to accommodate a Juniorate, the Provincial House and the residence of the Brothers.

In Hong Kong, towards the end of 1954, as many as ten juniors were living in the Brothers' residence in Kowloon while continuing their studies at St Martin's College. Eventually, a house was found on Stafford Road and the juniors were moved there with two Brothers to supervise their formation. Some got as far as the novitiate and even up to taking their perpetual vows but, distracted by temptations and possibly influenced by their pecuniary-minded families, most left the congregation, to the great sorrow of the Brothers.

In the summer of 1953, with the scholastics dispersed and gone to Australia, the US, or Europe, and with only two postulants left, it was decided to close the novitiate and to leave Macau where the Brothers had enjoyed the hospitality of Bishop Ramalho since May 1949. The two remaining postulants were asked to continue their novitiate at St Paul House in Singapore, where they took the habit on 15 September 1953. One of them made his first vows the next year.

WINDOWS OPEN IN ASIA

With the apparent 'death' of the works of Brother in China, new life sprung forth in the places where they found themselves afterwards, where they were either asked to take over the management of existing schools or to found new ones. We name these works briefly:

1949: The Brothers took over the Catholic High School in Singapore;

1950: The Brothers took over:

- Kim Sen Primary School in Bukit Mertajam, Malaysia
- Sacred Heart College in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea
- Hua Ying Primary School and Hua Yin Middle School in Indonesia

1951:

- The Brothers left for Japan for the first time. They began the Marist Brothers High School in Kobe
- The Brothers took over the Sam Tet Primary School in Ipoh, Malaysia

1952: The Brothers took over St Martin's College in

Kowloon, Hong Kong (later renamed St Francis Xavier's), in memory of St Francis Xavier's College in Shanghai.

- 1953:** The Brothers took over St. Francis Xavier Primary School in Malacca, Malaysia.
- 1954:** The Brothers were asked to direct, albeit in a limited capacity, St Thomas School in Kuantan, Malaysia.
- 1955:** Sacred Heart High School in Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia, was entrusted to the Brothers.
- 1956:** Catholic High School was opened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 1958:** Maris Stella High School was founded in Singapore, in memory of Maris Stella School in Weihai, China.
- 1960:** The Brothers started another school, in St Francis Xavier's School in Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong.
- 1965:** St Paul High School was opened in Kaohsiung,

Taiwan, in memory of St Paul's College in Sichuan, China.

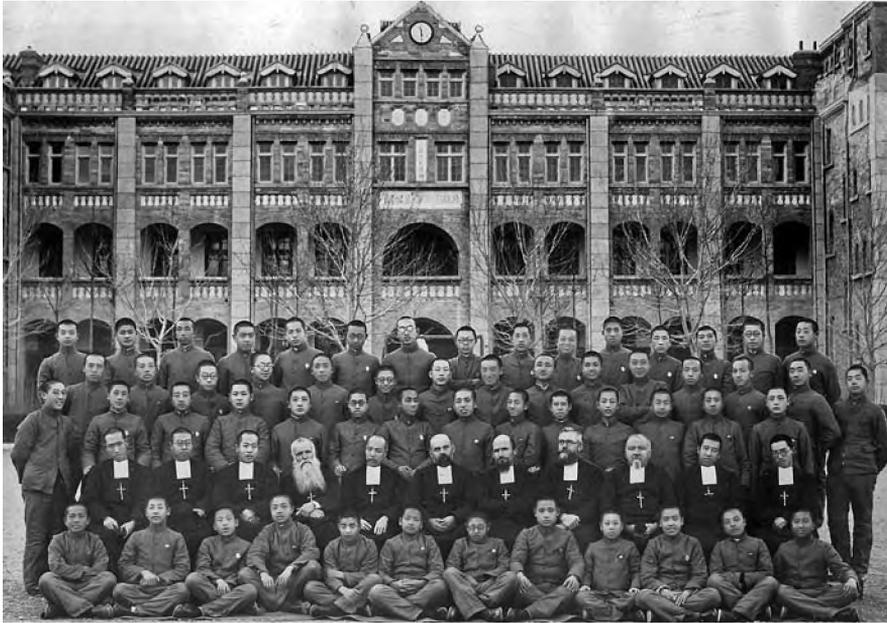
- 1999:** The Youth Centre at Port Dickson, Malaysia was officially opened.

Each of these institutions has its own story to tell, each with its challenges and achievements. The Brothers also had to leave some of these institutions due to certain circumstances, but not without considerable fruits during the period in which they were present in them. It would be too long to talk about each of these institutions here, but looking at all these, one cannot but marvel at how many souls must have passed through the doorsteps of these schools, nurtured and formed by the love, care and perseverance of the Brothers.²³

RE-ORGANISATION OF CHINA PROVINCE IN 1950s AND 1960s

In October 1956, the Superior General made a canonical visit to the China Province, the first time in the history of the Province that such a visit was made in person by the Superior General. He visited all the communities of 'Outer China' in Singapore, Malaya, Sumatra, Hong Kong, and Japan. This direct con-

²³ Dawn of the Word in Silence – The Adventure of the Marist Brothers in China, p.156-157.



Novices, St. Joseph College, Heishanhu, Beijing 1935

tact with the Superior General was certain to have buoyed the spirits of the Brothers although they were never lacking in encouragement from the General Council. Between 1949 and 1959, there were four canonical visits from the Superior General's delegates and in 1952, the General himself stopped over at Singapore on his way to Australia. In 1949, Assistant General Br Jean-Emile came for his second visit (his first was in 1939-1940). China was already in turmoil and he saw for himself what little hope there was of continuing the Brothers' work in the mainland. He was able to see the re-establishment of the novitiate in Macau, saw the possibilities for the Institute in Singapore and Malaya, and brought much assurance to

the Brothers taking refuge in Hong Kong. Br Jean-Emile made another visit in 1953 to assess the progress made in the reconstruction of the Province and spurred the Brothers to new efforts in local recruitment. This time he could no longer enter China as there was no Marist establishment there to speak of, only the seven or eight Brothers in prison.

After the General Chapter in 1958, the China Province was assigned an Assistant from the USA. On his first visit to the Province in 1959, the new Brother Assistant General Paul Ambrose announced important changes concerning the Province: 1) Ceylon, attached to the China Province since 1920, was now going to be an autonomous District;



Brothers
on board to
Hong Kong,
1949

Novices
in Macau
1950



2) Brother Joche-Philippe Wu had been nominated Provincial to replace Brother André-Gabriel; and 3) Kobe was going to be transferred to the Poughkeepsie Province after the signing of an agreement between the two Provincials involved.

In March 1958, the Institute still had fifty-six Brothers in mainland China, plus two novices who had

taken the habit in December 1953. Brother Damien had asked for authorisation for them to make their first temporary vows but it was not known if they ever did. From 1958 until 1963, twelve Brothers had died, dates unknown. Three left the congregation. As far as can be known, by then there were forty-one Brothers left in mainland China, plus the two novices.

The Institute had juniorates in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, but no novitiate from 1963. The juniorate in Singapore had to be moved to Petaling Jaya in Kuala Lumpur for the simple reason that only children of Singapore citizens or those in certain special categories could be admitted to Singaporean schools. As most of the juniors were from Malaya, the juniorate had to move.

The Province of China now comprised mainland China, of which there was scant news filtering out after 1958, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya. A plan to establish the Institute in Sarawak, Borneo materialised in 1960 with the opening of a Catholic high school in Sibul. Two Brothers were to be sent to Taiwan in 1963 to open a school in Kaohsiung.

The China Province was being re-born in a region no less rich as the one the Brothers had lost nor free of the hurdles confronted by the men who began it all. Animated by the same faith and the same hope as the six pioneers, the Brothers who were driven out of China were laying the foundations of a new Marist Province in what was called the 'outer China'. This fact had apparently not escaped the notice of the Brothers' persecutors. A Brother in Communist prison in 1953 was told that the Marist Brothers seemed to be encircling China with their work, that they were perhaps planning a 'new cultural invasion' of continental China. What grandiose motives to assign to the humble Marist Brothers of the Schools whose only ambition was to 'go and teach all nations' and live his life as a true Little Brother of Mary!



'Our Lady of Fatima' (Macau), founded 11 May 1949



Hong Kong
Juniorate

Hong Kong
Juniorate



A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

'The changes taking place in society and the decrease in the num-

ber of vocations are weighing heavily on the consecrated life in some regions of the world.'²⁴

²⁴ Vita Consecrata 63

This is particularly true with the Marist Brothers and many other religious congregations whose members are solely Brothers. So the future looks rather bleak. However, this phenomenon is not limited to Hong Kong, it is worldwide. The past few General Chapters have taken various measures to address this problem.

RESTRUCTURING OF THE INSTITUTE

The restructuring process has already been going on for several years throughout the Institute. In certain parts of the world, the process may be long and painful, but we get to face realities. In fact, the shortage of personnel everywhere, and the best use of resources available all favour restructuring.

The China sector including Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong which had been an independent province for more than a century, in the restructuring process, has combined with the Philippine Province and the District of Korea to form one new Province, namely, the East Asia Province. In so doing it is hoped that with the exchange and the interaction of the three sectors greater vitality would be created and resources would be properly used, and this in spite of such problems as cultural differences, requirement of visas, recognition of the diplomas

issued by different educational institutions in different countries, and possible language barriers.

CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY

The desire of the Church that lay people should play a more active role was manifested in a special way during and after Vatican Council II. Then in the Synod of Bishops 1987 on the vocation and mission of lay people and the letter of Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* have repeated call of the Vatican Council for fuller involvement of the laity in the mission of the Church.

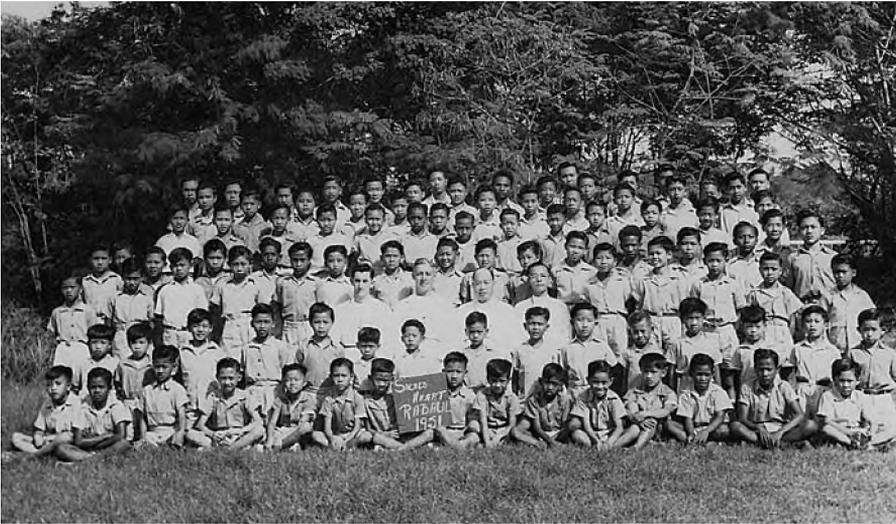
In response to the clear call, the Marist Brothers, the 1985, the 18th General Chapter called for the development of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. The Movement was made up of persons who desired to live a Christian life according to the spirit of Marcellin Champagnat and who pledged to follow the statutes of the Movement. It was presented to the whole Institute with the circular "The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family"²⁵

In the ensuing General Chapter (1993) 14 lay people involved in Marist life were invited to spend several days with the Capitulants, and in the General Chapter (2001)

²⁵ Marist Laity, www.champagnat.org

another group of laity took part. For the first time in a General Chapter, two of the five calls to the Institute were made to Brothers and laity

together. Other groups of lay people were invited to the 21st General Chapter (2009) and the 22nd Chapter (2016). -



Sacred Heart School, Rabaul, 1951



Kin Sen primary school, Bukit Pertajam, Malaysia 1951

More recently, mixed communities — which consist of professed Brothers and lay vocations have appeared throughout the Marist World. Lay people either volunteered or were invited to share the spirituality and sense of mission which the Brothers have inherited from their founder, St Marcellin Champagnat. At present, in many countries around the Marist world, there are already thousands of Lay Marists who share our spirituality, who are attracted by the same charisma that our Founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat has bequeathed on us. It is our hope that in the near future, the same can be carried out in Hong Kong.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The message of the XXI General Chapter was entitled: With Mary, go

in haste to a new land”²⁶ The new land to which we must go in haste is something of a mystery.²⁷

Still, we are ready to respond to the call: “*With Mary, go in haste to the new land.*” The call sounds simple but very meaningful. We must go with audacity and hope, guided and accompanied by Mary, our heavenly Mother, to the new land. We are to let go of the familiar, let go of what is comfortable, to practice more charity, to have more interest to do God’s will; to be more ready to evangelise and serve the youth; to get ready to go to ‘difficult missions to marginalised areas, and unexplored surroundings, where the seed of the Kingdom has not been sown or not yet taken root;’²⁸ to have a more disposable and generous heart like the Virgin Mary who heeded the word of the Angel and consented to be the Mother of God.

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A NEW LETTER OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



Eric Perrin

Mr Eric Perrin, historian and native of Saint Chamond, is not unknown to Marist researchers. In Marist Notebooks No. 32 (March 2014) pp. 133-160, he made available to us quite a list of documents concerning our origins, most of them originating from the office of a notary by the name of Finaz. With the discovery of a new letter by Fr Champagnat, he has delivered a master stroke.

In his presentation below, and with his agreement, I have provided some additional material coming from Marist sources.

Brother André Lanfrey, fms

Hermitage sur St Chamou commune St Martin en quoushuy

29 Oct 1827.

Le 27 octobre 1827. Lettre de recommandation à M.
Faulian avoué. Monsieur
Proc. de la Seign.

Présentes, Je vous fait mes très humbles hommages à
M. le préfet et prie, de ma part, de dire deux
mots de recommandation, à M. Bonhian ^{très} avoué par
maison Chichire du Champ Ange de sa rue d'Artois
et de la rue d'Angoulême, au sujet de la succession
de Pierre Berhier de la commune d'Angoulême décedé
depuis deux ans.

Ce dernier me fit, en mourant, son héritier par un
testament, reçu par M. Giras notaire à St Chamou
je n'ai pu entrer en possession dudit héritage et cause
que la mère, qui est détenue en prison par suite
d'un infanticide, a voulu attaquer les testaments

et toutes choses à M. votre fils qui me fit honneur
de me servir de témoin

Recevez Monsieur l'assurance de la considération
avec laquelle je tiens à honorer de

vos très humbles hommages
St. Champannat
par. etc.

I discovered this letter by chance in an archived file dealing with fiscal records of the Commune of Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux,¹ the district where the Hermitage is situated. The part featuring the address of the person to whom it had been written having been torn off to facilitate filing, we do not know the person to whom Marcellin Champagnat had addressed the letter. But since it appears in a file coming from the municipality of Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux, it was no doubt intended for the Mayor.² In this letter Marcellin Champagnat is asking the person to whom it is addressed to intervene

with the Prefect, with the request that he urge his lawyer, M. Paullian, to advance the settlement of the estate of Clément Berlier. Marcellin Champagnat was the sole legatee of this estate.

Until the discovery of this letter, this event was only known through the *Annales de l'Institut*, which situate the matter in 1825. Brother Avit, the author of the *Annales*, gives a brief account of how Marcellin Champagnat came to be entangled in this dispute over an inheritance, and suggests that finally the matter had been decided in his favour.

At the beginning of January, a young man by the name of Clément Berlier, an inhabitant of the hamlet of Bachat,³ near the Hermitage, fell ill. He was lying on straw, with no sheets and practically naked. His mother was not with him and he was refusing to see her, saying that she wanted to poison him. Father [Champagnat] was away travelling. He returned on 22 January. He was told about the sick man whom he had never met. He went to see him and, touched by his utter destitution, sent him a cushion,⁴ some sheets and some blankets.⁵ He did not hear his confession. The parish priest of Izieux had already done that and had anointed him. The young man died. He had left something in his will to the Hermitage.⁶ His mother falsely accused Father Champagnat of having abused the trust of the young man by hearing his confession.⁷ Father wrote his defence and proved clearly: that he had not known Clément Berlier; that he had been absent for almost the whole time of his illness; that he had never heard his confession; that he had seen him only once and in the presence of several witnesses; and finally, that he had only come to know about his will after his death. That was the end of the matter.

¹ Archives départementales de la Loire, 0682.

² At that time therefore Marc Antoine Perrochia.

³ The hamlet of Le Bachat is situated on the way out of Izieux a little before the Hermitage. But Clément Berlier lived in the hamlet of Layat, situated a little further on, just above the Hermitage.

⁴ We would say today a pillow.

⁵ He was acting as a neighbour and not as a priest.

⁶ In fact Champagnat was his sole legatee and received the major part of the inheritance.

⁷ In effect the court had upheld the charge before Champagnat had been able to put forward his defence.

This last sentence in all its brevity leaves out of consideration many of the events which Fr Champagnat's letter now helps to make clearer. In addition, my own research allows me to shed some light on the person of Clément Berlier and his family.

Born at Izieux on 30 Vendémiaire in Year IX (22 October 1802), he was the son of Jean Claude Berlier, a farmer at Layat, a hamlet in the commune of Izieux, and Françoise Chavanne. He became a farmer at Layat and did not marry. Clément died in his house 28 January 1825 at nine in the morning, at the age of 22. His death was notified by his cousins: Pierre (72) and Etienne Roussier (46), timber merchants at La Bruyère, in the commune of La Valla, about whom we will have more to say since they had business dealings with Fr Champagnat.

Clément Berlier's will had been legally registered before Maître Finaz, Notary at Saint-Chamond, on 25 January 1825. Having gone to the bedside of Clément, who was 'unwell but in full possession of his senses', he had written down the last will and testament as it was dictated by the dying man:

For my obsequies and pious observances I rely on the honour and religious devotion of my legatee; I give and bequeath to M. Marcellin Champagnat, priest and curate of the church in the parish and commune of la Valla,⁸ and director of the

establishment known under the name of the hermitage of the little brothers of Mary located in the place called Les Gaux, commune of Saint Martin-en-Coailleux, three quarters of all my goods, movable and immovable, rights and shares ... of which the law allowed him the free disposition, one quarter reverting by right to his mother. (Archives départementales de la Loire, 5 E 33-517).

The seals were affixed at Layat on 17th February and removed on 5 March 1825. On 23 February (ADL 5E 33-517) Maître Finaz drew up the inventory of possessions at the request of Françoise Chavanne, as legal heir to one quarter of her son's goods and legal guardian of Claudine Bonnard her daughter; and of Marcellin Champagnat as sole legatee. The total of the inheritance was estimated at 354.30 Francs, consisting of a cow and a pig. Champagnat signed the deed. He again signed the deed of registration of that inheritance and of that of Claudine Berlier (who died in 1822), on his own behalf and in the name of Françoise Chavanne, at the time of its registration on 26 July 1825. (ADL 3Q 6701).

The paltry value of the disposable goods left by Clément Berlier show that he was living in great poverty. But his lands constituted a not negligible piece of real estate, as is indicated in the account books of the Hermitage which mention, between 18 May 1832 and 20 July 1834, payments made in instal-

⁸ In fact Champagnat had been relieved of his ministry at La Valla since November 1824.

ments by Fleury Crapanne, of Layat, for 'what he owes for the acquisition of the funds⁹ of Clément Berlier.' The amount, with interest accrued, was for 2,160 Francs.

One of the reasons for the choice of Champagnat as sole legatee was Clément Berlier's distrust and suspicion vis-à-vis his mother, Françoise Chavanne born in Izieux, at Ocharra, on 4 May 1784. On 4 Vendémiaire in the year X (26 September 1802) she had married Jean-Claude Berlier, aged 27, a farmer at Layat born 24 February 1774. From this union three children were born: Clément in 1802, Claudine in 1804 and Jeanne-Marie in 1807.

Jean Claude Berlier, the father, died on 10 March 1810, at the age of 35. Now a widow with three children, Françoise Chavanne lost Jeanne-Marie in 1812. On 1 December she remarried. Her new husband was her brother-in-law Jean Bonnard, aged 61, a farmer who had been residing at Izieux for a year. Born in La Valla he was now a widower since the death of Marguerite Berlier, his wife from his first marriage. From this new union three children were born: Jean-Claude in 1816, who died after only 5 days; Joseph in 1818, who died at age 7 days; then Marie-Claudine in 1819.

Claudine Berlier, the daughter from the first marriage, died in the Saint-Chamond Hospice in 1822, aged 17 years.¹⁰ Not long afterwards Mme Berlier lost her second husband, aged 70 years, on 27 June 1823. With the death of Clément in January 1825, at the age of 41 she had been twice widowed and had lost all the children of her first marriage. Of the three children of her second marriage only Marie Claudine remained. She was therefore a woman who had known many misfortunes, but Br Avit suggests that her behaviour towards those close to her, rather than arousing compassion, had instead aroused disapproval and suspicion. The events that followed were to confirm that dubious reputation.

It was only recently that Marcellin Champagnat had become a neighbour of Clément Berlier, since the construction of the Hermitage had begun in the spring of 1824. The bulk of the work had been completed by the start of the winter but work on the interior continued until the spring of 1825. Clément Berlier from his place just above the Hermitage had been able to see the progress of the works. Moreover, the parish priest of Saint André in Izieux, M. Farge, who had heard his confession and had administered the Last Sacra-

⁹ That is to say the lands.

¹⁰ Dying in a hospice was the lot of the very poorest.

ments, was a friend of the Hermitage and had even lent a very large sum of money to Champagnat.¹¹ It was he perhaps who had suggested to Berlier that he use his inheritance for a good work happening close by to his place.

This inheritance was quickly to become a thorny problem for on 6 March 1826, the civil court at Saint-Etienne handed down its judgement that the will made in favour of Champagnat was null and void by reason of lack of entitlement. The legatee found himself caught by the provisions of Article 909 of the Civil Code which stipulated that ‘Members of the medical and phar-

maceutical professions, as well as medical assistants who have provided care to a person during an illness from which he/she has died, may not profit from arrangements between living persons or beneficiaries that may have been made in their favour in the course of that illness.’¹² (Archives départementales de la Loire, 3 U 3/568).

Brother Avit reminds us that Father Champagnat, certainly through the lawyer Paulian as his intermediary, had contested the decision. But the letter which I have discovered shows that this affair was still dragging on more than two years after the death of Clément Berlier.

*L'hermitage on St Chamon commune St Martin en quoaieux
29 August 1827*

*(A note in a different handwriting; no doubt that of the Mayor or the secretary of the Mairie:
‘From 27 October 1827.¹³Letter of recommendation from M. Paulian, lawyer¹⁴, to M. the Prefect)*

Monsieur,

Please present my very humble respects to M. the Prefect and beg him on my behalf to say a few words of recommendation to M. Paullian lawyer at [the] St Etienne house of Tholière du Champ on the

¹¹ He was present at the blessing of the chapel by Fr^r Dervieux, parish priest of St Pierre in Saint-Chamond, on 13 August 1825 and at the blessing of the house by Archbishop de Pins on 13 June 1827. (OFM3/604 pp.1-2) In a financial statement for the situation of the Hermitage dated 22 February 1826 (OFM1/109 p. 1) two amounts, one for 3000F and the other for 4000F, are inscribed under the name of “the Curé of Izieux”.

¹² This article obviously had as its objective the prevention of undue influence being brought to bear on the disposition of property by those who were assisting the dying person.

¹³ These lines were probably written by the Mayor or the secretary of the Mairie to indicate that this document or a certified copy had been communicated to the solicitor, who had added it to his mail of 15 November.

¹⁴ A solicitor (or attorney at law) is a person in the legal profession with functions akin to those of a lawyer.

corner of rue d'Artois and rue d'Angoulême¹⁵ on the matter of the inheritance of Clément Berlier of the commune of Izieux, who died two years ago.

The latter, as he was dying, made me his heir by means of a will received by Maître Finaz notary at St Chamon. I have not been able to enter into possession of the said inheritance because the mother, who is in prison following a case of infanticide, wished to dispute the will.

My very kind regards to Monsieur your son, who did me the honour of serving my Mass.

Please accept, Monsieur, the assurance of the very great respect with which I have the honour to be your very humble and ob(dient) s(ervant)

Champagnat

Pr(iest), T(eacher) [prêt(re), insti(tuteur)]

When writing this letter, Champagnat refers to the new situation in which the Berlier woman found herself. Indeed, on 23 April 1826 she had given birth to a child father unknown. And, her immoral behaviour having been for a long time 'a scandal for the commune of Izieux', she 'could not hide the results of her promiscuity'. As she had not registered this birth, the Justice of the Peace accompanied by two gendarmes came to her house on 26 April. They found the dead body of the newborn hidden in the cellar. Already suspected of infanticide after the death of her daughter Jeanne-Marie Berlier in 1812, once a medical examination had been carried out, she was arrest-

ed, taken into custody and brought before the Court of Assizes of the Loire at Montbrison. On 8 August 1826 she was condemned to two years in prison, a fine of 600 Francs, with court costs awarded against her (Archives départementales de la Loire, 4 U 87). Even if this affair has no direct link with the preceding one, it considerably weakened Mme Berlier's position and helps to justify the choice made by her son. A letter from the solicitor, M. Paullian, to Baron de Chaulieu, Prefect of Loire, dated 15 November 1827, not only serves to confirm in legal terms that Berlier-Bonnard's case was in trouble, but that the matter had not yet been brought to a conclusion.

¹⁵ The present day Rues Général Foy and Michel Rondet.

¹⁶ No copy of this letter has been found in the ordinary outward correspondence of the Prefect (ADL 1 m 142), nor in additional material concerning such correspondence ... (ADL 1 M 180).

Monsieur

An absence of a few days, occasioned by the public holidays, has prevented me from replying sooner to the letter with which you honoured me dated 27 8ber [October].¹⁶ I have in effect been charged with pursuing in the name of M. Champagnat the material sent to me concerning the inheritance of Clément Berlier, whose sole legatee he is. The request has been formulated against the mother of the deceased, the heir by default. This woman is applying to have the will struck down on the grounds of persuasion and improper influence, and she has drawn up a list of claims that have been formally disavowed by M. Champagnat; she has requested and has been accepted as the heir. This woman's lawyer, very embarrassed, no doubt, to be putting forward evidence of this sort, has been in no hurry to have the case brought to judgement; after two consecutive calls for payment, I have been obliged to myself push for the speedy resolution of this matter and to get it put on notice in order to overcome the delays to the investigation; otherwise we will never be done with this matter.

Now, I am waiting for the course of action that the adversaries are going to take; if they do not commence their case within a week of the notification of the judgement handed down on the 14th of this month, it is all over; I will take the matter to a hearing and get a ruling on the funds. If, on the contrary, the case goes to examination by the court, I will need to discuss the depositions made by the witnesses. In this latter case, the matter will not be concluded in less than two months.

*I have the honour to be with the very greatest respect,
Monsieur, your very humble servant
Paullian*

St Etienne 15 9ber [November] 1827.

I have not had the time to search through the maze of the judicial archives to establish the sequence of events and the final outcome of the case. Although at the end of 1827 Fr Champagnat seemed to be on the way to winning his case, the judgement in his favour must have been made very much later, since Fleury Crapanne only began making his payments for the purchase of the Berlier property in 1832.

It is important, however, to come back to Pierre (72) and Etienne Rousier (46), cousins of Clément Berlier, who notified the authorities of his death in January 1825, and who are often mentioned in the Marist account books. Etienne Rousier was the master mason who directed the construction of the Hermitage in 1824,¹⁷ and Pierre was a timber merchant. On 21 April (OFM, Vol.1/ doc.108/p.10) the accounts books

¹⁷ Annales de l'Institut, 1824, n. 54.

acknowledge a debt of 400 Francs still owing to Etienne Roussier for 82 days of masonry work carried out over the course of the month. On 16 September 1826 (OFM/108/12) the register of expenses notes “paid to Pierre Roussier, timber merchant, the remainder of what I owed him” without giving the exact amount. And the register of expenses continues up to 1840 to note payments made, mostly to Pierre Roussier.

Did the Clément Berlier affair play some role in relations between the Roussiers and Marcellin Champagnat? One thing is certain: they were all involved with the same person at the same time. It is not impossible, moreover, that it was the Roussiers who had made Fr Champagnat aware of the pitiful state of their cousin. For his part, Champagnat, busy as he was with the construction of the Hermitage, had not had any direct dealings with Berlier. As Br Avit says in the *Annales de l’Institut* (1825, n.2) at the conclusion of the Berlier affair, Champagnat had ‘only seen him once in the presence of several witnesses’ but had ‘willingly sent him bed linen and blankets’ and even that ‘he readily sent his Brothers to provide nursing care for poor people in their own homes’. So it was less with Champagnat personally, than with Brothers from the Hermitage acting on his orders or at his suggestion, that

Berlier had had contact. Nevertheless, with the Marist Brothers not yet being a charitable association recognised by the government,¹⁶⁵ Berlier had no choice but to name Champagnat as his heir, designated in a somewhat neutral manner as ‘director of the establishment’ and not as the superior of a religious house. He himself identified himself in the letter as ‘priest, *insti(tuteur)*’. This latter title, enjoying enhanced status since the Revolution, was being used to designate a school-teacher. But it had an ongoing older meaning of the founder of a work (or institute).¹⁶⁶ No doubt Champagnat was playing on the capacity of the word to carry more than one meaning in order to discreetly affirm his double identity as both founder and the one in charge of an educational establishment.

The fact remains that the court case between Françoise Berlier, the woman with the notorious reputation, and a Fr Champagnat accused of exerting improper influence over the disposition of an inheritance, must have been a matter for no little embarrassment. In accepting this bequest did Fr Champagnat have any idea of the trouble it was going to cause him? Whatever the case, he needed resources for his work, and he probably regarded this inheritance as having been made to the community he represented,

¹⁶ Their first request was made in 1825 but was unsuccessful.

rather than to himself personally. Finally, this letter helps to remind us that the milieu in which Champagnat was undertaking his project and carrying out his charitable activity

was characterised by a very great material and spiritual poverty rendering people hard, grasping, disputatious, and indeed sometimes worse.

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