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MARIST

Notebooks



MARCELLIN J.B. CHAMPAGNAT
1799 - 1840
(Portrait Entry)

Institute
of the
Marist
Brothers

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EDITORIAL

Up to now, and contrary to most of the publications of the General House, *Marist Notebooks* has been very sparing in the use of illustrations in its pages. This has not been accidental but a matter of choice: in giving an account of the state of research in the Institute the image, in most cases, is not necessary. The journal has remained focused on its objective to present knowledge and means for reflection.

Overall reflection on the status of the image in our society, moreover, encourages us to continue in this way for we are witnessing an invasion of images, which tend to cloud reflection and enter into unreasonable competition with the script. We are gradually becoming accustomed to lay aside any text that is not illustrated, whatever its intrinsic value. And we are more inclined to produce images than to write. This tendency, already strong among adults, has become all-prevailing among the new generations, to such a point that the world culture presently taking its place is first of all a culture of the im-

age. But is it still a question of culture or simply of sub-culture?

In certain parts, it seems to me, we are already plunged into a universe resembling George Orwell's "1984", where the world evolves under the eye of "big brother" keeping continuous watch over the world, ceaselessly re-inventing the past in accordance with the needs of the present and working systematically to impoverish the language.

It seems necessary to me, then, to take up a critical posture vis-à-vis the image, even a severe one, for it is a matter of preserving the human being's ability to decipher the world in terms other than representational images. However, it is not a question of going so far as to return to the Byzantine iconoclasm of the eighth and ninth centuries.

So, although this Number 29 of *Marist Notebooks* does not wish to act contrarily to the rule about a sparing use of illustrations, its editors consider it as a sort of essay on the

methodology of studying Marist iconography. It is not, in fact, a question of illustrating texts to give them a more attractive appearance, but of considering the image as an integral part of research. An iconography which is not necessary to the understanding of the articles or documents still has no place in this periodical. On the other hand, the iconography itself can be an object of study.

In conclusion, it seems to me useful to mention some recent works carried out in this area and in a spirit close to our own. I will content myself with indicating a few, and ask Brothers aware of others to draw them to my attention.

Brother Agustin Carazo A., in the book *Tras la huellas de Marcelino Champagnat*, published in Chile in 1999, has not been content with translating the articles of Brother Pierre Zind (Louis Laurent) on Father Champagnat. He also offers us a quite extensive iconography of representations of the Founder in the

form of paintings, photos, engravings, sculptures. Unfortunately, it is in black and white and in small format, but solidly documented in an appendix. We thus have available a first systematic study on a major point of our iconographic patrimony.

Brother Jean-Claude Longchamp, of the community of Marlihes, recently mounted an exhibition on the same subject and drew up a catalogue, which constitutes another summary of the Champagnat iconography.

Finally, a confrère, Claude Morisson, has just completed the computerisation of the iconography of the *Bulletin of the Institute* presenting a great number of engravings and photos of works, but also of portraits, recording the life of the Institute from 1909 to 1984. This mine of documents could make for many studies.

We wish, therefore, to continue work on the Marist iconography, but within the theoretical framework outlined above.

THE PORTRAITS OF F. CHAMPAGNAT IN THE XIX CENTURY

A complex iconographic tradition



André Lanfrey
fms

Nothing is more common among us than representations of Father Champagnat, whether in the form of pictures, statues, busts, or holy cards. To a greater or lesser extent, they are linked to a single model: the painting – or rather the paintings – of the painter Ravery. We will see, however, that the history of these original paintings is not as clear as it appears, and the iconographic tradition from which it emerges, more complex than commonly thought.

In addition, a new quite confusing portrait, preserved by the Arnaud family, a continuing branch of the Champagnat family, poses the question of an original source distinct from Ravery's one.

After a brief survey of the works of the Champagnat iconography, my presentation will consist of two main parts: first, an examination of the iconographic tradition issuing from the Ravery portrait; then the presentation and critique of what we will call the “the Arnaud photo” which gives

us the portrait of a corpse showing traits in common with those of Champagnat and forcing us to ask the question: is what we have here another original portrait hitherto unknown to our tradition?

BRIEF SURVEY OF THE ICONOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT

There are three versions of the portrait done by the painter Jean-Joseph Ravery at the time of Father Champagnat's death: one in the chapel of the General Council in Rome¹, considered the original version; another at Saint Genis-Laval, made at the request, it is said, of Brother Benoît Deville, and a third at the Hermitage, which raises problems since it is not known under what conditions it was made and even when it came to the Hermitage. Various hypotheses have been put for-

¹ It is portrait 1 from Rome which is represented here

ward about these three paintings². It is not up to me to take a position in this debate, but simply to underline the fact that supplementary studies need to be done to better document the different paintings of Ravery³.



However, it appears to me to be useful to point out some particularly useful summary works.

1. In 1994 Brother Fernando Hinojal wrote an article in *Marist Notebooks* No. 6 summing up the Champagnat iconography, giving the contents of six albums composed by Brother Alain Bégay in 1979-80 and kept in the archives of the General House⁴. He develops a chronology of this Iconography in five periods:

- From the death of the Founder to the introduction of his cause (1840-96), without any notable iconographic production apart from the Ravery paintings.
- From the introduction of the cause to the centenary of the Foundation (1896-1917): A more and more varied and diversified production (images, busts, statues)
- From the centenary of the Foundation to that of the death of the Founder (1917-1940): a great growth in the iconographic production and a growing variety (ceramics, stained glass windows). Outside France, the celebration of the fiftieth jubilees of many provinces occasioned new images.

² If I have read the documentation on the question rightly, Brother Claudio Santambrogio, restorer of portraits 1 and 3, puts forward the hypothesis that after 1860 Brother François, retired to the Hermitage, would have ordered this portrait for the « great reliquary » of Father Champagnat. Relying on an oral tradition, Brother Jean Roche thinks that this painting, much less finished than the others, is in fact the one Ravery rapidly executed in the Founder's room on the day of his death. Stored in the painter's studio, it would have been given to Brother François after 1860, either by the painter himself, or by his heirs.

³ There exists a CD on Ravery and the portraits of Father Champagnat but, to our knowledge, no systematic study by an art history specialist on the three works together. The best approaches are those of Brother Santambrogio who restored two of the Ravery paintings.

⁴ At present, the first album has been reclassified by Brother Juan Moral, archivist. Brother Alain Bégay belongs to the current Province of the Hermitage.

- From 1940 to the beatification (1940-1955): This is a period of profusion of iconography, with the production of some works of great value.
 - From the beatification to the bi-centenary (1955-1989): spread of the iconography around the world, great variety of styles and techniques.
3. Recently, Brother Jean-Claude Longchamp, of the community of Marlies, organised a display of Champagnat iconography from around the world. A very informative catalogue exists on computer and also is worth publication⁷.

As for myself, I would simply like to return to the first phase of the iconography of the congregation (1841-1896), which is richer in my eyes than has been noticed up to now.

Published in December 1994 the article could not include the time of Champagnat's canonisation, which appears to have sparked a fresh explosion of iconography, an account of which awaits presentation.

2. The book of Brother Agustin Carazo, *Tras la huellas de Marcelino Champagnat. El contexto histórico, religioso y educativo*⁵ presents a Spanish translation of 61 articles of Brother Pierre Zind, but also a very well documented dossier of iconography, unfortunately in black and white, on the representations of Father Champagnat⁶.

1. BIRTH AND AFFIRMATION OF AN ICONOGRAPHIC ORTHODOXY

In view of the importance of the original paintings, it is helpful to recall the texts relating the conditions in which they were done. The best known and most detailed is the one in the *Life*⁸ where Brother Jean-Baptiste takes it up more precisely than does the act of death and burial drawn up on 8 June⁹ which is much more restrained. It is worth comparing the two documents.

⁵ Published by the Marist Province of Chile, 1999.

⁶ The images, unfortunately in minor format and in black and white, are commented on in appendix 14 (p. 234-243). Such a work deserves to be reprinted in a separate edition and with imagery in colours.

⁷ A CD entitled « Ravery et les portraits de M. Champagnat », probably created by Brother Jean Roche, containing a study of the portraits and a certain number of documents in annexes is of great interest. It does not appear to exist in a paper version.

⁸ 1st part, ch. 22, p. 258.

⁹ Circulaires, t.1 p. 323 : Act of death and burial

1.1 - The circumstances of the painting of the portrait

Act of death and burial 8 June 1840	Life of Father Champagnat (1856)
<p>In the year eighteen hundred and forty and on the sixth day of June, vigil of Pentecost, at four o'clock in the morning Joseph-Benoît-Marcellin Champagnat died: priest, founder and first superior of the Society of the Little Brothers of Mary, son of Jean-Baptiste Champagnat and Marie Chirat, born in Marlihes, 20 May seventeen hundred and eighty-nine.</p>	<p>At twenty minutes past four, his breathing became much slower and more difficult, and it came only at intervals. The community was at the time in the chapel for the singing of the Salve Regina. A beginning was immediately made of the litanies of the Blessed Virgin; and while they were being recited, the holy founder went to sleep peacefully in the Lord without any struggle or movement. It was Saturday six June, vigil of Pentecost [...]</p>
<p>Immediately after his death, he was clothed in priestly habit (that is, his soutane, surplice and stole) and set up in an armchair holding in his hands the cross worn by the professed Fathers of the Society of Mary. Close to him, on a table, was a crucifix between two lighted candles.</p>	<p>After his death, he was shaved and washed; he was reclathed in the priestly habit, a surplice and a stole; his profession cross was placed in his hand, and he was thus left on view, seated in an armchair, in his own room. Beside him was a little table on which were placed his breviary, his biretta and the image of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin with two lighted candles.</p> <p>He was extremely pale, but in no way disfigured; his face had kept its masculine features, and that air of goodness and dignity which during his life had so much impressed minds and won him hearts. One felt no painful feeling in his presence; on the contrary, one felt comfortable; the Brothers liked to look at him and kiss his feet.</p>
<p>And the Brothers came in turns into his room to recite the office of the dead.</p>	<p>The Brothers came one after another to contemplate with love and trust the cherished remains of their kind Father. They relieved each other in relays of six to say the office of the dead and the rosary around his corpse. In the intervals between exercises, all visited him several times.</p>

<p>The same day, his portrait was done by M. Ravéry, a painter from Saint-Chamond. The following night and the day after, the feast of Pentecost, his body remained on view as on the vigil, and the Brothers continued to recite the same prayers around him.</p>	<p>On the day of his death, his portrait was made by a painter called expressly for the purpose.</p>
<p>In the evening, he was re-clothed in the priestly habit, in the double coffin which had been prepared (it was a strong oak coffin enclosing a second coffin of lead). Before closing the coffin, there was inserted, in the presence of Father Matricon and Brs François, Jean-Marie, Louis and Stanislas, a plaque of the same metal, in the shape of a heart, on which were inscribed the words: <i>Ossa J.B. M. Champagnat, 1840.</i> The funeral was celebrated on Pentecost Monday, eighth of June...</p>	<p>On Sunday evening, his body, re-clothed in the priestly habit, was placed in a leaden case enclosed in a strong oak coffin. The body was perfectly flexible. Before closing the lead case, there was inserted, in the presence of Father Matricon, chaplain, and Brothers François, Jean-Marie, Louis and Stanislas a plaque of the same metal in the shape of a heart inscribed with the words: <i>Ossa J.B.M. Champagnat 1840.</i> His funeral took place on Monday 8 June ...”</p>

Using these texts, let us try to establish a chronology from the death of the Founder to his funeral on Monday 8 June at 8. 30 in the morning,¹⁰ a little more than 48 hours later. It is necessary to note, first of all, that the two texts do not agree on the time of death. We should probably place our trust in the act of death and burial rather than the account of Brother Jean-Baptiste, which is much later, and perhaps concerned to have the death coincide with the singing of the *Salve Regina*.

In addition, his account of the agony of Father Champagnat (p. 258) indicates that around two thirty in the morning, Father Champagnat under-

stood that his sight was going. A little later, he entered a death agony “which lasted nearly an hour”, which brings us close 3.30 in the morning¹¹. So it can be thought that the community was informed of his death after the *Salve Regina*, perhaps about a half hour after his death. The visits to the deceased, taking into account the time needed to dress the body and transform the bedroom into a “fervent chapel” could only have begun at the beginning of the morning, about 6 o’clock at the earliest. Brother Jean-Baptiste suggests that then the Brothers came one after the other “to contemplate with love and trust the cherished remains of their

¹⁰ Circulaires, t. 1, p. 41. Circulaire du 6 juin 1840.

¹¹ He adds, and this contradicts what has preceded, that at 4.20am the breathing became more difficult.

kind Father". It was only in a second period that a vigil was organised in teams of six, the maximum number for a restricted space and a house with multiple services. This organised watch, which did not exclude individual visits between exercises, was certainly carried out on the two nights of 6/7 and 7/8 June. As for the painter's intervention, the text suggests later in the day of 6 June.

1.2 - Problem of the time of the portrait

Contrary to what is suggested, Ravery must have intervened quite early on the morning of a 6 June. Father Champagnat's death being imminent, the superiors had doubtless arranged with him to have his portrait made as soon as possible after his death, the deceased founder having been placed in an armchair to allow this operation. This unusual position could not be maintained for more than a few hours, before corporal rigidity required the deceased be placed lying on a bed, in order that he be placed in a coffin without difficulty¹². The painter must, therefore, have carried out his work on the morning of 6 June¹³.

1.3 - The funeral customs of the Congregation

In the *Annales de l'institut* (year 1840, § 708), just after having mentioned the death and funeral of Father Champagnat, Brother Avit gives some details on the funeral customs of the congregation:

"After death, the professed were alone clothed in the religious costume. They were then seated in an armchair and not laid out on a bed. The novices and postulants were wrapped in a sheet and covered with another sheet."

With Father Champagnat, therefore, it was a matter of respecting a tradition and not simply making an exception so that his portrait could be made. This usage of seating the deceased is perhaps monastic in origin¹⁴ but the death of Father Champagnat was able to install a custom, the deceased professed being recognised as an authentic disciple and thus worthy of being presented for the veneration of the Brothers, certainly in the same armchair¹⁵. On the other hand, when Brother Avit speaks of the religious costume, he doubtless means the habit complete with rabat, the cross

¹² Brother Jean-Baptiste seems to suggest this solution as well by affirming: « the Brothers liked to look at him and kiss his feet ». If the Founder was lying down, the rite can be carried out in a dignified way: each Brother passes in front of the deceased and bows slightly to kiss his feet at a raised level. This is much more complicated if the Founder's feet are close to the ground, unless the armchair is placed on a sort of platform.

¹³ We are at the end of spring and the light is sufficient.

¹⁴ It would be necessary to study the usage of the first monks of the East in this matter.

¹⁵ To my knowledge, this armchair has not survived.

for the perpetually professed, and the cord. Finally, when he affirms that the professed were “then seated in an armchair and not laid out on a bed” one must understand: not laid out **immediately** on a bed. As for the novices and postulants wrapped in a sheet, they were certainly not buried without a coffin, but the sheets covered their lay clothing and replaced the religious costume they were not yet worthy to wear¹⁶.

The Marist texts are rather economical in describing the funeral customs because they do not think it useful to talk about what seems to them to go without saying. One can consider in any case that placing Champagnat in an armchair was not as exceptional as we thought.

1.4 - A problematic picture

It is evident that during the morning of 6 June, the painter could only make a rough draft or at most sketch the features of the deceased on a support which was doubtless not a canvas¹⁷. Besides, painters were only just beginning to use tin tubes which let them paint outside the studio, and it is certain that Ravery did not work in colour in the very bedroom of Father Cham-

pagnat. The painting, after all, was not delivered until February 1841¹⁸.

One can see that the painter positioned himself slightly to the left of the deceased. Because the latter was not in a prone position but half seated, the weight of the head caused the neck to disappear and the rabat to rise around the bottom of the face. In addition, the head leaned lightly down on the rabat, the borders of which form an odd angle which Ravery appears not to have dealt with correctly in perspective, with the result that the top of the rabat appears larger than the bottom.

The slight forward inclination of the head has led the painter, apart from his position looking down, to emphasize the skull and its advanced baldness. To soften the effect of this unflattering angle, he has arranged the hand holding the crucifix in such a way that this bowed face, with emaciated features and half-closed eyes, evokes contemplation, while the white surplice and the golden facings of the ecclesiastical costume, certainly not authentic but reconstituted in the studio, light up the scene. In his way, Ravery composes a portrait in which attention to realism¹⁹ and a mystical touch go together well enough,

¹⁶ See *Annales de l'institut 1840* § 704 : « The rabat was only permitted to the novices when they knew their prayers well. It was often taken from them as a punishment, and likewise the soutane. For the rest, all the Brothers of the house did not wear the rabat during the day ».

¹⁷ The report of Brother Santambrogio indicates that the portrait of Father Champagnat in Rome, considered the first, consists of a paper pasted onto canvas.

¹⁸ AFM 5101.301, *Carnet des « Mélanges divers »* du F. François p. 51. It has been translated for Marist Notebooks (No. 12, December 1997) under the title of “Miscellany” (Personal notes).

¹⁹ Or perhaps an inability to idealise.

though the excessively decorated stole fits less well with the austerity of the face and the dull look.

The painting also corresponds, at least partially, to the witness of the Brothers who saw the Founder in his last moments. Brother Sylvestre, who visited him on 5 June around noon²⁰ is quite precise: "... he always appeared calm; his sunken eyes were full of kindness, his pinched, almost flat lips still gave him that air of goodness which won him every heart". Brother Jean-Baptiste, who was not present, and reported the witnesses of the deceased Champagnat, is more vague: "He was extremely pale, but no way disfigured; his face had kept its masculine traits, and that air of goodness and dignity which won hearts for him".

One finds in the painting the sunken eyes and the pinched lips, as well as the dignity and the "masculine traits". But it is difficult to see any kindness there. And that is the whole problem with Ravery's painting, which shows us a man already dead after suffering a long illness, to whom he has restored a little colour and given a changed look, but not enough to take away the impression that what we have here is an ascetic rather than an educator and a "good father". In summary, Ravery would not have had the time or the talent necessary

to "draw a portrait" which could be a living likeness, and the Brothers seem to have needed some time to accept an image of their Founder which appeared to them somewhat remote from the one they had known.

1.5 - The portrait which as not well accepted?

In 1889, Brother Eubert²¹ accompanied the painting of Father Champagnat with the following commentary: "... This portrait is the one painted by M. Ravery, a painter from St Chamond and friend of the venerable Father, on 6 June 1840. When he brought this portrait to N.D. de l'Hermitage, Brother François, Superior General, called the community together in a room in the Mother House. After contemplating tenderly this image of their well-loved Father, so faithfully rendered, all the Brothers went down on their knees and recited the *De Profundis* ..."

This late text, which gives us to understand that the portrait was well received, is contradicted by the almost total silence at the time the painting was received. In his notebook of *Mélanges divers* Brother François²² simply observes: "Reception of the portrait of Father Champagnat. Saturday, 20 February 1841 (new bedroom on the 2nd floor). Holy martyrs whose name is known by God alone²³. Be a

²⁰ Frère Sylvestre raconte Marcellin Champagnat, Rome, 1992, p. 215

²¹ AFM 194.1/112. Born in 1826. According to his file, he was not present at the Hermitage. Assistant General, he died in 1895 at St Genis-Laval.

²² AFM 5101.301 p. 51, Marist Notebooks No. 12, p 20.

²³ The meaning of this reflection escapes us and does not appear to be connected to the reception of the painting, unless Brother François was comparing the trials and long illness of Champagnat to a martyrdom.

living portrait". The Circular of 10 August 1842, the first after the reception of the painting, makes no mention of it. The first edition of the Life of Father Champagnat, in 1856, contains no portrait of the Founder²⁴ and the Circulars do not speak of a portrait of Father Champagnat before 1916²⁵.

This seems to be in complete contradiction to the Circular of 6 June 1840 (*Circulaires* t. 1, p. 42) which announces: "His life-like portrait has been made and will be sent to you at the first opportunity". The first part of the phrase refers certainly to the work of Ravery but the following appears to envisage a lithographed or engraved version of Champagnat's portrait which did not happen.



The hypothesis, then, that there was a misunderstanding between Ravery and the Brothers, which would explain why a lithograph inspired by the portrait was not promptly made, cannot be discarded.

1.6 - An iconographic tradition nevertheless

As the number of Brothers grew and the Institute expanded, the need for portraits to be available became more pressing, even if only for propaganda purposes. A first image has come down to us, consisting of a white sheet 26.8 x 20.5cm, on which is printed a rectangle 14.5 x 17 cm enclosing an oval medallion 9.5 x 8 cm, where one can recognise a copy of the portrait of Champagnat according to Ravery²⁶. Beneath a text: "J(oseph)h. B(en)oit. Marcellin Champagnat, priest, founder of the society of the Brothers of Mary, born in Marthes (Loire) 20 May 1789, and deceased at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage in St Chamond 6 June 1840". In the middle of the text, a crown of laurels surmounted by a royal crown enclosing an intertwined AM. The provenance can easily be identified since in a corner of the rectangle can be recognised the words: "Lith (ograph) St Côme, 8, Rey-Sezanne, à Lyon", which indicates that the Rey-Sezanne lithography studio, sit-

²⁴ The new edition of the Life of Father Champagnat in 1897 contains a portrait.

²⁵ Volume 13 p. 228. The General Council decided to have a great number of copies of an image of the Ven. Founder printed with a prayer on the reverse side asking for his beatification.

²⁶ We saw and photographed this document in the archives in Rome several years ago, but have since displaced it.

uated at 8 rue St Côme in Lyon carried out this work.

Consultation of the Lyon annuals from the nineteenth century permits us to come close to dating the production of this document, which is not a holy picture but a portrait intended to be a poster. In 1841, 6 rue St Côme was still managed by the Béraud-Lauras lithography while Rey was a typographer at 6 place St Jean. But from 1843 Rey was established at 6 rue Saint Côme. It appears that his association with Sezanne can be dated from 1848 or 1849²⁷.

In any case, the archaism of the formula accompanying the portrait is noticeable: Champagnat is only a priest and not a Marist priest; he is founder of the Society of the Brothers of Mary and not of the Little Brothers of Mary, the name given in the prospectus of 1824 and recognized by the State in 1851. As for the portrait, it is fairly rough: broad forehead, and extremely marked features, coarse design. However, the incipient baldness very clear in Ravery's painting, has almost completely disappeared. This is without doubt the first portrait of the Founder used as poster in communities and classrooms: as a belated response to Brother François' announcement of 1840.

It is perhaps to this engraving that a decision of the Superiors' Council makes allusion on 1 December 1861:

"To have portraits (images for classes) of Father Champagnat made."

The second document is a holy picture of format 13 X 8 based on the same model as the preceding: a rectangle 11.5 X 7cm, with rounded corners, containing a medallion 6.5 X 5.5cm under which there is a slightly modified version of the previous formula: Father Champagnat is a "Marist priest" and the society is that of the "Little Brothers of Mary"²⁸. Above the medallion, an inscription explains the function of the image: an "offering to the benefactors of the Little Brothers of Mary" containing on the back the list of "spiritual aids and gifts in which the benefactors share", together with a brief presentation of the state of the Institute in 1860. So there is a difference of a dozen years between this document and the preceding one. The print made by the Louis Perrin house in Lyon is much finer than the preceding: the founder's features have been softened and the baldness is almost imperceptible. The artist is J.M. Fugère del.(?) and sculp(tor). From now on, it is an idealised portrait which will serve, with slight modifications, the work of the juniorates in 1877, still offering the same spiritual benefits to the benefactors.

A last image composed as medallion but of uncertain provenance further refines the face of Champagnat. His

²⁷ Annuals for the years 1859, 1860, 1865 1875: they push the association of the two back to 1848 or 1849.

²⁸ AFM 194.1/163 and 164

hair is tidied up; his rabat now has regular edges. The hand holding the crucifix is different: the index finger is slightly separated from the others²⁹. The engraving of the habit is remarkably fine.

1.7 - Iconographic policy of the superiors

Two late letters³⁰ of the general administration appear to give us a key to the observations made above:

Letter 11405³¹ 6.05.1892 to M. Bonamy, publisher in Poitiers (Vienne)

"Sir,

Our intention would be to have a new engraving, a little better than the attached specimen, of the portrait of our venerated Founder, Father Champagnat, and to confide this work to you.

Would you be so kind as to let me know:

If you accept.

The price of the engraving, according to the dimensions and the form of the original enclosed.

What would be the price for your delivering us this portrait, in the case of twenty-five thousand copies.

If we come to an agreement in this regard, I would have the honour of sending you another lithograph portrait which gives a better example of the expression which we want to have in the new engraving.

While awaiting your response, I beg you to accept, etc. ...

Brother Philogone, Assistant General."

Letter 11404, 11.5.1892 to M. Bonamy, publisher in Poitiers (Vienne)

"Sir,

According to the wish expressed in your esteemed letter of the 9th of this month, I am sending you, in this envelope, two steel-engravings, similar to the one I sent you recently, plus a lithograph of the same portrait.

The portrait to be reproduced should have the dimensions and form of the one engraved on steel, with the inscriptions above and below the portrait. As for the inscription on the reverse, we will provide you with the text, modified a little, after definitive agreement over the engraving.

²⁹ The artist and the publisher are difficult to identify: "P. PROJA. DIS. ED. INC".AFM 194.1/171

³⁰ Registres des lettres de l'administration générale : lettres n° 11 404 et 11 405

³¹ This letter is not in its chronological place. It comes before the preceding which it complements.

The portrait was made after the death of Father Champagnat. The effects of the wasting away caused by his long illness and the traces of his death are obvious. Apart from these traces which must be removed, the lithograph portrait is the one which (best) reproduces his person.

While maintaining the same pose, we would like him to appear as though alive and looking at the crucifix he is holding in his hand.

Please accept, etc. ...

Brother Philogone, Assistant."

Mr Bonamy, then, certainly received a photo of the Ravery portrait³². The lithograph of the same portrait that was joined to his second mailing is certainly the one from the engravers in Lyon in the years 1849-50. The two steel-engravings sent are certainly those made by the Perrin house about 1860 with the image on the front and a text on the back. The last image analysed above would, then, have been produced in the studio of Mr Bonamy about 1892-93³³.

But the most important thing is that Brother Philogone allows us to see the feeling of dissatisfaction of the superiors, and probably of the Brothers in general, with the Ravery's portrait, while they were at the same time aware that this was the only authentic one. So it was necessary to do adapted portraits of the Founder, based on Ravery's. Before the introduction of the cause of Father Champagnat, the official iconography of

the institute would then have consisted, in addition to the Ravery portrait, of three engravings: one about 1850, a second about 1860 and a third after 1892. Each time, the portrait has become more idealised.

But engraving is an expensive technique and the photo had become a major medium of iconography. This is why numerous portraits are the work of photographers who introduce variations: rectangular and no longer oval portraits; Father Champagnat always holding the crucifix in his right hand and a book in his left. Often enough, the face is not inspired by the portrait of Ravery. The transitional portrait³⁴ comes from the "Photographie universelle" firm, 35 rue Victor Hugo, in Lyon. It dates probably from after 1885³⁵. There the oval is still to be found, and Champagnat's head very closely resembles the one in Ravery. On the other hand, he is holding a book in his left hand.

³² It is less probable that he was sent a copper engraving.

³³ But the administrative correspondence does not let us know if this project was realised.

³⁴ AFM 194.1/121

³⁵ The date of the death of Victor Hugo.

Let us say, therefore, that despite growing variations, and probably some reservations, the Ravery portrait has created an essential iconographic archetype, quite simply be-

cause, despite its inadequacies, it is the only authentic portrait. But the emergence of a hitherto unknown document, at the beginning of 2004, has sown some doubt.



2. EMERGENCE OF A PROBLEMATIC DOCUMENT: THE ARNAUD PHOTO

On 3 January 2004, Marius Arnaud, great-grandson of Philippe Arnaud, nephew of Marcellin Champagnat, who lived at La Valla and the Hermitage, visited the Hermitage with his daughter. They asked Brother Gabriel Michel what was the best image of Champagnat possessed by the Institute. When given the postcard representing the portrait of Marcellin by Ravery, they objected: "We have a better one at home: Marcellin on his death bed... and it is a photo." Brother Gabriel Michel was sceptical.

On 4 January, Mr Arnaud returned with the original. It is a fine paper photo of format 14 x 10 cm glued on a quite thick piece of cardboard 16 x 10.5, which bears on the back the identity of the photographer: Maurice Scheuring, of Lyon. It represents the head and bust of a dead priest in profile, lying on

a bed and clothed in traditional ecclesiastical garments: rabat, surplice, stole. On his chest is a large missionary crucifix. The resemblance to Father Champagnat is astonishing, even if the profile view tends to attenuate the sunken features of the deceased.

2.1 - A photo dating from around 1900

On 5 January, Mr Arnaud presented the original to several Brothers of the Hermitage and the superior, Brother Michel Morel, informed the General Council of the "discovery" of this strange document. Informed, and asked to study this question, I had an interview with Mr Arnaud, his nephew, Brother Gabriel Michel, and Brother Michel Morel. The resemblance appeared to me, in fact, troubling, but the document seemed relatively recent. On returning to Lyon, I consulted the city archives "Indexes"³⁶ of the nineteenth century in order to locate the photograph.



³⁶ One would now speak of annuals.

The Fournier index of 1896 and 1897 included no Scheuring under the heading of photographers. I found him in the Henry index in 1901³⁷ and 1903³⁸. In 1908 he is listed as former photographer³⁹. To find some complementary details, I telephoned numerous French museums of photography, who did not know of this person. Finally, the Musée Nicéphore Niépce⁴⁰ in Châlon-sur-Saône informed me that Scheuring figured in the work of J.M. Voignier, *Répertoire des photographes de France au XIX^e siècle*, in a very succinct fashion: "Photographer in Lyon, 33 rue Romarin, around 1900", which only confirmed what I had found. I have since found two other photos of this photographer, practically unknown by the specialists.

2.2 - Copy of a daguerreotype?

Having ascertained this important point, it was necessary to examine if the photo was not a copy of an older document, produced in the manner of the first kinds of photograph on a plaque of silvered copper called "daguerreotype" after its inventor Daguerre. This process, which can require an exposure of several

minutes, was made public in 1839 and became an instant craze. In Strasbourg, Lyon and Marseille from January 1839 the press began to speak about this invention. "Exhibitors of daguerreotypes" plied the main roads and began to sell portraits. For example, in Lyon P.F. Durand purchased the equipment in August 1839 and in 1840 he produced remarkable views of Lyon with "an exposure of 7 seconds".

So a daguerreotype of Champagnat is not chronologically impossible, though highly improbable, but one can in a strict sense envisage the taking of a daguerreotype on 6 or 7 June. It would have been able to be made by a travelling daguerreotypist to the account of the Arnaud family, or for Ravery anxious to retain a document useful for the realisation of the portrait, or again for one of the notables of St Chamond, friends and benefactors of Father Champagnat such as Messrs. Victor Dugas, Antoine and Eugène Thiollière, Antoine Neyrand, Richard-Chamboret, Royer de la Bastie, or Montagnier Gayot⁴¹.

Let us observe in passing that the report of the death and burial of Father Champagnat is very incomplete,

³⁷ p. 1699 in the « Répertoire alphabétique des principaux habitants de Lyon » and p. 2234 under the heading « Photographes ».

³⁸ p. 1709 and 2265.

³⁹ p. 1744. He no longer appears under the heading « photographes ».

⁴⁰ He is considered as the inventor of the photographic process.

⁴¹ Acte de décès et de sépulture du P. Champagnat, Circulaires, t. 1 p. 323-4, et Annales de l'institut (F. Avit) t.1 p. 308. Among those first interested in Daguerre's invention were portrait artists, wealthy amateurs able to buy the relatively expensive equipment, pharmacists accustomed to handling chemical products.

since it makes no mention of the numerous visits made by the relatives and lay and ecclesiastical friends during the two days of his exposition. They would certainly have been numerous, Father Champagnat being such an important person: in 1835, at a period of a census of voters, he paid sufficient taxes to be included among the electors⁴². Let us add that St Chamond, situated on one of the rare railway lines then operating in France, was easily accessible to an enterprising daguerreotypist or to one commissioned by someone.

An attractive but fragile hypothesis presents itself. But, why do the Marist texts not speak about it? And why did the family not mention it much earlier, if not the daguerreotype, which could not be reproduced, then at least the photo obtained around 1900? So, without rediscovering the original daguerreotype, or documents making a clear allusion to it, it is not possible to sustain a hypothesis which includes so many unknowns. And yet ...

2.3 - A detail which changes everything

In examining the photo carefully, I noticed that the deceased had, on the eyebrow above the left eye a clearly visible scar. Now, the passports of Father Champagnat composed in

1836 and 1838 indicate as identifying marks “a light scar at the top of the left cheek and another above the right eye”.

An objection may be made that the scar in the photo is over the left eye and that the left cheek of the deceased shows no mark. Certainly! But daguerreotypes⁴³ inverse images, like mirrors. Thus, if a daguerreotype is indeed at the origin of the Arnaud photo, we are looking at the right profile of the person. So there is, on the one hand, an extraordinary coincidence between the document and one identifying characteristic of Champagnat mentioned in an historic document; on the other hand, the inversion of the scar establishes the serious hypothesis of a daguerreotype at the photo's origin. So one cannot exclude the possibility that the deceased in the Scheuring photo may be Champagnat.



⁴² Annuaire de la Loire pour 1835, by M. Buchet, divisional head at the prefecture, Departmental Archives of the Loire, PER 756-1. Father Champagnat was one of 103 members of the college of the second electoral ward sitting in St Chamond. That year, he paid 246 francs 35 centimes in taxes.

⁴³ At the beginning. Then inversors were invented.

3. IMPORTANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE ARNAUD TRADITION

Since the indications noted above are sufficiently strong not to dismiss out of hand the hypothesis that it is a question of Father Champagnat, we must now examine some other arguments, not as convincing but not without force.

3.1 - The tradition of the Arnaud family

Here is what Marius Arnaud says in a letter of 20 April 2004.

“Our relationship with Marcellin has its origin in the marriage of Benoît Arnaud and Marie-Anne Champagnat on 29 Jan(uary) 1799. Eight children were born from their union, including Philippe (1805-1886) who married Jeanne Patouillard. They had eight children: Jean-Baptiste, Marie-Joséphine, Antoinette, our great aunt (1844-1937), Jean, Vincent, Camille, our grandfather (1859-1933).

Philippe, whose career with his uncle Marcellin during the construction of N.D. de l'Hermitage is well known, first lived near the Hermitage, and then established his carpentry business at La Bruyère, on the road linking St Chamond to La Valla, doubtless after the death of his uncle Marcellin (1840).

The family kept different objects of his: a watch, some religious books, and the photo of his uncle on his death bed⁴⁴.

How was the photo handed down? It was our great-aunt Antoinette Arnaud-Duculty († 1937), who lived the longest (93 years), who kept it. Her niece Antoinette Arnaud (1896-1995), who stayed with her until her death, in the same house, kept the family documents and photos. At her death in 1995, at the age of 99, Maryvonne, my cousin, inherited the collection.

The canonisation of St Marcellin in 1999 [...] awakened memories. It was during a meeting at the home of our cousin Maryvonne that we rediscovered the photo of Marcellin, among the various family documents ...”

Mr Arnaud adds an important post-script:

“Since I was born in 1926, I knew my grandfather Camille (1859-1933) and my great-aunt Antoinette (1844-1937) while they were still living. Our great-aunt Antoinette Arnaud-Duculty had passed on to the community of N.D. de l'Hermitage in the 1930s (before or after: oral testimony) various documents, religious books, etc. used by Marcellin at the home of his uncle Benoît Arnaud, schoolmaster of the college at St Sauveur-en-Rue, during his studies. The watch was sent some years later by my uncle Joannès Arnaud (1888-1965)⁴⁵.”

Marius Arnaud descends, therefore, from the second son of Camille Arnaud deceased in 1933. It was probably at the time of sharing the bequest that his eldest son, Joannès Arnaud (1888-1965), inherited Marcellin's watch, which he shortly after presented to the Brothers.

⁴⁴ Affirmation unsubstantiated.

⁴⁵ This watch was stolen at the Hermitage.

3.2 - A critique of the family tradition

One can think that, if the daguerreotype was made in 1840, it could have been kept by Philippe Arnaud up to 1886. After his death, a sharing seems to have been carried out: Champagnat's watch going to Camille Arnaud, and various documents to Antoinette.

There is nothing to prove, however, that the possible daguerreotype was kept by her. One can imagine, on the contrary, that it remained in the hands of one of her elders who could have had it transformed into a photo around 1900 and given a copy to each of the children or grand-children. Besides, daguerreotypes, which had to be kept under glass and away from the air, had a tendency to oxidise, particularly at the edges. As it is not difficult to reproduce them on paper,⁴⁶ the family might have felt the need to draw on modern support, especially as, around 1900, they had a good reason: Father Champagnat was declared Venerable on 9 August 1896, and in 1903 his cause was introduced in Rome. But why go to a photographer in Lyon when St Chamond and St Etienne then had very capable photographers available?

The exceptional longevity of great-aunt Antoinette and the fact that she had no children, her husband having

died prematurely, explains why the document did not disappear in the course of successive inheritances. The niece Antoinette Arnaud (1886-1995) having been in the same situation, the inheritance once more avoided a dispersion.

So, despite certain obscurities, the original document (the hypothetical daguerreotype) would have remained in the same family before being reproduced around 1900. However, if the photo of 1900 is indeed a copy of this primitive document, it would be logical that other examples would have been made and distributed to the heirs⁴⁷. The discovery of a second photo would considerably reinforce the hypothesis that it is really a matter of Champagnat. For the present, and despite some investigations by Marius Arnaud, no new example has been found. All the more reason for the daguerreotype remaining unable to be found.

The family tradition concerning the fact that it is Champagnat is relatively clear. First of all, Marius Arnaud and his daughter on the visit to the Hermitage had no doubts about the identity of the personage in the photo. Since then, two succinct testimonies have come to reinforce this conviction: Mme Geneviève Combes, niece of Camille Arnaud, aged today about seventy-two years, wrote to me at the beginning of 2005 that she

⁴⁶ The daguerreotype acted like a mirror, so it sufficed to place some black material in front of the object to avoid reflections. Information obligingly supplied by a specialist at the Nicéphore Niépce Museum in Châlon sur Saône.

⁴⁷ The daguerreotype had the inconvenience of not being able to be reproduced. This is why it was very quickly replaced by the paper photo.

had “a vague memory”, of having seen the photo of Father Champagnat on his death bed when she was four. During a telephone conversation (on 21 February 2005) Jean Arnaud, son of Joannès, brother of Marius, informed me that he had seen the presumed photo of Father Champagnat when he was twelve, that is, around 1930-32, at Le Creux, a suburb of St Chamond, at the home of Camille and Marguerite Arnaud. It had been kept with other family photos.

He added one detail of some importance: the evening prayer took place in front of a portrait of Father Champagnat about 30 x 25cm: so certainly a copy of the Ravery portrait. The family, then, had no problem in connecting the person of the photo and the portrait. But they had different roles for each: the first was commemorative and family; the second devotional and iconic. That is why, doubtless, the family did not feel the need to speak about this photo considered as a private and, on the whole, lay property.

So the Arnaud family tradition is quite clear: the photo did not leave the family from about 1900 to 1995 and was considered that of Father Champagnat. For the period 1840-1900 we are reduced to suppositions, no document or well established tradition surviving to support the family contention, even if we know that the relationship

between Philippe Arnaud and Marcellin Champagnat was a strong one and would explain very well why the nephew wanted to keep a souvenir.

4. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE DOCUMENT

I have already mentioned the importance of a major detail: the scar. I also studied the vestments of the deceased and his crucifix.

4.1 - The stole and the rabat

On the photo the stole has nothing in common with the one in the portrait of Ravery. A priori, there is nothing surprising about that, since painters were able, in the course of realising the portrait in the studio, to paint more flattering garments than those of the person being reproduced. The rabat of the deceased in the photo is also different from the one in the painting: this is merely a piece of material at the top of the soutane while Ravery painted it very large and probably tied behind the neck⁴⁸. Still again one can say that Ravery painted according to a conventional model. But these two differences in clothing between photo and painting are quite disturbing.

So I asked for an opinion on the stole in the Arnaud photo Arnaud from Father Bernard Berthod, conservator of the museum of Sacred Art of

⁴⁸ See the numerous portraits of ecclesiastics in OM or in the museums which present at least two models of rabats. See the painted portrait of Brother François (1860) whose rabat is very large.

Fourvière and consultant on the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural

Property of the Church. Here is his reply, in a letter of 24 March 2004 :

"Your idea of dating by the liturgical vestment is quite pertinent, for there are decorative themes which allow establishing a branching of dates. In the case concerning the photograph you sent, the stole, which must have been violet or black, features a stripe, of silver doubtless, with a motif of a cross marked with a fleur-de-lis inscribed within an orb. This motif is neo-Gothic in inspiration and I do not think that it is found in France before 1850-1855. In 1840, the year of death of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, the motifs were still connected to the classical tradition inherited from the XVIII century; one also finds Empire motifs, but this is not the case here ..."

As regards the stole, the advice of a specialist is thus rather negative. As for the rabat, formed from two rectangles of black material edged with white joined together, it was usually large and attached to the "cuff" of the neck, that is, to its inner side⁴⁹. It appeared about 1760 and was worn by the French clergy up to about 1930. So this piece of clothing can hardly be used for a precise dating. On the photo the rabat appears quite narrow in comparison with the one presented by Ravery, but the elongated position of the deceased, which sets off the neck, and the profile view do not allow the disclosure of great difference.

One detail, though, is interesting: the collar of the habit is much too big for the neck of the deceased and this

suggests an important and recent emaciation. This is certainly what happened to Father Champagnat⁵⁰.

4.2 - A "photo" which seems influenced

One image of Champagnat, done at St Etienne by the photographer C. Chol, successor of Raphaël Royer (AFM 194.1/151), departs somewhat from the Ravery tradition and closely resembles the Arnaud photo. As in the two preceding photos,⁵¹ Champagnat is holding the crucifix in his right hand and a book in his left, but the crucifix is more inclined and the look does not appear to be fixed on it. As for the book, placed lower than the crucifix in the other representations, it is here raised to the level of the person's heart.

⁴⁹ Louis Trichet, *Le costume du clergé*. Paris, Cerf, 1986, p. 141, 145, 168.

⁵⁰ *Life*, ch. 21 p. 223: « He suffered very much during the winter. His only food consisted of some broth, a little milk or some very light food... »

⁵¹ doc. 194.1/121, photographie universelle, Lyon and photographie Marmand, St Genis-Laval.



The face, slightly marked, seems to me to sufficiently resemble the Arnaud portrait. The rabat, which in the Ravery tradition is at an awkward angle, is here normal, as in Scheuring. It is in the ecclesiastical habit that the photo shows some novelty. The two lengths of the stole are for the first time linked by a cord with a tassel and ending in pompons. Now, in the Scheuring photo one can clearly see a cord and the tassel in which its two extremities are passed. One cannot see the pompons but there is no doubt there are some. In addition, an examination of the jars containing some textile relics recovered from Champagnat's coffin allowed me to

discover a tassel and what remained of the pompons. The report on the exhumation given to the Brothers on 15 January 1890 (Circulaires t. VIII p. 6), moreover, specifies: "Besides the venerable bones there were also preserved the tassels of the Good Father's stole, the buttons of his soutane, the almost complete stocking (under-stocking) of the right leg.⁵²"

One thing then is clear: there is a strong relationship between the photos of Scheuring and Chol and their representation of the stole corresponds with the reality, while Ravery is inexact. The same for the surplice: in the Scheuring photo as in the Chol image, it is very simple, with no lace, contrary to the Ravery iconography followed up until then. As for the stole, which Ravery presents as bordered with gold motifs, in Chol it has a modest border, although one does not find either any close resemblance with the stole in Scheuring.

I was able to approximately date the Chol photo: in 1890, the Annual of the Loire Department still shows Royer as photographer in St Etienne. In 1895, Chol has replaced him, in the same place: 27, rue de la République. In 1900, Chol has disappeared from the Annual. So we are in a date bracket of 1891-1899, which will have to be further refined but which brings us close to the date of the photo of Scheuring: around 1900.

⁵² This is a knitted stocking and not a cloth one.

If nothing definite can be drawn from the comparison, it does show that the photographer Chol had available a sufficiently reliable model to be able to depart from an already well established iconographic vulgate and which he certainly was aware of, since he respects two of its main aspects: the person slightly inclined towards the left, crucifix, liturgical garments. So he could have been acquainted with the Scheuring photo.

Another strange detail: the photo does not appear to bear the stamp of the Marist Brothers nor even the name of Champagnat, as if it were due to a private initiative. And then how was the Chol photo made? By

the pose of a person bearing a resemblance and at the cost of a certain retouching? By a combination of drawing and photography (head drawn and body photographed)?

For the first time, the iconographic tradition coming from Ravery appears to be combining with that of the photo, at a time which is not without significance, since on 9 August 1896 Marcellin Champagnat was declared venerable in view of the introduction of his cause in Rome. Other photos exist which are more or less similar but without official standing, which lead us to think that the Champagnat iconography is diversifying.



4.3 - Hypothesis that another priest is concerned

It is known that Eugénie Seux-Arnaud, niece of Father Champagnat, had three sons, of whom two became Marist Brothers (Brother Tharsice 1829-1890 and Brother Théonas 1840-1902). A third son, Camille Seux, became a priest. Born probably about 1835, he left for the USA and the diocese of Santa Fé in 1863. He died there at the age of over 80 around 1910-1915. It could not be him in the Scheuring photo for several reasons: the dates do not coincide; the deceased is not an old man; he is wearing a Gallican rabat, which would be very odd in the USA. Finally, the photo was made in Lyon.

One can certainly imagine that it features a priest of the Saint Chamond or Lyon region. Deaths are certainly not lacking there between 1840 and 1900. But it would be very extraordinary if any of them had all the characteristics of the personage of the Arnaud photo: striking resemblance to Champagnat even to the detail of the scar; same hair style and already thinning forehead. This said, one never knows, and one may even say that the photo of a priest of the Lyon region, deceased about 1900, could have been taken for an image of Champagnat, precisely because of his resemblance to him.

4.4 - The problem of the crucifix

The texts describing the dead Champagnat tell us that “his profession

cross was placed in his hand” and Ravery’s painting indeed shows us Champagnat holding in his right hand a cross of odd proportions: a very long vertical axis in comparison with the transversal. The one in the photo of Scheuring rests, on the contrary, on the breast of the deceased. It is a cross of large dimensions such as worn by missionaries, who passed it through their sash when they were preaching.

Volume 3 of *Origines Maristes* shows us (p. 114) the profession cross in use among the Marist Fathers up to 1868, of 9.5 X 6.5 cm (OM 3 note 1 p. 309) with trilobate ends, which resembles neither the one painted by Ravery nor the one in the Scheuring photo. On the other hand, a portrait of Father Chanel, painted about 1841 (OM 4 p. 256, illustration 159), shows us him with a cross of quite large dimensions passed through his sash. And in the 1989 edition of the Life of Father Champagnat, there figures (p. 335) an engraving of Pierre Chanel, probably much later than the preceding and inspired by it, with a still larger crucifix still stuck in the sash, and which closely resembles the one resting on the breast of the deceased in the Scheuring photo.

The portrait of Father Chanel leads us, therefore, to suspect that the cross of small size and complicated fashioning, which Father Colin, who did not like it, called “episcopal”, was not originally used in the Society. Also, the presence of a missionary cross on the deceased’s breast would be rather an

argument in favour of authenticity, Champagnat and the other Marists keeping the crucifixes used as diocesan missionaries before the constitution of the Society. The cross of the Redemptorists, 30cm high and 14cm wide, with metal ends is almost identical⁵³. Finally, Father Verguet, who was a Marist in the Solomon Islands for three years from 1841 to 1844, posed about 1860 with the same cross stuck in his sash.⁵⁴

It seems besides that one should say of the cross painted by Ravery what was said of the ecclesiastical garments of Champagnat: he has not gone for an exact reproduction but reconstituted the design in the studio in such a way that it occupies a suitable but not prominent place in the painting. If he appears to have respected the height of the object, he has reduced the length of the arms, which leaves a somewhat disproportionate crucifix where Christ, especially in the painting in Rome, appears perched very high, while in the painting in Saint-Genis-Laval the body of Christ is better proportioned to the wood of the cross.

Finally, if one admits that Champagnat was transferred, after several hours, from the armchair to a display bed, it would be normal that his crucifix be placed on his breast. One curious thing, however, remains, and that is

that, in the exhumation of the remains of Champagnat, there is no mention of the presence of the crucifix, the metal parts of which would have been preserved. The examination of the jars containing the various remains found in the coffin have revealed nothing on this subject. This leads us to believe that, for one reason or another, Father Champagnat was not buried with his profession cross.

An additional testimony comes from the Circular of 15 January 1890 (*Circulaires* VIII p. 10) which, relating the examination of the Founder's remains, stated: "He is there in the same position in which he was placed during his burial, arms over his breast in the prayerful attitude he was given at the time." No mention of a crucifix nor even of a rosary, while the text insists on the trivial details: tassels of the stole, soutane buttons, and even the stocking on the right foot. In sum, as the two texts describing the funeral say: "On Sunday evening, the body, revested in the ecclesiastical habit, was placed in a lead coffin ..." without any other object, except the plaque specifying that they were the remains of Father Champagnat. What, then, became of the crucifix, which would have perhaps allowed us to make some headway in our problem? What became of the other objects as well, such as the armchair in which Father Champagnat was exposed?

⁵³ Cross kindly loaned by Father André Barjon of the Foyer des Missions de Champagne-au-Mont d'Or.

⁵⁴ He did not remain a Marist. See the Catalogue of the exposition Mer de Corail, terres de mission. Les Maristes en Océanie. 1836-1936. Service historique de la Défense, Toulon. Musée Balaguier, La Seyne sur Mer., 3 April-31 March 2006, p. 22. Kindly communicated by Lionel Roos-Jourdan.

4.5 - The document of Brother Bérillus

A notebook written up about 1898, the time of the decree of the venerability of

Father Champagnat, attributed to Brother Bérillus, Assistant, and retracing the life of Father Champagnat, provides some interesting details about the relics of Father Champagnat:

"The day after the death of the Venerable Servant of God, each one wanted to possess some object belonging to him, but Brother François did not grant these holy desires so as not to allow what were already regarded as relics to be dispersed and lost. He gathered in one place all that the Venerable had left behind. His relics are always ardently sought after and kept. The greatest joy we can give our Brothers is to send them a souvenir of the Venerable Father: some fragment of wood from his prie-dieu, a piece of his old cloak, etc. etc. And not only the Brothers of the Institute demand these objects but even persons of the world: everywhere there are requests for medals, rosaries or other objects that have touched his tomb. It is said that most of the families of Marthes or Lavalla have his portrait hung on the walls of their living room; in some families, he is invoked every day.

M. Elisée Neyrand, mayor of Chevière, certified 'that the Christ before which the Venerable prayed in his cell, is considered and kept by his family as the relic of a saint'. He certified in addition 'that the doctor who looked after him during his life and especially during his last illness and whom he knew well, had such veneration and deep respect for the holiness of Father Champagnat that he was happy to keep his rosary, for he regarded it as a sacred relic. However, this doctor, who died a very Christian death some years ago, was not then a particularly religious man and did not fulfill the duties imposed on us by Holy Church'."

This testimony would indicate to us, then, why the major items among Father Champagnat's belongings have disappeared.

In the same way, photos of Champagnat, including perhaps the Arnaud one, could have constituted substitutes for relics: persons attached to the memory of Father Champagnat being able to order them and thus create an autonomous iconographic tradition from the Institute. Nor should one

neglect the initiatives taken by some Brothers, Directors or others, concerned to have more attractive portraits of the Founder than those of Ravery for distribution, at a good price and available in multiple copies.

4.6 - The hair of the deceased

Another argument, minor but quite interesting: the deceased in the Arnaud photo has long hair following the ecclesiastical fashion of the early

XIX^o century. One has only to look at the many portraits contained in the *Origines Maristes* to be convinced of this. They show only one exception: Louis Querbes (1793-1859). The Curé of Ars, who died about 1860, always had long hair. By 1900 ecclesiastics, and men in general, were wearing their hair short.

4.7 - Hypothetical traces of a daguerreotype in the photo

I said earlier that the strongest evidence for the use of a daguerreotype was the scar shown above the left eye of the deceased, which would betray the inverse image given by this type of apparatus. But we can refine our observations.

There were various formats of daguerreotypes, notably the demi-plaque format of 16 x 12.2 cm, that is, slightly larger than the Arnaud photo (14 x 10). As the edges of daguerreotypes often became oxidized, it was necessary to reframe them when one wanted to reproduce them.

The Arnaud photo possibly shows some traces of such a reframing for, on the right edge, the pillow has been cut, and on the left edge, the hands holding the crucifix are no longer visible. The base of the photo also cuts off the arm of the deceased. A good photographer might perhaps have cut off the pillow, but would not have failed to include the hands of the deceased and show his

arm better. It was so much easier for the arm that the space above the deceased was quite sufficient and there were only advantages in avoiding a large dark spot. So the photographer would have taken the best part possible of a document deteriorated at the edges and which originally gave a more complete view of the person.

This hypothesis appears to me to find corroboration in the fact that the photo has retained some black spots in the dark part above the corpse, and these could well be marks of oxidation. A clear spot on the end of the stole as well as some white points here and there also pose a problem. One finds it hard, then, to resist the feeling that this photo is not an original but a copy of a somewhat deteriorated earlier document.

5. WHO WOULD HAVE MADE THE DAGUERREOTYPE OR HAD IT MADE?

The hypothesis of a daguerreotype kept by the Arnaud family from 1840 to about 1900, does not seem to us the most probable one.

5.1 - The Ravery Hypothesis

We would incline towards a document preserved by the Ravery family. Before developing this thesis, we should know something more about a person who is not well known.

The civil register of St Chamond states that he was born on 6 August 1800 in that town⁵⁵. His marriage contract⁵⁶ with Jeanne Garon on 9 January 1824 names him as Joseph Ravery, painter, elder and legitimate son of Pierre Ravery, of the same profession. He died on 26 July 1868. “Landowner”, “former painter”, he left his widow and daughter a tidy capital of 8385F.

Louise-Fleurie Ravery, only daughter, married François-Marie Butavant who died on 8 March 1900. She herself died without children, aged 72, on 12 May 1900⁵⁷. She chose for her residuary legatee Augustine Francine Didier, single, without profession, resident in Saint Chamond. She left a capital of 16,160 F.

Ravery is completely unknown at the Museum of Art of St Etienne. Nor does he figure in the *Dictionnaire des artistes et ouvriers d'art du Lyonnais*⁵⁸. There is no doubt, however, about his profession as a painter. Stéphane Bertholon⁵⁹ situates him as a painter, and friend of the silk-maker Terrasson “a great conjuror and great orator in clubs in 1848”. In *Notre vieux Saint Chamond*⁶⁰ François Gonon specifies that Ravery had done the interior decoration of the chapel of the penitents and “had left some paint-

ings which are not without merit”, including the one of Father Champagnat. Let us add that he did the whole decoration of the chapel of the Hermitage in 1836. The detailed description by Brother François, reproduced by Brother Avit in the *Annales de l'institut* for the year 1836, suggests that Ravery had talent as a painter of frescoes and decorator. He was an artisan of multiple talents as well as an artist.

The invention of the daguerreotype having an immediate interest for artists, Ravery could have made use of an intermediary to have a daguerreotypist obtain for him a portrait very useful for completing the portrait ordered. This would have been made, not at the same time as the sketch for the painting, but during the day of 6 or 7 June: the time required for the arrival of the possible daguerreotypist. At that time, Champagnat was no longer in the armchair but on the bed.

On this subject, the taking of a profile shot is a good argument in favour of an older type of photography, for in 1900 photographic apparatus is sufficiently light and not very demanding in terms of time and light, so as to allow shooting angles from the front, even with persons lying down. Al-

⁵⁵ Information furnished by the Archives of the city of St. Chamond

⁵⁶ A. D. de la Loire, Archives notariales. Maître Malassaguy de Rive-de-Gier 5E-VT1067DEM-8366.

⁵⁷ A.D. de la Loire, Registres de l'enregistrement, 3 Q 6759 et 6899.

⁵⁸ Marius Audin et Eugène Vial, Paris, Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, 1919, t. 2.

⁵⁹ Histoires de St Chamond, 1927, p. 268.

⁶⁰ 1944, p. 41.

ready in the 1850s, post-mortem portraits show the deceased from the front or at least in such a way that the two sides of the face are visible. So the angle of shooting suggests more awkward equipment.

One can suppose that Ravery was able to use the daguerreotype during the painting of the portrait in the studio and then kept it. His only daughter must have inherited it and on her death in 1900, left it to her residual legatee, Augustine Didier. Discovering the daguerreotype and aware of its memorial value at a time when Father Champagnat appeared a potential saint, Augustine Didier would have allowed the Arnaud family to make a copy of a probably damaged portrait.

We may ask if it was not at the same moment that Miss Augustine Didier gave the Brothers of the Hermitage the portrait that is still kept there today. Certainly, a tradition held by Brother Jean Roche today affirms that this portrait was given to Brother François in 1860, but without any proof. Such a gift would be more probable in 1868, on Ravery's death, or in 1900, on the death of his daughter.

But this involves a cascade of hypotheses, and besides, in the course of 2006 the trail of the testament of Mme Butavant, daughter of Joseph Ravery, seems to have definitively disappeared, for this document, registered on 4 May 1900 with Maître Cartier, notary of St Chamond, and rediscovered by M. Marius Arnaud,

does not give an inventory of the goods bequeathed.

5.2 - The Evrard Hypothesis

I have consulted the *Répertoire des photographes de France au XIX^e siècle*, published in 1993, which mentions as the only daguerreotypist for the Loire in the 1840s, a certain Evrard. The author, M. Voignier, whom I consulted, found his name in a work by J. Thierry, of Lyon: *Franches explications sur l'emploi de sa liqueur invariable... Précédées d'un Histoire abrégée de la photographie*, published in Paris and Lyon in 1847. The author praises Evrard "for the perfection of his proofs".

The man in question is probably Charles Albéric Romain Evrard who married Marie Anne Virginie Girodet on 26 July 1841. Born in Cambrai (Nord) on 21 August 1806 or 1809, he graduated from the School of Mines in St Etienne in 1830. In 1841 he was a mining engineer, that is to say, a person quite well off and with a good level of scientific knowledge, like most of the first daguerreotypists. Moreover, he moved in the same milieu as the notable industrialists with close ties to Champagnat, such as Messrs. Génissieux, Thiollière and Neyrand.

Some lengthy research in the Departmental Archives of the Loire has allowed me to situate this person. Director of the mine of the three basins (Unieux, Fraisse and Firminy), Evrard

seems to have been dragged down in its failure in 1865. He died in 1872, indigent and in debt. His wife, Anne-Marie Girodet, died in St Etienne on 13 February 1892. Her death may not have been unconnected to the publication of the Chol photo, the Evrard inheritance probably being broken up at this time. Jules Evrard, son of Charles Evrard and A.M. Girodet, was enrolled as an advocate at the bar of St Etienne in 1869. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he was considered a notable of the city, and it is probable that the financial situation of the family improved after 1870.

Overall then, the Evrard trail is disappointing, even if it is certain that one Evrard practised daguerreotypography in the years 1840-50.

CONCLUSION – BALANCE SHEET

So at the conclusion of this study, the question remains open. On the one hand, we have strong evidence to think that the person in the photo could be Father Champagnat:

- Striking resemblance⁶¹.
- Scar over the right eye documented by the passport and shown on the left in the photo, which leads to the thought that it is a matter of an inverted image, as

with those obtained with a daguerreotype.

- Conviction of the Arnaud family.

The objections are no less important:

- No written or iconographic source to support this document in a decisive way.
- An Arnaud tradition not going back beyond the 1900s and documented by a single photo.
- Difficulty of believing that a daguerreotype could have been made less than a year after the spread of this technique. And by whom?
- Secondary evidence (clothing, crucifix) contradictory.

There remains a question as difficult as the one we have grappled with, and which could close the debate: if this portrait is not of Champagnat, then of whom is it?

At present, then, this portrait cannot represent a complementary iconographic path to that of Ravery. On the other hand, its study has allowed a better view of the context in which the Ravery portrait was completed and to pinpoint the areas of obscurity in its realisation and diffusion.

Finally, this dossier goes far beyond the question of the authenticity or not of the Arnaud photo, for it poses the problem of a Champagnat iconography coming from local initiatives of members of the Congregation or

⁶¹ Mr. Arnaud told me that when he went to have the document photocopied in Saint Chamond, the lady who performed the operation, immediately thought that it concerned Father Champagnat. As for myself, when I showed a copy of the document to an inhabitant of Saint Genest Malifaux, he let me understand quite clearly that he could not see why I was taking so much trouble to prove what was evident at first glance.

even of persons or groups not too concerned with referring to an official image of Father Champagnat, his being their saint as much as the Marist Brothers'. It may be, then, that the striking resemblance between the priest in the Arnaud photo and Champagnat aroused in some the conviction that it was indeed the man they venerated, without their taking

care to verify the authenticity of the document.

Much more investigation, therefore, is needed, and to make further progress in the study of the Arnaud photo, the Patrimony Commission proposed to explore an original line of research. Brother Ivo Strobino will give the results of this in the following article.

THE ARNAUD PHOTO, THE RAVERY PORTRAIT AND CHAMPAGNAT'S CRANIUM

Results of a Scientific Analysis



**Ivo Antônio
Strobino, fms**

*Province of
Brasil Centro-Sul*

The appearance in 2004 of the Arnaud photo caused lively interest among certain Brothers more directly linked with research on the Founder, for it was a question of a photograph which was held by the family of Marius Arnaud, direct descendant of Philippe Arnaud, the nephew of Marcellin Champagnat, and because it represented a priest on his death-bed with a striking physiological resemblance to Father Champagnat.

Brother André Lanfrey, coordinator of the Commission of Marist Spiritual Patrimony was especially interested in this discovery and undertook some specific research on certain particular aspects provided by the photo: date, photographic studio which produced it, procedure used for copying the image, type of priestly garb on the image, especial indications, etc. He also attempted to establish the genealogical tree of the Arnaud Family, trying to understand when and

how the photo had been made and what paths it had followed until it ended up in the hands of Marius Arnaud, who had very kindly presented it to the Superior at the Hermitage in January 2004. Brother André Lanfrey's work constitutes the text of another article of this same issue of *Marist Notebooks*.

At the annual meeting of the International Commission of the Marist Spiritual Patrimony in Rome, in June 2005, the Arnaud photograph was a topic for one of the sessions.

On this occasion it was decided to undertake a rigorous scientific study, making a comparison between the **photograph** and Champagnat's **cranium**. I was charged with this task, in the name of the Brazilian Brothers, having undertaken a scientific work in this domain, outside of Brazil, as will be explained later on, in the first part of this article.

FIRST PART

A Reconstruction of the facial and cranial measurement of Champagnat's head

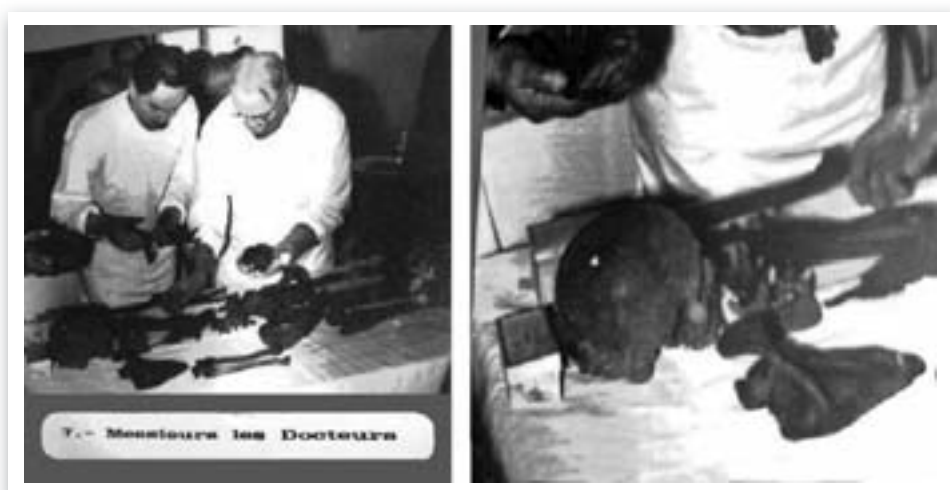
1. COPY OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT'S CRANIUM

As we all know, in 1955, on the exhumation of Marcellin Champagnat for his beatification, several of his bones were removed completely: femur, tibia, phalanges and also the **cranium**. These bones were intact, and photos were taken of them at the time. Having cleaned them, authenticated them, and treated them as necessary, the bones were prepared to be again preserved as holy relics. While waiting for the new and precious urn for the relics – which is presently found in the Hermitage

chapel - the Brothers came up with a good idea: make a mould of the cranium. So from the mould a few copies of Marcellin Champagnat's cranium were realised.

2. CRANIOMETRICAL RECONSTRUCTION

In 1977, the Brazilian Provincials approved a project presented by SIMAR, Interprovincial Marist Secretariat, which suggested undertaking a scientific task of reconstruction of the cranial measurements of Marcellin's face. A copy of the cranium had already been sent to Brazil, from



In 1955, exhumation of Champagnat's remains: we can see the cranium still intact.

which it would be possible to lead the project to a successful conclusion.

Brother Roque Brugnara, executive secretary of SIMAR, and Brother Claudio Girardi, former Councillor General had led the project. The scientific work was confided to the team of Dr Badan Palhares who, at that time, was a reputable Brazilian authority in the area of reconstruction, in the field of forensics.

On a copy of Champagnat's cranium, the gaps between the bones and missing cartilages were ascertained and were then coated with appropriate plastic wax to a depth carefully identical to that of the normal depth of tissue and the complexion of the human face. A complete skull of the head of a man was thus constructed, with the proportions provided by the copy of the cranium. We then had the possibility of a reconstructed head of Marcellin Champagnat in 1840.

3. FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION

The next part of the work consisted in defining the appearance which would be given to this skull of the head, so that it would form a human face having the physical expression consistent with the personality of Marcellin Champagnat. The task was confided to two artists in plastic construction, Cícero Davila and Marco Antonio Cavallari, both from Sao Paulo. They had access to the various descriptions of the character of Marcellin Champagnat and studied some pictures representing our Founder, in particular the *Ravery portrait*. The attempt of the two to return to life the personality in the portrait meant giving expression to the face: hair, colour of the skin, clarity of eyes and general expression. Unfortunately the result did not please everyone, because of the idealised picture we all



Phases of the reconstruction of the cranium

have of the Founder. We have been influenced by paintings which throughout history have represented

stereotypes of Marcellin, according to the artistic, aesthetic and spiritual ideas of their authors.



Attempt at a facial reconstruction using the measurements of the copy of the cranium.

4. IN SEARCH OF AN OFFICIAL PORTRAIT

In 1998, while in Brazil this work was being done on the facial reconstruction, the recognition of a miracle attributed to Father Champagnat was announced in Rome, thus marking the end of the long process toward his canonisation. It was then that, even before the publishing of the awaited date, in the General House a group was constituted to work at preparing all the material and social aspects of the canonisation: "*le groupe pro-canonisation*". One of the preoccupations of the group was to decide on the official portrait of the Church's newest saint, a portrait which would be used not only for the revealing of the painting, but also be reproduced on the huge tableau pro-

vided on the façade of St. Peter's on the day of the canonisation.

On 9th October 1998, Brother Benito Arbués, Superior General, sent a letter to the executive secretary of Simar, requesting that the work which was in course be speeded so that the canonisation planning group could resolve the result of the facial reconstruction in question, as an element in the choice of the official portrait. In response to Brother Benito's request, photos of the work were sent to him as they were at that time, even if they were not completely finished. The photos were examined, the canonisation planning group praised the work of craniological reconstruction because of the contribution brought to bear on the exact proportions of the face, but it considered that Marcellin's **facial** re-

construction was not good. It thought it needed a more dynamic and lively reconstruction of the face. The final result lacked engagement and attractiveness.

Then, following the choice of Goyo's painting for the official portrait for the canonisation, the work being done by the Brazilian group of SIMAR was

suspended, before the plasticisation artists could correct the face to give it an expression that would be more enthusiastic and serene, and less sad and serious. The main pieces of the work of reconstruction of Marcellin's cranium and face were later sent to Rome tidied up. They are to be found in archives at the General House.

SECOND PART

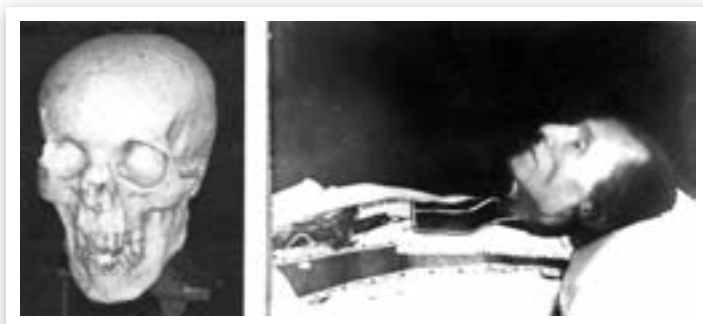
Comparison of the *Arnaud photo* with the copy of the cranium

In Brazil, after the restructuring of the six Provinces which existed up until 2002, UMBRASIL was created, an organisation which coordinated Marist activities at a national level. This was the organisation which replaced and enlarged the one previously called SIMAR. It was thanks to UMBRASIL that the scientific plan for a comparative analysis of the *Arnaud photo* took shape.

In May 2007, in Brasilia Brother José Wagner Rodrigues da Cruz, executive secretary of UMBRASIL, and Mr José Radaelli, his assistant for inter-institutional relations contacted Dr Malthus

Fonseca Galvao, involved in the forensic aspects of medicine, a noted authority in Forensic Anthropology and Professor of the Catholic University of Brasilia, who was working at the Institute of Forensic Medicine for the Federal district and in the Criminology Section of the police academy. They obtained his agreement to undertake a scientific comparison of the *Arnaud photo* with the copy of Champagnat's cranium.

The conclusion of this scientific analysis was made public on 6th December 2007, by verdict 19.898/2007 of the



Copy of Champagnat's cranium and "the Arnaud photo."

Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology. The result was negative, that is to say that there was no actual consistency between the photo and the cranium. Some stages of this study are summarised in the following paragraphs.

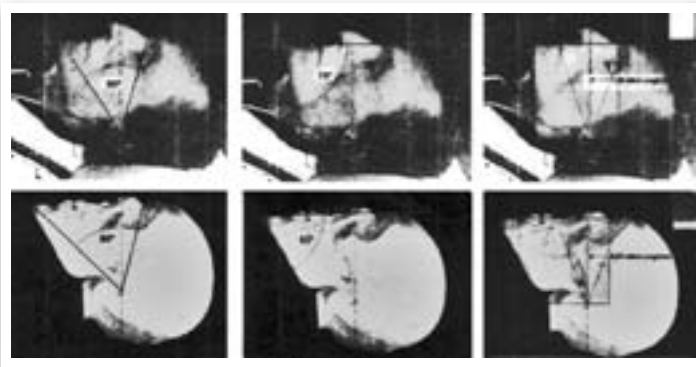
1. ANGULAR COMPARISON

The angle formed by certain specific points of the face in the photo does not coincide with the angle formed by the corresponding points on the cranium. Three important craniometrical

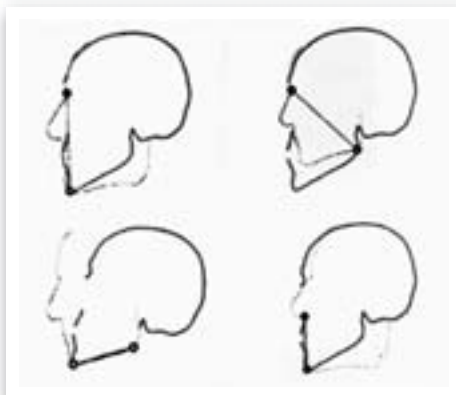
points were taken as a basis: the pignon, the pogonion and the nasion.

2. COMPARISON OF FACIAL AND CRANIAL CONTOURS

The line of the facial/mandibular contour of the photograph, re-dimensioned in correct proportions, does not coincide with the contour of the cranium. When certain essential points are lined up against each other, we observe that the contour lines deviate appreciably.



Variations in millimetres of the position



Distortions of the sphericity on of the cranium on the photograph

3. LIPS CLOSED AND DENTAL ARCH OPEN

The photograph shows a face with lips closed. This does not prevent, inside, the position of the jaw from being open or closed. As the cranium presents the jaw closed, a projection of the open mandible was made with the help of a computer to verify if in this hypothesis, there

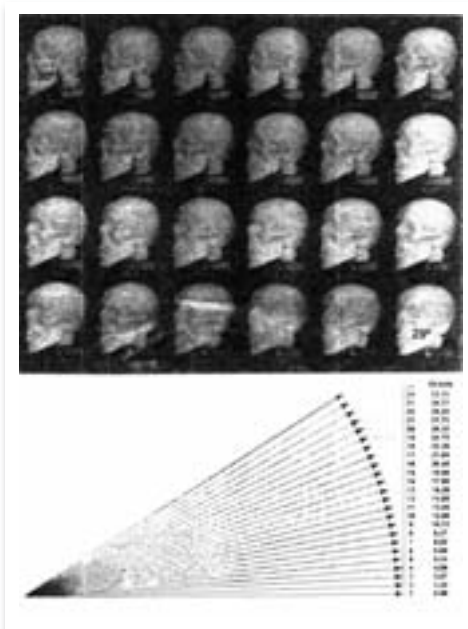
could have been some coincidence of lines of contour noted. Likewise, in this case divergences remain.

4. MILLIMETRIC ROTATION OF THE CRANIUM.

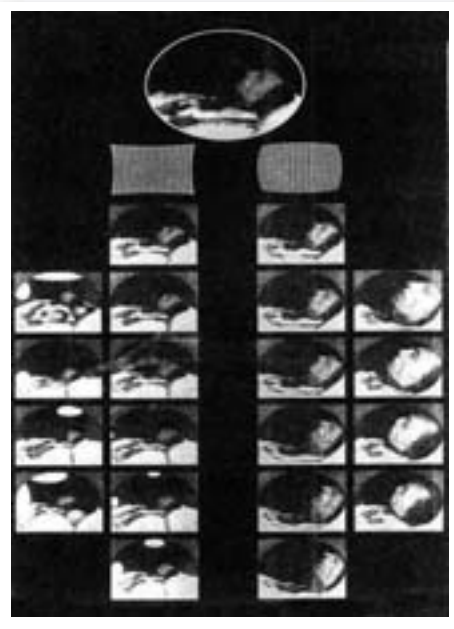
In an attempt to align a position of the cranium identical to that of the face represented in the photograph, the cranium was submitted to a millimetric rotation. None of the various positions which were generated indicated a significant coincidence of lines of contours analysed.

5. DISTORTION AND CURVATURE (SPHERICITY)

The *Arnaud Photograph* is a copy of a *daguerreotype*, that is to say, an image from the beginnings of photography. Daguerreotypes nearly always produced small distortions along the edge. Following a hypothesis that such distortions were the reason for no significant coincidence in alignment between the cranium and the *Arnaud photo*, they proceeded to make convex and concave distortions on the photograph. Again, none of the new positions obtained gave satisfying results.



Variations in millimeters of the position of the cranium



Distortions of sphericity in the photo

6. CONCLUSION OF THE ANALYSIS

The study also provides other points of analysis, all showing the incompatibility of the profile of the cranium with that of the photographed face. The most accentuated divergence is that of the jaw and the chin, which were more elongated in the cranium than in the photograph. The final verdict, pronounced by the experts, Dr Malthus Fonseca Galvao and his assistant, the forensic medical specialist Dr Elvis Adriano da Silva Oliveira, affirm the following:

1. *the photograph is incompatible with the copy of the cranium;*
2. *the person from whom the cranial copy was taken is not the same person who is represented in the photograph.*

7. A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

The preceding conclusion affirms nothing concerning the Founder; it only says that the person photographed was not the same one as the one with that cranium. The identity of the person in the photo remained an open question because it was of a priest with hair and clothes resembling those of Marcellin Champagnat, with a small scar above the right eye, a startling detail since Marcellin's passport of 1836 also described the existence of a "small scar above the right eye."

When I presented the result of the scientific analysis to the members of the International Commission of the

Patrimony, at its annual gathering in Rome, in June 2008, an obvious question cropped up: **is the cranium used to establish the comparison with the photograph a true copy of Champagnat's cranium?**

Even while having available documents which retraced the itinerary followed to obtain this object and transfer the copy to Brazil, the question was logical: that there have may been circumstances that led to the copy of the cranium being false, which would render all the study to date invalid. The idea was surfaced for asking Dr. Malthus' team in Brazil to do a second examination, this time analysing the cranium with Ravery's painting.

We know that the painting created by Ravery was the most exact representation we have of the Founder, even if the portrait was painted after his death. In the follow-up study it was reasonable to propose one of two possibilities:

1. If the cranium had lines and points consistent with the painting, this would be proof that it was a true copy of Champagnat's cranium.
2. If the comparison of the cranium with the portrait gave the painting a negative result, that is to say that it represented notable differences, we would have to admit that the cranium was not Champagnat's, or that the painting realised by Ravery had been poorly done, and that it did not reproduce in an exact manner the craniometrical proportions of the deceased's face.

The conclusions from this second study were put forward at the beginning of 2009. The result of the analysis was made public on 16th June 2009 in the Bulletin no. 24136/09 from the Laboratory of Forensic An-

thropology of Brasilia. The document is signed by Dr. Malthus and by another member of his team, the forensic specialist, Dr. Cristofer Diego Beraldi Martins. We will present below a few points on this work

THIRD PART

Consistency between the cranium and the Ravery portrait



The Ravery portrait and the copy of the cranium

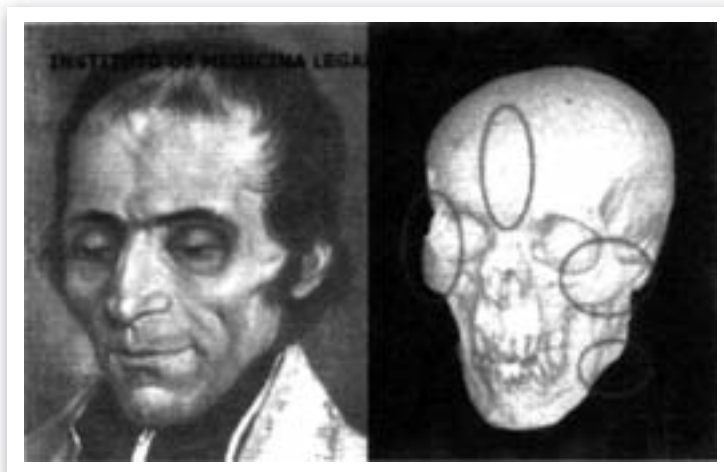
The scientific work undertaken was the comparative analysis of the copy of the cranium with the portrait of Marcellin Champagnat, a painting in oil undertaken by Ravery the day of the Founder's death. Its being a painting, Ravery's portrait is an artistic conception. We know that in an artistic production, the original is not always presented in exact proportions and characteristics, the artist being always free to bring out the

elements with which he himself identifies the most. Bearing in mind that the object of the analysis is a portrait and not a photograph, the analysis of Ravery's portrait was regarded more from a *cranoscopic* aspect than from a *craniometrical* perspective, that is to say that research was undertaken on the salient physiognomic characteristics without submitting them to strict linear or angular measurements.

1. EIGHT STRIKING RESEMBLANCES

The cranium was photographed from an angle as close as possible to that of the Ravery portrait. The photo of the cranium and the Ravery portrait, when they were placed side by side, revealed resemblances on eight important points:

1. in the frontal cranial median
2. in the general form of the cranium
3. in the form of the chin
4. in the proportion between the third frontal bones
5. in the hypoplasius of the sinuses and the rise of the zygomatic (arch)
6. in the contour of the mandibular base and its angle
7. in the aspect of the surorbitairy arches and the globelle
8. in the craniofacial proportion



Indication of points of visible agreement

2. PROBABILITIES

We can advance the hypothesis that, at the time of the Founder, in the region where he lived, others could also have some of his marked facial characteristics, and consequently the cranium might not be that of Marcellin Champagnat but of someone else. What is the probability of this occurrence?

Applying the calculus of probability (which is not included in this article)

the possibility that it is another person having the same eight facial characteristics indicated is hardly 1.05%.

Given this degree of probability, the verdict of Dr. Malthus and his team concludes in these terms: **by methods of approximation, there exists a probability of 98.95% that the copy of the cranium analysed was of the same person who is represented in Ravery's portrait.**

This result offers us the certitude that the copy of the cranium is neither false nor irregular, thus validating the analyses performed on it.

CONCLUSION

The description of this work of technical and scientific analysis from the *Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology of Brasília*, comparing Champagnat's cranium with the *Arnaud photograph*, can be regarded as a chapter in the Marist story of the quest for revealing new aspects of the human personality of St. Marcellin. It belongs within the general theme of the iconography of the Founder.

Given the lack of an authentic photo of the Founder, the numerous images of him that have been produced over the nearly two centuries of existence of the Institute derive as much from the Ravery portrait as from the imagination of other artists. These latter ones, since they emanate from the subjectivity of the author, are necessarily less authentic and more subject to debate.

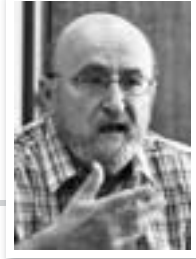
The appearance of the *Arnaud photo* has aroused interest and curiosity for if it were to be revealed as authentic, it would be an accurate capture of the Founder's face. But, while waiting, unless new elements arise, the technical verdict dismisses the daguerreotype image which is the object of our study.

This negative result must not be considered disappointing. In the same way as we have for Jesus and Mary only idealised images in our hearts, painted in the colours of our devotion and marked by the nuances that we gain from the Gospels, it is the same with the image of our Founder. We are challenging ourselves by representing him subjectively, by putting the emphasis on the striking aspects of his human and spiritual personality. It is in loving contemplation that his image will be formed in us. Thus, faithful to this way of thinking, we can conclude with this verse from the Gospel:

Lord, show us the Father and that will be sufficient for us

(Jn. 14.18).

OBSERVATIONS ON THE WORK OF JOSEPH RAVERY



André Lanfrey
fms

For most Marist Brothers, Joseph Ravery (or Ravéry) is the man of a single work: the portrait of Marcellin Champagnat, the original of which, begun on 6 June 1840, the date of the Founder's death, was completed at the beginning of 1841. In fact, he had already worked for the Institute for a considerable time in 1836, and we will see that considerable traces of his work are still to be found today.

1. JOSEPH RAVERY AND THE ICONOGRAPHIC SCHEMA OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT

Born on 6 October 1800, and deceased on 26 July 1868, Joseph Ravery worked for Father Champagnat from quite early on. The Annals of the Hermitage⁶² mention "a painting of Christ on canvas which is in the refec-

tory, and is 1.35cm high by 1.07m wide (which) was done by M. Ravery, painter from St Chamond, from whom Father Champagnat had commissioned it for the refectory of the Brothers at Lavalla, and it has remained since in the refectory at N.D. de l'Hermitage."⁶³ Ravery had certainly great experience and an established reputation when in 1836 he decorated the new chapel at Hermitage. It was the opportunity for Father Champagnat to pass on his spirituality message in the decoration. At the same time, this decoration gives evidence of the material and symbolic success of his work, since he could devote to it, certainly with the help of benefactors, considerable sums of money.

In the Annals of the Hermitage⁶⁴ Brother François describes for us this monument, of which no representation has come down to us:

⁶² A.F.M. 213/ 16 p. 21.

⁶³ It appears to have disappeared today.

⁶⁴ A.F.M. 213/16. The Annales of Brother Avit (Annales de l'institut t. 1 p. 175 § 149-152) largely repeat this description but do not mention the Marial invocations in the sanctuary.

"M. Ravery, a painter from St Chamond and a friend of the house, did the paintings with which it is adorned. Twelve frescoed Corinthian columns, with a cornice projecting above, embellish the sanctuary. Between each column there are painted in fresco medallions with some of the invocations from the litanies of the Blessed Virgin, represented in symbolic form.

On the Gospel side (to the right of the congregation) 1. Foederis Arca: the Ark of the Covenant; 2. Rosa mystica [Mystic rose]: a beautiful rose; 3. Regina martyrum [Queen of martyrs]: a royal crown placed between two palms entwined in a crown of roses; 4. Turris Davidica [Tower of David]: a tower; 5. Auxilium christianorum [Help of Christians]: a cross and a sword fastened together.

On the Epistle side: 1. Janua coeli [Gate of Heaven]: an open door; 2. Stella matutina [Morning star]: a star; Regina virginum [Queen of Virgins]: two lilies entwined in a crown of roses surmounted by a dove; 4. Sedes Sapientiae [Seat of Wisdom]: a beautiful throne surmounted by a dove; 5. Consolatrix afflictorum [Consoler of the afflicted]: a fruit-laden vine clinging to a cross.

In the middle of the sanctuary, behind the altar, is a large picture representing the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin painted on canvas by M. Ravery. Above the picture is a fresco of a crucifix with two adoring angels. At the same level, on the Epistle side, there is the statue of the Blessed Virgin, the same one as in the old chapel, and on the Gospel side, that of St Joseph in gilded wood also purchased by Father Champagnat. Below, on each side of the painting, there are also statues, of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga on the Epistle side and of Saint Francis Xavier on the Gospel side.

The part that forms the nave, as well as that reserved for visitors, is decorated with 15 Ionic columns with a cornice of the same order above. Between each column is a picture of the Stations of the Cross⁶⁵. On each side and at the back of the chapel, above the cornice, there is a fresco of a curved garland of roses.

The nave is lit on both sides by two arched windows and the sanctuary by only one, the window on the other side being a painted one⁶⁶. The ceiling of the chapel is of plaster and in the form of a vault supported by large wooden beams. Above the altar, is a fresco of the Holy Spirit on a blue background, surrounded by a great circle of glory.⁶⁷"

A significant detail, which is not connected with Ravery but gives the Hermitage a clearly conventual status:

"The part of the chapel destined for visitors is separated (from where the Brothers are) by a balustrade 2.60m in height,

⁶⁵ This is certainly not Ravery's work. It must have been of mediocre value since Brother Avit indicates in § 160 that, shortly afterward, Father Gourdias, parish priest of St Polycarpe parish in Lyon, donated a new Way of the Cross, which he had just blessed himself.

⁶⁶ Certainly in trompe l'œil.

⁶⁷ Brother Avit specifies that in the middle of the sanctuary there were also painted two rose windows, one on the left and one on the right. There were also frescoes of large rose windows in the middle of the ceiling in both the Brothers' nave and the part reserved for visitors»...

composed of complete panels to breast-height and decorated above with bars terminating in a point.”

So the essence of the spiritual message is contained in the sanctuary. On a vertical axis we have the Holy Spirit, the crucifix, the Assumption, the altar. The centre of the horizontal axis is the Assumption, surrounded on all sides by medallions inspired by the litanies of the Blessed Virgin.

It is clear that Champagnat did not choose the twelve invocations among

the 45 in the litanies by chance. It is also easy to see that they are in pairs and constitute a sort of mystical ladder reaching its ultimate expression in the Assumption.

The following table allows us to visualise this organisation. It is too fastidious to interpret this message with all its rich symbolic connotations. However, one can observe that these invocations are based either on symbols of authority (queen, throne, tower, arch), or mercy (consolatrix, help, door), or beauty (rose, star).

	ASSUMPTION	
Epistle Side		Gospel Side
Janua Cœli (open door)	Mary guarantee of our salvation?	Foederis Arca (the ark of the covenant)
Stella Matutina (a star)	Mary guide and ideal model?	Rosa Mystica (a beautiful rose)
Regina Virginum (lily, crown, dove)	Mary participant in the Redemption?	Regina Martyrum (crown of roses and palms)
Sedes Sapientiæ (throne surmounted by a dove)	Mary participant in the Incarnation?	Turris Davidica (a tower)
Consolatrix Afflictorum (vine twined around a cross)	Mary revealing the cross as principle of fruitfulness and victory?	Auxilium Christianorum (a cross and sword fastened together)

Thus, the Assumption, crosspoint of the vertical and horizontal axes, uniting symbolically earth and heaven, appears to express a Champagnat spirituality which, although it is not surprising, seems to me to be some-

what neglected in Marist texts. It is amazing, for example, that Champagnat did not keep any invocation of Mary as Mother when the litanies offer nine invocations beginning with “Mater”. In the same way, he dis-

carded the seven invocations beginning with “Virgo”. It seems he is offering us a Marial spirituality which is both militant and mystical.

2. OTHER WORKS BY RAVERY

François Gonon, in *Notre vieux Saint-Chamond*, 1944, recalls: “... the painter Ravery, credited with the interior decoration of the Chapel of the Penitents⁶⁸ (the four panels on the walls are his without doubt). He has left some paintings which are not without merit ».

These four panels from the Chapel of Penitents have doubtless been preserved but we do not know where. In any case, the internet site of the General Heritage Inventory (site Palissy) mentions several works by Ravery in the town of Saint Bonnet-le-Château, not far from Saint Etienne:

2.1 - An adoration of the Blessed Sacrament by angels⁶⁹

Painting 88 cm long by 66cm wide. It shows a monstrance in the sky surrounded by the heads of little angels, and above a group of four angels, two of them praying while one is throwing flowers and the last putting incense into a censer.

2.2 - The Trinity above an unidentified pilgrimage site

This painting has the same dimensions as the preceding. In the skies appear: on the left, Christ holding his cross, in the centre, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and on the right, the Father, represented as an old man holding a globe and a sceptre. In a cloud at the feet of Father and Son are the heads of little angels. At the bottom of the painting there is a landscape with a river in the foreground, a plain with a church in the middle ground, and two conical mountains in the background. The initials “JR 1838” feature on the painting.

2.3 - A presentation of the Scapular to Saint Simon Stock

in the presence of Saint Teresa of Avila. Its dimensions are impressive: 2.56 m long, and 2.06 m wide. While the Virgin is presenting the scapular, the child Jesus on her knees is stretching out his arms to the female saint. The event takes place in a scene representing a convent, with a river flowing in front under a bridge. According to the account book of the hospital of St Bonnet-le-Château, this painting was commissioned by the confraternities. It cost 220F and was completed by Ravery, who also

⁶⁸ Demolished in 1965.

⁶⁹ For these first three paintings, see the appendices.

signed it "Ravery, 1836". The frame was constructed and painted by the same artist in September the same year.

2.4 - Baptism of Christ

belonging to a retable for the combined baptismal fonts of the collegiate church of St Bonnet-le-Château. The painting was screwed on to the retable. Height: 129.5 cm ; width: 116.5 cm. It is signed "Ravery fils, 1839".

2.5 - The retable

referred to above dates from 1676 and is probably the work of Pierre Peyreyron, sculptor in Monistrol-sur-Loire. It is of wood. Its dimensions are 2.40 m high and 2.44 m wide. In order to install it over the baptismal fonts, in 1838, Ravery, who directed the whole work of decorating the church at this time, remade the base and painted the top-piece in imitation wood.

2.6 - Adoration of the shepherds

Canvas 2.12m high and 1.57m wide. The seventeenth century painter is unknown, but the frame, identical with that of the presentation of the scapular to Saint Simon Stock, is certainly by Ravery.

CONCLUSION

This inventory shows that Ravery was an active decorator of churches in the years when Father Champagnat was building up his work at the Hermitage. He appears to have been not only a painter but an entrepreneur in decoration, probably using the services of a team without doing himself all the works that he signed. The works by him mentioned are probably only a small part of his work. In particular, his talent as a portrait painter is only known to us from the portrait of Marcellin Champagnat made on 6 June 1840.

Some Documents concerning Ravery

CONTRACT OF MARRIAGE⁷⁰

*"In the presence of François Mallassaguy and his colleague, notaries resident in Rive de Gier (Loire).
The year eighteen hundred and twenty-four, the thirty-first of January.
M. Joseph Ravéry, painter, elder son and legitimate heir of Pierre Ravéry of the same profession and
of Mme Hélène Montfouilloux, living with his father and mother in St Chamond, Place Saint Pierre.*

⁷⁰ Archives notariées, fonds Malassaguy, notaire à Rive-de-Gier (Archives Départementales de la Loire, 5E_VT 1067DEM_8366)

And Mlle Jeanne Garon, elder and legitimate daughter of Jérôme Garon, property owner, and of Fleurie Foiras living with her father and mother in the place of Treyve, commune of Longes & Treyve, on the advice and with the consent of their fathers and mothers here present have concluded the agreement for their future marriage in the following manner:

M. Joseph Ravéry and Mlle Jeanne Garon place at their common disposal their own goods and property, duly certified, which would be their portion in remaining single.

The actual property of the bride consists of:

- 1. her wardrobe estimated by both parties at the sum of five hundred francs, which, on the dissolution of the marriage by the death (?) of her future husband, she will have the right of reclaiming in kind or in the estimated value. M. Joseph Ravéry being responsible for the value indicated, from the day the marriage is celebrated, there will be no need for another legal act;*
- 2. and the additional property which is assured her by her father.*

In the favour of the marriage, Jérôme Garon has made a gift, between living persons and irrevocable, but to be deducted from her future inheritance, to his daughter of a thousand francs, in silver.

Of this amount, one hundred francs have been credited to the future husband who has withdrawn it on his authority, given receipt, and made himself responsible for it up to the present for his future wife. The surplus of this sum of a thousand francs will be paid by the donor as he has engaged at the rate of a hundred francs at the end of each year as from this day.

In proof of the affection that they bear their son Joseph Ravéry and, under his authority, Hélène Montfouilloux, they make a gift between living persons and irrevocable of the house and garden of which the last named is owner, the house situated in St Chamond, Place St Pierre, and bordered on the east by the public square, on the south by Rue St Pierre and on the east and south by the house of the named Perat and Gagnol. This house, which consists of a ground floor, a cellar, a first floor and a loft, provides an annual income of one hundred and fifty francs, and the garden situated at the place of the cross of Beaujeu, commune of St Chamond, is bordered on the east by the land of M. de Montdragon, on the south by the vineyard of M. Souchon, on the west by the garden of M. Corrompt (?) and on the north by the Square of the Croix de Beaujeu and gives an annual revenue of fifty francs.

In proof of his attachment to his future wife, the future husband makes her, by these presents, gift between living persons and irrevocable, of a house and garden of which he has just become the receiver, but the designated will not be able to enjoy the effect of this arrangement until after the death of the said Joseph Ravéry and the death of the said couple Ravéry & Montfouilloux, who reserve for themselves its express use during their lives.

Which act, made and passed at the said Rive de Gier office of M. Mallassaguy and after being read, the parties minus the mother of the future husband have signed with the receiver notary, the named person not having signed herself because not knowing what she has declared.

*Joseph Ravéry⁷¹ Jeanne Garon
Pierre Ravéry, Jérôme Garon, élène Monfuollio (sic)
Guauttier Mallassaguy*

[NB. The translator has not made any attempt to reproduce the archaic legalese of the original]

⁷¹ See below, in annex, the reproduction of the signatures

DEATH OF JOSEPH RAVERY⁷²

Monday 27 July 1868.

Death of Ravery husband of Garon, 68 years

M. François Marie Butavand receiver and (?) of the civic hospices of this town, 45 years old, rue de la Fondrière, maison Ravery n° 9 and M. Laurent Girard caretaker and attendant at the Town Hall, 45 years old, Grande Rue maison Thomas n° 77 not related

Who have declared that Joseph Ravery native of Saint Chamond son of the deceased Pierre Ravery and Hélène Montfouilloux, 6 October 1800, husband of Jeanne Garon, landed proprietor, ex-painter, aged 68, died on Sunday 26 July at 4 o'clock in the morning in his home, Rue de la Fondrière n° 9.

In the Alphabetic Table
of successions and absences
(A.D. de la Loire, 3Q 6892) :

In the Register of Enrolment
(A.D. de la Loire 3Q 6720 p. 54
cote 115):

Name: *Ravery Jean Joseph*

Profession: *proprietor*

Place of death: *St Chamond*

Age: *68*

Date: *26 July 1868*

Husband of Jeanne Garon

Heirs: *Garon Jeanne and Lucie Ravéry*

Goods declared:

value of personal property: 385F

revenue from estate: 400F

*"Ravéry Jean Joseph deceased 26 July 1868,
husband of Jeanne Garon*

At 20 January 1869"

"Have appeared:

*1° Mme. Jeanne Garon, widow of the deceased,
housewife of St Chamond...*

*2° M. François Marie Butavant receiver of the
hospices of Saint Chamond acting as husband of
Mme Fleurie Lucie Ravéry residing with him but
who intends to appear only to meet the payment
of the rights due to the treasury...*

Total of acquests : 8385 F.

⁷² Etat-civil de la mairie de Saint Chamond

DEATH OF JEANNE GARON HIS WIFE ⁷³

Name: Garon Jeanne, No profession

Place of death: St Chamond

Age: 82

Date: 31 October 1883

Widow of Ravéry Joseph

Heir: her daughter Ravéry Lucie of St Chamond

Transfers due to Death (A.D. de la Loire, 3Q 6734 p. 91)

Direct inheritance of Garon Marie, widow Ravéry deceased at St Chamond 31 October 1883 at the age of 82 ... leaving as sole rightful heir her daughter Ravéry Lucie wife of M. Butavant.

Her dowry estimated at 77 F.

Properties

1. House and garden Rue Ardaillon 9. Revenue of 500 F. of which half for the inheritance: 250 F.

2. House Place Saint Pierre n° 11 owned by the deceased. Revenue of 200 F.

Capital 9000 F.

BUTAVANT INHERITANCE

Declaration of transfer due to death (A.D. de la Loire, 3Q 6759). Declaration of 23 October 1900 n° 60.

Inheritance of Madame widow Butavant

The undersigned Augustine Francine Didier, spinster of full age, without profession, residing in Saint Chamond, rue de Lyon, acting as residuary legatee declares that Madame Ravéry Lucie Fleurie, aged ? widow of M. François Marie Butavant, without profession, domiciled in Saint Chamond rue de Lyon died in her home on 12 May 1900.

She has left no heir in reserve and by her will received (by) M. Cartier, notary of St Chamond 4 May 1900, she has made her residuary legatee Mlle Didier, informant.

The inheritance consists of:

Property as estate, estimated 160F

And a property situated in Saint Chamond Rue de Lyon, composed of a dwelling house and garden, of an extent of about 1300 square meters, unlet.

Revenue: 800F Capital: 16,000F

Total: 16,160 F.

The informant affirms as honest and true the present declaration contained in one page.

St Chamond 23 October 1900

Augustine Didier.

⁷³ Table alphabétique des successions et absences (A.D. de la Loire, 3Q 6896)

RAVERY IN THE LITERATURE OF ST CHAMOND⁷⁴

Stéphane Bertholon, *Histoires de Saint Chamond*, 1927.

*"We conclude by enumerating some notables of Saint Chamond. We cite at random and briefly:
The silkmaker Terrasson, great conjurer and great club orator in 1848; his friend Ravéry the painter;
the handsome Butavand, officer of the Garde Nationale..."*

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE RAVERY-BUTAVANT FAMILY According to information provided by the departmental archives of the Loire

*Pierre Ravery, painter, and Hélène Montfouilloux,
living in Saint Chamond have as son Jean Joseph Ravery born in 1800.*

In 1801 birth of Jeanne Garon, his future wife.

*Jean-Joseph Ravery, painter, married 26 July 1824 Jeanne Garon daughter of Jérôme Garon,
landowner in Longes and Treyves, and of Fleurie Foiras.*

In 1828 birth of their only daughter: Fleurie Lucie Ravery.

In 1836 Ravery decorates the chapel of the Hermitage, near Saint Chamond

In 1836-39 Joseph Ravery executes important works in Saint Bonnet-le-Château.

*At an unspecified date (about 1848), Fleurie-Lucie marries François-Marie Butavant receiver
of the hospices of Saint Chamond.*

Death of Joseph Ravery 26 July 1868

Death of Jeanne Garon, wife of Ravery 31 October 1883

Death of François Marie Butavant at Saint Chamond 8 March 1900.

*Death of Fleurie Lucie Butavant-Ravery 12 May 1900 at St Chamond. Augustine Didier,
who appears to have been her servant, is residual legatee.*

⁷⁴ Information kindly supplied by Brother Dominique Murigneux, native of Saint Chamond.

Appendix

APPENDIX 1

The signatures of the Ravery - Garon marriage contract

Extract of the marriage certificate of Joseph Ravery and Jeanne Garon 26 July 1824

It is to be noted that neither Joseph Ravery nor his father Pierre use an accent on their name while other texts give “Ravéry”.



APPENDIX 2

The paintings of St Bonnet le Chateau

Department: 42 Référence: IM42000490

Area of study: Saint-Bonnet-le-Château

Commune: Saint-Bonnet-le-Château

Held where: Medieval citadel, Ursuline convent,
CURRENTLY hospital Référence: IA42000267

Actual title: paintings (2): **Trinity above a pilgrimage site,
Adoration of the host by angels**

Cartography Lambert3 x = 0735470 y = 0348620

Legal status: Public Property

Topographical inventory dossier established in 1996, 1997 by Ducouret Bernard; Monnet Thierry © General inventory, 1996

DESCRIPTION

Technical category: painting

Structure: vertical rectangle

Materials and techniques: canvas (support): oil painting

Description: artificial frame

Representation and ornamentation: landscape (river, mountain, church, pilgrimage);
Trinity, in the air, little angel; monstrance, in the air, little angel, angel, prayer, censer, flower

Subject of first painting: Trinity in the air above an unidentified pilgrimage site;

Subject of second painting: Monstrance in the sky surrounded by the heads of little angels and underneath a group of four angels with two in prayer, one throwing flowers and the last putting incense in a censer.

Dimensions: h = 88 l = 69

Condition of work: A little hole at the base of the Trinity painting.

Marks and inscriptions: signature (paint, monogram, on the work) date (paint, on the work), signature and date on both paintings: J.R. 1838

HISTORY

Author(s): Ravery J. [?]
 Place of execution: Rhône-Alpes, 42, Saint-Chamond [?]
 Dating: 2nd quarter 19th century. 1838

The initials J.R. probably correspond to those of Ravery, painter of Saint-Chamond, from whom another work for the same hospital was ordered in 1836 (cf. dossier).

42 SAINT BONNET LE CHATEAU
 MEDIEVAL CITADEL - CONVENT - HOSPITAL Ursuline convent
 PAINTINGS (2) Trinity above a pilgrimage site and Adoration of the host by angels



Trinity above a pilgrimage site

Jean-Marie Refflé, Eric Dessert © Région Rhône-Alpes,
 inventaire général du patrimoine culturel, 1997
 ADAGP n° 97420474 XA

42 SAINT BONNET LE CHATEAU

MEDIEVAL CITADEL - CONVENT - HOSPITAL Ursuline convent

PAINTINGS (2) Trinity above a pilgrimage site and Adoration of the host by angels

**Adoration of the monstrance by angels**

Jean-Marie Refflé, Eric Dessert © Région Rhône-Alpes,
inventaire général du patrimoine culturel, 1997
ADAGP n° 97420474 XA

Department:	42	Référence: IM42000491
Area of study:	Saint-Bonnet-le-Château	
Commune:	Saint-Bonnet-le-Château	
Held where:	Medieval citadel, Ursuline convent, CURRENTLY hospital Location: Main chapel. Nuns' choir	Référence: IA42000267
Actual title painting:	Presentation of the scapular to Saint Simon Stock in presence of Saint Thérèse d'Avila	
Cartography	Lambert3	x = 0735470 y = 0348620
Legal status:	Public property	
Topographic inventory		
Dossier established in	1996, 1997 by Ducouret Bernard; Monnet Thierry © General inventory, 1996	

DESCRIPTION

- Technical Category: painting
- Structure: vertical rectangle
- Materials and techniques: canvas (support): oil painting
- Description: artificial frame
- Representation and ornamentation: Presentation of the scapular to Saint Simon Stock while the Child, on the knees of the Virgin, holds out his arms to Saint Thérèse d'Avila. The scene takes place in a landscape representing a convent in front of which flows a river under a bridge.
- Dimensions: h = 256 la = 206 dimensions of the opening of the frame
- Condition of work: mould on the robe of the nun
- Marks and inscriptions: signature (paint, on the work); date (paint, on the work), signature and date RAVERY 1836

HISTORY

- Author(s) : Ravery : painter
- Place of execution: Rhône-Alpes, 42, Saint-Chamond (?)
- Dating: 2nd quarter 19th century. 1838

According to the account book of the hospital chapel this painting, called Notre-Dame du Mont Carmel, was ordered by the "confraternities", it cost 220 francs and was made by a painter of Saint-Chamond named Ravery.

The frame was constructed and painted by the same artist, at the request of the parish priest, in September of the same year.

- 42 SAINT BONNET LE CHATEAU
MIEVEVAL CITADEL - CONVENT - HOSPITAL
Ursuline convent
PAINTING Presentation of the scapular
to Saint Simon Stock in presence
of Saint Thérèse d'Avila



**Presentation of the scapular to Saint Simon Stock
in presence of Saint Thérèse d'Avila.**

General view.

Jean-Marie Refflé, Eric Dessert © Région Rhône-Alpes,
inventaire général du patrimoine culturel, 1997
ADAGP n° 97420508 PA

DOCUMENTATION

A.D. Loire, 34 J, entrée 548, n° 24 : *Journal des recettes et des dépenses de l'église de l'hospice de Saint-Bonnet-le-Château*, 1836 septembre.

A.H. Saint-Bonnet-le-Château: *Registre des recettes et des dépenses de l'église* (1860-1909), notice ajoutée en tête du registre.

SOME BENEFACTORS OF F. CHAMPAGNAT AND THE INSTITUTE



André Lanfrey
fms

THE NEYRAND- THIOLLIÈRE-DUGAS-DE BOISSEAU FAMILIES.

Although Marist literature has tended sometimes to affirm that the Marist work has been miraculous and has constituted itself with the sole help of Providence, Father Champagnat and his successors benefitted from a lot of support. Moreover the Institute has frequently recalled the role of these benefactors, notably by praying for them, but no general work seems to exist on the subject.

We know of M. Basson, the only bourgeois in Lavalla, advisor and friend of Father Champagnat.⁷⁵ Moreover, in his *Annals of the Institute*

(Vol.1, year 1840, § 680) Brother Avit, after having given the list of clergy who took part in Father Champagnat's funeral listed the lay benefactors: "Messieurs Victor Dugas, Antoine Thiollière and his son Eugène, Antoine Neyrand, Richard-Chambovet⁷⁶, Royer de la Bastie and Montagnier-Gayot⁷⁷, from the town of Saint-Chamond and benefactors of the Society of Mary."⁷⁸

In the same *Annals* (t. 1 p. 300 § 659) Brother Avit mentions the financial help received by Father Champagnat: from M. Antoine Thiollière 100,000F according to Brother Stanislas; from Mlle. Fournas, 70,000F; from Boiron, around 40,000F⁷⁹, from the Marquis de Mondragon at least 6000F⁸⁰. Also

⁷⁵ Life, Ch. 12 p.129; OM2 doc 754 § 14; census from Lavalla, 1815, commune's archives.

⁷⁶ In Lucien Parizot there is indicated (in the appendix) Richards and the Chambovet without mentioning their status

⁷⁷ He was a wealthy merchant of Saint-Chamond (Lucien Parizot, *La Révolution à l'Oeil nu...*, edition Val Jaris, 1987, appendix 41, p.337)

⁷⁸ There is only a copy of the death and burial certificates. See *Circulaires*, t.1 p.324.

⁷⁹ This is without doubt the Boiron whose case was summoned before the National Convention on 8th. March 1794. Cooper at Izieux he was accused of having collaborated with the Lyonnais rebels in 1793. See Lucien Parizot, appendix no.24 p.326.

⁸⁰ See Lucien Parizot, *La Révolution à l'oeil nu*, p.15: in 1768 Jean-Jacques Gallet de Mondragon bought the marquisate of Saint-Chamond.; p.32, that at the beginning of the Revolution De Mondragon owned a tool sharpening business (where already whetted tools were sharpened still more into arms) at Pré-Château and a forge making shovels and agricultural tools. He also had coal mines.

mentioned were the parish priest Dervieux, MM. Dugas, Génissieux, Neyrand, Montagnier and others “whose donations are not known.”⁸¹

The list of the *Letters of Father Champagnat* (Brothers Paul Sester and Raymond Borne, Rome, 1987) gives us notes on several of them and some others. M. Antoine Thiollière (1796-1876), forge master at Saint-Chamond, associated with Neyrand, was the one most mentioned⁸². In 1834 together with M. Meyrand he founded a school at Lorette for their workers’ children. (*Annals of the Institute*, V.1, § 44). In 1837, according to Brother Avit (idem V.1 § 214), on 18th January 1837 Father Champagnat sent him a message of spiritual association demonstrating the closeness of the relations between the two men (P. Sester, *Letters* 1, no.85:

“We will associate ourselves, if you agree to it, with you and your family, in a special and particular way in a community of good works which are being done and which could be done in the future.”⁸³ He would continue his donations to the Institute and install the Marists at the school of Saint-Médard-en-Forez where he had a residence. On the occasion of his death, Brother Louis-Marie mentioned this benefactor in his Circular of 29th. June 1876 and, in a letter of condolence, (RCLA, vol.6 no.6672) he

reminded Eugène Thiollière, his son, of all the benefits received by the Institute.

Mlle. Marie Fournas (1763-1833) also has a note (P. Sester and R. Borne, *Letters* II p.223). It was she who gave the house at La Grange Payre to Father Champagnat.

M. Victor Dugas (1783-1861) (*Letters* II p.202-204) was, together with his brother, a large manufacturer of ribbon in Saint-Chamond, its mayor from at least 1819 to 1825 and a man involved in many things.

M. Génissieux (?-1878) (*Letters* II p. 246) was the director of the “Company of the foundries and forges of Terrenoire, La Voulte (in the Rhône valley) and of Bessèges (in the Gard). He was a social patron. The Marist Brothers were established by him at Terrenoire in 1832, then at La Voulte in 1837 and in Bessèges in 1854.

M. Royer de la Bastie (1766-1849) was mayor of Izieux from 1808 to 1829. There he opened a school for the Brothers in 1838.

Thus, although all the benefactors were not in the same circumstances and although some were better (more generous) than others. Marist researchers have already begun the work of investigation well.

⁸¹ Regarding life at Saint-Chamond under the Revolution see Lucien Parizot, *La Révolution à l’oeil nu. L’exemple du Lyonnais vécu à Saint-Chamond et en Jarez.*, édition Val Jaris, 1987.

⁸² Paul Sester and Raymond Borne, Rome, t.2 p.493-496.

⁸³ This type of association operated between private individuals but also the convent gave certificates of spiritual association such as that which was given to the to M. Courveille by the Abbot of La Trappe (OM1/doc 153 p.396).

THE NEYRAND AND THIOILLIÈRE FAMILIES AFTER CHAMPAGNAT

The cordial relations between these families and the Institute continued for a long time. My attention has been

especially attracted by a letter from M. Elisée, mayor of Chevrières, a village in the Lyonnais mountains contained in the documents of the diocesan process for the canonisation of Marcellin Champagnat.⁸⁴

"I the undersigned Elisée Neyrand, mayor of Chevrières, member of the Council for the District of Montbrison (Loire) aged 65 years, certify in the most formal way that, during all of my youth, I have heard the Abbé Champagnat spoken of as a saint, thinking only of God and his neighbour, how to serve him and be useful to him, without ever concerning himself with his own person, exercising evangelical poverty in an absolute way. I testify that the Crucifix before which he prayed in his cell has been kept in my family and regarded as the relic of a saint.

Chevrières, this 6th October 1886."

This testimony attesting to the faith, zeal and disinterestedness of Father Champagnat gives us a precious witness of the way in which he was regarded in pious circles in Saint-Chammond. Evidently the gift of a crucifix belonging to Champagnat to the family showed the depth of the relations between Antoine Thiollière and the

Founder already documented by spiritual association spoken of above.⁸⁵

In a second letter (No. 46) 18th October 1890, M. Elisée Neyrand, less precise regarding the virtues of Champagnat, gave a general picture of the opinion that was held of him in the region:

*"I was very young when I saw M. Champagnat, on a couple of occasions. I have always heard it said that he was a holy priest, I have always heard high praise lavished on him, but I have never heard of him one salient fact that has stayed in my memory
I have always had a great veneration for this holy man whom everyone in our region talks of with genuine admiration, but I cannot say more, my age preventing me from knowing him personally ..."*

⁸⁴ Witnesses to Marcellin Champagnat. Diocesan inquiry, text transcribed by Brother Agustin Carazo, postulator, Rome 1991, Volume II, appendix 1, Letter no.16 p.14.

⁸⁵ It is not very likely that this crucifix had been given on the recommendation of Father Champagnat, since he had been a member of a religious Order since 1836

M. Eugène Thiollière⁸⁶ (letter No.45) was in the same position as M. Neyrand: on 17th. October 1890 he wrote

“... Being a child on the death of Father Champagnat, I knew nothing in particular about his life, which was not known to others, but my father knew him, loved him, and always preserved his memory in great veneration.”

Furthermore Brother Avit's *Annals* of the houses provides interesting information on the Neyrand and the Thiollière as founders of the Brothers' school at Chevrière in the mountains of Lyons and at Saint-Médard-en-Forez.

“... At the time of which we are speaking, Chevrières, like most of the rural communes had only teachers with little knowledge, a lack of method and were often somewhat lacking in edification. MM. Thiollière and Neyrand, whom our pious Founder included amongst his main benefactors, formed the plan to put order into this state of things. The former had realised his plan at Saint-Médard as early as 1812⁸⁷. The latter took steps to realise it there in 1853. He first of all came to an agreement with M. Girardet who was parish priest of Chevrières since 1847. A verbal understanding was reached with our superiors for two Brothers only. They were to direct the town school which was in a large part a paying school.”

Here follows the text of the convention in 11 articles

“The truth is that M. M. Neyrand paid the cost of installation and the furniture for the personnel.

The rest would seem to have been a result of M. le Curé's begging ...”

There follows lengthy attention given to the running of the school

“In 1896 M. Neyrand, still mayor, intended to keep the Brothers in a free school when the right to conduct the town school was to be taken from them.”⁸⁸

This is what in fact happened. There is still a Catholic school in Chevrières from which the Brothers withdrew several years ago.

THE PROBLEM OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S CRUCIFIX

Since M. Elisée Neyrand has mentioned a crucifix belonging to Father Champagnat which was given to his family, I would like to research this object. Thanks to a confrere in my community from Chevrières⁸⁹ I was able to make contact with M. Bruno de Boisseau, related to the Neyrand and present owner of the château at Chevrières. M. de Bossieu replied to me that, indeed, he did possess a nineteenth century crucifix which he would willingly give us. Arrangements having been made we soon discovered that the measurements of the crucifix did not correspond to the one mentioned by M. Elisée

⁸⁶ Brother-in-law of Elysée Neyrand, son of Antoine Thiollière.

⁸⁷ Médard is likewise known as the parish of the Curé Jacquemont, leader of a Jansenist faction still very active in the Forez at the beginning of 19th century. See *Annals of the Province of the Hermitage*. M. Thiollière quite demanding on the Brothers in his school.

⁸⁸ Extract from the *Annals of the houses of the Province of the Hermitage: Chevrières*.

⁸⁹ Brother Michel Fatisson. Chevrières has given a number of Brothers to the Province of the Hermitage.

Neyrand. However, M. de Boisseau has kindly given me a work of genealogy drawn up by the Neyrand family and its connections: "The Neyrands in the Vivarais and the Lyonnais, a Family of Forge Masters"⁹⁰ which is a real mine of information on this family and its connections as well as on industry in Saint-Chamond during nineteenth century.

GENEALOGY OF THE NEYRAND FAMILY

According to this document a younger branch of the Neyrands, originally from the Ardèche, emigrated to the Jarez⁹¹ where Jacques Neyrand (1659-1720) became royal notary at Longes from 1695 to 1720. He had seven children among whom was Catherine, born in 1701 who married in 1723 Nicolas Pleney, a merchant at Saint-Julien-en-Jarez then wholesale nail maker. The youngest son, Eustace (I), born at Longes near Rive-de-Gier in 1712 married Marie Burlat, from Saint-Chamond who died soon after. He left for Avignon then Nîmes where in 1732 he married Marie-Anne Gélinet, daughter of a surgeon by whom he would have four children. He was then an "ironmonger".

Having returned to Saint-Chamond from 1740 he worked a splitting mill¹⁸ which he made prosper and then bought more of them. Around 1760 the

mill's clientele extended throughout the Midi and right to Spain. He ended up by bringing in with him his two sons Eustache (II) (1737-1812) and Antoine who was born in 1837. Thus it was that at the beginning eighteenth century, through alliance with the Pleney family, that the Neyrands entered the business of manufacturing and selling nails.

On 13th October 1767 Eustache II and Antoine Neyrand married two sisters: Marie-Anne and Agathe Ravel daughters of Jacques Ravel, a wealthy ribbon dealer of Saint-Étienne, "former municipal magistrate" and *Seigneur* of La Terrasse in the valley neighbouring the Gier. Anne-Marie Ravel having died soon after, Eustache II remarried Marie-Madeleine Buyet in 1773 in Lyon. As for Antoine, his three children would die at an early age.

The cutting shop at Lorette, near Saint-Chamond which would become the Neyrand mill was acquired in 1771. The Neyrand brothers also bought some coal mines and made property purchases. In 1875 Eustache II and Antoine were ennobled.

On the eve of the Revolution the Neyrand family with all its activities and matrimonial alliances, were therefore strongly installed in the three major activities of the region of Saint-Chamond: nail-making, coal mines and rib-

⁹⁰ Volume in A4, without the name either of author or editor, 2003, 353p.

⁹¹ The region of Rive-de-Gier, near Saint-Chamond.

⁹² A metalwork shop which split metal, that is to say, which made bars iron which the peasants in the surrounding districts made into nails

bon making. The Neyrands, Thiollières and the Dugas⁹³, great benefactors of Father Champagnat at the beginning of nineteenth century formed a kind of powerful conglomerate that was both familial and industrial.

During the Revolution the Neyrands were prudent. Although inscribed on the list of nobles in 1789 they did not participate in the vote for the deputies to the Estates General. However, in 1790 Eustache II welcomed at his home at La Rive, Bishop d'Aviau⁹⁴ who together with his vicar-general M. Bertholet were fleeing France. (Abbé Lyonnet, *Life of Mgr. d'Aviau*) before they continued their journey to Lyon and Chambéry. Like so many others they bought up church property.⁹⁵

Lucien Parizot (p.143) declared that Antoine and Eustache Neyrand, preferring a regime of economic liberalism to the preceding system embraced the new ideas. Involved in dealing with their affairs, they left the first stages of the Revolution to take their course but "when they considered that their lives, their property and their freedom were threatened by a Revolution which had gone astray they decided to involve themselves." Eustache had himself elected on 2nd December 1792 as

municipal officer of the commune of Saint-Julien-en-Jarez which was contiguous to Saint-Chamond and became one of the most influential men in the municipality. In 1793 he was one of those who refused to send troops to aid a Lyon in revolt and on 8th August 1793 he officially declared his allegiance and that of his brother Antoine to the National Convention (Lucien Parizot, p.144). Having shown proof of loyalty when it was needed, and also becoming large beneficiaries of the requirements of the Republic at war (nails were needed for the boots of soldiers and sailors), the Neyrand survived the Revolution thanks to their political shrewdness and because the Republic at war needed their industry. They also knew how by generous gifts to escape the mistrust of the extremists. (L. Parizot p.169, 244)⁹⁶ In 1793 the company of Neyrand Brothers and Thiollière was, by and large, at the top of around a dozen enterprises in the making of nails (L. Parizot p.234).

Eustache II associated his two sons in the enterprise: Guillaume Neyrand-Collenon in 1801 and André Neyrand-Buyet⁹⁷ in 1809 and even sold them a portion of his property. He died on 12th December 1812 aged 75. On his death

⁹³ Ribbon dealers, these latter were closer to the Thiollières than to the Neyrands.

⁹⁴ Jacques-Olivier Boudon, *The Religious elites in Napoleon's era*. Dictionary of bishops and vicars-general in the First Empire New World edition/Napoleon Foundation, 2002, p.52. Charles-François d'Aviau du Bois de Sanzay (1736-1826) was appointed Archbishop of Vienne on 13th September 1789. Having refused the constitutional oath he went into exile in Italy in 1792 but returned to France in 1797.

⁹⁵ Lucien Parizot, *op.cit.* appendix 9 p.312.

⁹⁶ The Dugas, another family who were Champagnat's benefactors, would be more poorly treated: in 1794 they had to submit to imprisonment and extortion of funds by Javogues who exercised his dictatorship over the region. (Parizot, p. 199-202).

⁹⁷ The second name served to distinguish the two families. The Collenon was a tributary of the Gier. The name "Buyet" had been added to please a maternal grandfather.

his wealth was valued at 1,422,300F. Unlike his brother he was not remembered as an especially charitable person.

Antoine Neyrand⁹⁸ was known in Saint-Chamond for his great charity and his piety. He was especially close to M. Dervieux, the parish priest of Saint-Pierre, whom he helped to re-establish La Charité (a hospice). He provided considerable funds for the hospital. Together with his wife he supported a work of benevolence, which among other services, distributed more than a thousand loaves of bread each Sunday. During the difficult years of 1813-1817 his charity was without limits. He also played a large part in the re-establishment of worship in Saint-Chamond. As for Father Champagnat: "he constantly went to him to seek help in facing the expenses of maintaining his Institute, and these expenses were heavy due to the number of students received into the juniorate."

The document "The Neyrand in the Vivarais and the Lyonnais" (p.35) gives an interesting picture of his piety: he made a gift to the church of Saint-Pierre of an elaborate monstrance and obtained two favours in exchange: every time it was used the *Inviolata* (a Marial hymn) would be sung and every Thursday the Mass of the Blessed Sacrament would be said.

He was a faithful royalist: on 24th. July 1814 King Louis XVIII, who had just returned to France, decorated him with

the the *Ordre du Lys*. In 1824 he was made a *Chevalier* of the *Ordre royal de la légion d'honneur*. On an unknown date he received a visit from the Comte d'Artois brother of the King and the future Charles X. Having died on 8th February 1830, he was buried at Saint-Julien-en-Jarez and his heart was placed in a chapel of the Church of Saint-Pierre at Saint-Chamond.

LIBERALISM, ROYALISM AND SOCIAL ACTION

The Neyrands' business affairs had been helped more than hindered by the Revolution. Even if, publicly, they had adopted a loyalist policy towards the Revolution and then the Empire, their Catholicism and royalism remained intact. The favours received under the Restoration prove that they must have rendered serious services to the royal cause. In fact they had, like the majority of the population, "steered a direction" under regimes to which they were little attracted, at the cost of clearly understandable compromises and ambiguities.

Certainly of a liberal bent in material matters, their Catholicism and the spirit of the *Ancien Régime* had kept within them the idea that those who were gifted with wealth and its benefits had obligations towards the less favoured. They not only practised charity in generous measure but they even provided accommodation,

⁹⁸ Les Neyrand en Vivarais et en Lyonnais, p. 35.

chapels, schools and hospitals for their workers, and involved themselves as administrators in social works for the common good, such as the hospital at Saint-Chamond. They were, indeed, pioneers of social Catholicism.⁹⁹

Champagnat's works attracted their interest on several fronts. First of all, by forming capable and morally reliable teachers it responded to a social and religious need in which they were personally involved in chapels, hospitals and schools associated with their factories. Nor is it purely by chance that, in the context of rapid urbanisation, a significant number of Marist Brothers' schools were situated in industrial areas. Also Marcellin Champagnat personified qualities which they considered of the highest order and which they themselves practised: the spirit of enterprise, sound doctrine, great austerity, and a great disinterestedness.

It is also certain that M. Champagnat's origins had its own attraction for them: they certainly knew that his father had been a merchant and had, under the Revolution, exercised responsibilities through which, like them, he made the best of it. In short, the story of the Champagnat family was somewhat similar to theirs.

M. DERVIEUX

Without doubt a key person was someone who was an intermediary between this bourgeois milieu and Champagnat: M. Julien Dervieux, the curé of Saint-Pierre in Saint-Chamond from 1803¹⁰⁰. Parish priest of Saint-Ennemond, one of the parishes of Saint-Chamond before the Revolution, he seems to have taken and then retracted the oath. The Departmental authorities in August 1792 regarded him therefore as dismissed and his parish was also suppressed.¹⁰¹

What had he done under the Revolution? There were fewer than eleven priests in the city who, on 12th August 1795, took the act of submission to the Laws of the Republic (L. Parizot p.267 and doc. No.36). It could be that he had emigrated and/or involved himself in the clandestine activities of the refractory Church. Be that as it may, the fact that he was appointed to an important post from 1803 allows us to suppose that he had not fallen foul of the authorities during the difficult years.

However the opinion of him given by Vicar-General Courbon in his list of the clergy in 1802¹⁰² reveals a slightly different picture of M. Dervieux:

⁹⁹ See J.B. Duroselle, *Les débuts du catholicisme social in France (1822-1870)*, PUF 1951. It seems to me that the author of this classic thesis establishes the beginnings of social Catholicism a little belatedly.

¹⁰⁰ See OM4, p.418, an outline of the parish of Saint-Pierre and its Curé, M. Dervieux.

¹⁰¹ Lucien Parizot, *La Révolution à l'oeil nu*, p.82, 84.

¹⁰² "General list of priests in the diocese of Lyons on 1st vendémiaire 1802" archives of the archdiocese, 2 II/83

“Former parish priest of Saint-Ennemond¹⁰³ working there¹⁰⁴, aged around 49 years old, a good subject in all areas, weak health influences his character, somewhat [un peu] political¹⁰⁵”.

This then was an experienced priest but of a chameleon nature. The qualification of “*politique*” is not easy to interpret: in principle this term describes someone inclined to conform himself to the line taken by the powers-that-be, but other meanings are possible. The term can also describe someone inclined to appear to fit in with the decisions of superiors (this was the case with Neyrand during the Revolution) or even a person with an authoritarian temperament. In any case, towards Father Champagnat, M. Dervieux revealed two extreme traits of his personality: a great intransigence initially and later an extreme generosity.

He seems to have also been an appreciated spiritual director. He had probably been that for Neyrand and other bourgeois in Saint-Chamond. The biographies of Brothers Cassien and Arsène remind us that Louis Chomat, the future Brother Cassien, born in 1788, at the age of 24 in 1812, although not living in Saint-Chamond but at Sobiers near Saint-Étienne, placed himself under the spiritual direction of M. Dervieux who gave him a

detailed rule of life¹⁰⁶ and guided him up until 1820¹⁰⁷.

We know that around about 1820, as President of the canton’s Committee for Public Education, he threatened Father Champagnat with having his community dissolved, but after the Founder’s sickness between end of December 1825 and the spring of 1826, it was he who paid six thousand francs worth of debts (Life, and OM2 p.788) and hosted him in his presbytery during his convalescence (Life and OM2 p.793. On 15th August 1825 it was he who blessed the chapel of the Hermitage (OM1, doc. 138) and even gave the gift of candle holders for its decoration.

Cardinal Donnet, a fellow student of Father Champagnat at the seminary who had become Archbishop of Bordeaux, in a letter to Brother Louis-Marie in 1864 (OM3 DOC 888 § 4) recalls indeed that he had “helped to turn around the negative thought which had been incalculated¹⁰⁸ into the mind of M. Dervieux, against the whole Order”. Father Champagnat, himself (Letters, V.1/ doc.26)) affirms that it was Abbé Jean-Louis Duplay who had persuaded M. Dervieux to modify his ideas on Champagnat’s work. Be that as it may, in the spring of 1830 he again inter-

¹⁰³ This was the oldest parish in Saint-Chamond, dating back to before XIII century. M. Dervieux was made its Curé just before the Revolution

¹⁰⁴ He had perhaps returned earlier to his former parish.

¹⁰⁵ The “un peu” has been crossed out.

¹⁰⁶ Biographies de quelques frères

¹⁰⁷ It seems that then Louis Chomat addressed himself to M. Rouchon, parish priest of Valbenoîte who wanted to enrol him in his congregation of Brothers (Biographies, p.193).

¹⁰⁸ Certainly M. Cathelin. See in OM4 p. 415

vened to support the legal authorisation of the Marist Brothers (OM1 p.81). He died on 15th January 1832. According to his biography by Jacques de Boisseau he did not even leave behind the money necessary for his burial and it was the parish which charged itself with the expense.¹⁰⁹ The fact that Antoine Neyrand had his heart placed at Saint-Pierre in Saint-Chamond, M. Dervieux's church, seems highly significant. Besides, it is very likely that the 6000F paid out to reduce Father Champagnat's debts in 1826 were, at least partially, sourced from M. Neyrand.

Therefore, without minimising the influence of Donnet nor that of M. Duplay it must be considered that with the arrival of Archbishop du Pins, who supported Champagnat, M. Dervieux, to have been enthused by the cause of M. Cathelin, Principal of the College at Saint-Chamond who feared the rivalry that Lavalla¹¹⁰ would cause his college, adapted his thinking to that of the new apostolic administrator. It could even be that he had paid the debts on the recommendation of the Archbishop. Having said this, it is not appropriate to place in doubt the sincerity of his rallying to the work of M. Champagnat.

The benefactions from M. Antoine Neyrand towards Champagnat perhaps began before M. Dervieux began to solicit them since being a nail-maker, it was probably he who, as early as 1817, provided him with the "bars"

(verges) of iron serving to make the nails. Nevertheless, the fact that MM. Champagnat and Courveille took a loan from Lyons on 13th. December 1825 (OM1, doc. 142) seems to indicate that local aid for the work of the Brothers had not really begun. It may even have been that M. Dervieux had broken or prevented it.

M. Dervieux's volte-face regarding M. Champagnat must have been one of the great influences which persuaded M. Neyrand and certain of the other bourgeois of Saint-Chamond to help the work of the Brothers. If the year 1826 had been that of the retreat of Champagnat's priest colleagues, it was also that of the beginning of a massive local financial support of which M. Dervieux and Neyrand were the supporters. This support definitely made the prospect of the material failure of the work much less likely.

FROM ANTOINE NEYRAND TO THE SONS OF EUSTACHE II

In his will Antoine Neyrand who had no direct heir, left some goods to the parish priest of Valfleury, to that of the parish of Saint-Julien-en-Jarez, to the superior of the seminary of Saint-Irénée (4000f), to the Sisters of Saint-Charles (1200F), to the Brothers of the Christian Schools (800F), to the Bureau of Charity (6000F) to its servants. The document seems to indicate that he

¹⁰⁹ Life of Father Champagnat, edition 1989, note 18 p.143.

¹¹⁰ It could also be considered that by acting thus he was following the policy of Vicar-General Bochart.

bequeathed to Father Champagnat, superior of the Brothers of Mary the sum of 1400F which would be payable by his heirs¹¹¹ (see document)

Guillaume Neyrand-Collenon (1780-1834), son of Eustache II and nephew to Antoine, married Françoise-Louise (1809) daughter of Jean-Claude Thiollière de la Côte, one of the associates of the Neyrand nail factory, whose wife Louise-Elisabeth Regnault whose mother was a Dugas. André Neyrand-Buyet (d. 1832) married the sister of the former, Elisabeth Thiollière (1813). Guillaume had no children, but André and Elisabeth would have seven of them.

In 1824 Guillaume and André transformed the iron splitting factory at Lorette into an iron and steel works, causing the metallurgy of the artisan stage to pass up to industrial quality. They constructed a chapel dedicated to our Lady of Loretto which would become the parish church in 1840. In my opinion the crucifix preserved by M. Boisseau came from this chapel. The commune of Lorette would only be created in 1847. It was André Neyrand-Buyet who bought the château of Chevières in 1828. He died intestate at Saint-Julien-en-Jarez on 6th September aged 46.

At the beginning of 1834 therefore the enterprise rested on the shoulders of the children of André Neyrand-Buyet and Elisabeth Thiollière. Antoine, the eldest (1813-1854), educated by the Jesuits in Fribourg, Switzerland, led the

enterprise's changes. He was a devout Christian and a convinced *legitimiste*. He married Anne Alexandrine Terasse de Tessonnet (d. 1833) from a Lyonnais family which had been very affected by the Revolution. It was he who took part in the funeral rites for Father Champagnat on 8th June 1840. Among the other six children, Elisée Neyrand, born in 1821 who in 1846 married his cousin Louise Thoillière. They would have seven children. It was he who inherited from his father the chateau of Chevières and established the school run by the Marist Brothers. It was he who testified at the process for the beatification of Father Champagnat.

The daughter of Elisée and Louise Thiollière, Louise Neyrand, in 1868 married Paulien Dugas du Villard, one of the branches of the Dugas family, the great benefactors of M. Champagnat. Their daughter Louise Dugas du Villard in 1896 married Jacques de Boisseau a great benefactor of the Institute. Thus the ownership of the château of Chevières passed from the Neyrands to the Boissieus.

THE DE BOISSIEU FAMILY

During the course of 19th century the Neyrand, Thiollière and Dugas families multiplied the links of business and marriage between themselves. The de Boissieus, originally from the Lyonnais, were present at Saint-Chamond just before the Revolution.¹¹² In

¹¹¹ This lapse could perhaps result from the fact that, the Marist Brothers not being recognised, it was an inheritance to a person not to an organisation.

¹¹² Lucien Parizot, op.cit. p.42. At this time they had three houses.

1793 the goods of the widow de Boissieu, who was regarded as a suspect, were confiscated¹¹³. Perhaps impoverished by the Revolution, the de Boissieus did not figure among Father Champagnat's main benefactors. The links between the de Boissieu family with the three great Saint-Chamond families only seemed to begin in 1834 with the marriage between Louise Dugas de la Boissony and Roch de Boissieu. Their only son, Victor de Boissy, in 1865 married Antoinette Duga-Montbel. Their only son, Jacques, married Louise du Villard in 1896. It therefore seems to have been Victor and Jacques de Boissieu who provided the support of Father Champagnat's work.

The relations between the Institute and M. Victor de Boissieu seemed to have been centred around the work of the juniorates. The development of these establishments, decided on by the

Chapter of 1876, required significant resourcing, so Brother Louis-Marie created the 'Work of the Juniorates', encouraged by a letter from Cardinal Caverot, Archbishop of Lyon (1877) then a Brief from the Sovereign Pontiff (1880)¹¹⁴.

A letter from Rev. Brother Theophane of 12th. October 1884 in which he presents his condolences on the death of the mother of Victor de Boissieu, causes us to see that he was President of the central committee of the work for Juniorates (administrative letters). But it was his son Jacques who seemed to have been the most active support of the Institute.

JACQUES DE BOISSIEU

The acts of the Chapter of 1920 describe his actions in detail¹¹⁵:

"The Very Rev. Brother Stratonique next gave the following interesting details, relating to the reacquisition of Lavalla, the cradle of the Institute. Since its sale, our cradle has been in the hands of M. Aubrun, parish priest of Saint-Paul at Lyon and was serving as an inn.

On several occasions, negotiations had been entered into for the reacquisition of the buildings; but God's time had not arrived. Negotiations amounted to nothing ...

This year, 1920, in February, a new attempt was quietly made after getting together with one of our friends, who continues to show himself to be a worthy representative of the de Boissieu family, a great benefactor of the Hermitage since the time of our venerated Founder.

The success surpassed our expectations. Everything seemed to be going ahead according to our wishes, when fresh difficulties suddenly cropped up breaking the negotiations.

113 Ibid. doc. 23 p.324.

114 Regarding juniorates, see André Lanfrey, *Un congregation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*, Lyons, 1979, p. 115-118 and 209-223.

115 Extract from the acts of XII General Chapter of the Marist Brothers in 1920. In the report of the commission of finances, Monday, 14th June.

Fortunately everything turned out okay and on Saturday 6th March M. Jacques de Boissieu became the owner of all we owned in Lavalla before 1903.

At this time, this good gentleman, whose devotion is without limit, has just established an association for property which could acquire, besides the property at Lavalla, other properties devoted to teaching. Thanks be to God, to the Virgin Mary and also to M. de Boissieu, the cradle of the Institute has become again the cradle of numerous and good vocations. It can be noted that M. de Boissieu is the linchpin of the property society of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. In return, this distinguished man asks, for himself and for his family, a portion of the prayers and good works performed in the Congregation..”

We find M. de Boissieu at the Hermitage for the centenary of the house (Bulletin of the Institute) and on this occasion Rev. Brother Diogène recognised him as “one of our most distinguished benefactors”. He was likewise present for the exhumation of the remains of Brother François in 1936¹¹⁶.

In a letter of condolences on the occasion of the death of Brother Diogène in 1842, Jacques de Boisseau conjured up this same situation of fictitious proprietor and founder of a screen company, allowing the Institute to recover his goods and assuring them a legal framework.

“It was during his Generalate that I bought back the boarding school at Valbenoîte¹¹⁷ and that at La Valla, this latter especially dear to the children of the Venerable Father Champagnat ... The Institute was able, in this way, to gain back several houses which for it had an inestimable worth.”¹¹⁸

The Superiors replied¹¹⁹ that

“the Members of the General Council considered that it would be failing in its duty if they did not assure you of the feelings of religious respect and deep gratitude which Rev. Brother Diogène, continuing in this the tradition of [his] predecessors has professed, at every opportunity, for the Boissieu family who is rightly classed in our annals among the worthiest benefactors of the Institute.

When M. Jacques de Boissieu died in 1947 the Superiors sent to M. Jacques de Boissieu, probably his eldest son, a banker in Saint-Chamond, an especially laudatory letter of condolence¹²⁰

“... This loss is deeply felt by the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary which, from its very first beginnings, has always regarded and honoured the de Boissieu family as a distinguished benefactor. In actual fact, the Brothers of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage could not possibly forget

116 Bulletin of the Institute no.106.

117 Some correspondence on the integration of Valbenoîte into M. de Boissieu's society figures in the administrative letters of 21st. January 1921 and 8/3/1922

118 Administrative letters, no. 17519, 7th. February 1942. Addressed to Brother Michaelis, Vicar-General.

119 Administrative letter no. 17520, 4/3/1942.

120 Administrative letter no. 17697, 9/3/47.

the services of all kind rendered very special by this dear and venerated deceased to our house and to the very work of Venerable Marcellin Champagnat.”

The Superiors seemed to be exaggerating somewhat when they mentioned links between the de Boissieu family and the Institute since the origins, but, through them, they were thanking all the benefactors from Saint-Chamond. Without necessarily knowing the complicated genealogies of the Neyrand, Dugas and Boissieu families well, they were aware that all these families formed a same milieu devoted to Catholic works and from which the Institute benefitted greatly.

In 1951, replying to the congratulations from M. Jacques de Boissieu on the occasion of his receiving the Legion of Honour, Brother Leonida would

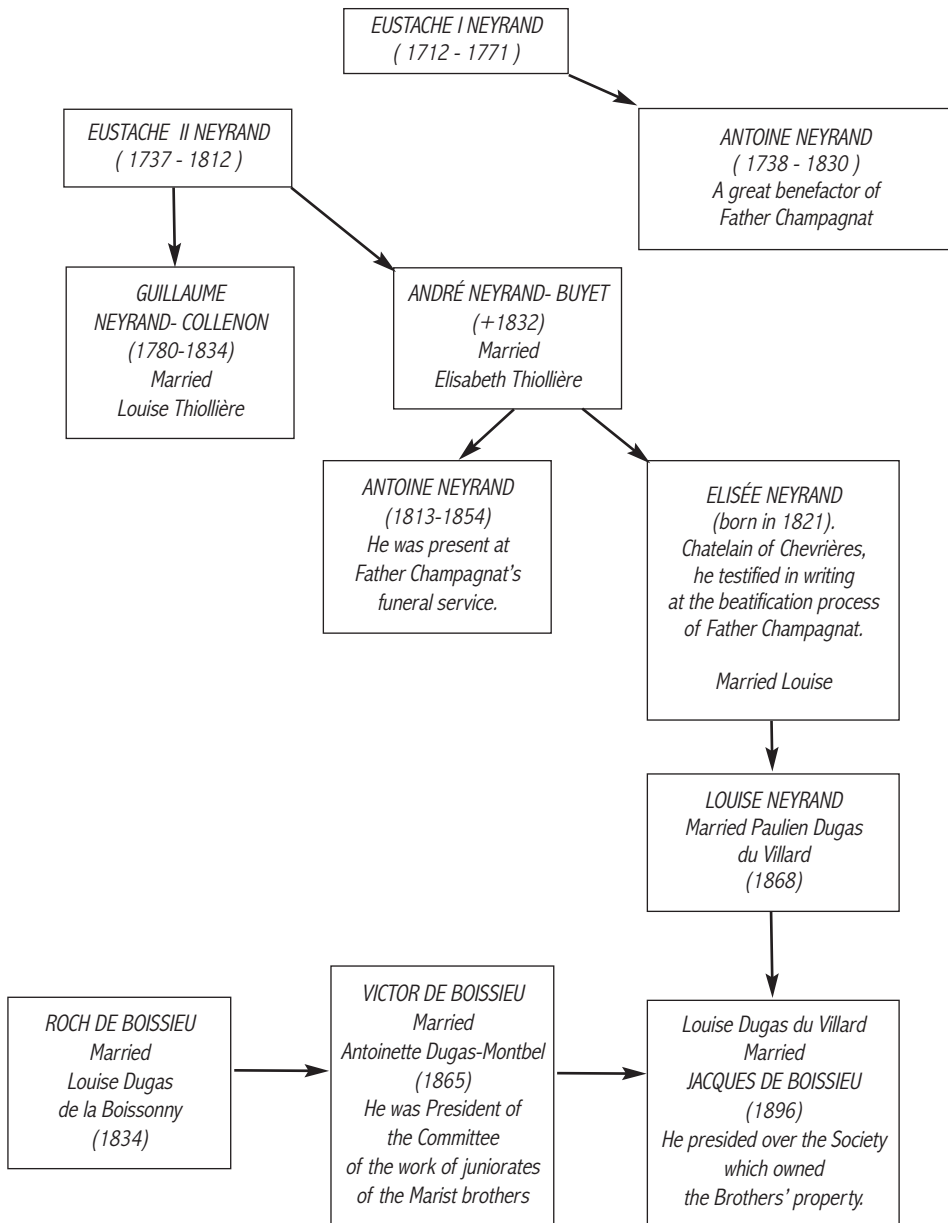
mention things similar to those mentioned in 1942¹²¹:

“We cannot forget that the immense expansion of the work of the Venerable Father Champagnat owes much to the de Boissieu family, and I am very happy to take the opportunity of this occasion to assure you of the imperishable memory that this deeply Christian and “Marist” generosity has left on the history of the Institute.”

We have not taken our research beyond 1951, but by his gift of a precious crucifix M. Bruno de Boissieu has inscribed himself in a long tradition of gifts towards the Institute and many other works. In addition, this article would like to recall how much Father Champagnat’s work responded to the needs of a milieu and a period to the extent of convincing some men who were at the same time realists and firmly rooted in their religion such as these families of which we have just written.

¹²¹ Administrative letter no 17888. A.M. Jacques de Boissieu, banker, 24, rue de la République, Saint-Chamond.

SIMPLIFIED GENEALOGY OF THE NEYRAND-THIOLLIÈRE-DE BOISSIEU FAMILIES

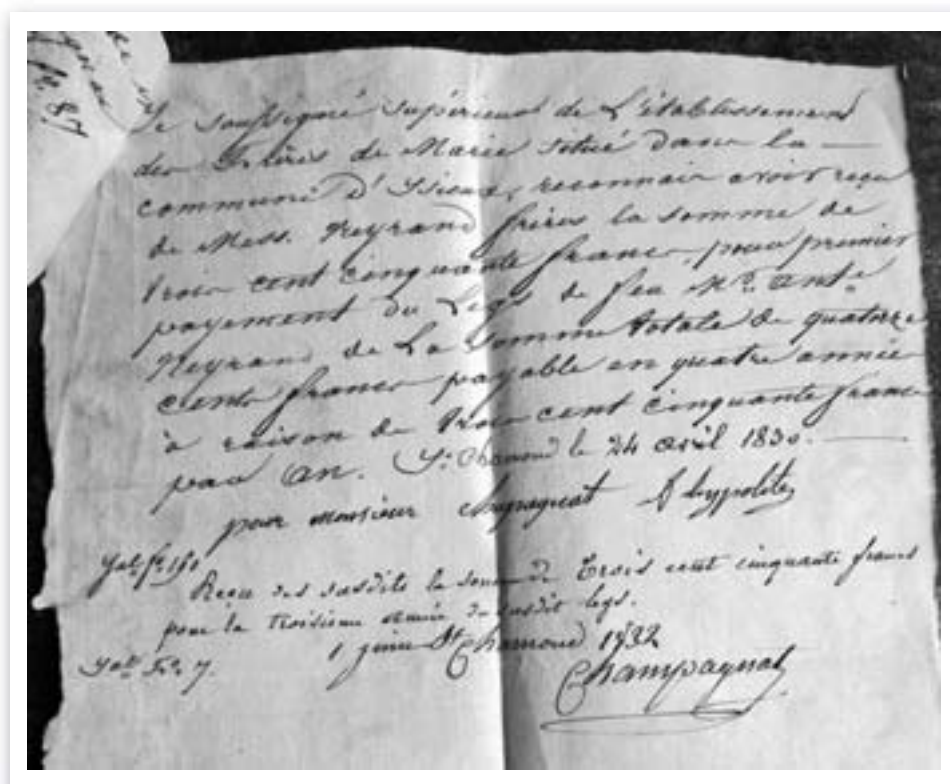


Appendix

APPENDIX 1

The Receipts

from M. Champagnat to MM. Neyrand



J'ai reçu de M^r Neyraud père la somme de
 trois cents - cinquante francs pour le paiement
 de la dernière somme de la loi de feu M^r Antoine
 Neyraud aux fins de la loi de 1830.
 St. Chamond le 10. 1830.
 Champagnat

Je soussigné, déclare avoir reçu de M^r Neyraud Bugeat
 la somme de trois cents cinquante francs pour le paiement
 de la dernière somme de la loi de feu M^r Antoine Neyraud
 aux fins de la loi de 1830. dont j'ai fait quittance
 le 16. 7. 1830. à M^r Joseph de Stenestage sur St
 Chamond
 Champagnat
 Sup. Not. 16

APPENDIX 2

The crucifix

**Gift from
M. Bruno de Boisseau
to the
Province of the Hermitage,
14th December 2008**

Its dimensions are imposing:
1.13m high on a plinth; 90cm for
the cross alone. 43.5cm wide for
the stretch of the arms
of the cross. The height
of the Christ in sculptured ivory
is 42cm. It is a work of art
of 19th century of fine quality.

According to M. de Boisseau
it came from Saint-Chamond.
Its dimensions cause the thought
that it was placed in a chapel,
probably that which the Neyrand's
had built for their workers
at Lorette around 1824
which was replaced in the middle
of the century
by the parish church

Placed in the renovated Hermitage
it symbolically recalls
all the benefactors of the work
of Father Champagnat.



IN COMMON CAUSE

Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers, and Pompallier, Bishop of Western Oceania



Br. Frederick
McMahon, fms



Jean-Baptiste François Pompallier, Bishop of Maronea and
Vicar-Apostolic of Western Oceania

PART II

Introduction

The second Part of the Pompallier-Champagnat story begins with an examination of the famous Querbes affair – the attempt by Archdiocesan authorities to combine Champagnat’s congregation to that of Father Querbes. A ‘triumvirate’ of significant people seems to lay the blame, to a greater or a lesser extent on Pompallier. There are other viewpoints on Pompallier in this matter, so a reflection is given at some length

and then a conclusion is drawn. Pompallier and the Mission to Oceania occupy a significant section of this Part, while the Champagnat-Pompallier connection in regard to the Missions is also presented. Concerning the Mission, Pompallier’s decision not to take vows as a Marist is important in regard to later relationship between Superior General Colin and Bishop Pompallier. The early stages of a troubled relationship be-

tween these two men are presented. The ample correspondence between the Mission bishop and the Brothers' Founder and the freedom of expression thus engendered led to a wonderful expression by Champagnat of his deep attachment to the Blessed Virgin.

In 'A Final Word' an assessment of Pompallier's very positive contribution to the Society of Mary is attempted. There is also, however, an outline of ways in which Pompallier drifted away from any form of permanent attachment to the Society of Mary.

POMPALLIER AND A CHAMPAGNAT CRISIS - "THE CLERCS OF ST VIATOR AFFAIR"

Having now completed an examination of Pompallier's letters to Champagnat we must now 'turn back the clock' to concentrate on a controversial aspect of the Pompallier-Champagnat relationship - to the years between 1831 and 1834. By 1831 Champagnat's congregation was in a parlous position. On 18 April 1831 there was a royal ordinance concerning teaching by members of religious congregations. The document included the obligation of compulsory military service. Exemption could be obtained by an engagement of ten years in the service of public instruction. Religious of authorised congregations could obtain this exemption through their congrega-

tion, but those in non-authorised congregations had to approach civic authorities individually. Champagnat's group was not authorised.

On 18 May 1831 came a questionnaire from the Academy of Lyon to the Mayor of St Chamond concerning the Hermitage and its activities. The mayor replied in an essentially favourable manner. Nevertheless, on 24 July came the famous visit of inspection by the police magistrate - and Champagnat's masterly handling of the episode.

As time passed by, the Archdiocesan authorities were necessarily worried. Attempts by Archbishop de Pins to obtain legal authorisation for Champagnat's Brothers had so far failed, so de Pins' advisers were open to other suggestions to solve the problem. In the meanwhile Champagnat sought to find a solution by sounding out a congregation that enjoyed legal authorisation. He wanted to see whether an accommodation could be made without both groups losing their particular identity. Now, the circumstances of the first contact between Father Chaminade and the Marists remain obscure. If the first move came from the Father Chaminade's Marianists at Bordeaux, it must have seemed providential to Father Champagnat, placed, as he was, in the necessity of obtaining the protection of legal authorisation.

Father Chaminade's group had been authorised on 16 November 1825. By being affiliated to it, the Little Broth-

ers of Mary would benefit from such authorisation. In accordance with the advice of Father Colin, Father Champagnat then thought of going to see Father Chaminade at Agen. In this matter he had the support of Vicar General Cattet, who wrote to Champagnat on 30 November 1832. Unfortunately, Archbishop de Pins was not supportive of this move. And Cattet, in his letter had to admit, 'The Archbishop has expressed his intention to continue his efforts with the government to have you authorised.'¹²²

Basically, it seems that a divergence of views existed between the Vicar General and the Archbishop, the for-

mer favouring an affiliation and the latter a renewal of efforts with the object of securing authorisation by a direct approach. The Archbishop did not favour any form of affiliation with a group outside his own archdiocese; obviously, it was part of de Pins' policy of retaining his own priests and religious. Champagnat was not given permission to travel to Agen to meet Father Chaminade.

Just one week later the bombshell landed – a letter from Cattet giving the decision of the Archdiocesan Council that Champagnat attempt to negotiate an affiliation with the Clercs of St Viator, a group that lay within Archdiocesan boundaries:

Lyon, 5 December 1832

'My dear Father Champagnat,

'After having reflected on the matter, the councillors at to-day's meeting are of the opinion that you would profit from the Royal Ordinance in favour of the congregation of St Viator. Instead of going out of the Archdiocese and addressing yourself to Father Chaminade to affiliate yourself and bring about the exemption of your Brothers by one legal process, you have with us a much easier and more suitable legal means.

'It would suffice therefore to come to an understanding with Father Querbes. It is not a matter of changing your Rules, no more than it would be with Father Chaminade. All prejudice apart, you have in this means all the advantages that you put forward without having the inconveniences. Seeing in this matter only something good and something for the greatest glory of God, you will, my dear Father Champagnat, give much attention to following up this idea, which is as wise as it is natural.

*'Believe fully in all the sentiments with which I am,
'Your very affectionate,*

'Cattet, Vicar General.'¹²³

¹²² O.M. 1, Doc. 256.

¹²³ O.M. 1, Doc. 259.

We can imagine how disturbed Champagnat was on receipt of this letter. Fortunately, he did not have to endure the agony for long, for, on the very next day, there came a second missive from Cattet, rescinding the first instruction. The Archbishop, who had not been present for the Council meeting and did not know of the letter it had already sent to

Champagnat (although he actually signed the Minutes of this meeting), had determined on yet another attempt at authorisation through approaching the government. It was to come to nothing, but at least it took immediate pressure off Champagnat to affiliate with Querbes. Acting under the Archbishop's instructions, Cattet wrote on 6 December 1832:

'Father,

'Although I wrote to you yesterday, I now have to inform you that the Archbishop seems more determined than ever to continue his formal procedure with the government to obtain your Ordinance. Do what the head of the Archdiocese asks of you and put off indefinitely what, on behalf of the Council, I told you in my last letter. Hence you will not speak to Father Querbes. God will perhaps bless the new attempts of His Grace.

*'Yours devotedly,
'CATTET, Vicar General.'¹²⁴*

Unfortunately, the Archbishop's attempts again failed and, in the next year, on 28 June 1833, there came for all France the Guizot Law, which required that every teacher have the *brevet*, or teacher's certificate. This law boded ill for Champagnat and his men; the net was closing around them. What was the response to this new crisis? The Archdiocesan authorities were becoming more and more concerned for Champagnat's congrega-

tion, which, not having legal authorisation, did not have the protection afforded to authorised groups in these matters. Consequently, the Archdiocesan Council sought to stave off trouble by again involving Father Querbes; this time the solution would be by joining Father Champagnat's group to that of Father Querbes.

On 7 August 1833 the Council Minutes recorded:

¹²⁴ O.M. 1, Doc. 261.

'Council is of the opinion that the Little Brothers of Mary unite with the Clercs of St Viator of Vourles, already legally authorised. At least, there are good grounds for the attempt to be made.'¹²⁵

In his reply to this decision, Father Querbes advised Vicar General Cholleton of the conditions required for this union to be effected. On 18 August there came Pompallier's letter (given above) in which he mentions that Father Cholleton is soon going to write to Champagnat. It is likely that this letter would have been about the proposed union.

It is at this juncture that Champagnat finally shows his reaction to all the pressures pushing him towards uniting with Querbes. It is to be seen in the draft of a letter composed by Champagnat in August-September 1833, a letter to be sent to the Archdiocesan authorities. We find that Champagnat is strongly opposed to such a union and feels very deeply about it. All his pent-up feelings, stretching back over seven years, are poured out in this draft. Champagnat's mind goes back with great sorrow to 1826 – to the period of his own severe illness, to the departure of Courville, to what he regarded as the desertion of Terrillon, and to the official inspection and investigation of the Hermitage by Vicar General Cattet. The sensitive Champagnat, the man of feeling, is clearly to be seen.

Now, in addition to the contents of this draft-letter, we find that one page clearly shows the imprint of what appear to be teardrops – Champagnat unable to hold back tears as he composes the letter. Some claim that the stains were drops of rainwater from a passing storm falling onto letter-paper left close to an open window. Whatever the case, there is no doubt that Champagnat was deeply moved by this affair.

Those advocating the combination did not desist. In a letter of 10 October 1833, we have these words of Cholleton:

'The Jesuit priest who gave the Retreat to the Brothers of the Hermitage told Father Barou that Father Champagnat was now well disposed to enter into all our views about the union.'¹²⁶

In point of fact, neither Champagnat nor Querbes was keen on any form of union of their congregations. Happily, the passage of time was a helpful factor, as was also the emergence of a way-out for Champagnat – those Marist Brothers who were in danger of conscription to the army could temporarily join the Brothers of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Father Mazelier's congregation, which possessed government authorisation. These Champagnat Brothers studied for their Teacher's Certificate (brevet), taught in Mazelier's schools and, in

¹²⁵ O.M. 1, Doc. 276.

¹²⁶ O.M. 1, Doc. 291, Section 3,

due course, returned to their Marist confrères.

Champagnat's first biographer tells us that, later on, the Archbishop of Lyon congratulated Champagnat on resisting the efforts of those who advocated the union.

A Triumvirate against Pompallier

Brother Jean-Baptiste, in his *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, takes a harsh view of Father Pompallier, accusing him of being instrumental in inflicting on Champagnat the agony of the projected union of his Brothers with Father Querbes' Clercs of St Viator.¹²⁷ 'Father Pompallier,

who for several years was chaplain at the Hermitage, disapproved of Father Champagnat's manner of conducting the Society.

He censured the Father's administration and the direction he gave his Brothers.

'According to Pompallier, the Society could not but fail in the hands of Father Champagnat. He was so convinced of this that he believed himself bound to represent the matter to the Archbishop. "Father Champagnat", said he, "notwithstanding his piety and virtue, has none of the qualities requisite to conduct a community with success. He is not fit to carry on a correspondence by letter, to instruct his Brothers, to deal with the directors of the schools or to direct a novitiate

properly. Besides, he does not give much attention to such things and devotes almost all his time to building and clearing the mountain side; whence it follows that the Brothers are not sufficiently trained, either in piety or in the religious virtues, that they are not instructed in the branches necessary for teachers and that many other things are neglected."

'Father Pompallier was so earnest in urging his views and manifested so much zeal and devotedness for the Little Brothers of Mary that credit was given to his representations. The Archbishop commissioned him to treat with Father Querbes, Superior of the Clercs of Saint Viator, with a view to amalgamation. In the meantime, the Archbishop sent for Father Champagnat and said to him: "You see, you have not been able to obtain authorisation from the government and, judging by the spirit with which it is animated, this favour with never be granted to you. Moreover, as your society is becoming more numerous and cannot get on without legal recognition, I wish you to unite your Brothers with those of Saint Viator, who are already approved by the government. Father Querbes is ready to receive your Brothers into his congregation."

Well, Brother Jean-Baptiste certainly is no devotee of Pompallier, painting him here almost in the colours of a Machiavelli. According to the declaration of Brother Jean-Baptiste, it was Father Pompallier who was be-

¹²⁷ 'Life', 1947, pp. 189-191 and 'Life', 1989, pp. 186-188. 'Life', 1947, pp. 189-191 and 'Life', 1989, pp. 186-188.

hind the project for the affiliation with Querbes in 1833. He is not the sole accuser. Father Colin weighed in heavily against Pompallier in a document of 1847:

'Anxious and insinuating, he' (Pompallier) 'gained the confidence of the Archbishop Administrator, caused a Vicar General to be replaced by another as superior of the new house of the Brothers at the Hermitage, and, some time later, almost succeeded in having the Archbishop Administrator take from Father Champagnat the direction of the work he had nurtured, and in putting in his place a priest who was a stranger to all concerned. That would destroy the new establishment. Providence wished that it did not succeed. It was then that, on the intervention of Archdiocesan administration, he was proposed as Vicar-Apostolic of Western Oceania.'¹²⁸

And Brother Avit, whose *Annales* are one of the early documents of the Brother's Institute, joins the accusers. Avit does not quote his sources, but, without doubt, his assertions are based on the memories of the older Brothers and, one suspects, on Brother Jean-Baptiste's account. His story is similar to that of Brother Jean-Baptiste, a story in which we can also hear clearly an echo of the severe judgement of Father Colin.

Avit writes:

'Father Pompallier was still at the Hermitage. According to all reports, the Institute was prospering; the novices were numerous; the Brothers were being formed; they had a good spirit and were attached to their pious founder.

Father Pompallier, however, was not of this opinion. He did not approve the way Father Champagnat conducted affairs. He blamed and criticised his administration and the direction which he gave to the Brothers. According to him, the Institute could only perish in Champagnat's hands. His conviction in this regard was so profound that he believed himself obliged to pass on these sentiments and fears to the Archbishop.

"Fr Champagnat", said he, "notwithstanding his piety and his virtue, has none of the qualities requisite to conduct a community with success. He is not fit to carry on a correspondence by letter, to instruct his Brothers, to treat with the managers of the schools, or to direct a novitiate properly.

Besides, he does not give much attention to such things, and devotes almost all his time to building and clearing the mountain side; whence it follows that the Brothers are not sufficiently trained, either in piety or in the religious virtues, that they are not instructed in the branches necessary for teachers, and that many other things are neglected."

'Father Pompallier was born at Vourles. He knew the parish priest, Father Querbes, very well - the priest who had founded the Clercs of St Viator, a congregation that was small in numbers. Its members, as their name indicates, were occupied as much with the sacristy as with the school. They went one by one, living and lodging at the presbyteries of the parish priests. Their Rule was still in a formative stage. Their costume had nothing impressive about it; they were as much in street clothes as in clerical attire.

¹²⁸ O.M. 4, Doc. 909, Lines 17-26.

'Nevertheless, Father Pompallier was persuaded that this little congregation was very solidly based and had a brilliant future. He therefore begged the Archbishop to make Father Champagnat link his Brothers with the Clercs of Father Querbes. He put so much strong conviction in what he was saying. It appeared that he had studied the matter so well that Monseigneur the Archbishop allowed himself to be convinced. He summoned the good Father Champagnat and pressed him strongly to carry out Father Pompallier's project.'¹²⁹

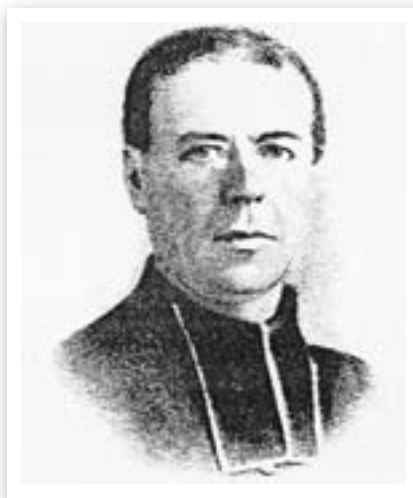
A Reflection

But, just how accurate are these three men in their accusations? Are they being fair to Pompallier? We have studied the assessments of these three commentators. We have noted that Avit's account closely follows that of Jean-Baptiste - in some places word for word. Besides, Avit did not come upon the 'Hermitage' scene until well after the departure of Pompallier for Oceania. Hence his story would rely heavily on others - on the very sources that Jean-Baptiste used. And, as for the third testator, we know that, after some years of handling Marist affairs in the Pacific, Pompallier had incurred the displeasure, even the wrath, of Colin. Let us now study material favourable to Pompallier in the matter of the Querbes affair. It is true that there was contact between Champagnat and Querbes well before the raising of the project of the amalgamation of the two Institutes. Let us deal with this topic first.

As early as 1824 we find a request by Querbes for Champagnat's Brothers. Nothing resulted from this attempt: Querbes states:

'From 1824 I sought also to procure for the little boys of my parish the benefits of a religious education and to get rid of the two schoolmasters who were unworthy of their profession. My request for a Brother to Father Courveille, then the Superior of the Marists, having been turned down, I understood from then on the need of a religious Institute which could send, one by one, some of its members to the most remote country places.'¹³⁰

Probably, Querbes became aware of Courveille's 'Prospectus', issued from the Hermitage and 'advertising' the Marist Brothers. Courveille had also unblushingly 'advertised' himself as Superior.



Father Querbes, Founder of the Clercs of St Viator

¹²⁹ Abridgement of the Annals of Brother Avit, p. 154 (p.98). Also O.M. 4, Doc. 909, Page 71, Footnote

¹³⁰ O.M. 2, Doc. 765, Lines 3-9.

We again have a letter from Father Querbes, this one to Monseigneur de Pins (2 November 1829), but it is not about uniting the Institutes; rather, it

states that both groups can work harmoniously in the same diocese or archdiocese; it discounts any suggestion of competition between the two:

*'Is there need to add that this establishment can no more harm the development of the Brothers of La Valla than the Sisters of St Joseph can harm the Sisters of St Charles. Some will go to Juda, others to Samaria, all moving towards the same end but by different paths. The diocese of Lyon and its surroundings are a vast enough field for such works of zeal. I do not fear to put forward that we shall act in accord with Father Champagnat, who came to see me some time ago and who has just written to me about the matter through Father Pompallier, who is due to return soon. I wish to go to see Father Champagnat myself so that I may see all the good it has pleased the Lord to effect on behalf of the children through the efforts of this virtuous priest.'*¹³¹

This is only an extract from the Querbes dispatch; other topics are also raised in his letter. We are not certain whether Father Querbes finally decided to send the letter, for it is still in the archives of Querbes' Institute. Perhaps Father Querbes eventually decided not to send it. We do not really know. But it is obvious that, at this early stage, there is no question of a proposed amalgamation.

Now let us turn our attention to Pompallier. Apart from the ten Pompallier letters we have already considered, letters which show his harmonious relationship with Champagnat, we now present a list of pertinent documents from 'Origines Maristes' which

cast doubt on Jean-Baptiste's strong assertions:

- **Doc. 276** (Archdiocesan Council decision, 7 August 1833): '... to effect this merging is worth an attempt at least' – decision of the Archbishop's Council, but no reference to Father Pompallier.
- **Doc. 277** (Letter of Father Querbes to Father Cholleton, 10 August 1833): The conditions stated by Father Querbes for this proposed union – no mention of Father Pompallier.
- **Doc. 278** (Letter of Father Pompallier to Father Champagnat, 18 August 1833). Perhaps refers to a possible union with the Clercs of St Viator, but it is not directly mentioned: 'Father Cholleton told me he had just written to you.'

¹³¹ O.M. 1, Doc. 204.

- **Doc. 280** (Letter of Father Cholleton to Father Querbes, 23 August 1833): 'Father Champagnat seemed to me to be fairly well disposed. He will go to your place during the course of next week.' – Champagnat did not go; and, again, there is no mention of Father Pompallier.
- **Doc. 286** (August-September 1833): This is a rough draft of Father Champagnat's admirable letter to Father Cholleton. No reference is made to Father Pompallier.
- **Doc. 291** (Letter of Father Cholleton to Father Querbes, 3 October 1833). He quotes the Jesuit Retreat priest as saying that Father Champagnat was now better

disposed to enter into 'all our views' regarding the union.

All the quotations from these documents offer little evidence of any intervention by Father Pompallier in the Father Querbes affair.

There is a letter which, since it is to be found in the archives of the Clercs of St Viator, is almost certainly from Father Pompallier to Father Querbes. The suggestion has been made that this letter appears to establish some attempt at union between Champagnat's group and that of Querbes about the middle of 1831, two years earlier than the crisis of 1833. A careful reading, however, will disclose that such a theory finds only flimsy support within the letter:

'Fourvière, 31 August 1831.

'Father and worthy pastor,

'I was unable to see Father Cholleton except very briefly on Friday evening (26 August) - after having waited for him for at least two and a half hours.

'He seemed to still hold firmly to the diocesan idea. I told him in substance your difficulties; he took no notice of them. He told me that the authority' (this would be Archbishop de Pins) 'had only certified to the existence of the establishments of this archdiocese, a certification which, he added, the Archbishop could not refuse.(1) But no request has been made by him to obtain an authorisation for the whole project and for its members scattered in two dioceses. (2) And there you have pretty well the core of the affair.

'There still remains the ideas which I had the honour to tell you of, ideas that can legalise the proceedings of our Superiors in these circumstances. What discretion has to be exercised and what prudent steps are required to treat at the one time both the supernatural and the human!

I will agree with you that we must pray very much and pray without ceasing. If you come to Lyon of Monday,

1. This may have been an attestation made by Monseigneur de Pins when he was taking steps in the previous year to obtain the legal authorisation of the Little Brothers of Mary.
2. The two dioceses of Lyon and Belley in which the clerical aspirants of the Society of Mary were working. By that time the teaching Brothers of Father Champagnat had spread into three dioceses – Lyon, Viviers and Grenoble.

*come up to Fourvière and make our house your hotel. You will afford us the greatest pleasure.
 'I have the honour to be, with deep respect and entire devotedness, Father and worthy pastor,
 'Your very humble and obedient servant,*

'Pompallier, priest.¹³² »



Archbishop de Pins, Titular Archbishop of Amasia,
 Apostolic-Administrator of Lyon

This letter, one which is somewhat 'out of the blue' (there being no prior or subsequent documents), and also not very clear in meaning, requires careful interpretation. What can be stated for certain is that the 'whole project' referred to therein has nothing to do with Father Querbes, for the document refers to a group which

was 'scattered in two dioceses' and which had 'establishments' in the Lyon archdiocese. Father Querbes' congregation was not thus situated; indeed, his group did not really begin until some months later.

On the other hand, the Society of Mary (priests) had its members scattered in two dioceses and was striving to overcome the purely diocesan ideas of the Archbishop of Lyon. It was this Society especially that would be a matter for discussion between Father Cholleton and Father Pompallier.

It is clear that one point raised in the letter does directly concern a Father Querbes' project, even though we cannot say precisely what the 'difficulties' were with this project, or really what was really at stake in that interview.

There is, however, one passage in the letter which may possibly have some bearing on a scheme to legalise Champagnat's group through some affiliation with Querbes' group, which had been fortunate enough to obtain legal authorisation from King Charles X in January, 1830. The interesting passage is:

¹³² O.M. 1, Doc. 235.

'There still remains the ideas which I had the honour to tell you of, ideas that can legalise the proceedings of our Superiors in these circumstances.'

So, solely on the basis of documentation, it seems to have been concluded from this letter alone that Father Pompallier was the "force" behind the proposal for the affiliation of the Little Brothers of Mary with the Clercs of St Viator. Indeed, apart from that short, obscure sentence we have little to show from documents that Pompallier was involved in attempting a union of Champagnat's group and that of Querbes.

Therefore, from all Pompallier's letters to Champagnat and from the other documents on this topic we would conclude that Pompallier was no major player in this stressful period of Champagnat's life. Yet the doubt remains. The testimonies of Colin, Jean-Baptiste and Avit, prejudiced yet powerful, and the slight suspicion aroused by that short, obscure sentence, quoted two paragraphs above, leave a lingering doubt.

In her biography of Pompallier, Lillian Keyes, states:

'The author of one Life of Father Champagnat attributes to Father Pompallier an attempt to negotiate a union of the congregation of teaching Brothers founded by Father Champagnat to the institute which Father Querbes was founding at Vourles, but this is not quite correct.

The Administrator of Lyon, Monseigneur de Pins, around about 1832, entrusted his Vicar, Father Cholleton, with the direction of the Brothers of St Viator before that congregation was officially approved by Rome.

'In a memoir addressed in 1844 to Cardinal de Bonald, Father Querbes himself says expressly that it was Father Cholleton who "had the idea of uniting to our institution the Brothers of Mary. This idea was approved by the Archbishop's Council; it was also warmly supported by Father Pompallier of Vourles, a Marist priest. . . . God did not permit this union because the aim of the two congregations was not the same." Father Pompallier's part in the matter was not therefore an active one.'¹³³

A Conclusion on the Querbes Affair

Let us now consider what Father Coste, one of the great Marist historians, has to say about this topic: 'Bound on one hand to Father Querbes by reason of family connections with Father Querbes' parish of Vourles, and on the other hand to the future Society of Mary, to which he belonged since 1829, Father Pompallier could hardly do otherwise than desire the union of this latter body with the work of the Catechists of St Viator. From first taking up residence at the Hermitage he had intervened in this direction.'¹³⁴ Now, given Pompallier's family connection with Vourles, where Father Querbes was parish priest, we can readily understand his interest in this affiliation of Champagnat's work with that of Querbes. But, although

¹³³ 'The Life and Times of Bishop Pompallier' P. 36. Also (in part) in Abbé J.B. Martin, "History of the Churches and Chapels of Lyon", Vol. 1, P.334.

¹³⁴ O.M. 1, Doc 235, Introduction.

Pompallier seemed to like to play the role of “Mr Fix-it”, we could conclude, from the evidence before us, that Pompallier was not deliberately trying to undermine Champagnat’s position in any malicious way. At the most, he would seem to be good-heartedly favouring this solution as an easy means to solve Champagnat’s authorisation problems.

We can, nevertheless, certainly criticise Pompallier for his lack of sensitivity towards Champagnat’s wishes and for his neglect in not giving sufficient consideration to reasons against the affiliation. Despite these weaknesses in Pompallier, it would appear that he does not deserve the degree of condemnation laid on him by Champagnat’s first biographer and others.

Why, then, do Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Avit paint Pompallier in such sombre colours in this matter? The documents certainly do not condemn Pompallier. It would seem, therefore, that it is the *viva voce* that accuses him – Pompallier was not popular among some of the Brothers. Both Jean-Baptiste and Avit were not close to the Hermitage scene for any long periods during their early careers, but they evidently picked up the prejudices against Pompallier that were expressed by Brothers who had closer contacts with him. One can readily imagine that the dignified Pompallier, of noble bearing, all-round ability and consciousness of his own worth would not appeal to

some of Champagnat’s humble followers who, in the early days, despite intellectual talents they may have possessed, did not have opportunity to let their talents shine in use. The obvious prejudice of Jean-Baptiste and Avit against Pompallier may partly be explained by the fact that they were influenced by others.

Of course, one glaring weakness of the way in which Brother Jean-Baptiste and Brother Avit relate this Champagnat-Querbes story lies in the use of ‘manufactured dialogue’ by these authors. Take, for example, the conversation between Champagnat and the Archbishop. How could these authors be so privy to the verbal interchange on these occasions? It is difficult to accept as sound historians men who merely manufacture dialogue. What is more, the words used to denigrate Pompallier in this fabricated dialogue and in the narrative are certainly not those that an impartial historian would choose.

We know, of course, that, partly owing to Father Champagnat’s special talent of playing for time, the union with the Clercs of St Viator did not take place. Later, according to Jean-Baptiste, the Archbishop congratulated him.¹³⁵ We may note in this regard that it is stated by one Champagnat scholar that Brother Jean-Baptiste inserted this retraction by the Archbishop in order to restore the latter to favour among the Brothers!

¹³⁵ “Life”, 1989, page 188.

POMPALLIER AND THE MISSIONS OF OCEANIA

It would be appropriate now to turn to the circumstances in which the Marist priests received Rome's authorisation as a religious congregation and, consequently, for its members to be exempt from strict canonical control by diocesan bishops.

Alarmed by the activities of the English Protestant missionaries in the Pacific basin, Rome determined to set up the Vicariate of Western Oceania. The difficulty was to find priests for the new mission and a leader to undertake its direction. An approach concerning the leadership was made to Father Pastre, former Prefect-Apostolic to the island of Réunion. Pastre, a sick man, had retired to Lyon, where he became a canon of the cathedral. Wanting to help in some way, Pastre mentioned the matter to Vicar General Cholleton, who immediately thought of Pompallier, a priest who had expressed a desire to work in the foreign missions. Pastre interviewed Pompallier, found him to be quite satisfactory, and told him of the proposed mission.

Still a Marist aspirant, Pompallier wrote to Colin. The Central Superior immediately foresaw the happy results that acceptance could have for the approbation of the Society of Mary. He urged Pompallier to accept, advising him to make explicit mention of the

branches of the Fathers and the Brothers as sources of missionary recruits. Pastre duly wrote to Rome, enclosing Colin's letter to Pompallier. The Marist hat was in the ring. In due course Rome, through its mission branch, Propaganda, made the decision to entrust the new mission to the Society of Mary. Subsequently, the Papal Decree "Omnium Gentium" gave pontifical recognition to the Marist priests. Pompallier became a bishop, being nominated as Vicar Apostolic of the huge region of Western Oceania. When the aspiring Marist priests came together at Belley (24 September 1836) for profession of vows, they numbered twenty – eleven from the diocese of Belley; nine from the Archdiocese of Lyon. Bishop Pompallier, also from Lyon, attended, but did not pronounce vows. He gave his reasons in the post-script to a letter to Cardinal Fransoni (10 September 1836):

'I am going to leave Paris for Lyon next Wednesday. I am going to be in the midst of my confrères for the meetings which we are going to have for the election of the Superior General and for a Retreat which must precede the emission of the Profession vows. As for me, I am preparing to make a declaration which will place me, in regard to the congregation, in the state in which a bishop finds himself when, before his consecration, he was tied by the vows of religion, since, according to the advice of your Eminence, and that of Cardinal Sala, I must not, as a bishop, make vows to a simple priest, that being unbecoming, especially after having promised under oath an immediate obedience to the holy Father, the Pope.'¹³⁶

¹³⁶ O.M. 1, Doc. 401, Lines 1-11. Post-script of a letter from Father Pompallier to Cardinal Fransoni 10/ 9/36.

Pompallier a effectivement fait sa « déclaration » lors de la rencontre des premiers Maristes (le 24 septembre 1836) ; il a fait une promesse d'attachement spirituel à la Société.



Pope Gregory XVI, 1831-1846

We have a quotation from Wiltgen's book, 'The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850', that has a bearing on this matter:

'On 29 May 1848 Luigi Cardinal Lambruschini, at a general meeting, told the cardinal members of the Evangelisation Congregation that Pompallier had been allowed by Rome to make vows' (with the Marists) 'at this time, but he never did so, and never afterwards considered himself a member of the Society of Mary. But, in his own declaration after the vow-making of 24 September 1836 (Saturday), there is record of his statement: "To hold fast with heart and soul to the Society of Mary. ... I wish to be a member till my latest breath."

'Pompallier appointed Colin his Vicar-General (Pro-Vicar) for Western Oceania. Father Colin accepted it as a sharing in the mission. Colin asked Pompallier to act as religious superior over the missionaries of his Order. Pompallier accepted, "but tell me if I should give it up so that I can be occupied exclusively with the mission."
'This pact was to cause endless strife between them; it would even threaten to bring the work to an end. The mission in Western Oceania would in time suffer great harm, and it would almost certainly have been destroyed except for the wisdom, patience and the ultimate severity of the Evangelisation Congregation in Rome.'¹³⁷



Father Jean-Claude Colin S.M., Founder of the Marist Fathers

There is, metaphorically, a wide world of information about Pompallier in his subsequent career as a missionary in Oceania, but the period in question does not come within the scope of this study.

¹³⁷ 'The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850'. Ralph W. Wiltgen S.V.D. Page 129.

Pompallier's and Champagnat's Mariology

Our gratitude should be directed to Pompallier, for his contact with Champagnat elicited a response from the latter which gives some indication of the depth of Champagnat's devotion to Mary.

Champagnat's Letter to Bishop Pompallier in Oceania

Father Champagnat took advantage of his second Sunday in Paris in 1838 to answer a letter from Bishop Pompallier, a letter which has not been preserved. The number of letters they exchanged shows clearly enough the bond that existed between Father Champagnat and Bishop Pompallier. That may explain the

confidential tone of this letter. The post-script was written after the Champagnat's return to the Hermitage, around mid-July. Since the letter bears no post-mark, Champagnat may have foreseen an occasion to have someone carry the letter. But that is just a guess, for we do not have the slightest shred of evidence to guide us. The second group of missionaries left for Oceania in September 1838, which, given that the letter was written in May, seems to be a date too far off to be a plausible explanation in this case.

The letter is now in the archives of the Marist Brothers' Sydney Province, having been given in 1905 to the then Provincial of Australia, Brother Stanislaus, by Bishop Lenihan of Auckland. It was found among the papers of Pompallier, first bishop of New Zealand. The letter:

*Foreign Missions, Rue de Bac No. 120.
Paris, 27 May 1838.*

Bishop Pompallier,

'It is with real pleasure and special enthusiasm that I seize the most favourable moment to reply to your very kind letter.

'I have been in Paris, as you see, since the 18th of the month of January, seeking the authorisation of the Brothers, which I still do not have, but which I hope for more and more. Everything seems favourable, but the formalities are never sufficiently completed. How many journeys I have made in Paris, how many visits - it is impossible to form even an idea of them. I have made all my visits, all my travelling in soutane, without any insult. I have not even been treated as a Jesuit!

'Paris is as peaceful as ever, and business is about the same. There is in the capital more religion than one imagines in the country. You must be thinking how hard the time is for me, distant as I am from my affairs. With all the troubles I have at Paris, I am in better health than at the Hermitage. Father Dubois often speaks of you and of your mission. It is only a few days ago that he said to me: "Don't forget that mission! What a holy man! How necessary it is to have many like him and to have him live for a long time!"

'At this moment France supplies missionaries for all the countries that need them. During my stay here I have seen six from the seminaries of the Foreign Missions depart, and others who are getting ready to go. What matter for edification I find in this house! Religion will not yet perish in France; there are too many resources. The work of the Propagation undertakes new developments every day.

'Monseigneur Mioland is the Bishop of Amiens, and he took possession yesterday. The Chartreuse Fathers have appointed a Superior for themselves. I am very annoyed at my having forgotten his name.

'We still receive very many novices. We are at present 225 or 226; we have 38 or 39 establishments and 70 requests. We suffer a real persecution from those who desire to have Brothers; they employ all sorts of means to wrest them from us. Those who have not sufficient influence make use of persons to whom we can refuse nothing. We are on the verge of making a second mother-house. It is possible to make it in the Department of Var.

'Father Matricon is still with me; I am very satisfied with him, and he makes himself loved by the Brothers; he has excellent judgement. I have also Father Besson, who is always a very good man. Brother François is my right arm; he directs the house in my absence just as if I were present. Everyone submits to him without any difficulty.

'Mary shows her protection very visibly in regard to the Hermitage. Oh, how much power the name of Mary has! How happy we are to be able to bear it! Our Society would have ceased being spoken about ages ago were it not for that holy Name, that miraculous Name. In Mary there is all the wealth of the Society.

'We have finished our chapel; it is very beautiful and infinitely dear to us, having been blessed by the first missionary and the first bishop of the Society. I hope that to all these titles there will be attached a third as a natural consequence – the first... who . . .

'Father Terrailon is still at St Chamond as parish priest. I think, however, that he will not be there for very much longer. The Archbishop shows us his goodness more than ever, and the same goes for the bishop of Belley.

'We have begun the establishment of La Grange Payre; it is beginning to prosper and already has a certain number of pupils. To Mary, yes, to Mary alone all our prosperity. Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything because Mary has always her adorable Son either in her arms or in her heart.

It is, as you are no doubt very convinced, Monseigneur, it is always through Mary that I count to obtain the Ordinance that I earnestly seek, that the holy and the most holy will of God may be done.

I hear you answer, "Amen."

'May all those who are with Your Lordship - I mean Brothers and confrères - answer likewise and pray for me. May I recommend myself in a very particular way to their good prayers, to yours especially, Monseigneur. For myself, I never approach the holy altar without thinking of our dear mission and of those who have been sent to it. Show yourself a father to those we are sending you, as you do with the first ones.

'Kindly accept the assurance of my sincere devotedness and of the truly affectionate sentiments with which,

*Monseigneur, 'I have the honour to be with respect,
'Your very humble servant,*

'CHAMPAGNAT.

'I am back at the Hermitage without having finished at Paris.

M. Fulchiron, whom I have just seen arriving from Paris, told me that my documents have been taken at last from the hands of the University to pass on to the Council of State, with a favourable covering note from the Minister.

'We are going to make a foundation at St Pot (Pas de Calais), which the Minister asked of me.

*It seems that a Mother-house would be needed there. Another has been asked of us for Montpellier and another for the Department of Var, the expenses of which will all be met. We are besieged by numerous requests that reach us every day; I desire very much to find someone to replace me. Pray for me; I have very great need of that. I am quite sure that your prayers are pleasing to the good God.'*¹³⁸

Champagnat wrote this letter from Paris during his second visit to the French capital. He went there a third time, also in 1838. In his first journey to Paris he was accompanied by Pompallier. His reference to 'being a priest or a Jesuit' indicates the extreme anti-clericalism which occasionally gripped the French, especially in Paris, where priests had indeed been thrown into the Seine. The Propagation of the Faith was the Society founded by Pauline Jaricot, who was a friend of Father Colin and who organised funds for the Missions, including the mission to Oceania led by Pompallier.

For the omitted words in 'the first... who...' we could perhaps guess that the missing sections concern 'apostle' or 'martyr'.

Father Terraillon, who left the Hermitage in 1826, resigned as parish priest of Notre Dame in St Chamond in November 1839 and proceeded to Puy-lata in Lyon, an appointment from

Father Colin. He had made his religious vows with the other Marists in September 1836.

La Grange Payre, mentioned here, had just become a boarding-house, a Juniorate for which Champagnat had great affection.

Before his death in 1840 Champagnat sent his own Brothers as missionaries to Oceania – three with the very first contingent in 1836, three more in 1838, Brother Attale in 1839 and two more in February 1840.

St Pol is in the far north of France, far removed from the tight cluster of Champagnat's communities near St Chamond, to the south-east of Lyon. In responding to the Minister's request for a school in this region, Champagnat was hoping to obtain legal authorisation for his Institute. He was unsuccessful. Brother Jean-Baptiste was sent to open the school at St Pol; it was a move that led to developments beyond all expectations.

¹³⁸ Archives of Marist Brothers, Sydney Province.

The 'Pray for me; I have very great need of that' is possibly a reference to his health, for, in 1837, Champagnat had taken ill on his journey to the south and had to turn back. There was also the strain associated with the building programme. It is not surprising that, after 22 year of ceaseless exertion and anxiety, Champagnat wished to entrust the work to others.

But, above all the other comments, we need to say that it is in this letter to Pompallier in New Zealand that Champagnat gives us our deepest insight into his devotion to Mary. He writes:

'Mary shows her protection very visibly in regard to the Hermitage.
Oh, how much power the name of Mary has!
How happy we are to bear it!
Our Society would have ceased being spoken about ages ago were it not for that holy Name,
that miraculous Name.
In Mary there is all the wealth of the Society ...'

And later in the same letter:

'To Mary, yes, to Mary alone is all our prosperity.
Without Mary we are nothing,
and with Mary we have everything,
because Mary has always her adorable Son
either in her arms or in her heart.'

One would not expect such lyricism from a man from the farm, a lyricism which displays Champagnat as a man of tender feelings. So our thanks go to Pompallier for being the occasion for this outburst of Champagnat's paeon of praise for Mary.

POMPALLIER – A FINAL WORD

Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier was perhaps the priest most closely associated with Marcellin Champagnat in the early years. Coming to the Hermitage in 1829 and residing there, more or less, until the end of 1832, he was constantly in contact with Champagnat. Even after his departure to Lyon, Pompallier, friend of Vicar General Cholleton, remained an unofficial liaison officer between the Archdiocesan authorities and the budding Marists in the archdiocese. He was thus in close touch with Champagnat until 1836, the year of his appointment as Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania.

Champagnat's letter to Pompallier in 1838 is both a wonderful expression of friendship and a heartfelt declaration of Champagnat's devotion to the Blessed Virgin. On the other hand, Pompallier's ten letters to Champagnat, already considered in this study, are likewise friendly and full of news and information about Marist and Archdiocesan affairs. Always, the tone of Pompallier's letters is amicable, sympathetic and respectful. The letters give us no hint at all of Pompallier as the Machiavellian character depicted by Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Avit. Although we find no real documentary proof of Pompallier's involvement in the attempt to affiliate Champagnat's Brothers with the Clercs of St Viator, we have it on the good authority of Marist historian Father Coste, and also of Father Vourles himself, that such was the

case. Even so, we would imagine that Pompallier would have joined his efforts to those of Father Cholleton (the main mover in the process), not as a malicious schemer, but simply in the role of a 'Mr Fix-it', the man of superior knowledge providing ready, rapid-fire solutions for all situations. And Pompallier was indeed a man of superior knowledge. For instance, his reading of the Mission opportunity was most perceptive:

'The mission itself, if I may put it thus, is to my mind an accessory, and the obtaining of a Brief of authorisation, or at least of centralisation for the recently-founded Society of Mary, that is the principal thing. If that occurs, I shall set out very happily to the ends of the earth, to those islands of the Pacific Ocean, to those poor savages who do not know Our Lord, but who offer, it is said, good dispositions.'¹³⁹

And also:

'How greatly I rejoice before God for having from the beginning accepted in particular the work of this mission, and for having induced the whole Society to devote itself to this same project, which I always foresaw as bound to hasten and perhaps assure the approbation' (from Rome) 'which is the object of our common desires!'¹⁴⁰

Pompallier's capacity is also to be seen in his management of the spiritual development of the Tertiary Brothers of Mary, in his initiation of the Christian Virgins and in his intervention on behalf of the Marist Sisters. His part in the appointment of Cholleton to replace Cattet, indicated

in his letter (8 April 1833) to Jeanne Marie Chavoin, while it displays his capacity as a lobbyist, also seems to show a certain self-satisfaction in his own persuasive abilities.

Pompallier's strongly expressed desire for the establishment of the Society of Mary and his personal desire for missionary work abroad, contained in the passages quoted above, assuredly indicate Pompallier's commitment to the Marist cause. It is possible, however, that other motives actuated Pompallier too. Perhaps he realised that his situation was not strong, certainly in regard to positions of high responsibility, among the Marists. Despite his having most of the required attributes for leadership, he was not elected by his fellows of the archdiocese of Lyon in the November 1832 election; Séon was chosen. Pompallier's propensity to draw up rules was perhaps a disqualifying factor for him. Again, his removal to the boarding house of the Tertiary Brothers further distanced him from his fellow Marists. Therefore, there is the possibility that Pompallier, anxious as he undoubtedly was to launch the Society of Mary, might well have been on the lookout for opportunity to spread his own ecclesiastical wings elsewhere.

Busying himself as much as possible about Rome's acceptance of the Oceania Mission as the way of having the Society of Mary approved did

¹³⁹ O.M.1, Doc. 347.

¹⁴⁰ O.M.1, Doc. 370.

indeed put him in the forefront for selection as a Mission leader; perhaps this was what he was aiming at. Certainly, he had all the qualities of an episcopal leader. Besides, as a bishop, he could avoid being under the jurisdiction of the Superior General of a religious congregation. He could be his own man and, with his Marist connections, he possessed the additional advantage of having members of this religious congregation available, perhaps, as assistants on the mission.

Pompallier's action in attempting to distance the Tertiary Brothers from the Marist connection is most interesting. Although Father Forest, a Marist, was appointed to replace him as chaplain to the Tertiary Brothers, Pompallier, as we saw, was not intent on trying to attach the Tertiary Brothers to the jurisdiction of the Superior of the Society of Mary. This is strange because, earlier, it seemed that he intended to link the Tertiary Brothers with the Marists. Perhaps his thought was that, since they were under the jurisdiction of Archbishop de Pins, it would be best not to push them overtly into the Society of Mary. Perhaps he did not want to offend de Pins. Whatever the reasons, we have his words to Colin concerning his conversation with the Pope about the Tertiary Brothers: 'I have not presented them as tied in jurisdiction to the authority of the General of the Society' (of Mary).¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, Pompallier did much for the Society of Mary in many ways. He it was who brought about the accomplishment of one its original aims – the establishment of a Third Order. It is true that Colin had something of this nature going among men at Belleley, but Pompallier's group in Lyon was by far the more vigorous, and it was from this Lyon group that the Third Order eventually emerged and waxed strong, especially under the directorship of Father (later, Saint) Peter Julian Eymard. Moreover, it was also Pompallier who initiated a female branch – the Christians Virgins, from whose ranks there eventually emerged the Missionary Sisters of Mary, who, in turn, encouraged the establishment of small indigenous congregations in the Pacific region.

Despite Pompallier's genuine attachment to the Society of Mary and the excellent work that he accomplished in its cause, it is not really surprising that he opted not to take vows as a Marist in 1836. We have, of course the reason he put forward concerning his first duty being towards the Pope, but there seems to be more to it than that.

Pompallier always seems to be on the periphery of the Marist priests' movement. It seems likely that he was the protagonist in drawing up, probably in 1830, those certain sixteen Statutes, which were really a manifesto of the Society of Mary of

¹⁴¹ O.M. 1, Doc. 395.

the Hermitage, such as had been lived in early years. Of course, they became no longer of concern after the election of Colin as central Superior later in 1830, for, as such, Colin was the one designated to supervise the life-style of Marists in community. Again, when the Valbenoîte group was set up, Pompallier drew up rules for its way life. As we know, his propensity to produce regulations was evidently not appreciated. Nevertheless, in this endeavour to fabricate the rules for the Marist groups Pompallier gives the impression that he had his own vision of what the Society of Mary should be. It is possible, then, that he was not happy with the direction the Marists were taking.

From 1832 to 1836 Pompallier was playing a lone hand, still deeply involved in Marist affairs but conducting himself more or less independently. In his many activities, he seems to be somewhat on the margin of the Marist spirit, and, in religious life terms, he seems more a man of power than a man of service. So, in electing not to join the Marists and in accepting the leadership of the

Oceania Mission, an apostolate which distanced him from France and the heart of the Society, Pompallier may have done so in the realisation of his differences from his erstwhile companions of the Society of Mary.

Pompallier and his Marist companions duly set out for Western Oceania at the end of 1836. For Pompallier this meant more than three decades of difficulties and dangers, of squabbles with Colin and of contests with missionaries of other Christian denominations. That his heart was truly in his work is to be seen from the lasting impression he made on the Maoris of New Zealand. In the year 2002, as a pilgrimage group, they sought out his body lying in an obscure Parisian cemetery and, with solemn and prolonged ceremonies, brought it back to the Land of the Long White Cloud, laying it to rest under the altar of a little country church at Motuti on the Hokianga River, close to the site of the first missionary endeavours of the first Christian bishop of New Zealand, Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier.

THE CIRCULARS OF BROTHER BASILIO RUEDA

The Circumstances of their composition, by brother Gabriel Michel



Alain Delorme
fms

INTRODUCTION

A few months after the death of Brother Basilio Rueda on 21st January 1996, the idea came to me to ask Brother Gabriel Michel, who was in the same community as me at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, if he would agree to write his recollections regarding the composition of the Circulars written by Brother Basilio during his two periods as Superior General. With his usual generosity, he had soon composed a long text, a condensed version of which will be presented in this issue of *Cahiers Maristes*.

I simply recall that Brother Gabriel Michel had been Secretary General during the first period of Brother Basilio's tenure (1967-1976). Carrying this title, he was one of his closest col-

laborators notably for overseeing the drawing up in French of each of the Circulars. During the second period of tenure (1976-1985), Brother Gabriel Michel, who has been appointed to the *Centre d'Accueil* at The Hermitage in order to continue his work as an historian of our origins and to serve as guide to the various groups of pilgrims from Marist places, was no less close to Brother Basilio who continued to require of him an active participation in putting his Circulars into shape.

May the reading of the pages which follow be the occasion of thanking the Lord, through Mary, for these two Brothers whose lives have been a splendid gift to our religious family. The numbers in brackets refer to the pages of the French edition of the Circulars.

From Les Avellanes, 11th December 2009

2 January 1968

1. ON THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CHAPTER

At the beginning of the Chapter of 1967, Brother Basilio was already known by a part of the Congregation. He was therefore able to receive many confidences regarding the problems which were becoming evident. If the capitulants arrived without great preparation, others, on the contrary had carefully studied documents such as *Perfectae Caritatis*. Therefore they could very quickly see the directions which emerging in the sub-commissions and commissions charged with studying the major themes: religious life; apostolic life; formation of aspirants and Brothers; government of the Institute.

Scarcely appointed, Brother Basilio stressed he must not nor would not want to impose anything before the new Constitutions had decreed on what was expected of the new General Council.

Some complex Capitular procedures

A provisional text of the Constitutions and Statutes had been prepared in 1966 and all its articles had to be approved by the Chapter. This would only happen later, for first of all it was necessary to clarify some “documents” emanating from the commissions and sub-commissions which were printed as “rose papers”, then “blue papers”, then “white papers”. The “rose paper” level indicated that the commission was in agreement, but that it had still to obtain the

agreement of the plenary Assembly. This latter would make criticisms which would lead to the rewriting of the text, published this time as “blue papers”. After approval by the plenary Assembly they would then appear as “white papers” for the definitive vote.

The document on access to the priesthood, desired by some within the limits described by *Perfectae Caritatis*, was one of the most crucial. It was especially in regard to these decisions that Brother Basilio Rueda felt obliged to remain neutral and discreet, knowing that he might have to see to the application of decisions with which he would not be comfortable (6).

Already he could feel in such and such a Province a certain rejection of the classical community life in order to direct themselves towards forms closer to secular Institutes (26-27). Therefore, for him, at this stage of between the two sessions of the Chapter – the time when he published his Circular: January 1968 – he did not attempt to influence matters in any way: neither those who wished to go ahead with speed, nor the others who no longer recognised themselves in a congregation which wished to change too much.

Results of the first session

Brother Basilio, who had already mentioned the need for truly scientific inquiries (46) noted that the first session, even if much friendship had been evident, had concluded with

quite antithetical positions (49). At the beginning of 1968, there was also the beginning of a crisis which was beginning to manifest itself in so many countries: new psychological research, group dynamics, insistence on the right to happiness, on freedom above everything. But freedom needed to be complemented by structures (57), by the charisma of the Founder, the source of true dynamism (58). Certainly one had to be in tune with the values of the time but in ways that that were positive and did not deny the values of previous times which also had authentic aspects.

2 February 1968

2. INTERSESSION

In a second Circular, Brother Basilio continued to prepare the Brothers for the second session of the Chapter. Moreover, he encouraged positive works which could be undertaken in certain Provinces, and also considered that it would be a good thing everywhere to have two Brothers exclusively engaged full time to prepare for the second session.

Fidelity to the spirit of the Council

Already by this time, Brother Basilio knew that he could not always trust pontifical texts (77). He therefore emphasised one of the points of the Council – the charisma of the Founders – and showed us how a “dynamic charisma” could be appropriately lived

out in each era. Since each generation could be faithful to this charism, Brother Basilio thought to undertake some research of our spirituality and an articulation of it (80) that would improve any inadequacies in its traditional expressions (79). This did not need to be rushed for the Institute had nine years and even eighteen available it to experiment.

From the experience of his own Province and from what had been confided to him as a Master of Second Novices, he had learnt that, if there was foolhardiness in the undue haste of those too eager for change, there was unacceptable braking applied by those who were unsupportive of anything new. The numerous contacts that he had had and still maintained with many other congregations allowed him to see that such tensions did not only exist among the Marist Brothers.

When later, the Society of St. Paul published most of his Circulars in Italian, it was mainly because it knew that Brother Basilio’s thought was appreciated as far-sighted, open-minded and prudent.

In conclusion, if religious life was going to involve new ways of acting, these needed to be shaped by these principles:

- transforming what was good into something better
- undertaking rigorous research
- looking for formulae more suited to our times
- accepting that the initiatives could be reversed
- not favouring irregularity

24 February 1968

3. FACING THE SECOND SESSION

It was important to direct things so that there was a conversion at the level of the Institute, something that would be more than the sum of personal conversions. The real question was: did we want what the Council had wanted? What the Gospel wants? There were two dangers: to become ossified or, at the other extreme, to become victims of internal revolts coming from the young.

Now, in every human milieu, it is still necessary to weigh in both the influences of fidelity and the flesh. And to admit clearly that a congregation is not the Church; it does not have the promises of eternal life. If its only tendencies are rigorism on the one hand and bourgeois liberalism on the other, it would have little chance of surviving the tremors making ready to occur. A Chapter must be a prophetic action, while attaching souls in the Spirit (127).

Renewal and faithfulness to the Gospel

An appropriate renewal does not lead to a law of death. The world we wish to help is no longer thought of negatively: it is a society based on obligations, to which we must carry new or re-presented values. It was not for nothing that Brother Basilio had studied axiology and completed a thesis on values (Being and value). We do not need to concern ourselves with minu-

tiae of his thesis, but rather its major axes: creation is good, but there was the fall, which was fortunately followed by the Redemption (131). It is only **in and through Christ** that the world and man come into being.

This is the meaning of a genuine renewal, one which is not just an accommodation. The temptation of many of the Superiors was just to adapt to the *fait accompli*: to somehow accept and accommodate what was happening. With a little black humour Brother Basilio noted that these legitimisations had the advantage of resolving the immediate tensions of an average community, but the disadvantage of putting it on the slippery slope to mediocrity.

Thus, decentralisation – yes! – but not federation, leaving each Province to create its own law. The role of the General Councillors was to remind people that the central authority had the right to react. The Chapter would decide the exact powers which the Provincial and local authorities could keep. This posed also the more general problem of obedience, something which will be treated later.

2 July 1968

4. A CHAPTER FOR TODAY'S WORLD

It was still some weeks from the Chapter and Brother Basilio was obviously preoccupied with a possible danger: that the Chapter would devote all its time to internal problems, without paying attention to the needs

of the world. He therefore tried to communicate what our world was waiting for from the Chapter of the Marist Brothers.

The Marist mission

The very day of his election, Brother Basilio stated his firm decision: to go to the poor and to the missions. The urgency of the time was not asceticism but charity. At the same time, however, this was asceticism, enlivening the dialogue with God and among the Brothers so we could examine whether the Institute was doing what was needed in the real world.

It was not a matter of a complete break with the past, but of adopting a better orientation that took into account the new needs of the global village which the world had become. Hence three questions:

- What were the calls of the world?
- What kind of echo must these have with Champagnat's disciples?
- How to respond?

The problem of violence

Since he knew the Latin American world so well, Brother Basilio could not fail to foresee the phenomenon of violence that would occur in reaction to great injustices in the division of wealth, and the dangers in theologically justifying this violence. He knew that police were also opposed to the violence of guerrillas, but they were just as much to blame.

The response to these situations was often a radical materialism. We, in contrast, are called to look for a Christian response, the passion for universal human development, to advance all people and every person (240).

Is violence permissible? It is not totally rejected in "Populorum Progressio" and Brother Basilio quotes Hel-da Camara:

"I respect those who, in conscience, have felt obliged to opt for violence, not the simplistic actions proposed by 'lounge-room guerrillas', but by those who have proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of their lives [...]
We Christians are on the side of non-violence, this is in no way a choice of weakness or passivity. Non-violence is to believe not in the force of wars, murders and hatred, but rather in the strength of truth, justice and love."

But certainly, it is necessary to distinguish between the desirable and the possible. There is no need to fight a real evil with a greater evil. And here, Brother Basilio could quote extensively from "Populorum Progressio" and the works of J. L. Lebret.

The Reality of our Educational Vocation

The Catholic school exists to further the mission of the People of God. And it is here that Brother Basilio saw that a change of paradigm was called for: how were the personnel and financial resources of all the teaching congregations proportionately responding to the needs of the world?

While everyone must respond to these needs – families, Churches, States – we who were professionals and apostles, had to show leadership which came from supernatural charity, in accordance with our charism. At the same time we needed to have realistic planning about this and not fall into anarchy, for nothing is achieved through anarchy.

“It is to this that I am trying to sensitise the Chapter, even if some young student Brother has discovered that the first three Circulars haven’t anything great to do with the Chapter. I cannot do anything less than think of the 8000 free wills which are at my disposal and for whom I have responsibility.”

Brother Basilio was deeply imbued by the doctrine of “Populorum Progressio” and he also quoted often from J. L. Lebrez:

“It is only if we are imbued with the spirit of the Lord and with the Gospel spirit that we can adapt ourselves to the signs of the times and give adequate responses.”(283)

The Man of the Gospel

Personally I have always admired Brother Basilio very much. Certainly he was a man of extraordinary intelligence, with a marvellous mind for synthesis, with a great openness to change, but, above all, he was a man of the Gospel. He said to me one day:

“If a Brother is consistently available to the Lord and others, I can dispense him from the whole rule!”

He was able to accept our times since they were our times and to do so with joy, without disowning the past. There was no question of the young becoming the leaders but he knew how to listen to them (286). We would take them from their walk of life and mould them for the world.

Another author whom Brother Basilio quotes several times is Houtart who reminds us:

“Christians must not forget that there is a mysterious yet real link between creation and eschatology. It is not disconnected to the new creation that we have made of the world a universe habitable for man who is either becoming more and more more similar to his creator, or on the contrary, a hell of hate and destruction. There is a mysterious link between the two.”

It is here that the vocation of a Brother is situated, something that remains marvellous:

“To be free from being conditioned to the secular life (gain, interest, family, regionalism, nation, sexual life) so as to devote himself with all his energy and all his physic unity, to integrate himself within a body of action, to offer himself as a gift in the service of youth, to development and evangelisation by the means of education: this is ideal that is being lived out.” (289).

But in order to live this life well, our life of prayer had to be from a familiarity with heaven.

How to protest in our world

Referring to the global protest which France had just experienced in May 1968, he also put us on our guard against certain new tendencies which were directing pupils towards ideas of rebellion and social preoccupations without control. But even a just rebellion must not use unchecked means to advance its cause.

One can understand to the ecclesial level to which Brother Basilio wanted to direct the Chapter.

“Humanity,” he said with Madeleine Delbrel,
 “will be evangelical or will cease to exist.”
 (312)

This is the argument of the Circular.

“The great enigma of anthropology is the failure of all secular humanism.
 The young especially need to find, not only the means of living, but reasons for living.
 We must return them to God’s plan of love, something that is done in real life and action, not by books.

Hence the need for planning: not to expect a persecution, Combes style, but for example a planned expansion in contrast to the forced expansion of 1903.

As for the formation of leaders, it was also necessary to step away from the classical method and not to fearful of

taking them from “all social classes” based on their dynamism, and their strength of devotion more than their academic potential, even though this does need to be taken into account in a teaching congregation.

In our world where some were asking about the purpose of the Church, Brother Basilio had anticipated the question and replied to it with the thinking of *Populorum Progressio*:

“All growth is ambivalent.
 Nevertheless to allow man become more human, he cannot be imprisoned by any supreme good which prevents him from looking up.
 Research has shown this to be an obstacle to full human growth, producing a “moral under-development”
 (310).

Hence the necessity of rediscovering and promoting among our students a Christian humanism.

Conclusion

With appropriate devolution, it is at the level of each Province that the real battle would be waged. The calls are those of the present, many being new but not in contraction to those of the past, for example the call to go to the poor. It is necessary to follow Christ, as we have followed the Founder, in total faith. And he announced a fifth part to be given in the course of the Chapter.

1 November 1968

5. CALLS FROM THE CHURCH AND OUR FOUNDER

Even if the excellent achievements of early times had to be re-evaluated, the school remained a very important place, a principle activity, but not on its own. "Traveller it is your journey which makes the path." We had therefore to apply the Council to our congregation and our Chapter.

Vatican II and the situation of the Institute

To be part of the Church "ad intra", it was necessary to be familiar with the Holy Scriptures, for even if the Church has structures "ad extra" these structures are charismatic and pneumatic.

5.1 - Life of Prayer

In every case, for us, Marist Brothers, what we first need is not exegesis but personal prayer and a taste for the liturgy. Brother Basilio wanted the Word of God to lead us to discover the Church and the Church lead us discover the Word. It was therefore important to pay attention to the readings of the Church and not digress by yielding to intellectual studies undertaken with a poor interior faith-life.

Brother Basilio who had experienced controversial attempts at the modernisation of the liturgy warned about fantasies. He also warned against the tendency to go to Mass individually, because it was a poor expression of community. At the other ex-

treme, however, some spoke of a vow of community. In any case there the Brothers needed to attend to the rule of daily Mass, and not to dispense themselves from on a weak pretext.

5.2 - Charity

The basis of the message of John XXIII was that charity is the fundamental law of human perfection (394). This aligns with Father Champagnat's spiritual testament. To do a work of charity without love is an offense.

5.3 - Ecumenism

Brother Basilio had long, but always very balanced, reflections on this subject. He could quote Culmann whom he had met and with whom he spoke of an ecumenical Eucharist: if faith ceases, inter-communion could become easy, but ecumenism has nothing to gain by the meeting of two failures."

5.4 - The Missions

Even if we were not a missionary Institute, we have had a good preparation. As early as 1836, the Brothers set out for Oceania. Now there was a missionary regression and entire continents were still unaware of the Gospels. Hence a new effort which ought to come from the Provinces and create new Provinces. (Thirty years later, it is partly achieved.)

The mission is the announcing of the Gospel,

a) to pagans and to the newly evangelised but who have not yet assimilated the message;

- b) to Catholics who have not the sufficient pastoral ministry; and
- c) to countries with Catholic traditions, but moving along a path to paganism.

Brother Basilio was to visit thirteen African countries before the Chapter to judge them better. For him the foundation of indigenous institutes was feasible, but this should prevent their being integrated. Moreover, overall such integration was very good for us Marists.

For a missionary expansion a certain attitude was needed. Therefore an ambiance which favourable to growth in vocations had to be established and Provinces needed to make reasonable sacrifices.

5.5 - Mariological renewal

A Circular eight years later would deal with this subject. Basilio only made the comment that never had a Council made a parallel synthesis on the Marial question. It is not correct to say that it was silent on Mary.

5.6 - Promotion of the Laity

The Church is not a democracy: it holds its power to teach from Christ. But Christians have an active participation in it. A Christian school is doing its job only if, at the end of the day, it is producing a reasonable number of young people who become religious or active Christians.

In the period of disarray in which we are now, we need strong conviction to understand the problem of vocations. Nobody struggles to defend

that in which they do not truly believe. One must have the “charism of not being able to live in any other way.” Therefore we must acquire a fresh awareness of our condition as religious.

For the choice of vocations it is not necessary to disparage other values (e.g. marriage) but let young decide themselves on what is really wanted by God for them.

5.7 - Spirit of the Founder

The Council asked for the reaffirmation of the charism of Founders. Therefore what do we say of Champagnat? Brother Basilio put forward these main points (482-483):

- Formation: Marcellin had been able to form in a period as difficult as ours. In dealing with the question of qualities of formators, Brother Basilio described himself: mature, able to communicate, receptive to the Council, sense of fatherliness, pre-occupation with well accomplishing the task, gift of his time, depth of spiritual life.
- Attachment to the popes and bishops.
- Evangelical boldness in events: not converting Champagnat’s work into a museum. One of the main events of that time was the war in Biafra. Brother Basilio asked what he ought to do, but he was reassured by the decision of the Brothers themselves: they wanted to remain in the country. Even if they could not be martyrs for the faith, they could be martyrs of love.
- Poverty.

Not to live in a system of ease based on economic security (567). Brother Basilio thought especially of opening schools which would not receive a subsidy from the State (where the State did subsidise) and where evangelisation could not be compromised. But he was not clear and it does not seem that this act of boldness took place.

The problem was also to go not only to the poor but to the marginalised. This is not “a variation on a theme” but an urgent necessity. He quoted the case of those sixty priest friends from whom he asked for a successor for the *Movement for Better World* and who refused for they had undertaken to serve only the poorest in Latin America (572-573). And so as to say he was not dreaming, he quoted a certain number of Marist Brothers who had gone to the truly poor (576).

He also suggested some very concrete things, such as putting a 5% reserve on the budget of a Province, which would be realised by real economies which would correspond to deprivations that one could impose on himself

Prayer, source of life for the Church. One cannot learn to pray by fleeing from prayer (597). Theology is all very well, but prayer is another thing. And he supported his plea with Urs Von Balthasar in *Cordula*:

“The authentic announcement of faith is born rather from an attentive and conscious union with the magisterium of the Church.

It requires deep study, meditation and prayer... ”
(599-600).

Conclusion (or the “finir-finir” as he would say when he saw that the end had been long in coming) He dialogues with clear propositions and authentic arguments: a sociological investigation. He saw that we were moving towards forms that would be less legalistic, apostolically bolder, more involved in a professional and growing socialisation, and with more independent forms.

30 November 1968

6. CONCLUSION OF THE 16th GENERAL CHAPTER

Brother Basilio recalled that on 21 November the capitulants had “presented in the Temple” the documents which announced a new style of personal and community life. They had imagined and discussed, corrected and approved the details of a life which, despite external appearances, fundamentally ought still to be that of the 7197 deceased Brothers.

Everyone lost something in the decisions which had been taken. He also noted: “I have tried to say what I expected from the Chapter. Now I will obey its decisions. We are no longer at the at the point of the water-spring or the small estuary. Our wave is at the stage where it its making its own way. The reality which will follow still remains a mystery. After the Council there will be crises. We cannot pretend to avoid them.”

19 March 1969

7. CIRCULAR FOR THE FEAST OF EASTER 1969

This is a very short exhortation from which I have remembered this allusion which Brother Basilio made regarding Father Champagnat:

"Nothing changed the peace of his soul nor the serenity of his visage.

Brother Basilio's peace

For me this allusion describes Brother Basilio himself. In nine years, I do not think I ever saw him once show discouragement or irritation, or a notable variation to his serenity. And God knows that in those years 1968-1970 he would have had good cause to experience such states of soul, be it because of the developments among our student Brothers in Rome, or be it because of the developments taking place in certain Provinces (Mexico was no exception). He took things as they came, waiting for the moment of grace and acting then with all possible wisdom.

He lost neither his appetite nor his sleep, or so it seemed to me. It must be said that his sleep was so reduced that sometimes he had to miss his meal so as to get a little sleep. He warned that he was not to be disturbed. People had fallen into the habit of saying: *il dordine* (from the proverb: he who sleeps, eats; *in French: "il dort, il dîne."*)

Certainly he was well enough aware that the disarray of the religious life was not a phenomenon of the Marists alone, and in the meetings of the Superiors, he came across as the realistic optimist whom Father P. Giordano Cabra F.N. recalled in this way:

"One of the most esteemed personalities was Brother Basilio. His writings on the religious life were known and appreciated for their practical side and for the surety of their doctrine. His cordiality made him amiable and made him seem fraternal. His extraordinary experience of the problems of different cultural contexts would appear group work. Often enough his advice became text, and was quoted as sure directions, not only during meetings but even in the various institutes. One can affirm that Brother Basilio was, as much by his writings as by his active and unique presence at these gatherings, one of the guides who was most listened to and most well-balanced in the years of renewal, not only within his own Institute but across religious life."

Having been myself part of the gatherings of Assistants General during the period 1968-76 I was able to hear similar appreciations. Moreover, when Brother Basilio was in Rome, as when he received guests at the house, for from time to time at the "*l'Eau Vive*", he did so always to create links, and to inform himself how others were thinking on such or such a subject under discussion.

He who had so little time to read, ensured he was remarkably well informed on all the great religious problems and very quickly he could formed a personal idea of it which he could

express in an impeccable synthesis. It is true that that the lack of time did not always render this synthesis easy and he had to take longer to explain his point of view.

But as we can see from the witness above, his faith dominated the whole, hazy landscape of the era:

“Our époque is difficult, but it is thrilling; and then, we had no choice: it was our period.”(23)

Brother Basilio’s relationships

I could add that he was also at ease with simple men as with the leading lights. After the Chapter session of 1968, as he was quite fatigued, the General Council decided that he should go to rest at Taormina (Sicily) and that I should accompany him there. We were therefore in a hotel. It was interesting to see how conversation might continue after the evening meal with the other travellers who were from all places, tourists, Christians or not.

He had many contacts in the clerical world. If therefore he told me: “Go and get Cardinal Pironio (whom he had invited)” or “Book three places at the *Eau de Vive*” (a famous restaurant run by religious sisters), this was not because of “worldly” relations but because he needed to sound out the point of view of Balthasar or Lyonnet or some other theologian while chatting casually over a meal. He gained his information with great simplicity. And when the invitation took place at

the General House, he saw that the guest was received with every courtesy possible, and to have him visit the house. If there was no-one to do this he saw to it himself, which, more than once, through the heat of the Roman summer, deprived him of a siesta which was so necessary for one who slept only four or five hours.

6 June 1970

8. COMMUNITY LIFE

After the year 1970 Circulars which dealt in an exhaustive way with the most important themes of the religious life came out at regular intervals for sixteen years.

Brother Basilio considered that he should begin with COMMUNITY LIFE, deficiencies on this point perhaps explaining the haemorrhage in vocations which marked this era. It was the time when, in Rome, there began to be an emptying of the huge General Houses and where malicious tongues related the story of a religious who had died without any of his confreres around him for two two days.

This Circular was to be a treatise and not simply an exhortation. It was a question of stating how important it was to have a genuine community life, without however, regarding it as a panacea. Hence the title: *Apologia for and demythologising of community life*. Brother Basilio had reflected much on the question and probably dealt with it in sessions or retreats

during the period when he was at the *Movement for a Better World* because this organisation had been founded specifically for the improvement of human relationships.

Brother Basilio had had, in his time at the *Movement for a Better World*, reasonably relations with some industrialists and he knew that research made in industry also had its wisdom: authoritarian conduct by those in authority was counter-productive; efficacy was enhanced when the head was approachable and relational.

So also with religious: psychological factors in community behaviour were important.

“The day when everyone understands that well-tested psychological laws engage moral conscience, great progress will be possible.”

(R. O. Hoffer).

In his years at the *Movement for a Better World* he had also been put in contact with organisations such as CLAR (Conference of Latin-American Religious) where the question had also been dealt with for and by men called to live together. But his Circular would remain quite personalised, for he would insist on listening to others and God knows how many hundreds of hours he himself spent listening to hundreds of Brothers:

“I would have liked to enjoyed going out to some entertainment that was suggested to me, but I had first of all to listen to my Brothers.”

He knew that he was addressing a congregation where there had never been grades of religious, where someone could feel less well accepted. Above all, it was needed to think of community playing the role of spiritual director to its members, something that was an invitation not to be content with the minimum.

12 May 1971

9. GENERAL CONFERENCE

Brother Basilio had travelled through a number of countries since 1968, and was able to see what was and what was not happening in the renewal suggested by the General Chapter. It has to be said also that it was close to the worst period for religious congregations.

Surely not. We were being called to a mission and to giving birth. There was an obligation to renew, by a conversion which had not only to be personal but institutional. And this was a change which went beyond the period of the mandate of the Council. It is for this reason that he spoke more of giving birth more than of mission. He quoted a bishop:

“You are in error because you do not want to change.”

And he added:

“I feel growing within me with an irresistible and spontaneous force of working in ways

that are loyal to the post-conciliar and post-capitular Marist pattern.”

Faced with all the defections which marked this period, we can only pose questions. Doubtless many of those who forsook us did so because of spiritual deficiency, but the refusal to change on the part of certain Brothers also played a part. Hence these harsh but true phrases:

“Religious life cannot renounce living by the Holy Spirit to nourish itself solely on a self-repeating narrative.”

Or again:

“Law without the Truth which engenders it becomes legalism.”

The Superior-General therefore addressed himself to his Provincials to ask them if they were aware of being Superiors at a time of change desired by the Church and the Holy Spirit. He questioned himself and them on the evangelical life, incarnate and charismatic. And Brother Basilio, always very attentive to older Brothers, often the most virtuous, stressed that he did not want to completely reject the past. Institutional identity remained a vital point, but ...

Obedience

It was necessary to allow the Chapter to set the directions, without abdicating responsibility of leadership. It is necessary to form people for leadership, for lieutenants also had their part to play.

Formation

New vocations were now coming at as adults. They could not be treated in the same way as younger vocations had been. This was a very serious problem (something seen and seen again, for example in 1996) which was presented itself especially with respect to motivation for the choice of a vocation.

Because such new adult vocations were already formed in a certain way, it was not necessary to submit them to trials beyond their strength, but neither was it necessary necessary, through of a puerile formation, to so with any spiritual and moral negligence.

Mission

The Catholic school remained a very important field of action, but there could also be other fields of apostolic action.

1 November 1973

10. TALK ON PRAYER

With the Circular on Prayer, Brother Basilio looked to use a method that he would use at other times: beginning with the views of Brothers. Subsequently he adopted another method. Having given a number of retreats on this topic, it was these conversations themselves which would become the Circular. We recall that the retreat conferences were also the replies to

the questionnaires that he had administered, and which revealed the actual prayer-life of the Brothers. This was done because there was some dispute about prayer and some reduction of time devoted to it.

A Fact

Brother Basilio had visited the Brothers in Ceylon and had been able to see that contemplation and chastity were also practised in the Buddhist world. Moreover, this was a time when many young Europeans set out for India to initiate themselves into Hindu and Buddhist spirituality. While the Charismatic Renewal had scarcely begun in the Catholic world, those that were put an accent on prayer of praise, Brother Basilio felt that it was necessary to respond first of all to prayer of petition which for St. Thomas seemed the essential and almost only type of prayer.

However the great objection to which he felt he had to respond was that prayer was a outmoded form of religiosity. And he quotes Sartre:

“Man’s freedom is the fruit of his hands ...
His despair becomes active and
he becomes in effect his own saviour.”

This was the time when these terrible phrases were heard, even in the religious world.

In speaking of prayer we need not avoid the question. Here, Brother Basilio referred to Father Häring who preached a short retreat to the Gen-

eral Council. Having been invited by Protestants to concelebrate the Eucharist with them, he said no “for you do not believe in the Eucharist”. But these Pastors had been able to answer him:

“You know your faith, but you do not know ours. Ask us some questions and you can judge.”

And after a few questions, he had had to recognise that those Pastors believed in the real Presence.

Brother Basilio therefore attempted to consider the problem of prayer at its essence, rather than in its concrete expressions, for he did not want to erect hurdles for himself. He developed several definitions of a philosophical nature that might be somewhat off-putting for the average Marist.

1st definition:

prayer, beginning, essence, and definition of transcendence

Stepping back from an overly Thomistic understanding, and making allusion to the disputed and questionable dictum – “And give bread to those who do not have any” – he noted that even in the request of a human heart there must be there systole and diastole: I ask but I also give. Furthermore, at the end of time there would not longer be prayer of request and yet all eschatology will be prayer. Therefore prayer was not synonymous with demand. He also took another example which he did develop at length but which was already known to many of the Brothers. A

young Spanish Brother studying in Rome had done some brilliant studies and a little later, he was struck by a very serious illness. He was asked in the last days of his life: "For you, Juan, what will eternal life be like?" He replied: "Continuing to do what I do: to contemplate."

In a parallel case, one can see prayer as a beginning. And that also means it is anticipation. And thus one finds the centre and the essence of prayer. It is therefore something other than usefulness, since some would like to strongly debate the usefulness of prayer. But this is another question.

2nd definition: vital psycho-theological

Brother Basilio always had the art of enlightening his abstruse definitions with simple metaphors. The computer age had not yet arrived, but the research which he undertook during his retreats was put onto IBM microfiches. He told the story of two lovers whom he met and to whom he said:

"Instead of wasting an hour in amorous conversation, help us make IBM fiches and the money you earn can be put towards your marriage."

The lovers replied "No"; they needed privacy for their conversations more than they needed money. He concluded from this that faith is first of all a dialogue of love. It is not that God needs my prayer, but that my baptismal life needs it, to speak about its interior experience, because the heart is not evangelised and prayer is a

great means of evangelising it. Without it one is empty of the Gospel. Christian life is in peril, if it falls below a certain threshold.

3rd définition : (again, somewhat off-putting in its language, but easily explained):

The anthropomorphic Epiphany of God

A merciful manifestation by which God assumes humanity and puts himself to prayer.

Brother Basilio sought a metaphor and first of all takes that of the child in his mother's womb. Breathing, circulation, assimilation, dissimulation, all his done by the mother. But once born he forms his own life.

To tell truth, in the Christian life, there is never separation: when a man prays and leads a Christian life, it is the Christ first-born of Mary who prays in him. When we pray our word reaches the Word which makes itself Word for the Father in human flesh. Prayer, is God speaking to God through man. Man makes himself like Christ by praying. All polarisation towards action against or towards prayer is bad.

4th definition: Prayer is an expression of the heart of three persons at the crossroads of various dynamisms and various existential spheres

Brother Basilio felt that this definition could be found to be somewhat abstruse. But he immediately suggested a metaphor: small streams which come together: Jesus, me and the Father. But Jesus and I are already

the Church. Christian life is a life in company. In the end, I have matters incommunicable or communicable only to God.

Conclusion

Above all the call is to experience prayer. And he quoted this young Indian from Taizé: "One can only speak of contemplation if one has experienced it."

Secularisation can have a good effect if it leads to a purification of prayer. But be careful of secularisation on its own. If there was no longer any detergent in your machine to wash with, the machine will wash nothing. Obviously Brother Basilio had scarcely anything to say to the Brothers he did not himself experience for, alas, his surveys sometimes his own time for prayer!

In the lay world we can find cases such as the Huber couple who devoted two hours a day to meditation. Mme. Huber came several times to speak to the Brothers. And we can add Carlo Carreto and the Sahara. The Neo-Catechumenate communities of Kiko Arguello blossomed fully and better in Italy than in Spain. We have Taizé where thousands of young people went only to pray and reflect, Caffarel and the school of prayer of Troussures where Basilio sent many of the Brothers, the charismatics, the weeks of prayer of Jean Fournier, and others.

Brother Basilio encouraged the contact with these movements. Personally, I participated many times in Neo-

Catechumate prayer; the cell at Taizé for one or two years; and I was able to quote him the case of this father of a family (four children from a Neo-Catechumenate group who said to me:

"Up until the present, I have had to find eleven hours a week; but now that I have been appointed a leader I will have to find twenty. I do not know how I will do it. But the Lord knows everything. At the beginning, my wife didn't want to come. Now she comes. Therefore, twice a week we leave the children with the grandparents and both are very happy with it. Before entering this community I used to attend all matches. Now, I no longer do so: the Lord has changed my tastes."

30 May 1975

11. OBEDIENCE

With the Circular on obedience, Brother Basilio addressed a matter which without doubt had disturbed many congregations for some years. We had begun to see dangers with obedience. The past had been witness to orders given with good results for saints, for example Saint Rita who was charged with revitalising a dry branch which ended up by producing a magnificent vine.

Brother Basilio could even recall that some acts of obedience almost of the same kind had still existed among the Jesuits with the Great Vows forty-five years previously, but there was nothing edifying in these.

While in the Sixties there was no longer any danger of being submitted to such trials, among those who were pressing for change in the vow of obedience these “errors of the past”, as they were called them, could be a good excuse for throwing out the baby with the bath water. More and more communities were being created without superiors and, more frequently still, in many communities the Superior no longer gave directives.

At the same time there was a small flourishing of spiritual direction that was rather called accompaniment. Brother Basilio certainly spoke about it but he especially put the bar very high to show clearly that obedience had lost none of his importance, and that, on the contrary, we were reaching a time when new understandings were going to make it much more demanding.

Brother Basilio wanted to go right away to the heart of obedience: passion for the will of God.

My food equalled doing the will of my Father,
right to the Cross.

Now, for Jesus, the will of God was always clear, even if, in agony, he was afraid. On the contrary this will of God is given to me as a task which is discovery, passion, love, and realisation. I must welcome the initiative of God as Mary, who welcomed him as the strong woman, from the Visitation right up until Pentecost. And me, I discover it through prudence, counsel, discernment, wisdom, and so on.

Brother Basilio, was accustomed to the practice of various movements: Movement for a Better World, but also Cursillos de Cristiandad and others ... which knew well that today people listen more willingly to witnesses than masters. He would also then give his witness. One day he had discovered that the will of God for him was the religious life, and yet when he spoke of it to a Brother he was told: “Remain where you are.” But despite that, as for the prophet Habakkuk, the Lord knew of an angel who would take him by the shoulder.

Obedience is different from spiritual accompaniment. The director guides but does not impose. The superior, on the contrary, after having dialogued, can have to give an order. What makes the religious life is clearly the regime of the most demanding mediation, when it is taken in all its depth. But that supposes that one undertakes to create the conditions by which the will of God will be tangible. Obviously, Brother Basilio spoke as a spiritual director of immense experience.

Brother Basilio who often used complex phrases took one of them from Father Varillon, who was also somewhat difficult:

“The will is the place of union
with God because
it is the deepest place of being.”

And he goes on to explain that faithful Christians will not perhaps clearly understand this phrase but realise, as

I do, that it can make up one's mind to take the vow of obedience, even if perhaps the realisation of it will be pretty average." However, a decision has its value. It can be said that it is "like a condensation which begins to develop a life of obedience." And it becomes a sign and anticipation in the Church.

Signs of the Times

Some of those who contest matters wanted to speak of the sign of the times, an expression of Council which needed careful interpretation. I can remember the word "discernment" and how it made the Brothers accustomed to blind obedience to see red.

For Brother Basilio, on the contrary, it was really necessary to be attentive to the signs of the times but not by seeking the will of God with a kaleidoscope till I found something that pleases me. For these amateurs what was important was the style of the cornice not the solidity of the column. Here we recognise metaphors which were typical of Basilio the conference giver (82).

Let us therefore distinguish between signs and fashions of the times. This does not mean to want to become a secular Institute or wish to unite the Marist Brothers with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He was able to quote the President of Secular Institutes (we moreover received several representatives of these Institutes at the General House for discussion)

telling us that the problem as they saw it was

"the difficulty of being understood by the men of the Church who misinterpreted and destroyed Pius XII's intuition."

On the contrary, he went into a subject that returned to something from the past: the examination of conscience which no longer existed except with the Jesuits. He did not regard this as a violation of conscience, but simply the means of creating minimal conditions for mediation that was evangelical.

"The code has reacted by suppressing a remedy which is regarded as harmful. But, it should be left to each congregation to create its own law."

In concluding, Brother Basilio returned to the question of the community without a superior (137) on the consensus that it was not necessary to re-seek the will of God. (141).

The will of God was much more than the common good of the community.

As for the mediation of the community it was a undoubtedly desirable utopia, but more utopian than that of a Superior. Brother Basilio let it be understood that he had lived that in the Better World Movement.

But patience. There was, as Légaut said, the essential and the indispensable. This mediation must therefore be begun by a shared prayer.

25 December 1975

12. THE SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE

We were in the USA for different short retreats. Brother Basilio had already spent some months earlier in the communities. During the intervals from retreats he decided to write a Circular on the spirit of the Institute. He mostly dictated it. As always I arranged it in French and submitted the result to him, which gave him time to correct, and complete it.

The preamble indicated that he had already dealt with the subject and had had second thoughts which had enabled him to deepen the theme. He was persuaded that he was not competent to deal with the historical part, but he could say how he understood this question of the spirit in his life as a Marist Brother, and also in what sense it could deal today's questions. In sum, he would speak of the three violets, of Mary, and the family spirit, an approach that each Brother would recognise as a summing up of our spirit.

But first of all there had to be a distinction between the "being" and the "charism" of this spirit. Charism is a gift which comes from the being, and produces fruit. Moreover, there is no need to give to a congregation more than it needs. The spirit must not concern the substance but the difference, for the substance will always be the Gospel. See also: "the important and the distinctive" (181). As for spirituality, this is the style that

comes from the spirit which makes us become what we are.

Champagnat first of all had a vocation of a Marist Father, that is to say of a priest formed by the theology of nineteenth century but, because of the foundation of the Brothers, Mary played for him the role of educator and also the role of the one to whom he prayed so much. Even more than for the other Marist Fathers it was perhaps this which most distinguished him.

Everything occurred as if the Holy Spirit, right from the promise at Fourvière, had worked at the differentiation between the branches, even despite the idea that Champagnat might have wanted. A little like the brief evolution of Judeo-Christian Christianity that is noted around St. Peter following the experience with Cornelius.

But origins, important though they may be, are not everything. The origin of Carmel – the apparition to Saint Simon Stock – is much discussed today but that does not prevent Carmel from being one of the great spiritualities. The sense of obedience in several congregations also depends on the monarchical concept that comes from the period. And therefore, in humility we can see that this is just a "cultural" thing: for example to keep religious down the pecking order. Also, humility can slide us from the spiritual to the psychological.

The problem of such sliding is that we can find Brothers resisting "what

keeps us children". It is necessary, therefore, to boldly look all argument in the face.

To clearly restore humility

I often spoke with Brother Basilio of the French situation, and I made the comment that the concept of the "Petits Frères" was, in the overwhelming majority of cases reflective of a low social status. The majority of vocations came largely from peasant classes with a small percentage from the sons of workingmen. Therefore, for a long time, they had to be content with the level of education of the basic teaching qualification, that is to say seven or eight years study less than a priest. Even if this was resented little, there were generations sacrificed right up to the 1940s.

Brother Basilio remarked very rightly that it was a totally different thing to go from the social higher classes to go to the social lower classes (often the case with the Little Brothers of Jesus) to live and belong there themselves. In particular this explains some timidity complexes and rules such as only permitting the Director to speak in a meeting with parents.

Brother Basilio said that he had taken a long time to understand the advice of Jesus: put yourself in the last place then you can be called higher. Psychologically, the explanation that he gives is interesting: in community life, instead of a schema of dominance, there has to be one of fraternity. And what's more I believe it is the best guarantee for the success of

community life. Always the first to wash-up. Never seeking to be treated differently. So much the worse if English is not his strength; he will say what he has to say even in that language. He is at ease and puts (others) at ease. I am the Superior-General, but if required I will wash anyone's feet. At the end of his experience, he could therefore say that humility is the key-stone of community construction.

Simplicity is the way out of complexity: walk humbly in the presence of God. To how many Brothers did he suggest to read the book of Quaker Kelly *My experience of God* where he speaks of his life having its source in the "Centre" and where one finds peace. He also quotes Boros who gives the description of people of simplicity:

"They distinguish very clearly what is just and what is not; when they are not able to approve they reserve their agreement, but they do not judge... They live often in a certain insouciance. They put the exhortation of Christ into practice while often not knowing great things about him."

Is this the kind of simplicity that the Petits Frères must have? In any case it was even that of a Pope: John XXIII. Quoting Jesus Descalzo:

"I see him in the basilica of St. Peters when all the bishops are awaiting his speech and while he fumbles, God knows in what hidden pockets, for his unfindable glasses, while the nerves of the bishops who surround him were on the point of exploding ..."

Here again, Brother Basilio, the perfectionist, was capable of this simplicity. If he had not had the time to prepare a conference because he had had to spend two hours in direction of a Brother, ah well, the Lord would provide.

8 September 1976

13. A NEW SPACE FOR MARY

The Circular "A new space for Mary" was written a few weeks before the Chapter of 1976 and concluded during this Chapter.

I do not know whether Brother Basilio saw the possibility that he would not be re-elected but anyway there was a possibility and therefore he felt that this Circular was necessary at the end of a mandate. In actual fact the Marial question, in the Institute as elsewhere, was causing a problem and the Brothers expected him to say what he thought of this serious problem of Marial disaffection in this Marial Institute.

He therefore brought together at the house of the 'Divino Maestro' (at Ariccia) a group of six Brothers who had studied in Mariology and with whom he worked for ten days. There were times of prayer, of reflection, of discussion. He asked questions on points where he feared he was not up with play with such and such a current nuance. But then he was able to dictate with his very remarkable assur-

ance, according to a plan that was in his head. I was truly impressed by the accuracy and precision with which the phases flowed. The recording for the doctrinal part was made on a cassette. This very balanced section is truly inspirational for a reader today. Next was added the historical part concerning the Congregation, then the research, then the witnesses whom he had sought a few months beforehand. There was no question of a treatise but of a Marial message destined to be meditated on, to form eventual material for Marial retreats, for "Marist weeks" of prayer, and so on. I will recall its essence.

This message had a quite personal tone but when such an idea was not forceful enough, Brother Basilio let it speak through its author, Guardini for example. Speaking of the waiting for the Messiah by Mary:

"She hoped for it, perhaps even had a presentment of it. If she hadn't, she herself might have contributed to this coming (272)?"

Brother Basilio then studied the reactions of Mary to the acts of Jesus, what he referred to as the Marial accompaniments in the public life of Jesus. Mary introduced him to the world of weddings: weddings of Yahweh with his people. And her humble wish was raised up to a direct order (325). The spiritual lives of certain Christians reveal something similar: an ordinary remark puts pressure on one of God's friends to do or say something or follow a path which will only enlighten him later.

There was no need to imagine Mary cloistered in Nazareth knowing nothing of Jesus for three years. It is evident that Mary contemplated Jesus in his public life. If not, how would she have developed, she who had received a very strict education and who was without doubt at least as faithful as her cousins “in all the observances”?

Brother Basilio saw it as possible that Mary (who had learned so many things through witnesses – Elizabeth, Siméon, Anne, the shepherds) also learned from the witness of the resurrection of her Son, for she was the one who was “happy to have believed.”

In any case, for Mary as for Abraham, it was necessary to believe and move on and not to have a crisis of identity. But it was at the Passion that her greatest revelation took place: she learned from Jesus that she was to become the mother of the disciple in verses 25-27 of John 19. She had no need of the explanations given to the disciples of Emmaus. She had meditated on the whole Bible.

New Marial Era

But what was to become of our mission to make Mary known and loved?

A survey of over 2000 Brothers revealed some interesting results, for example that inspiration from Mary contributed considerably to the dynamism and solidity of their vocation (430).

Alas, during the years which followed the Chapter of 1958 the situation regarding Mary became quite mediocre, both in publications (books and hymns) and prayer-life. The ancient forms contracted and the new forms had not yet appeared. At the time of the Circular (1976) a certain frisson of renewal was being felt. That is why Brother Basilio made his “*mea culpa*”: “I still did not know how to react.” This is the reason for the Circular. The 16th General Chapter (1967-1968) had spoken well of Mary (the Marial Document, in particular) but the current had not truly run its course.

Finally, Brother Basilio’s doctoral thesis on values proved to be valuable. He dedicated a chapter to this question: values did not demonstrate themselves, they reveal themselves. And he examined those which might lower marial worth:

- Axiological saturation
- Imposition
- Hypertrophy
- Appearances of new values (social for example)

From this was possible the reformulation of ancient values which require time and means.

Finally he added a few appendices to clarify one or more of his suggestions in the preceding pages.

Yes, this Circular is a large work but it can be used well either to meditate the excellent doctrine presented, or to discover the magnificent testimony from men who were our Brothers.

19 March 1978

14. COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Circular "Plan for Community Life" was a little unexpected; Brother Basilio would say this in Annex 4, p.193. It had been the Chapter of 1976 which had introduced this new idea of a Community Life Plan and many Brothers did not know what to make of it. The General Council therefore asked Brother Basilio to write a Circular on the subject, which mean he had to put aside the Circular he was preparing on Fidelity and which would only appear after this one.

Certainly he had ideas on the Project for Community Life and even some first-hand experience of it, but still he needed also to study what had been published on the subject and then deliver his own reflections which, as always, were original. This would be a reasonably forceful text where he would make some excellent insights. While we can describe his brilliant thoughts below, to put them into practice is another thing altogether.

What was needed were animation groups which in turn could inspire the new approach: an approach of change. And this had to be done even in advance if it this "utopia" was going to be fully accomplished. At its base, this new approach was about discernment and orthopraxy (correct conduct rather than correct enunciation). The brevity of the text may have been welcomed, but effective means of putting the text into action were sought. What were needed were men

who could be leaven, so that a community would become victim to those of its members who were worldly. Yes what were needed were men who were deeply imbued with the mystery of the cross.

Without naming Taizé, Brother Basilio proposes this community as a model. In fact, he knew Roger Schutz had been able to say:

"If you find community life difficult in Catholic communities, what could you say of Taizé, where we are eighteen different Churches."

If therefore a community wants to establish a real community plan, it must cease to put the stress on differences, on all that which could cause argument in order to seek that which would unify it. Differences had to be faced with optimism and so that a current of progress rather than regression could be created.

Then the community had to be open to the Province, the Province to the Church, the Church to the world. And criticism results should not be criticised too quickly: a certain place for prayer, in such conditions, would carry as much attraction for young Brothers as the ordinary chapel. For it depended on the reception which was given. The asceticism of spending a sleepless night for this reception had a much better chance of being better adapted than the cilice of yesteryear.

Brother Basilio did not let the opportunity slip without mentioning the

question of values, quoting Malraux:

“On the quest for values . . .
most men purchase nothing” (45).

Returning therefore to the example of the ecumenical community he was able to repeat what were the new and eternal basis and values of the Community:

“The base sine qua non
of a Christian confraternity is not necessarily
doctrinal homogeneity,
but living in unity in spite of differences.”

The solution was not in books, nor any longer in the ideal community. Brother Basilio added a whole appendix to quote Bonhoeffer who said among other things:

“For God to enable us to experience the authentic Christian community, we should not be deluded by others, or even by ourselves. In his grace God would not allow us to live, except perhaps for a few weeks, in the Church of our dreams.”

In the interval between the Chapter which suggested the new idea of a community plan and the drawing up of Appendix 4, Brother Basilio had been able to meet communities which had asked him how to set about realising this plan. He brought with him the theories of a few Brothers who were specialists on these questions and the practical advice that his recent experiences had given to him. This advice specifically concerned the importance of the time and place needed to develop the plan:

“The preparation must not be made in the house where we normally live. What is needed is a place that is physically conducive and psychologically adequate, and sufficient time to work uninterrupted.” (202).

Why then such fine texts and such disappointing results? Why had the more imperfect practices of the past given more solid results?

Once again we needed to look at the methods. Brother Basilio suggested, for example, spiritual sharing on the Constitutions, in a spirit of prayer (256). See also the Constitutions as an instrument of evaluation (316) of a community plan.

8 December 1982

15. CONTEMPLATION

In 1981, Brother Basilio had sent to the Provincials a letter on prayer to tell them to what extent they ought to be concerned with this problem.

Obviously the retreats based on his surveys had revealed a quite serious situation, something that was extensive among priests and religious. The Provincials then asked that this Circular be also sent to the Brothers.

It began with an introduction where Brother Basilio recalled the reproach of St. Peter of Alcantara to St. Teresa:

"No-one can give advice beyond what he lives himself." He was afraid of not being sufficiently a man of prayer to speak of prayer. It didn't matter: he had to speak.

For him, prayer meant listening to God not only speaking to him. The life of prayer was not the only thing that a Brother had to do (344) but how, in times of crisis, could we tear from their work those Brothers whose prayer-life was almost extinct? It was catastrophic. Superiors had a responsibility here. Some Brothers would make the best of it because they had made some personal effort, but had they need also to receive help from their Province and their community.

Tragic confusions could occur. Hence the suggestion to the Chapter desiring that the Brother

"might have a psychologically useful time to pray"

was interpreted as leaving free the daily half hour which is recognised by spiritual people as the minimum acceptable for religious.

The one who remained on the threshold of prayer could conclude, like Feurbach, that it was man who created the God with whom he thought he dialogued. On the contrary the one who truly entered into prayer with docility and faith could discover for himself that the spirit of prayer was a free gift:

"I will put my law at the core of their being and I will inscribe it on their heart."

But for this we had to stop scattering ourselves over a variety of useless occupations. And the Superior needed to know a little regarding where his Brothers were in their life of prayer so that he could watch over them. There was no reason for him not to re-propose the old Marist ways of prayer of the hour, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and the rosary. He also had to inform, to suggest, and to invite.

He knew by experience that the Brothers who were "consumed by activism" had been able to finish their days in a life of modest, but very profound prayer. Even moral situations very compromised by serious sin had been able to be transformed into "enviable, spiritual situations. He even dared say that a kind of Marist law predestined this maturation and he confirmed it with the words of Father Voillaume:

"A day will undoubtedly come when every grain which has borne neither flowers nor fruit will return an impressive harvest."(361)

Yes, all those acts of devotion and charity which had been carried out during a life over over-activity would be able to blossom into a life of prayer.

However, it was not necessary to wait until the evening of life. He cited the mysterious gleams from the Miraculous Medal, bright or tarnished:

"the graces that are asked of me and the graces which they have forgotten to ask me."

8 September 1984

16. FIDELITY

Finally the most voluminous Circular appeared, and one which would be quite different from the others: Fidelity.

While there would be some doctrine in it, this would be intermingled with testimony from the Brothers. Brother Basilio said that the idea had come to him as a flash of light. And for a number of years, taking advantage of every possible opportunity, he collected testimonies just as he often received them in his interviews with the Brothers.

It was an unbelievable work. He asked himself how he could have completed it, but he did not doubt for a moment that he would do so (9-10). The source was in his love for the congregation and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. When it was almost ready, he counted some 900 responses, numbering from one or two pages to five hundred.

Personally, even if I was no longer in Rome, I knew the type work that we were going to have to undertake with a small team working in the four main languages. What was required was to select, prune, certainly, while managing to keep the essence. And the essence was that, faced with a period of doubt and abandonment, Marist religious life was worth the challenge of living it.

Brother Basilio doing a little, his aides doing a little, photocopies of all the

testimonies from this period were made. Those to be kept were chosen, having eliminated others because of repetition and length. It was not possible to publish a testimony of five hundred pages even if it was very interesting. But every testimony, whether long or short, could provide quotations for various chapters and sub-sections.

For each sub-section, Brother Basilio dictated what he wanted to say on “evangelical, subjective and congregational roots” without fear of attributing blame to that which was blameworthy. As for the witnesses, once agreement had been reached among the members of the group on what was to be retained, they had only had to place them in or translate them into French since the basic text was to be French.

The doctrinal elements would be used as “umbrellas” for paragraphs and were often full of light and life, such as one reflection on the fidelity of the sick which concerned not only the level of will but also which allowed a humble fidelity to reconcile and restore a mind which had become bedevilled. (31).

The “umbrellas” enabled the incorporation of certain points such as the Marial climate,

“a rather exceptional climate
and which today is almost non-existent
in the houses of formation” (163).

Yes, there was a very strong call to those in formation to be much better

prepared than those previously, because they needed to have a sufficiently strong interior life and level of spiritual growth before they could engage in experimentation with them.

However, the testimonies were not all positive. For example, sexual education was rather weak, as it was in families of the past:

“Despite the spiritual quality of the Masters of Novices, it seems that few know how to initiate, enlighten, calm and guide a healthy understanding and a good attitude in this dimension of the person, or to develop a more integrated understanding of a virginal love and a vocation to this love” (188).

At the same time it had to be said that the Congregation had not been especially maternal in providing for possibilities for studies in the past and those that had gained diplomas had done so often thanks to excessive amounts of work.

Even if their fidelity has been admirable, we shouldn't shrink from judging the attitudes of those in leadership who showed little understanding for unhappy circumstances such as the death of a father or mother (297-298).

Brother Basilio was not a man of the past, and in a study which showed what was noteworthy in this past, he knew also how to approach the challenges of the present, and to criticise, for example, the fear of leaving a the cocoon of the past or mistrusting all that was alive in the Church.

Moreover, there were different types perseverance: he even dared to speak about cynical perseverance. The essential thing was not to remain, but to remain with the right kind of spirit. And here, too, testimonies revealed that even after a long time, conversion could occur in mature and old age and admirable growth still take place.

