

# fms

# 27

OCTOBER 2009

## MARIST NOTEBOOKS

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- Br Michael GREEN, fms

### A SELECTION OF ARTICLES FROM THE RESEARCH OF THE PATRIMONY COURSE IN ROME, 2008

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  - *Le Charisme et la Mission des Frères Maristes en Côte d'Ivoire, une réflexion personnelle*  
Vincent de Paul Kouassi, fms

Institute of the Marist Brothers



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# INTRODUCTION

**Br Michael GREEN, FMS**

*Marist Notebooks* Number 27 is devoted entirely to reporting on research papers that were written by members of the Patrimony Course, which was held at the General House between February and June 2008. A major component of the course was an individual research project (or “IRP”) undertaken by each participant. A wide range of research topics was explored, and some very interesting papers were written as a result. In this issue of *Marist Notebooks*, readers have an opportunity to read of some of this research. Contact details for each author are also provided, if readers wish to find out more about any of the IRPs.

Nineteen Brothers completed the programme. It was not a formation or renewal course, but an academic programme that required post-graduate level study and research. During the five months, under the guidance of the Academic Director, Brother Aureliano Brambila de la Mora, each of the participants followed a series of lectures, presented two short papers, and undertook a piece of personal research. At the end of the course, each Brother led a seminar on his IRP, and submitted a research paper. Most of these papers were quite detailed and lengthy, most of them between 20,000 and 30,000 words, some considerably longer. They are now kept in the General Archives and are also available on-line (see below).

In this edition, it is not possible to print the entire version of any of the IRPs. Of the nineteen IRPs, we have space to provide an abridged version of nine. The full versions of all the IRPs, however, are accessible on the [champagnat.org](http://champagnat.org) website. Enter the “Reserved Section”, and open “Patrimony 2008”. [Where the article is not by a native English-speaker, the text here

has been ‘tidied up’ for the sake of the reader, but local conventions of punctuation, etc. have been kept as printed]

The participants were given a wide range of possible areas to research. Some Brothers chose to focus on the time of Father Champagnat and the first Brothers, many opted to investigate an aspect of the history of their own Province or region, and some others applied intuitions that they gleaned from historical sources to the present-day realities of Marist spirituality and mission. Put together, they form a major contribution to the patrimony of the Institute.

Here is a brief description of each research project, the name and the Province of its author, and contact details for him:

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**I. RESEARCH RELATED TO CHAMPAGNAT  
AND THE FOUNDING TIME**

<i>Title</i>	The Social/Emotional Intelligence of Father Champagnat
<i>Author</i>	Brother Ben Consigli, Province of The United States of America
<i>Contact</i>	benfms@aol.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 93 pages
<i>Précis</i>	The letters of Marcellin are viewed through a contemporary lens. The theoretical construct of social/emotional developed by modern writers such as Howard Gardner, Daniel Goleman and Karl Albrecht are applied to analysis of Marcellin Champagnat, as he is revealed in his letters. Marcellin is shown to possess well-developed self-awareness competencies, self-management competencies, social awareness competencies, and relationship competencies.

<i>Title</i>	Father Champagnat, the Counsellor and the Spiritual Master.
<i>Author</i>	Brother Godfrey E. Perera, Province of South Asia
<i>Contact</i>	bro.godfrey@gmail.com
<i>Language; length</i> <i>Précis</i>	English; 67 pages Through a consideration of 13 letters of Father Champagnat and 3 of his Circulars, a portrait is painted of the Founder as an expert counsellor and spiritual guide. Particular attributes of Marcellin are identified, including his ability to forgive and to reconcile, his love and affection, his concern for the sick, his empathy and understanding, his empowering of the Brothers, and his sense of humour. Also discussed are his genuineness and his adeptness in reading and dealing with the feelings of his subjects. His spiritual insights and depth are revealed. The distinguishing characteristics of his spiritual guidance are proposed as submission to the will of God, good example, trust in Divine Providence, spiritual encouragement, assurance of prayers, humility, charity, presence of God, and closeness to Mary.

<i>Title</i>	The Relationship between Marcellin Champagnat and Brother François as shown by Champagnat's letters, Brother François's Circulars on Champagnat, and other Marist documents
<i>Author</i>	Brother Peter Walsh, Province of Melbourne
<i>Contact</i>	peterawalsh@maristmelb.org.au
<i>Language; length</i> <i>Précis</i>	English and French; 110 pages A critical reflection is made of the letters from Paris to Brother François (in 1836 and 1838), the Circulars written by François concerning Champagnat (in 1840 and 1857), and some other witnesses (Pompallier, Jean-Baptiste), in order to define the nature of the relationship between the Founder and his successor. A thematic analysis is made of the documents. It is concluded that the relationship is (a) an essentially healthy and functional one (marked by mutual trust, concern, individuality, openness, shared responsibility), (b) multi-faceted and multi-layered, (c) that it evolved and matured over time, and (d) that it was life-giving for both men.

## 2. RESEARCH DEALING WITH THE HISTORY OF A PARTICULAR REGION OR ASPECT OF THE INSTITUTE

<i>Title</i>	The Beginning of the German Marist Province
<i>Author</i>	Brother Augustin Hendlmeier, Province of West Central Europe
<i>Contact</i>	Augustin-hendlmeier@web.de
<i>Language; length</i>	English and German; 68 pages
<i>Précis</i>	The story of the German foundation is presented in four phases: (a) the early years before authorisation of houses in Germany, when German brothers were trained and lived outside the country, 1888-1912, (b) the foundation in Germany, 1912-1915, (c) From 1915 to 1945, and (d) after World War 2. A major part of this IRP was the translation from French into German of 27 documents (letters and reports) held in the General Archives that related to foundation and development of the German Brothers.

<i>Title</i>	Scripture and the Search for Identity: Finding the Institute's Story Hidden in Biblical Narrative
<i>Author</i>	Brother Colin Chalmers, Province of West Central Europe
<i>Contact</i>	colchalm@aol.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 34 pages
<i>Précis</i>	Part of a longer dissertation undertaken for a Masters degree, this paper examines a period in the history of the Institute, finding the story of this period hidden in a particular narrative in Scripture. The period under examination is the time from the 1967 General Chapter to the 1985 General Chapter. This period is proposed as "The Transformative Period". The scriptural narrative in which the period is hidden is proposed as the Jewish people's experience of the Babylonian Captivity. By reading its own story in the light of this experience of the Old Testament Jewish people, the Institute can deepen its understanding of the place and action of God in its own identity-formation narrative and by attempting to discover what can be read from the scriptural event, it can continue to deepen its call and possibility as the chosen people of God.



<i>Title</i>	A Biography of Brother Jonas Anaclet Kanyumbi Phiri
<i>Author</i>	Brother Auxensio S. Dickson, Province of Southern Africa
<i>Contact</i>	auxensio.dickson@yahoo.com.uk
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 59 pages
<i>Précis</i>	In the context of the history of the Catholic Church and of the Marist Brothers in Malawi, the life of one the first generation of Malawians to become Marist Brothers is related. Brother Anaclet lived from 1932 to 1993, joining the Marist Brothers as a teacher, just 11 years after the first Canadian Brothers arrived. He subsequently held significant posts in his District, including those of headmaster, vocations recruiter, and master of novices. His impact on students, on Brothers, and indeed on the author himself was immense.

<i>Title</i>	La Pastorale des Vocations en Centrafrique, de 1958 à 2008
<i>Author</i>	Brother Georges Palandre, Province of l'Hermitage
<i>Contact</i>	palandreg@yahoo.fr
<i>Language; length</i>	French; 97 pages
<i>Précis</i>	Following a summary of the history of Catholic and Marist missionary foundations in Central Africa, the story of promotion of local vocations is critically examined. Several phases are proposed: (a) the traditional approach that was followed from 1956 until 1966; (b) the vacuum of vocations after Council and the events of 1968 in Paris, and the mix of motivations that led some French Brothers to the country, lasting until the mid 1970s; (c) the attempt at recovery from 1974 until 1982; (d) the various attempts at new houses of initial formation, until 2002; and (e) the situation since re-structuring in the new Province of East Central Africa. Hope is expressed for the future.

<i>Title</i>	A Simple Brother You Need to Know: Rev. Brother John Samuel Metuh 1926-2007
<i>Author</i>	Brother Elias Iwu, Province of Nigeria
<i>Contact</i>	eliodinaka@yahoo.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 38 pages
<i>Précis</i>	John Samuel Akwulum-Okwulu Metuh was born into a royal family, and a prominent one in his region. Baptised as a 13 year-old, he completed school and teachers' training before joining the local Congregation of St Peter Claver. By the time of his profession, this group had been absorbed into the Marist Brothers. Brother John distinguished himself as an outstanding teacher and religious. He served the Marist Province of Nigeria as a vocations promoter and formator; he also fostered lay Marists in their vocation. Brother John's life was an epitome of simplicity, humility, modesty and love.

<i>Title</i>	L'Impact des Frères Maristes sur l'Enseignement en République Démocratique du Congo
<i>Author</i>	Brother Henri Bashizi, Province of Central East Africa
<i>Contact</i>	bashizi_henri@yahoo.fr
<i>Language; length</i>	French; 95 pages
<i>Précis</i>	A comprehensive history is given of Catholic missionary activity in The Congo from the time of the first Belgian missionaries, 1880s, and the arrival of the first four Marist Brothers in Kisingani in 1911, up until the present day. The story of the establishment and development of each of the Marist foundations in the country is related, along with a description of the spiritual and pedagogical characteristics of the Brothers' mission. A consideration is made of the difficulties and challenges that have been faced by the Brothers, including climate, sickness, adjustments in the post-colonial period, the nationalisation of all schools, political and tribal conflicts, financial decline, inadequate resourcing of schools, low numbers of vocations, and poor quality of teaching. Some suggestions for the future are proposed, including recommendations regarding specific institutions, and more general proposals for just payment of teachers and increased involvement of educated laity in the mission of the Church and the Province.

<i>Title</i>	The Tentative Fusion of the Congregation of the Mother of God with the Marist Brothers in China between 1909 and 1912.
<i>Author</i>	Brother Robert Teoh, Province of East Asia
<i>Contact</i>	robbytk@gmail.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English, Chinese and French; 24 pages + Appendix
<i>Précis</i>	From original documents held in Rome, a critical account is developed of a trial amalgamation of a local Chinese congregation, the Mother of God Brothers (or Maternistes) with the Marist Brothers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Reasons for the eventual abandonment of the trial merger are proposed, and some conclusions drawn for modern day realities in the Institute, especially that of re-structuring. Of importance is the need to respect each other's cultures and to make accommodations for this in formation and in community living, to learn each other's languages, to regard each other as equals, and to ensure there is genuine merging, not simply amalgamating.

<i>Title</i>	The Foundation and Beginning of the Marist Brothers in Korea, 1971-2007
<i>Author</i>	Brother Juan F. Castro Lenero, Province of East Asia
<i>Contact</i>	juancale@hotmail.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English, Korean and Spanish; 153 pages + Appendix
<i>Précis</i>	The 35 years of Marist presence in Korea are related in detail, from its foundation by Brothers of Mexico, to the formation of Sector of Korea, the establishment of the District of Korea, and up to its restructuring as part of the new Province of East Asia. Many original documents are used (translated from Korean or Spanish into English). The growth of the District is described, the inculturation of Marist life in Korean culture, the various changes in approaches to formation, the decisions about apostolic focus, and the eventual withdrawal of the foreign Brothers. Some critical reflection is offered on the present situation and future directions, including vocations and formation, apostolic options, and the challenges of internationality for the Korean Brothers

<i>Title</i>	Marist Brothers, 60 years in The Philippines
<i>Authors</i>	Brothers Niño M. Pizarro and Demosthenes Calabria, Province of East Asia
<i>Contact</i>	pizarronin@yahoo.com; brodemfms@yahoo.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 134 pages + Appendix
<i>Précis</i>	The histories of The Philippines and of the Church in that country are related, as prelude to the story of the foundation and development of Marist Brothers there. The documents and events around the two decisions to establish in The Philippines are presented, before a survey of the history of each of the foundations since 1948 and the individual Brothers, especially from the USA, who played key roles in these developments. The last part of the paper discusses the sensitivities around the Filipino Brothers' claim to their own identity and autonomy, and some of the challenges and priorities of the Brothers in The Philippines today, including apostolic priorities, vocations, and restructuring.

<i>Title</i>	The special novitiate of French-speaking countries of Africa, 1994-1996
<i>Author</i>	Brother Pierre Joseph Rasolomanana, Province of Madagascar
<i>Contact</i>	pierajos@yahoo.fr
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 44 pages
<i>Précis</i>	The unusual experience is critically recounted of the Brothers (mainly Malagas) who began their novitiate in Nyangezi, Congo, in September 1994, moved to Bangui, Central Africa in 1995, and then to Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France, in mid-1996. The account of their two year novitiate is considered against the documents of the Institute (the Constitutions and the Formation Guide) and some recent Circulars of Superiors General, as well as the cultural, political and Marist contexts in which it unfolded. It is a small but unique episode of the Institute's history.

### 3. RESEARCH WHICH IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH APPLICATION OF THE ORIGINAL MARIST INSPIRATION TO PRESENT-DAY REALITIES IN THE INSTITUTE

<i>Title</i>	<i>Une Tendre Affection</i> : a question about interpretation, inspiration and motivation
<i>Author</i>	Brother Christopher Maney, Province of New Zealand
<i>Contact</i>	cjmaney@ihug.co.nz
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 64 pages
<i>Précis</i>	“Une tendre affection”, an expression used by Marcellin in his Circular of 19 January 1836, is proposed as a linking intuition to interpret a number of writings of Marcellin and other early documents, as well as contemporary texts including recent Circulars of Superiors General, articles by modern Marist scholars, and the theories of Maslow and Erikson. The conclusions are brought to bear on current options for mission in the Province of New Zealand.

<i>Title</i>	Option for the Poor in the Marist Province of Nigeria
<i>Author</i>	Brother Benedict Umoh, Province of Nigeria
<i>Contact</i>	benixumoh@yahoo.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 54 pages
<i>Précis</i>	Some essential elements of the Church’s social justice teachings and some examples of the social justice intuitions of Marcellin are brought to a critical analysis of the past and present ministry options for the most disadvantaged which have taken by the Province of Nigeria. Some emerging needs of young people in Nigeria are also identified, and are proposed as possible future foci for the mission of the Province.

<i>Title</i>	Marist Spirituality and Melanesian Spirituality at the Crossroads.
<i>Author</i>	Brother Herman Boyek, District of Melanesia.
<i>Contact</i>	hermanboyek@yahoo.com
<i>Language; length</i>	English; 81 pages
<i>Précis</i>	Some definitions of spirituality are followed by a description of the characteristic elements of modern Marist spirituality and traditional Melanesian spirituality. A survey of the current state of the District of Melanesia precedes a critical consideration of how Marist and Melanesians spiritualities mesh, as there has been interplay between Marists and Melanesians since the 1840s. Concepts that sit uneasily in the Melanesian mind included the vowed celibate life, a focus on heaven and eternity rather than the present, private prayer and reconciliation, accumulation of possessions. Easier alignment between European Christianity and traditional Melanesian spirituality is found in things such belief in an all-powerful God, the abiding presence of God, the communion of saints, the efficacy of using symbols and rituals, the importance of story, serving the common good, and a sense of the kingdom of God present here and now.

<i>Title</i>	Disciples de Marcellin, compagnons en chemin
<i>Author</i>	Brother Jean-Pierre Destombes, Province of l'Hermitage
<i>Contact</i>	jpdestombes@maristes.net
<i>Language; length</i>	French; 90 pages
<i>Précis</i>	Using historical sources including the three key works of Brother Jean-Baptiste, <i>La Vie de J.B.M Champagnat</i> , <i>Biographies de Quelques Frères</i> , and <i>Avis, Leçons, Sentences</i> and some contemporary catechetical theory, the rationale and the outline of a catechetical experience is developed. This experience could be offered at the refurbished l'Hermitage. Inspiration on discipleship and mission is drawn from the Scriptures and from early Brothers such as Laurent, Bonaventure, Jean-Pierre, Dorothée and Cassien. Marcellin's way is proposed as a pedagogy of initiation for today's youth, to assist them in integrating their human and spiritual growth. This will be a mission undertaken by Brothers and lay people together.

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<i>Title</i>	Le Charisme et la Mission des Frères Maristes en Côte d'Ivoire, une réflexion personnelle
<i>Author</i>	Brother Vincent de Paul Kouassi, District of West Africa
<i>Contact</i>	kouassvin@yahoo.fr
<i>Language; length</i>	French; 53 pages
<i>Précis</i>	The paper falls into two parts: first, a consideration of the essence of the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, as it is revealed in his letters, early documents, Circulars of Superiors General, in the official texts of the Institute, and in commentaries written by Marist writers; second, the particular situation of Côte d'Ivoire is placed against this original inspiration. Two particular issues for that country are considered: the pressing needs of the present time; and the reasons for the non-perseverance of many local Ivorian Brothers. It is proposed that the District may need to re-consider its apostolic focus and priorities if it is to address these issues.





# *The Social/Emotional Intelligence of Saint Marcellin Champagnat*

**Br Ben CONSIGLI, FMS**  
*Province of United States of America*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Some researchers in the field of psychology have defined intelligence as “*a general mental capability, which among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas or situations, learn quickly, and learn from experience. Intelligence is not merely book learning or some narrow academic skill. Rather, intelligence seems to reflect a broader and deeper capability for comprehending one’s surroundings—‘catching on,’ ‘making sense’ of things, or ‘figuring out’ what to do.*”<sup>1</sup> As understood today, “true” intelligence is generally unrelated to academic performance or the acquisition of knowledge through formal education.

Marcellin Champagnat, by his own account, was clearly not an intellectual master as defined by academic performance or formal education. We must remember that formal education in the rural areas of France in the years after the Revolution of 1789 barely existed. In 1803, when two diocesan representatives arrived in Marllhes looking for candidates for the seminary, Marcellin was fourteen years old and almost illiterate. Before he would be able

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<sup>1</sup> Linda S. Gottfredson, guest editor. “Foreword to *Intelligence and Social Policy*”. ***Intelligence: A Multipdisciplinary Journal***, Volume 24(1) 1997. Ablex Publishing Company, Greenwich, CT., 1997, pp 1-12.

to commence the study of Latin, which was necessary for the priesthood, Marcellin would have to be able to read and write French. Even his father, Jean Baptiste, believed this educational obstacle would be hard to overcome for Marcellin. Yet, his mind was made up – from that moment on, he thought only of becoming a priest.<sup>2</sup> After two years of relatively intense study with Benoit Arnaud, his brother-in-law, his progress was so negligible, that Arnaud told Mrs. Champagnat that Marcellin “has too few talents to succeed” and did not show much capacity for formal learning.<sup>3</sup>

In November 1805, Marcellin went to the junior seminary at Verrières to begin his formal study for the priesthood. He was sixteen years old, big, uncomfortable with formal written and spoken French, and not the most academically intelligent in the class. For Marcellin, it was back to what we might today call the “beginners’ class.” At the end of the year, his results were so poor that he was advised not to return to the seminary. Nevertheless, he would eventually spend long years of seminary study and overcome many obstacles in order to become a priest. His fellow seminarians all agreed that he possessed neither the talents nor the necessary resources to attempt, with any hope of success, the foundation of a congregation. According to Father Denis Maîtrepierre, a confrère from his seminary days, Marcellin “*had in fact all that was humanly necessary to prevent the success of his enterprise.*”<sup>4</sup> Yet, in spite of this, he is considered by many to be among the most significant founders in the history of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

So what allowed this simple boy from rural France to set his mind on providing for others the formal education which he himself lacked? Brother Jean-Baptiste states it clearly:

*“Father Champagnat owed much to the success of his ministry and in the foundation of his Institute, to his bright, open, friendly and consider-*

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Farrell, *Achievements from the Depths*, Marist Brothers, Drummoyne, NSW, Australia, 1984, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Zind, “*L’écolier rebelle*”, *Voyages et Missions*, No. 115, Lyon, France, October 1971, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> Attributed to Marcellin Champagnat...by D. Maîtrepierre — OM #537. (Coste, J. (S.M.), and Lessard, G. (S.M.). *Origines Maristes (OM): Extraits Concernant les Frères Maristes*. Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi; Rome, Italy, 1985.)

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Balko, “*Father Champagnat and Confidence.*” *Marist Notebooks*, #5, May 1994, Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi, Roma, pp.22-38.

*ate character with its ability to resolve situations of strife. An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts and disposing minds to accept without difficulty and even with pleasure, his opinions, his instructions, and his re-proofs.*"<sup>6</sup>

In studying some of his correspondence and reviewing some of the testimony of those of who knew him, it is my belief that Marcellin was gifted with social/emotional intelligence which, combined with his extraordinary faith and trust in God, allowed him to accomplish what many thought improbable if not impossible. In order to examine this premise further, it would best to begin with a general understanding and brief layman's overview of social/emotional intelligence. I make no claim as a psychologist; my understanding of social/emotional intelligence comes from my experiences and studies in the field of education.

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## **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Understanding intelligence solely as the ability to succeed in "formal educational structures" (ie: schools) is a limited view of intelligence. Psychologists and educators sensed that true intelligence reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending one's surroundings and behaving accordingly. One such theorist, Harvard professor Howard Gardner, determined that IQ (Intelligence Quotient), as a singular measure of competence, could not be supported. In his 1983 book, ***Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence***, Gardner proposed a range of key competencies, which he calls *multiple intelligence*.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Goleman's ***Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*** (1995) popularized Gardner's notion and created widespread interest in the United States in the developmental possibilities of the multiple intelligence model in the realm of educational theory. In 2006's ***Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success***, Karl Albrecht explored a dimension of multiple intelligences which he defined as both the ability to get

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<sup>6</sup> Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Life*, p. 266

<sup>7</sup> Howard Gardner, ***Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence***, Basic Books, NY, 1983, pp 3-11.

along with others and a set of practical skills for interacting successfully in any setting.<sup>8</sup> “Social/Emotional Intelligence” is perhaps best understood as one of a whole range of interwoven competencies<sup>9</sup>. For over twenty years, Howard Gardner has been preaching the idea that human intelligence is not a single trait. According to Gardner, humans have seven or eight distinct intelligences, or primary dimensions of competence.<sup>10</sup>

The first step in understanding social/emotional intelligence is to place it into the context of Gardner’s multiple intelligence categories and Daniel Goleman’s four domains of emotional intelligence. While Gardner uses rather scientific sounding labels for his categories — verbal-logical, mathematical-symbolic, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and musical – Karl Albrecht, in his book *Social Intelligence*, re-coded and simplified them conceptually.<sup>11</sup> He then rearranged Gardner’s multiple intelligences into **six primary categories**<sup>12</sup>:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Abstract Intelligence	Symbolic reasoning
<b>Social Intelligence</b>	<b>Dealing with people</b>
Practical Intelligence	Getting things done
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Self-awareness and self-management</b>
Aesthetic Intelligence	Sense of form, design, music, art and literature
Kinesthetic Intelligence	Whole-body skills like sports, dance or flying a jet fighter

Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, understands emotional intelligence in four “domains.” The four domains have a number of categories<sup>13</sup>:

<sup>8</sup> Karl Albrecht, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success*, Wiley Imprint, San Francisco, CA, 2006, pp 28-32.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, pp 8-11.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Albrecht, *Social Intelligence*, pp 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. page 9.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Bantam Books, NY, 1995, page 253.

DOMAIN	CATEGORY
Self-Awareness	Emotional Self-Awareness. Accurate Self-Assessment. Self-Confidence
Self-Management	Emotional Self-Control. Transparency (Trustworthiness) & Communication. Adaptability. Initiative & Leadership. Optimism. Conscientiousness.
Social Awareness	Empathy. Organizational Awareness. Service Orientation
Relationship Management	Developing Others & Influence. Building Bonds. Teamwork and Collaboration.

With these theories as a foundation, Albrecht constructed a model for describing, assessing and developing social intelligence. He characterized social intelligence as a combination of a basic understanding of oneself and of people - a kind of “strategic social awareness” - and a set of skills for interacting successfully with them. A simple description of social intelligence is *the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you*.<sup>14</sup> Albrecht, using the work of Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman, suggests five key dimensions as a descriptive framework for **social intelligence**<sup>15</sup>:

SKILL DIMENSION	INVOLVES
Situational Radar (Awareness)	The ability to “read” situations, to understand the social context that influences behavior, and to choose behavioral strategies that are most likely to be successful.
Presence	Also known as “bearing,” presence is the external sense of one’s self that others perceive: confidence, self-respect and self-worth.
Authenticity	The opposite of being “phony,” authenticity is a way of behaving which engenders a perception that one is honest with one’s self as well as others.
Clarity	The ability to express one’s self clearly, use language effectively, explain concepts clearly and persuade/influence with ideas.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Albrecht, *Social Intelligence*, page 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp 28-32.

Empathy	More than just an internal sense of relatedness or appreciation for the experiences of others, empathy in this context represents the ability to create a sense of connectedness with others; to get them on your wavelength and invite them to move with and toward you rather than away and against you.
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Generally speaking, emotional intelligence improves an individual’s social effectiveness. The higher the emotional intelligence, the better the social relations. The high emotional intelligent (EI) individual, most centrally, can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings, and manage emotions, than others can. Solving emotional problems likely requires less cognitive effort for this individual. The person also tends to be somewhat higher in verbal, social, and other intelligences. The individual tends to be more open and agreeable than others. The high EI person is drawn to occupations involving social interactions such as teaching and counseling more so than to occupations involving administrative tasks. We need to keep this in mind as we look at the social/emotional intelligence of Marcellin.

The high emotional intelligent individual, relative to others, is less apt to engage in problem behaviors, and avoids self-destructive, negative behaviors. This person understands himself—both his strengths and limitations. The high emotional intelligent person is more likely to have possessions of sentimental attachment around the home (think of Marcellin and the Hermitage) and to have more positive social interactions. Such individuals may also be more adept at describing motivational goals, aims, and mission.

In order to translate emotional intelligence in effective interactions, social skills (social intelligence) play a key role. Social Intelligence has to do with the skills needed to have appropriate interactions with others. Individuals who are socially intelligent are usually extraverts and are characterized by their sensitivity to others’ moods, feelings, temperaments and motivations, and their ability to cooperate in order to work as part of a group. A socially intelligent person communicates effectively and empathizes easily with others, and typically enjoys working with others.

For the purpose of this paper and in evaluating the social/emotional intelligence of Marcellin through some of his correspondence and some of the testimony of those who knew him, I have integrated the competencies of emotional intelligence with some of the skill dimensions of social intelligence. So, with that having been said, let us begin...

## **Marcellin's Self-Awareness Competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Assessment, and Confidence**

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### **Self Awareness & Self-Assessment**

*“For us who were at the beginnings, we are like the rough stones that are thrown into the foundations; you don't use polished stones for that.”<sup>16</sup>*

Some people are not prepared to face the truth about themselves. When a person knows who he is, he may have to change; and some individuals just do not want to change because changing demands effort! Self-awareness requires honesty and courage ... to get in touch with what we are thinking and feeling and to face the truth about ourselves.

Marcellin, like many holy people, often believed he fell short of his ideals. We have a glimpse of this because he himself called attention to his faults – in particular, his pride and self-love. In 1812, while in the minor seminary at Verrières, Marcellin writes in one of his personal resolutions:

*“Holy Virgin...I turn primarily to you; even though I am your unworthy servant, ask the adorable Heart of Jesus to give me the grace to know myself, and once I know myself, to fight and to overcome my self-love and pride...”<sup>17</sup>*

Marcellin was keenly aware that his own “offenses” were just as “heinous” as those of others. He, in fact, concerned himself with his own sinfulness and “lamented” them, and through these lamentations took efforts to correct them.

In a very real way, Marcellin's awareness of his own lapses and failures encouraged him not to be so judgmental of others. This is seen in one of his early resolution during his seminary years:

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<sup>16</sup> Attributed to Marcellin Champagnat...by P. MAYET — OM #438. (Coste, J. (S.M.), and Lessard, G. (S.M.). **Origines Maristes (OM): Extraits Concernant les Frères Maristes**. Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi; Rome, Italy, 1985.)

<sup>17</sup> “M. Champagnat's Resolutions,” **Marist Notebooks**, # 1, June 1990, Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi, Roma, pp 75-76.

*“I will talk with all my fellow-students without exception, no matter how repugnant I find some of them, since I recognize now that it is only pride that keeps me from doing so... Why do I despise them? Because of my talents? I am the last in my class. Because of my virtue? I am very proud. Because of the beauty of my body? God made it, and in any case it’s badly enough put together, and I am nothing but a pinch of dust.”<sup>18</sup>*

This self awareness was a key part of Marcellin’s personality and was no doubt helpful in his future relationships with the many Brothers of the Institute whom he helped to form. His genuine, deep affection for his “Little Brothers of Mary” was evident in the paternal greetings which begin so many of his letters to the Brothers – “My very dear brother...My dear friend...My dear child...” The Brothers saw Marcellin’s love and concern for them, and Marcellin was able to show this care and concern for them in all their struggles because he too struggled in his life. He understood their struggles.

In the testimonies of the witnesses for the beatification of Marcellin, Brother Aidan stated,

*“It was especially in the confessional that his (Marcellin’s) zeal shone forth. His advice was always practical and adapted to each one’s needs. There, one always found the representative of the divine Master...the loving doctor who knew how to pour on oil and balm, to restore to the discouraged or wounded soul its confidence, peace and happiness. We could feel that the Father had drawn his loving words not only from doctrine, but especially from the heart of the Master.”<sup>19</sup>*

His years of seminary study obviously had been difficult for Marcellin, but his confidence in God adhered to his natural “toughness” and self-awareness, and these traits enabled him to persevere. He modeled this resoluteness and determination for his Brothers, but he also gave great witness to the idea that to know oneself well is a pathway to know God’s will.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp 77-79.

<sup>19</sup> WITNESSES ON MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT: MINOR WITNESSES (Taken from, Bro. Leonard Voegtle, FMS, Postulator General, “Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat”), Brother Aidan, Testimonies, page 4.



Marcellin knew his inner resources, his abilities, and limits—and he was willing and open to receive feedback and new perspectives about himself. By looking at his academic marks at the end of 1813, it is obvious that he had not improved scholastically, but his other marks (conduct, character, study) indicate an improvement in general attitude—an apparent early weakness which was no doubt pointed out by his seminary instructors.

The better a person understands himself, the better he is able to accept or change who he is. Being in the dark about oneself could lead an individual to get caught up in his own internal struggles and allow outside forces to mould and shape him. The clarity with which a person understands himself determines that person's capability to chart his own destiny and realize his potential.

Marcellin was motivated by a desire for continuous learning and self-development and had the ability to target areas for personal change for the greater glory of his God. This competency, also known as “achievement orientation,” shows a concern for a personal need to improve oneself. At the time of his death in 1840, Marcellin had a personal library consisting of approximately fifty-three books.<sup>20</sup> Many of his books, such as Liguori's *Théologie morale*, Boudon's *Dieu seul*, Surin's *Fondements de la vie spirituelle*, and Saint Francis de Salles' *Introduction à la vie dévote* gave guidance to him on how he should live his life for Christ. In his seminary years, the area which Marcellin focused on to improve was his pride. Once again, his resolutions give clear example of the steps he felt he would need to take in order for him to address this issue. At different times during his seminary days, Marcellin promised that he would:

*“...never...go back to the tavern without necessity... avoid bad companions and, in a word, not to do anything which would go against my serving you... (He promised) to give good example; to lead others, as far as I can, to practice virtue; to instruct others in your divine teachings...Talk with all my fellow-students without exception, no matter how repugnant I find some of them, since I recognize now that it is only pride that keeps me from doing so...”<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Brother Andre Lanfrey, Handout # 2, Biblioteques Maristes, 20 May 2008, Patrimony 2008.

<sup>21</sup> “M. Champagnat's Resolutions”, *Marist Notebooks*, # 1, June 1990, Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi, Roma, pp 73-77.

In his resolutions for 1815, he revealed a generous perseverance to act where and when he thought God wanted him to and a greater emphasis on study and prayer. He was giving attention to the fault of telling lies and engaging in slander, and he strongly emphasized charity toward neighbor (both in the seminary and back in Marllhes during his vacation). “*Every time my evening examen makes me aware that I have criticized anyone,*” Marcellin wrote, “*I will deprive myself of breakfast. . . . Every time I become aware that I have been guilty of a lie or any exaggeration, I will say the Miserere to ask God’s pardon.*”<sup>22</sup> Preparations for the priesthood led him to “deprivation of self, renunciation, life of prayer, of rule, of study...” and to achieve the goals he set for himself, he appealed strongly to the “holy Virgin,” his Good Mother, since he was well aware of his weaknesses.

The desire to learn more about himself and thus do God’s will led him once again to seek the advice of his former superior at the major seminary in Lyon, Father Philibert Gardette. In a letter from May of 1827, we see Marcellin writing to Gardette, somewhat of a “father figure,” for “some advice and consolation”<sup>23</sup> concerning the present situation at the Hermitage.

In 1827, the Institute was only ten years old and its foundations were still rather weak. When the Brothers were sent out to the schools, they were often still very young and not well trained. Marcellin, therefore, felt it necessary to continue their formation at their communities and at their apostolate, which required him to visit them frequently. At the same time, while Marcellin did have a Brother to serve as novice director, he wished to have some priests (preferably Marist in inclination) to assist with the spiritual formation of the young men at the Hermitage and with the financial administration of the Institute. At this point in the history of the Institute, Courveille and Terraillon had left Marcellin and he had to deal with all the issues by himself. Marcellin knew that he simply could not “do all that unless I have someone to share the work.”<sup>24</sup> He sought both consolation and advice.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp 89-91.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Father Gardette, May 1827, PS 003. (PS is understood as “Letters of Marcellin Champagnat” taken from *Letters of Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, Volume 1, Texts*, Edited by Brother Paul Sester, Translated by Brother Leonard Voegtle, Casa Generalizia Dei Fratelli Maristi, Rome, 1991.)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.N

We also have a glimpse of how Marcellin saw himself some fifteen years after leaving the seminary. While it is not a ‘direct’ self-assessment, Marcellin gives some insights into what type of priest should come to the Hermitage to assist him in his work with the Brothers. In a letter to Archbishop de Pins during Lent of 1835, Marcellin writes,

*“...what we still need is someone who can supervise, animate, and direct everything, who can meet and deal with those who come to the house; someone who loves, who realizes the importance and benefits of such a position, a director who is pious, enlightened, experienced, prudent, firm, and constant.”<sup>25</sup>*

Here, Marcellin paints a portrait of the type of person needed to assist the Brothers at the Hermitage...and unknowingly Marcellin has painted a self-portrait! Marcellin was “pious, enlightened, experienced, prudent, firm, and constant” as well as “someone who loves.” We will see more of this particular quality later in this paper, but first I would like to spend some time on Marcellin’s self-confidence.

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## SELF-CONFIDENCE

In the *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, Brother Jean Baptiste describes Marcellin as “*tall in stature, with an upright and dignified carriage; his forehead was broad and his facial features strongly marked; his complexion had a brownish tint; a grave countenance reflected a reserve and earnestness which inspired respect.*”<sup>26</sup> From these traits, one easily imagines a man with an impressive stature.

Speaking of the “*imposing exterior of the venerated Father,*” Brother Sylvester, in his *Memoirs*, noted the impression Marcellin made on him “*with his height and majesty, his air of goodness and seriousness at the same time. His face commanded respect, his cheeks sunken, his lips a little prominent which*

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<sup>25</sup> Letter to Monseigneur Gaston de Pins, Administrateur apostolique de Lyon, Rhône; 1835 (Lent); PS 056

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Life*, page 265.

*made him appear to be smiling, his eyes both piercing and searching, his voice strong and sonorous, his speech markedly articulate, without being terse or tedious, everything in proportion.*"<sup>27</sup> Brother François often exclaimed that Marcellin was "*firm...yes, definitely; we would all have trembled at the sound of his voice, under just one of his looks...*"<sup>28</sup>

These three remembrances of Marcellin's physical presence offer us a little understanding of how others' viewed Marcellin. Each of these three men, Jean-Baptiste, Sylvestre, and François, witnessed up close the "presence" of Marcellin. But what is meant by the word 'presence?' Daniel Goleman understands 'presence' (also known as "bearing") as the external sense of one's self that others perceive: confidence, self-respect and self-worth. The descriptors used by these men give us some sense of the confidence that Marcellin exuded just by his physical presence.

On the other hand, confidence is generally described as a state of being certain, either that a hypothesis or prediction is correct, or that a chosen course of action is the best or most effective given the circumstances. True self confidence comes from an attitude where an individual promises himself, that no matter how difficult the problem life throws at him, he will try as hard as he can to help himself to succeed.

Marcellin's life was characterized by confidence—a confidence in God and in Mary, his Good Mother—which would translate into a self-confidence which would allow him to fulfill the mission which he believed God and Mary wanted: providing a Christian education for poor, rural children. This confidence is evident throughout certain situations and events in the early years of our Institute. Let us look at a few situations which become some of Marcellin's greatest trials, but also reveal his enormous confidence and trust in his God.

When Marcellin had begun his work, he was very conscious that the vocational pool of Lavalla was being exhausted. In addition, Marcellin was not known outside of his parish. The parish priest in Marlhes, who had never-

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<sup>27</sup> *The Memoirs of Little Brother Sylvestre*, edited by Brother Michael Green, Marist Brothers of the Schools, Drummoyne NSW, Australia, 2007, translated from the original French by Brother Douglas Welsh, page 74.

<sup>28</sup> "Testimonies on Marcellin Champagnat: Brother François Evokes Memories of the Founder in His Notebooks", **Marist Notebooks**, #14, November 1998, page 111.

theless requested Brothers for his school, “did not have a very high opinion of Marcellin and never sent him any young men who wished to become religious.”<sup>29</sup> This lack of vocations, which threatened the very existence of the Institute, was truly a trial for Marcellin, but this in no way discouraged him. Instead, it “stirred up his zeal and intensified his confidence in God.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, Marcellin put the whole future of his work in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, his “Ordinary Resource,” who always had her Divine Son either in her hands or her heart. At the beginning of 1822, with the novitiate empty, Marcellin took recourse to Our Lady of Pity:

*“If you abandon us, we shall perish; we shall go out like a lamp without oil. But if this work perishes, it will not be our work which perishes, but yours, as it is you who have done everything for us.”*<sup>31</sup>

Mary did not delay in answering Marcellin’s prayer. In February, Claude Fayolle, the future Brother Stanislas, arrived. In March, eight more postulants arrived, one of whom was the future Brother Jean Baptiste. Marcellin’s confidence in Providence was not for naught.

In January of 1826, Marcellin was seriously ill, but he felt he could rely on Fathers Courveille and Terraillon, both of whom were now living at the Hermitage, to assist the Brothers if he did not recover his health. Yet, less than a year later, Marcellin was alone at the Hermitage with his Brothers who now numbered eighty.

It turned out that the year 1826 was a “terrible year” for Marcellin and the Institute: His first recruit, Jean-Marie Granjon, was dismissed by Marcellin from the Institute, and Brother Jean François (Roumesy), a very competent Brother, left; “major debts were hanging over” Marcellin’s head<sup>32</sup>, his health was extremely poor, and Father Courveille was becoming more and more unacceptable to the Brothers at the Hermitage. Courveille’s dissatisfaction with the Brothers and their devotedness to Marcellin became too much for Courveille who saw himself as the real Superior of the Society of Mary. He

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<sup>29</sup> Brother Alain Delorme, “*We Should Marvel: Our First Brothers*,” Handout, Patrimony Course, 2008-04-14.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Baptiste Furet, *Life*, page 92.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Baptiste Furet, *Life*, page 93.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to Monsieur Jean Cholleton, Vicaire général de Lyon, Rhône; 1833 (08, 09); PS 030

left the Hermitage and sent of letter of complaint against Marcellin and his Institute to Archbishop de Pins, administrator of the Diocese of Lyon. The Archbishop's Council in turn sent Father Cattet, Vicar General for religious communities, to the Hermitage in February 1826. Cattet's inspection and report to the Archbishop were quite harsh, and Cattet planned to make Marcellin's Brothers form a union with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, an institute recently founded by Father Coindre. Added into this milieu was the eventual departure of Terrailon from the Hermitage. All of this must have been an incredibly severe trial for Marcellin.

Yet we see that in May of 1827, Marcellin wrote four letters stating that the various difficulties and feelings of abandonment of 1826 had not destroyed his goal to provide Christian education to poor children in the rural areas. Instead, these difficulties strengthened his conviction that this work of God and Mary must proceed. According to the recollections of Father Maître pierre, Marcellin had said of the early opposition to his work, "*Until now I used to wonder if I was working according to God's designs; the attacks I have just received begin to give me hope.*"<sup>33</sup> A number of years later, Marcellin, again facing difficulties and obstacles, believed more strongly that the work he was about was necessary. To Father Simon Cattet, Vicar General of Lyon and the individual who wrote the stinging inspection report, Marcellin writes that he "*still firmly believe that God wants this work<sup>34</sup> in this age when unbelief is making such frightful progress...*"<sup>35</sup> During this same time, he writes "*with a great deal of confidence*" to Father Joseph Barou, his formator in the Minor Seminary and now Vicar General for the Diocese of Lyon responsible for assignment of priests, and states that he "*still firmly believes that God wants this work.*"<sup>36</sup> The same sentiments are revealed, almost word for word, in his May 1827 letter to Archbishop de Pins: "*God wants this undertaking in these perverse times; this is still my firm belief.*"<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> OM #752

<sup>34</sup> The word 'work' here is used by Marcellin to mean both the work of the continuous formation of the Brothers so they could teach the rural poor and the administration of the fledgling Society of Mary in the Lyon Diocese. See Jean-Baptiste Furet's *Life*, page 192.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Monsieur Simon Cattet, Vicaire général de Lyon, Rhône; 1827-05; PS 004

<sup>36</sup> Letter to Father Jean Joseph Barou ; 1827-05 ; PS 007

<sup>37</sup> Letter to Monseigneur Gaston de Pins, 1827-05 ; PS 006

In looking back over this time Marcellin, in a 1833 letter to Father Jean Cholleton, Vicar General in the Lyon diocese, wrote,

*“Though I found myself alone after the withdrawal of Fr. Courveille and the departure of Fr. Terraillon, Mary did not abandon us. We are gradually paying our debts, and other confrères have replaced the first ones. I have to find money for their upkeep all by myself. Mary is helping us, and that is enough...”*<sup>38</sup>

This evidence of Marcellin’s confidence is not only revealed to those he deems as his “ecclesial” superiors. He writes often to his Brothers, revealing this same confidence.

In his Circular of January 1828, Marcellin asked all the Brothers to pray for the success of the steps which Archbishop de Pins was taking to gain legal authorization of the Institute. His opening sentence reveals his confidence that “all will be well” because of God and the Blessed Virgin:

*“God has loved us from all eternity; he chose us and drew us out of the world. The Blessed Virgin has planted us in her garden, and she sees to it that we lack for nothing.”*<sup>39</sup>

In July 1830, the Revolution of the “Three Glorious Days” (27<sup>th</sup> July through the 29<sup>th</sup>), directed against the Church and its priests, and against everything which recalled the Old Regime which Charles X had tried to restore, forced the King to abdicate and to go into exile. The overthrow of Charles X was accompanied by an anticlerical flare-up, including attacks on churches throughout parts of France (In Paris, Notre Dame’s sacristies were desecrated.); religious communities and institutions were sacked, and a number of mission crosses in the provinces were torn down and desecrated. The clergy, especially in the cities, went out only in secular clothing from then on. Naturally, some of the Brothers were fearful of what might happen.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Letter to Monsieur Jean Cholleton, Vicaire général de Lyon, Rhône; 1833 (08, 09); PS 030

<sup>39</sup> Circular, January 1828; PS 010.

<sup>40</sup> **Letters of Marcellin J.B. Champagnat: Texts, Volume 1**, page 23.

Some Brothers wanted to take precautions and advocated wearing secular clothes. *“The right way to prepare,”* said Marcellin, *“is to have no fear, to be wise and circumspect in your relations with people and with children, to have nothing whatever to do with politics, to keep closely united with God, to redouble your zeal for your perfection and for the Christian instruction of the children, and finally, to place all your confidence in God. Your religious habit is a safeguard for you, and not a danger; don’t resort to secular dress; it can no more preserve you from harm than a spider’s web...”*<sup>41</sup>

Marcellin’s Circular of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1830 addressed his Brothers’ concerns with prudence and confidence:

*“Don’t be frightened; Mary is our defender. The hairs of our head are all counted, and not one of them can fall without God’s permission. Let us be totally convinced that we have no greater enemy than ourselves. Only we can hurt ourselves; no one else can. God has said to the wicked, ‘You can go just so far and no farther.’”*<sup>42</sup>

Marcellin was so confident in his belief and so unmoved by the political turmoil that on the same day that he wrote the circular (15<sup>th</sup> August 1830), he received more postulants into the Institute and clothed them in the religious habit.<sup>43</sup>

He confidently reiterated this advice less than a month later when he wrote to Brother Antoine and the Brothers in Millery:

*“Do not be afraid of anything, dear friends; we have God to defend us. No one can harm us if God does not let him. Despite the rage which hell stirs up against it, the Church is founded on a rock and nothing can shake it. It is never more beautiful than when it is persecuted. So let us abandon our-selves to the wise and loving guidance of Divine Providence...”*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Life*, Page 173.

<sup>42</sup> Circulaire; 1830-08-15; PS 016

<sup>43</sup> Brother Sylvestre’s *Memoirs*, page 53.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Antoine; MILLERY, Rhône; 1830-09-10; PS 017



Marcellin's confidence also manifested itself in his letters of encouragement to his Brothers. In one, he addresses Brother Barthélemy who is facing difficulties in Saint-Symphorien d'Ozon, Isère, and apparently is upset with the small number of children being taught:

*"...Be brave, good friend; it is enough that you and your co-worker are willing to teach many children... Don't get upset over the small number you have now. God holds the hearts of everyone in his hands; He will send you students when he sees fit; all you have to do is be sure that no infidelity of yours stands in the way. You are where God wanted you to be, since you are where your superiors wanted you to be. I have no doubt that the Lord is rewarding you with many graces."<sup>45</sup>*

In answering a letter from Brother Théophile, Marcellin must have been well-aware of the problems Théophile was facing. From what Brothers Paul Sester and Raymond Borne tell us about him, the teaching profession did not really suit Théophile because he did not have much education, his health was not very good, and going from tailoring to teaching at the age of twenty-four was certainly not an easy transition.<sup>46</sup> Yet, we hear Marcellin telling Théophile:

*"Courage, dear friend, everything will improve with time, and besides, God will definitely be our reward. So why worry? Let us act as if we were sure of total success, and give all the honor to Jesus and Mary."<sup>47</sup>*

Likewise, we see a confident Marcellin in Paris in 1838 attempting to gain legal approbation for the Institute *"seeing, visiting this one and that one, with no idea when...the exhausting errands will be at an end... (Yet) in spite of all that, I am still strongly convinced, dear brother, that we will get only what God wants, neither more nor less. However, I do not neglect any step that might further our cause."<sup>48</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Letter to Fr. Barthélemy; Saint-Symphorien d'Ozon, Isère; 1831- 11- 01; PS 024

<sup>46</sup> **Letters of Marcellin J.B. Champgant, Volume 2, References**, Edited by Brother Raymond Borne & Brother Paul Sester, Translated by Brother Leonard Voegtle, Casa Generalizia dei Fratelli Maristi, Rome, 1992, p.478.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to Fr. Théophile, Marhles, Loire; 1835-07-12; PS 061

<sup>48</sup> Letter to Fr. Antoine Couturier; Millery, Rhône; 1838-03-24; PS 183

Brother Laurent, in his 1842 recollections of Marcellin, said,

*“He often spoke to us of the care that divine Providence takes of those who put their confidence in it, and especially of us; but when he spoke to us the goodness of God and of God’s love for us, he ignited in us the divine fire which filled him, so that the troubles and tasks and the miseries of life were not capable of unsettling us.”*<sup>49</sup>

Marcellin’s confidence in God was contagious... according to Laurent, “he ignited in us the divine fire...so that troubles were not capable of unsettling us.”

One cannot look at Marcellin’s confidence without also looking at his generally optimistic attitude toward life in general, his belief in the basic goodness of people, and his interactions with those he came in contact with. Let us now look at Marcellin’s other social/emotional competencies – his self management competencies.

### **Marcellin’s Self Management Competencies:**

*Emotional Self-Control, Transparency & Clear Communication, Adaptability, Initiative & Leadership, Optimism, and Conscientiousness*

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Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, states that our impulsive, emotional reactions can cause us to interact with others in ways that are counter-productive. We stop listening. We start to see the other person as wrong. We become rigid in our thinking and less open to influence. These responses compromise decision-making and execution. And when these patterns play out over and over again between the same people, the relationship itself

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<sup>49</sup> Brother Laurent, *Memoirs*, 1842, page 3. As Brother Michael Green, translator of this text from the original French said, “This memoir was penned by one of the first community at Lavalla, Brother Laurent. It seems to have been written in response to the invitation of Brother Jean-Baptiste in 1841 when he asked the first Brothers to put in writing their memories of Father Champagnat. Brother Jean-Baptiste, of course, had undertaken the commission to write the official biography of the Founder, this being eventually published in 1856. Fortunately, Laurent’s response to Jean-Baptiste has survived when all the others have not. The value of Laurent’s work – scribbled in poor French over five pages of an exercise-book – is the fact that it was written by one of the very first members of the Institute, someone who was there in Lavalla from 1817. Probably completed in 1842, it is the oldest account we have of the life of the Founder.” This text, at this point in time, has not been published in English.

can become the problem, eroding the morale and productivity of any group. Emotional self-management speaks of “managing” one’s emotions so social interactions can be productive. Emotional self-management covers a wide range of competencies, such as emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, initiative, optimism, and conscientiousness. For the purpose of this article, I will cover just one of these competencies – emotional self-control.

### ***Emotional Self Control***

Emotional self-control is the ability to keep one’s impulsive feelings and emotions under control. It is being able to restrain negative reactions when provoked, when faced with opposition or hostility from others, or when working under pressure. One of Marcellin’s great strengths was his ability to deal calmly with stress and remain poised and positive, even in trying moments. We already have seen how Marcellin handled the “vocation crisis” of 1822. Let us look at some other situations and how Marcellin reacted to them.

In the year following the July Revolution, alarming stories were circulating among the people near Saint-Etienne that the Hermitage was an anti-revolutionary arsenal, with cellars full of arms. Brother Jean-Baptiste mentions that some in the local area believed that the Brothers had been doing military drills at night. In March and April of 1831, a rumor circulated that a marquis was hidden in the house and that he was the inspiration behind the Brothers’ plan for a counter revolution.<sup>50</sup> The local government ordered a house search, and a public prosecutor, accompanied by the police, went to the Hermitage. As the prosecutor entered the house, the police surrounded the building. Champagnat, through his personal transparency and self-control, immediately defused a possibly dangerous situation by greeting the public prosecutor and his men:

*“A great honor certainly for us! You are not alone, I see, sir. I know what you want. Well, you must make a thorough search to find out whether we are harboring nobles, suspected persons and arms. You have probably heard that we have cellars; let us begin with those.”<sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. pages 174-175.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. page 175.

The prosecutor and two of his men visited the cellars, but by this time the prosecutor was becoming convinced by Marcellin's attitude and his willingness to accommodate his requests that the reports he and the local government had received were false. He wanted to cut short the inspection, but Marcellin wanted to make sure that the rumors would be squashed once and for all, and he insisted: *"No, sir, you must see everything! Otherwise the rumors will persist that we are out of order."*<sup>52</sup> Marcellin took the investigators through every room of the house. Once the inspection was complete, Marcellin graciously offered the prosecutor and his men some refreshments which they accepted. According to Jean Baptiste's account, the prosecutor apologized for the unpleasant duty and told Marcellin: *"Have no fear, your Reverence; I promise you that this visit will prove advantageous to you."*<sup>53</sup> Marcellin's calm and transparent manner helped save the day.

Marcellin also handled difficult and disappointing situations with calm, sometimes with resignation, but never with any hint of residual anger or bitterness. When the town council of Feurs in Loire voted in 1831 that the mutual teaching method would be used and that the Marist Brothers were too expensive for the town of limited resources to keep, Marcellin wrote to Mr. Jean-Baptiste Mondon, mayor of Feurs:

*"Thank you for informing me about the decision of your council. I accept the termination of our brothers' establishment in your town with resignation and calm... Please accept, Mr. Mayor, the respect of him who has the honor to be your most devoted servant..."*<sup>54</sup>

We also see this sense of calm in his letter to Brother François dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1838. By the time that this letter is written, Marcellin has spent the last few months attempting to get legal approbation for the Institute and is convinced that Mr. De Salvandy, Minister of Public Education, is constantly looking for new ways to drag out the process. In the final analysis, it seems that De Salvandy does not want to give Marcellin the requested authorization. So, Marcellin is preparing to leave Paris disappointed, but resigned:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Letter to Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Mondon; Feurs, Loire; 1831-04; PS 021

*“I imagine you want to know how our business is going. Sad to say, I know practically nothing about it, or if you prefer, I know everything. What was simply my suspicion has today become certitude. I am very annoyed, but not upset; I still have great confidence in Jesus and Mary.”<sup>55</sup>*

This sense of calm and resignation is also revealed in his 24<sup>th</sup> November 1838 letter to Mr. Jean-Jacques Baude, a deputy in the French government. Marcellin had written this letter to dispel the rumor that the Marist Brothers were opposed to the University and therefore the French government itself. By the end of 1838, it seems more and more probable that Marcellin has failed to gain legal authorization for the Institute, yet he writes,

*“What I have just learned from Mr. Jovin Desbayses and from one of our Brothers who was passing through Paris, really upsets me, but it does not discourage me.”<sup>56</sup>*

In his letter of 28<sup>th</sup> December 1838 to Brother Dominique, we see Marcellin’s calm yet firm response to this Brother who often complained about his fate. Marcellin could have reacted explosively to Dominique’s relatively constant complaints, but instead, we see a letter of understanding and encouragement mingled with clear advice that is proportionately exacted:

*“As for you, dear friend, we will always be ready to please you and even to obey you. Show us a task at which you can remain constant and content, and we will entrust it to you right away. It is a very sad illness, to be happy only in places where one is not. It is also a terrible mistake to go looking for any other way to do good than the one which has been entrusted to us.”<sup>57</sup>*

Marcellin’s transparent and authentic manner in dealing others also gives further credence to his social/emotional intelligence.

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<sup>55</sup> Letter to Fr. François (Gabriel Rivat); Notre Dame de l’Hermitage; 1838-06-23; PS 197

<sup>56</sup> Letter to Monsieur Jean-Jacques Baude, député; Paris; 1838-11-24; PS 228

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Fr. Dominique; Charlieu, Loire; 1838-12-28; PS 234

## **Marcellin's Social Awareness Competencies:**

### ***Empathy, Organizational Awareness, and Service Orientation***

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**Social Awareness** refers to how people handle relationships and awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns. The Social Awareness cluster contains three competencies:

- **Empathy:** Sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns
- **Organizational Awareness:** Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships
- **Service Orientation:** Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting the needs of others.

For the purpose of this article, let us focus on Marcellin's empathy.

## **Empathy**

More than just an internal sense of relatedness or appreciation for the experiences of others, empathy in this context represents the ability to create a sense of connectedness with others—to get them on your wavelength and invite them to move with and toward you rather than away and against you. People with empathy are able to constantly pick up emotional cues. They can appreciate not only what people are saying, but also why they are saying it. This competency is about understanding other people and the ability “to read” situations well. It is the ability to hear and understand accurately the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others.

So, how is Marcellin empathetic? It is important to remember that Marcellin had suffered as a boy from the absence of any regular schooling and was determined to see that the opportunities for learning, which he did not have, were extended throughout rural France. He was deeply convinced of the importance of education. He set out to establish a system of primary schools in which rural children could receive a good elementary education—an education which he had no opportunity to receive — and, at the same time, receive instruction in the Christian faith. Marcellin knew first-hand what deprivation the young people were experiencing...and shared his remembrances of this deprivation in his letter to Queen Marie-Amelie of France:

*“What I saw with my own eyes in that new post, with reference to the education of young people, reminded me of the difficulties I had experienced myself at their age, for lack of teachers. I therefore quickly carried out the project I already had in mind to establish an association of teaching brothers for the rural towns, very many of which, for lack of financial resources, cannot afford the Brothers of the Christian Schools.”*<sup>58</sup>

These same concerns were also shared with King Louis-Philippe:

*“...I learned to read and write only after making tremendous efforts, for lack of capable teachers. From that time on I understood the urgent necessity of having an institution which could, with less expense, provide for rural children the same good education which the Brothers of the Christian Schools provide for the poor in the cities.”*<sup>59</sup>

Marcellin also understood his Brothers. As we have seen earlier, Marcellin knew Sylvestre “thoroughly and esteemed him highly for his frankness and docility” and defended him when the older members of the community alleged that Sylvestre’s “only thought was to enjoy himself...and upset the good order of the community.” The infamous wheelbarrow incident apparently caused significant rumblings in the community. How did Marcellin respond to these Brothers who complained? He said:

*“I prefer to see him enjoy himself in that way than mope about bored. I can’t see what harm his barrow escapade caused. You used to enjoy yourselves too, when you were young... Instead of joining the young Brother in some harmless game or some diverting activities to help him pass the time, you leave him to himself; you are busy at study or talk over serious questions; are you surprised that he plays with the barrow? Please don’t make a crime of it, still less abandon him to himself at the risk of souring his attitude to his work and his vocation.”*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Letter to Queen Marie-Amelie, 1835-05, PS 059

<sup>59</sup> Letter to King Louis-Philippe, 1834-01-28; PS 034

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Life*, pages 270-271.

Brother Sylvestre, in his *Memoirs*, describes several examples of Marcellin's kindness towards him, in particular when he pardoned him of twelve hundred lines given to him by the Master of Novices:

*“During spiritual reading I made a noise while moving a statue on my desk. The Master of Novices, somewhat annoyed by my carelessness in the past, gave me not less than 1200 lines. I believed this penance to be completely unjust and went to ask Fr. Champagnat to let me off with it. When I got to his room I told him in tears and in great detail why I had come to see him. After carefully listening to me he took a sheet of paper from his desk, dripped sealing wax on it and applied his seal. Then he wrote a single line on it, signed the sheet and gave it to me, telling me to be more careful. What did that line contain? Here it is word for word: ‘Payment of 1200 lines’.”*<sup>61</sup>

Marcellin's response reveals his natural and intuitive understanding of adolescence and of religious life. But this intuitive understanding was not only for Brother Sylvestre. According to Brother Jean-Baptiste, as soon as Marcellin noticed that a postulant was having troubles settling in or had doubts about his vocation or was home-sick, he either sent for him or found an opportunity of being alone with him.

*“This might be by taking him as companion on a journey, by an outing with him or by inviting his help in some manual work. In any case, he never lost touch with him until he had reinforced his determination to persevere in his holy state... Marcellin had a variety of approaches and he used every possible means to banish temptations against vocation and to instill courage into those who were taking fright at the trials or troubles of religious life. He would make one promise to stay a few days longer, assuring him that if the dissatisfaction did not pass he would let him leave. Another, might be given a position of trust with the reminder that he was counting on him and was confident that he would not be let down in the slightest. Or it might be that he called on the ‘waverer’*

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<sup>61</sup> Brother Sylvestre's *Memoirs*, page 91-92.



*to make a novena, with the promise, that, if his dispositions remained unchanged, there would be no obstacle afterwards to his departure. A young man might be advised to stay on to further his studies and while he was busy doing this, the Founder would skillfully inspire him with a taste for religious life and lead him to a decision to embrace it.*<sup>62</sup>

Marcellin's empathy is all the more significant when it is seen in the context of the prevailing rigorism in moral theology, the expectations of religious life, and even of pastoral practice of the times. For the rigorist, human nature was corrupt and valid forgiveness from God was difficult to obtain. Jesus Christ was looked upon as a severe and inscrutable Redeemer.<sup>63</sup> Because of this, a large number of persons remained away from the Sacraments, especially in France, during the 17th and 18th centuries, or received them but seldom, under pretext of being too unworthy. Yet in the following testimony of Brother Callinique, we see Marcellin as a man of enormous empathy in the confessional. He was both firm and compassionate:

*“During my novitiate, I made a general confession of my whole life, as the Rule suggests. Nothing can describe the goodness of Father in the confessional. During my confession, he held me in his arms, as was his custom, and hugged me affectionately against his heart. He was truly the father of the prodigal, welcoming his son...”*<sup>64</sup>

His empathy helped him “to connect” with people. To create a sense of connectedness with his Brothers, Marcellin took the time to get to know them and understand them. To build this connectedness, Marcellin made sure that he was “in touch” with his Brothers.

It is interesting to note that the Rule of 1837 required all the Brothers to write to the Superior “every four months.”<sup>65</sup> Clearly, this was one way Marcellin got to know his Brothers. It is also because of this rule that we have

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<sup>62</sup> Jean Baptiste Furet, *Life*, Pages 465-466.

<sup>63</sup> Keith Farrell, *Achievements from the Depths*, p.4.

<sup>64</sup> WITNESSES ON MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT: MINOR WITNESSES (Taken from, Bro. Leonard Voegtli, FMS, Postulator General, “Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat”), Brother Callinique, page 7.

<sup>65</sup> Rule of 1837, Chapter VII, paragraph 2.

a number of letters from Marcellin, responding to letters from his Brothers. Many of these letters reveal Marcellin's empathetic qualities, especially his ability to listen attentively to others. To Brother Barthélemy, Marcellin writes:

*"I was very glad to hear from you and to know that you are in good health. I also know that you have many children in your school; you will consequently have many copies of your virtues, because the children will model themselves on you, and will certainly follow your example."*<sup>66</sup>

In another letter, Marcellin is able to hear and understand Barthélemy's thoughts, feelings, and concerns:

*"I am very well aware of all the problems which all the illnesses of your co-workers can create for you. Take good care of yourself, so that you can carry out your difficult duties well... Be brave, dear friend; think how precious your occupation is in the eyes of God. Great saints and great men were happy to have a task which Jesus and Mary value so highly. Let these little children come to me, for heaven belongs to them."*<sup>67</sup>

Possibly from his own father's example, Marcellin had learned how to come to know people closely, how to mix with them, how to show concern for them, and how to develop bonds with them. Marcellin's natural tendency was to be relational. In support of this view, it is interesting to note that Brother Sylvestre says that Marcellin's many journeys to visit his parishioners in the remote hamlets, "...were not solely to visit the sick, but also to re-establish contact with the families, to reconcile their enemies, to help the poor, to console the afflicted and to bring back to their duties the people who had distanced themselves and who no longer spoke charitably of their priest. He had a natural gift for gaining confidence and correcting without ever hurting."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Letter to Brother Barthélemy; Ampuis, Rhône; 1830-01-21; PS 014

<sup>67</sup> Letter to Brother Barthélemy; Ampuis, Rhône; 1831-01-03; PS 019

<sup>68</sup> Brother Sylvestre's *Memoirs*, page 34.

### **Marcellin's Relationship Management Competencies:**

#### **Developing & Influencing Others, Building Bonds, and Teamwork and Collaboration.**

*“His (Marcellin’s) lessons and example will not be lost; we shall find them in the Brothers whom he has founded.”<sup>69</sup>*

Relationship Management competencies deal with an individual’s ability to work with others, to mentor them, and to foster relationships which are related to activities or projects which are larger than any one individual. Let us specifically look at one of these competencies – Developing & Influencing Others.

### **Developing & Influencing Others**

This competency is about the ability to foster the long-term learning or development of others. Its focus is on the developmental intent and effect rather than on the formal role of teaching or training. Those individuals who do this well spend time helping people find their own way to through specific feedback. They mentor others by recognizing their strengths. They also have the ability to impact others in order to support a particular aim. In Marcellin’s case, his aim was clear: to provide a Christian education for poor youth of small towns.

Of the many images used to describe Marcellin, the one of “mentor” is extremely apt. He mentored his early Brothers so that they could one day assume leadership roles within the community. He mentions this in his 1835 letter to Archbishop De Pins:

*“It is true that I have some brothers who help me with various tasks: a good master of novices, a capable brother to direct the brothers’ class, another for the novices, and an econome...”<sup>70</sup>*

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<sup>69</sup> Jean Louis Duplay, Testimony as found in *Annals of the Institute* #205

<sup>70</sup> Letter to Monseigneur Gaston de Pins, Administrateur apostolique de Lyon, Rhône; 1835 (Lent); PS 056

We also know that Marcellin believed in developing his brothers. In his Circular of 1840-02-04, it is clear that Marcellin has trained others to lead the annual conference:

*“Therefore, in conformity with our last circular, the conference will be held at...for the establishments of...and will be presided over by our Brother First Assistant, and in his absence by Brother...”*<sup>71</sup>

He advised and mentored François on how to be a leader and how to make decisions. One example of this is seen in Marcellin’s letter of 10<sup>th</sup> January 1838 to François. Marcellin, who is on his way to Paris to attempt to gain legal authorization for the Institute and is aware of François’ reluctance in assuming a leadership role in his absence, tells François:

*“Whenever you have a problem, after consulting God and our common Mother, consult Fr. Matricon. Tell him that I told you to consult him. Work things out with him and Fr. Terraillon, when you can. On Sundays, at the usual time, meet in the secretariat with Fr. Matricon and the usual brothers...”*<sup>72</sup>

Marcellin modeled the type of decision-making he believed was necessary— Consultation with the priests at the Hermitage and “the usual Brothers.” In his letter to Father Ferréol Douillet, we can see Marcellin’s decision making process, which he no doubt passed on to his Brothers:

*“The decision which I shared with you about our establishment in La Côte was in no way one I made all by myself. After recommending the matter to the prayers of all our brothers, and saying Mass for that intention, I consulted my confrères, our brothers, and all were of the opinion that we should not continue directing the school in La Côte except under the conditions according to which it was established, and according to which we establish them everywhere else.”*<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Circular of 1840-02-04; PS 318

<sup>72</sup> Letter to Fr. François; N.D. De l’Hermitage; 1838-01-10; PS 169

<sup>73</sup> Letter to Monsieur Ferréol Douillet,; La Côte-St.André, Isère; 1838-10; PS 215

Also important to note is that before the Rule of 1837 was promulgated, Marcellin sent it around to the senior Brothers for consultation and for their comments on its content, and according to Brother Marie-Jubin, Marcellin also sought the advice and opinions of some of the younger Brothers:

*“Asking for advice never embarrassed him. More than once he came to me, a young brother of twenty, which both surprised and edified me.”<sup>74</sup>*

Marcellin also spent time helping some of his Brothers “find their own way” through specific feedback. This was already seen in his two letters to Dominique (PS 049 & PS 234), his letter to Brother Cassien (PS 042), his letter to Brother Barthélemy (PS024), his letter to Brother Denis (PS 168), his letter to Brother Théophile (PS 061), and one of his letters to Brother François (PS 197). The following are just a few excerpts from those letters:

To Brother Dominique, Marcellin wrote,

*“...A little more humility and obedience would not hurt your situation any...”* and

*“...As for you, dear friend, we will always be ready to please you and even to obey you. Show us a task at which you can remain constant and content, and we will entrust it to you right away. It is a very sad illness, to be happy only in places where one is not. It is also a terrible mistake to go looking for any other way to do good than the one which has been entrusted to us.”*

To Brother Cassien, Marcellin counsels:

*“...So then, dear brother, what have you got to be upset about? If the members of the Society of Mary are too imperfect to serve as models for you, dear Cassien, then look at her who can be the model of the perfect and the imperfect and who loves them all: the perfect because they*

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<sup>74</sup> WITNESSES ON MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT: MINOR WITNESSES (Taken from, Bro. Leonard Voegtler, FMS, Postulator General, “Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat”), Brother Marie-Jubin, p. 12.

*practice virtue and lead others to do good, especially in community; and the imperfect because it is especially for their sake that Mary was raised to the sublime dignity of Mother of God.*"

In his 1<sup>st</sup> November 1831 letter, Marcellin advises Brother Barthélemy on how to "win over his students":

*"...Tell them, 'God loves you, and I also love you, because Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints love you so much'. Then tell them, 'Do you know why God loves you so much? It is because you were purchased with his blood, and you can become great saints, and with very little difficulty, if you really want to.'"*<sup>75</sup>

To Denis, Marcellin writes,

*"If you want me to continue to admonish you for your failing, good friend, you must not consider my admonitions so strange..."*<sup>76</sup>

To Brother Théophile, who is anxious about a situation at the school in Marlhès, Marcellin recommends:

*"... Why worry? Let us act as if we were sure of total success, and give all honor to Jesus and Mary."*

And to François, fearful that his talents and abilities are not up to the tasks at hand, Marcellin says,

*"Just try to do your duty well and God will do what you cannot..."*

Clearly, Marcellin had the ability to foster the development of his "Little Brothers" so that they too could meet the needs of the young children entrusted to their care.

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<sup>75</sup> Letter to Brother Barthélemy; Saint- Symphorien d'Ozon; 1831- 11- 01; PS 024

<sup>76</sup> Letter to Brother Denis, PS 168.

## CONCLUSION

We conclude where we began — with a reflection on Marcellin from Brother Jean-Baptiste:

*“Father Champagnat owed much to the success of his ministry and in the foundation of his Institute, to his bright, open, friendly and considerate character with its ability to resolve situations of strife. An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts and disposing minds to accept without difficulty and even with pleasure, his opinions, his instructions, and his reproofs...”*

Marcellin’s intelligence was rooted in his *interactions* with others and his sensitivity to others’ feelings, temperaments and motivations... In short, it lay in his ability to understand the very real details of human relationships. He was a person gifted with a strong social/emotional intelligence. He had the ability to “read” situations, to understand the social context that influences behavior, to form and develop others, and to inspire. Marcellin was able to choose strategies that would lead to the fulfillment of his primary goal: to provide a Christian education to poor children.

Through some of his correspondence and through the reminiscences of those who knew him well, we see Marcellin as calm, serene, open, constant, and courageous. Aware of his own limitations, he was gifted with a deep intelligence in the practical sense, and he was exceedingly confident in his convictions. Marcellin always hoped that the quality which would define his “Little Brothers of Mary” would be simplicity, and in many ways, this quality characterized Marcellin. For Marcellin, simplicity was straightforwardness in relationships with others, enthusiasm for the work at hand, and an uncomplicated confidence in his God. He shared this quality with his Brothers whom he hoped would become like a family.

We have seen that Marcellin was truly talented in human relationships; his common sense and his compassion made him a popular confessor throughout his life. He was able to communicate effectively and empathize easily with others. Yet, we know from our Marist history that Marcellin was not a man for writing spiritual treatises, but he was a man of determination and

action, a man of heart and affection. His emphasis was on the heart and on relationships – both with God and other people. It was, and is, key to our spiritual heritage and to our Marist pedagogy. It was through this heart and affection...for the youth of rural France and for those who would teach them...that Marcellin succeeded in doing what many thought impossible. These qualities of Marcellin’s social/emotional intelligence — “his open, friendly and considerate character... his unassuming affability, a straightforwardness and impression of kindness” — allowed him to do great things.



# *The relationship between Marcellin Champagnat and Brother François*

*as shown by Father Champagnat's letters  
to Brother François from Paris,  
and some other documents*

**Br Peter WALSH, FMS**  
*Province of Melbourne*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This is an abridged version of a paper that was presented for the Patrimony Course, Rome 2008. The aim of that paper was to examine the letters of Marcellin Champagnat sent to Br François, from Paris, the circulars that Br François sent to the Brothers about Champagnat and other documents, with a view to examining what they told us about the relationship between these two men, one a Founder and Superior and the other his protégée, secretary and successor.

Since the extant correspondence is one sided we chose to look at four circulars that François wrote to the brothers, three on the death of Champagnat, and one in 1857, and at some other minor documents.

The paper was divided into the following sections:

- I: Beginnings.
- II: The letter of 1836.
- III: The letters 1838.
  - A: The letters of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
  - B: The letters of March 7<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>
  - C: The letters of May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

- IV: Two Circulars to the Brothers dated 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1840 and 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1840, a Circular to the Brothers in Oceania dated 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1840, and the Circular of 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1857.
- V: Other witnesses.
- VI: Conclusion: What can we say about the relationship between Marcellin Champagnat and Br François?

In this paper we shall confine ourselves to a brief look at parts of the whole.

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### **THE LETTER FROM PARIS OF 1836<sup>77</sup>**

By 1836, Br Francois has been at the Hermitage for ten years – since 1831 as private secretary to Fr Champagnat, a post to which he was re-appointed in 1835.

1835 has been a good year for Champagnat; he has not received his authorisation but Fr Mazelier has provided a solution by accepting those brothers who were eligible for conscription into the Brothers at St Paul Trois Chateaux. Fr Pompallier has been appointed Vicar Apostolic for Oceania, Fr Matricon has been appointed chaplain at the Hermitage, four new schools have opened, there are 140 Brothers of whom 80 are in the schools.<sup>78</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> August, along with Bishop Pompallier and Father Chanut, who were going to take care of some business concerning the mission in Oceania, Fr. Champagnat went to Paris in the hopes of wringing out of the government the final signature needed for the authorization of his congregation. From there he wrote to Br François on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1836 the following letter:

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<sup>77</sup> Lettres de Marcellin J. B. Champagnat (1789-1840) Fondateur de l'Institut des Frères Maristes, présentées par Frère Paul Sester, 1985, translated by Brother Leonard Voegtle, two-column format: CEPAM, **to** Fr. François (Gabriel Rivat); Notre Dame de l'Hermitage; 1836-08-28; PS 067; Original: AFM, 111.18; published in: CSG, I, p. 209

<sup>78</sup> Vide "Chronologie, 1976" for the year 1835.

*My very dear brother,*

*[01] After three days and three nights of travel<sup>79</sup>, we arrived in Paris, in good health and determined to do all we could to carry out our various errands. Thanks be to Jesus and Mary, I completed the trip without experiencing, as I had feared, the pains I usually have.*

*[02] We are staying at the seminary of the Society for the Foreign Missions. The worthy superior of this house received us with admirable kindness. We have adjoining rooms.*

*[03] How much we need the help of the prayers of everyone in the house! I am really afraid that we will obtain nothing, since the cabinet has been changed<sup>80</sup>. Will the new one be favorable to us? I have no idea. Bishop Pompallier hopes to have an interview with the king and queen. If possible, he will speak to the king on our behalf.*

*[04] Don't worry about me, I feel fine. I find the people of Paris very polite; we have not heard a single insulting word. I will write you as soon as I have made any moves, to keep you abreast of everything.*

*[05] Tell Fathers Servant, Matricon and Besson how much I am counting on their Masses and on them for their overall supervision. Take their advice and that of Brothers Jean-Marie and Stanislas for the more thorny problems.*

*[06] You must speed up the business of the chapel<sup>81</sup> as much as you can, without spoiling anything. Take care of it; work things out with Frs. Matricon and Besson, and Bros. Jean-Marie and Stanislas. I ask you above all to see that no one is left with nothing to do.*

*[07] Prepare everything for the vacation; I have no way of knowing when I shall leave Paris. It seems to me I could stay here very willingly, since everything appears extremely calm.*

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<sup>79</sup> By stagecoach

<sup>80</sup> On 25th August the Thiers cabinet, formed the preceding 22nd February, had fallen. Fr. Champagnat could not therefore have known about it before reaching Paris. The next Cabinet would not be formed until 6th September, and Public Instruction would: no longer be entrusted to Pelet, but to Guizot.

<sup>81</sup> The construction of the new chapel, on the site of the present one, was nearly completed. Father Champagnat wanted it finished for the retreat

*[08] You have my address if you need to write me. Please accept, all of you, the assurance of the tender affection with which, my dear brothers, I have the honor to be your most devoted and affectionate father in Jesus and Mary, Champagnat, Sup. of the M. B.*

*[09] From Paris, 28th August 1836, at the Seminary of the Society for the Foreign Missions, Rue du Bac. No. 120*

### **What can this letter tell us about the relationship between Fr Champagnat and Br François?**

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In the opening paragraph, Champagnat displays an awareness of François's concern with his (Champagnat's) health and an openness not only to discuss this with him but also to discuss the fears he had regarding the trip. "After three days and three nights of travel, we arrived in Paris in good health ... I completed the trip without experiencing, as I had feared, the pains I usually have." There is an intimacy here and an expectation that François would be anxious about his health. Champagnat takes it for granted that François is aware of his usual pain. To share your pain with another requires an intimacy that is built on a solid relationship.

Again, in the third paragraph, Champagnat is sharing his fears with François: "I am really afraid that we will obtain nothing..." and his uncertainty: "I have no idea." To be able to share your fears and doubts with another also requires a certain intimacy and closeness of relationship.

In the fourth paragraph, Champagnat seeks again to reassure François that he is all right: "Don't worry about me, I feel fine." The implication is that Champagnat feels that François will be worrying about him. Thus Champagnat has sought to reassure François that he is all right on three occasions in four short paragraphs.

There is also the suggestion that François might also be worrying about the reception that Champagnat might receive from the Parisians: "we have not heard a single insulting word." Almost the whole of the first half of the letter is an attempt to assure François that he, Champagnat is safe and well. Marcellin concludes this paragraph by promising to write and keep François abreast of "everything". The relationship portrayed by this half of the letter

is an intimate and loving one – with François worrying about Champagnat's health and well-being, and Champagnat worried because François is concerned about him. He goes out of his way to allay those fears. Obviously, this is more than a professional relationship between a Superior and a secretary; it is more like the relationship between a father and his son – and a close one at that.

Having allayed, as far as possible, François's concerns, Champagnat now turns to more practical matters. He reminds François in a very oblique way that he has Fathers Servant, Matricon and Besson to fall back on: "Tell (them) how much I am counting on them for their overall supervision." In the same way, without diminishing François's responsibility, he reminds him that he can take their advice, along with that of Brothers Jean-Marie and Stanislas, "for the more thorny problems." Here we find Champagnat, the master encourager and developer of persons at work. He is careful not to diminish François's authority and responsibility and at the same time to let him know that he is not alone and that there are others who will support and advise him.

Having allayed his fears, bolstered his authority and ensured him of support, he now tells him with full confidence in his ability to do so: "You must speed up the business of the chapel as much as you can, without spoiling anything." There is a wealth of material in this sentence. "You": the responsibility is certainly François' and Champagnat trusts him to do it, realising that it is a difficult, perhaps impossible task: "as much as you can". Not only is it difficult, but there are inherent risks: "without spoiling anything".

In spite of the difficulties, Champagnat trusts, even expects François to get it done. "Take care of it"; but again he reminds him that he has others to fall back on: "work things out with Frs Matricon and Besson, and Brs Jean-Marie and Stanislas." Again we see this two-fold relationship: trust and confidence in François along with a concern that he might be asking too much. One feels Champagnat's heart-strings being pulled in two directions like that of a parent who is trying to let go of a developing adolescent ; giving him a free hand but anxious that he succeed.

He then asks François, the superior of the house, to see that no one is left with nothing to do and to prepare for the vacations. He seems less anxious that François can do these tasks successfully - after all he has been doing it for the past eight or nine years.

He concludes assuring all of the brothers, but perhaps, especially François, of his tender affection as their devoted and affectionate father in Jesus and Mary.

It seems to me that this is an extraordinarily affectionate letter whilst not being overtly so. There are no explicit statements of affection, apart from the general one at the end of the letter and yet, if one reads it carefully, it is full of real concern (assumed by Champagnat) on behalf of François for Champagnat's health, how he is being treated in Paris, how he is worrying about him ; and then on behalf of Champagnat, a confidence and trust in François and, at the same time, a concern to encourage and support him and an anxiety that perhaps he is asking too much of him.

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### **THE LETTERS OF 1838**

By the beginning of 1838 Champagnat still had not obtained the authorisation and he decided to return to Paris where he remained until Easter when he returned to the Hermitage. He was back in Paris in May. He wrote letters to Br François on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, April 12<sup>th</sup> and then on May 20<sup>th</sup>, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. One obvious division is the letters of the second trip (January to April) and the letters of the third trip (May to June). For somewhat arbitrary reasons, but ones that presented themselves as I read the letters, I decided to further sub-divide the letters of the second trip into those of January-February and those of May-June. Thus I divided the letters of 1838 in the following groups:

- A: The letters of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
- B: The letters of March 7<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>
- C: The letters of May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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### **THE LETTER OF 24TH FEBRUARY 1838**

The final letter in group A, of the 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1838, is sent after two months in Paris, two hectic and frustrating months, when Champagnat is exhausted from his fruitless efforts to gain authorisation.<sup>82</sup> There is exhaustion

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<sup>82</sup> See PARIS DIARY (Fr Chanut Jan 15<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1838) , Appendix B

and despondency in the letter that he doesn't seek to hide from Br François. Obviously, in response to a query from François, Champagnat refers to a refusal from the rector of the university concerning Br Martin's ten year commitment re conscription. He reveals his frustration, maybe even his despondency to François: "I do not know what sort of results we can expect, and I don't know what other remedy to try." Similarly, he has been told in regard to Br Theodore that "it would be more difficult to obtain his exemption than our authorisation." In his frustration he continues: "The farmer has to get out." And then goes on to tell Br François that he has not answered his question about the prices of the texts. "I wanted to know what you thought and you didn't answer my question at all." His frustration continues to pour out: "As for our main business, how many procedures, how many errands, how many visits... you can't begin to imagine."

The next paragraph tells François that M. Delebecque is convinced the business will be settled within three weeks but Champagnat is not so sure: "(W)ho knows if it will end well?" But this is not the last of his woes. We now learn that his last surviving brother has died and Champagnat confides to François: "Here I am all alone now out of the ten of us in the family;" and then, almost a cry of despair: "I think my own turn will not be far off."

It seems to me that in the middle of this letter, Fr Champagnat bares his soul and shares with Br François the darkness and despondency with which he is struggling. At this point we see a soul mate with whom Champagnat feels he can lay open the blackest moments of his "despair". Characteristically, this feeling of hopelessness doesn't last long and he is immediately trying to reassure François that he is OK. "And despite all that ... I feel better than I ever have. I hardly take any 'warm water' at all. My appetite is very good." I doubt whether François would have had his mind put at rest!

After trying a few positive and reassuring remarks, he slips back into his black mood. "You may think we have a lot of money; it dwindles every day and we are earning nothing as you must realise." Even his post script is despondent and even curt: "I do not need to tell you how dear to me are all the brothers I named in my last letter, even though you did not mention any of them." (Underlining is mine.) He continues: "You hardly answered any of my questions;" and softens the criticism with: "I guess you had nothing very consoling to tell me about these topics." Champagnat seems to have lost his way; he is so despondent that he is almost rambling. He ends with: "I wanted to tell you something else but I forget what it was."

If his letter of tears<sup>83</sup> was his lowest point, then this letter must run a close second. In the first he unburdens himself to Fr Cholleton and here, almost without realising he is doing it, perhaps in the throes of exhaustion, he opens his despondency to François's gaze. It appears that, in 1836, François bore for Marcellin a real concern of which Marcellin was aware. One can only imagine, therefore, what François must have felt when he received this letter. Yet Fr Champagnat seems so exhausted and despondent that he is not aware of what he is saying, nor of the impact that his words would have. Exhaustion, despondency, frustration, even a premonition of approaching death. Unfortunately, since there is no surviving correspondence from Br François we can only guess at his response, at the impact that this letter had on him.

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#### **SECTION IV : BROTHER FRANÇOIS' CIRCULARS**

Unfortunately, we do not have any of the letters Br François wrote to Champagnat whilst he was in Paris. However, we do have a number of Circulars that Br François wrote concerning Champagnat.<sup>84</sup>

The first Circular dated 6th June, 1840 informs the communities of the death of Marcellin Champagnat, priest of the Society of Mary and Founder and Superior of the Little Brothers of Mary. We have seen through Marcellin's letters to François aspects of the relationship from Champagnat's side of the fence, with a few inferred attitudes of Br François. Here is our first real chance to examine the relationship from the other side. How does Br François see Marcellin Champagnat?

His first reference is to "our good Father Superior", not just to our Father Superior, but our good Father Superior. Apart from the usual connotations that we would associate with good, can we infer a reference to "our good Mother"? Just as Mary was seen as first superior and our "the sum total of the resources of our society"<sup>85</sup>, can we say that François is alluding to Cham-

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<sup>83</sup> PS Letters 030 to Fr Cholleton, August or Sept 1833

<sup>84</sup> CSG 51.01.01.1840.1 and CSG 51.01.01.1840.2 (Translation by Br Peter Walsh, fms), CSG 1.333-7 (Translated by Br Edward Clisby, fms). And CSG 18570106 (Translation by Peter Walsh).

<sup>85</sup> PS Letters 194 Champagnat to Fr Pompallier, 27.5.1838



pagnat as our father, superior and fount of all our achievements, the sum total of who we are?

He then invites the Brothers “to join with us your tears and your hopes”, the implication being that François has already wept and is hoping that Champagnat’s work will continue through them. He invites them to weep for their loss and gives a description of what Champagnat has been for them: “a good father, a worthy Superior and Founder, a holy priest of the Society of Mary, our support, our guide, and our tender consoler.” He goes on: “Weep that death strips from us he who knew so well how to share our struggles and direct our steps on the road to salvation. He has ended a life of penance, laboriously and wholly filled with works of zeal and devotion and of faithfulness by the sufferings of a long and cruel illness. His death has been like his life totally filled with edification: we have no doubt that he has been precious in the eyes of God.”

“It is up to us now”, he says, “to recall and to follow carefully his last and so touching instructions, of making him live in each of us by imitating the virtues that we admire in him, and to gather more than ever around our good and tender Mother.” François, at least, has been touched and is determined to imitate his beloved Founder, Father and mentor.

The second circular, dated 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1840 to call the Brothers to the annual retreat begins by enjoining the Brothers “to live as one like Brothers.” He reminds the Brothers that they will “not be given the joy as before of (Fr Champagnat’s) presence” but they will find him “our pastor and father” in “the monuments of his zeal and his devotion for us, in the memory of his pious lessons, in the mutual recitation of his virtues and his blessed example.” Clearly Champagnat was still very much alive for François.

The third circular, to the Marist Brothers of Polynesia, dated 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1840 will accompany the next wave of missionaries, will encourage them and inform those already in Oceania of the death of Father Champagnat. “It is now six months since the good God called him from this world to his eternal crown, so we hope, and to recompense him for his long labours and great sufferings.” He tells them that “his final illness left him so exhausted and drained that he was no more than a living skeleton.” Here we catch a glimpse of François having shared for a number of years the suffering that Champagnat endured. We deduced in the letter of 1836 and then in

some of those of 1838 that François was feeling for, and perhaps suffering with, Champagnat. “His death like his life was full of edification. We don’t doubt that he was precious in the eyes of the Lord,” he says again.

He goes on: “We don’t need to tell you... how much regret and sorrow such a painful loss has left in our hearts. It is a wound that will take a long time to heal.” There is no need to stress how personal such a loss was and whose is the wound he is describing.

We get another little word picture of: “a good father, such a reliable guide and such an understanding consoler,” and we know to whom, in particular, he was father, guide and understanding consoler.

In 1857 he writes another circular following the publication and dissemination of Br John Baptiste’s “Life of Fr Champagnat”. Since the Circular is dated January 6<sup>th</sup> and since the Chronologie gives 1857 as the date of publication of the Life, this circular must have followed hard upon its heels. In it Br François puts before the Brothers the example of the Founder’s life for them to imitate.

He then goes on to list a number of sayings of Fr Champagnat on various topics. The first nine relate to the daily exercises, as below.

Rising	“For more than twenty years,” he said to a brother, “I rose at 4.am; however, I never got used to it: for all that time it was a sacrifice and a struggle. Truly, when I think of it, I feel sorry for the young brothers for whom it costs so much.”
Prayer, meditation	“A brother who doesn’t know how to pray, doesn’t know how to practice virtue, nor how to do good amongst the children. It is impossible for him to fulfil his religious obligations without a true and solid piety.”
Office	“The Office is a consolation for the Brothers. It is true that they don’t understand Latin; but God understands it and their prayer is no less pleasing if they say it with intention and meaning.”

Mass, Communion	“For a brother who has a spirit of faith, it is a great sacrifice to be unable to attend mass every day. He who misses through his own fault shows he lacks zeal for his perfection and he doesn’t love Jesus Christ.”
Study, work.	“A brother should make himself capable of filling any office or employment in the Institute; to do this he should love work...”
Class	“An earthen vessel retains for a long time the taste and smell of the first liquid that it contains; if the children learn good habits and good attitudes in the infants class they will stay with them all their life.”
Catechism	“A brother must desire nothing more than to be a good catechist; for it is the main function and the end of his vocation.”
Food	“I have always noticed that those who think a lot of their bodies think little of their souls.”
Recreation	“Joy and happiness should be the usual attitude of a religious. This is the disposition that I want from you, and you should fear nothing more than a sad and unhappy spirit, for sin apart there is no greater danger.”

He then lists another twenty for relations amongst the Brothers, for Ordinary Temptations, and Religious Perfection. Thus in his circular of 1857, Br Francois lists 29 sayings of the Founder, a kind of summary of the teaching of Father Champagnat and of Br John Baptist’s “Life”.

For Br François, faithfulness is tied up in imitating Fr Champagnat:

*“If then we wish to be true disciples of our pious founder, if we wish sincerely to continue his work on earth, and participate in his merit and goodness in heaven, we must walk in his footsteps, imitate his virtues and always conform our conduct and our thoughts to the rules and the sayings that he left us. In a word, we must conduct ourselves in such a manner in all things, that none of our words and actions could be disowned by him, by what he has said or done.”*

For Br François, a true Little Brother of Mary, a true follower of Champagnat, a true Religious, a true son of Champagnat is one who imitates him “as perfectly as possible”.

Champagnat spent many years forming Br François; his letters from Paris contain much advice and encouragement. He gave Br François the freedom to act on his behalf and to make many decisions himself, but always he was there in the background, advising, supporting, encouraging. It is informative to see how much of Champagnat appears in the Circular of 1857. It is also very interesting to see how strong is the feeling that François still has for Champagnat 17 years after Champagnat’s death.

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## **OTHER WITNESSES**

In his letter to Fr Pompallier dated 27th May, 1838<sup>86</sup> Fr Champagnat in responding to one that he has received from Pompallier, says: “Brother François is my right arm; he runs the house in my absence as if I were present. Everyone submits to him without any problem.” So here we have a firsthand account of Champagnat’s feelings and attitude towards François. He is Champagnat’s right arm. No, more than that: he is Champagnat himself! When François presides, it is as if Champagnat were present.

When Br François was elected Director General of the Brothers in 1839, it is reported that Fr Champagnat, “au moment d’élection, ... avait manifesté une joie très visible” and “after the election,” said one of the Brothers who is quoted in his biography, “he appeared very satisfied with the result of the count and he said: I am happy with the choice; he is exactly the man I wanted. God has blessed the election.”<sup>87</sup> It is reported that several days before his death a Brother asked him who would be able to lead the Congregation when he was gone. He responded: “The Brother you have chosen to succeed me, will do better than I have done.”<sup>88</sup>

Br Jean Baptiste in his *Life* wrote of Br François, “Filled with the spirit of the pious Founder and eager to adopt his way of governing the Brothers

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<sup>86</sup> PS Letters 194

<sup>87</sup> See ALS 411

<sup>88</sup> See Furet, *Life of MBJ Champagnat*, 1989 ed. P. 226

and of doing good, Br François made no change in what had been done or in the manner of doing it...it was clearly seen with great satisfaction, that under the new regime, ...Father Champagnat lived on and continued to act, in his successor.”<sup>89</sup>

In Br François’ diary he notes on receiving the portrait of Marcellin Champagnat: “Received the portrait of Father Champagnat. Be his living image.”<sup>90</sup>

So it seems obvious that Champagnat was happy with the man he had groomed for so long; confident that he had learnt his lessons well and that he had the quiet strength to be successful. It is equally obvious that Br François had learnt well from Champagnat; attracted to him at a very early age, he had sat at the feet of the master and absorbed his wisdom and his goodness; so much so that he set himself the task of becoming his living image, and encouraged all the Brothers to do likewise. And 28 years later it was obvious to an observer that he still maintained that affection and reverence.

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## **SECTION VI: CONCLUSION.**

In examining any human relationship there are certain expectations that we would have:

- Does the relationship exhibit the qualities of a healthy or an unhealthy relationship?
- Is the relationship simple or complex?
- Is the relationship evolving and maturing?
- Is the relationship live-giving for the individuals?

In examining the relationship between Marcellin Champagnat and Br François, as shown in the correspondence, we should ask these same questions.

In seeking to answer these questions, we will accept that the qualities of a healthy/unhealthy relationship can be as listed in the following table.

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<sup>89</sup> Life, p.252

<sup>90</sup> ALS, p. 411 quoted in Gabriel Michel, Frère François, p. 78.

<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP</b>
Good communication/ transparency	Poor communication/dishonesty
Trust/shared feelings/intimacy	Intimidation/abuse
Mutuality/support	Isolation
Shared responsibility	Blaming/ Unresolved conflict
Individuality	Loss of identity/self-esteem

In reviewing each of the sections of our paper, what characteristics of the relationship did we discover? In the section “Beginnings”, we found a mutual attraction, that young Gabriel Rivat found a sense of belonging and identity, that his sense of self was nourished and strengthened; that there was mutual trust and respect; that there was a mutuality and sharing of lifestyles; that each had confidence and respect for the other; that (given the discrepancy in ages and responsibilities) each allowed the other to develop his own capacities and individuality.

In the letter of 1836, we saw François’s anxiety regarding Champagnat’s health and Champagnat’s concern for François’s apprehension (mutuality and support). We observed too that François was aware of Champagnat’s pain (intimacy), that Champagnat expressed his fears (transparency), that Champagnat was prepared to allow Br François to make decisions (individuality), that they share the responsibilities of the Hermitage (shared responsibility). Obviously, the whole letter bespoke good communication. We found none of the characteristics of an unhealthy relationship.

In the letters of 1838, we found that Champagnat had great trust in François especially in regard to the forgotten notebook that he was enjoined to lock up or burn (shared responsibility/mutuality/trust). There is discussion of Champagnat’s health and of his fears (intimacy) and of Br François’ role as infirmarian/spiritual counsellor, and his need to make certain decisions (individuality). There is a sharing of feelings and open, transparent communication.

Nowhere do we find any of the characteristics of an unhealthy relationship. The nearest we come to it is in the single remark in the letter of 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1838: “You hardly answered any of my questions”; but as we saw this, too, was softened with the comment: “I guess you had nothing very consoling to tell me.” It is remarkable that in these fifteen letters some, as we have seen, written when Champagnat appeared pretty despondent, we find no examples of intimidation, blaming, isolating, dishonesty or unresolved conflict. On the evidence of the letters, we can say with some certainty that the relationship between Champagnat and Br François displays all of the characteristics of a healthy relationship and none that are unhealthy.

***Is the relationship simple or complex?***

The relationship between Champagnat and Br François is a complex or multi-faceted one. We could say that there are, in fact, many relationships. We might summarise them as in table two.

<b>Multi-faceted relationship between Champagnat and Br François</b>
Father/son
Big brother/little brother
Teacher/pupil
Founder/follower
Spiritual director/subject
Manager/secretary
Leader/successor

An examination of the correspondence of Marcellin Champagnat to Br François from Paris has given examples of all these “relationships”.

***The third question we have to look at is: Is the relationship evolving and maturing?***

Our examination of the letters has shown that the relationship began as a father-son relationship, moved through the stages of teacher-pupil, big

brother-little brother, founder-follower, spiritual director-subject, manager-secretary and culminated in leader-successor. In a recent article, Rabbi Jonathon Sacks talked about the fact that “while *good* leaders raise up many followers, *great* leaders raise up leaders”.<sup>91</sup> He goes on to say “A chief ingredient in raising up leaders seems to me to have to do with granting *permission* in an atmosphere and culture where people can flourish and are encouraged.” It seems to me that, by this definition, Champagnat can be classified as a great leader. His letters provide ample evidence of the atmosphere and culture of granting Br François permission to be himself, to trust his own judgement, to make decisions, to become the great leader that we know he did.

Our final question is: Was the relationship life-giving for the individuals concerned? It seems to me that it was. Obviously, as we have seen, Champagnat allowed Br François to grow into the person that we know he became. He was nurtured and encouraged, supported and given permission to become a leader of men. Champagnat taught him, modelled for him, the characteristics of a healthy relationship and a good leader. We have ample evidence of this.

Was the relationship life-giving for Champagnat? I believe that it was, in that it was a reciprocal relationship of good communication/transparency, trust/shared feelings/intimacy, mutuality/support, shared responsibility, and individuality. François became Champagnat’s right hand, his confidant, a trusted supporter, someone with whom he could share his innermost feelings, his fears, his blackest moments. Whilst his natural tendency was to do it all himself, it was impossible for Champagnat to do all that had to be done. A trusted second made it possible for him to much more than he could by himself. It would also have been enormously helpful to him to have someone in whom he could confide his innermost thoughts and fears. Truly, the relationship was life-giving for both Champagnat and Br François.

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# *The Beginnings of the Germany Province*

**Br Augustin HENDLMEIER, FMS**  
*Province of West Central Europe*

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## **PREFACE**

This work can only be considered as *a first step* on the way to a complete study of the history of the German Province of the Marist Brothers, especially of the conditions of its foundation and the complicated negotiations with the German government in Berlin, and the governments in the Prussian Province, Westfalia and the Kingdom of Bavaria.

There are some particular problems to be considered in shaping the work:

- a.** The only sources available at the time of the research were the documents in the archives of the Generalate in Rome. Of course these documents are not complete and can only show one side of the whole history. The other side is to be found in the archives of Arlon and the Provincial archives of Beaucamps and in the Provincial archives of the German province in Furth. The documents – all in French – are published here for the first time. This is one of the main contributions of this research.
- b.** A study on the history of the German Marist Province has to be written in German, as it is to be read first of all by the German Brothers. It would be the wrong way to do it in English and then to translate it into German.

In view of these two points, the following work can only give an incomplete survey or a summary of the conditions of the beginning of the Province and of its development in the years after the foundation. The main task consisted in identifying and accessing the relevant documents. The translation of them into German was also a very important part of the work, but these, for obvious reasons, are not included here. It should be clear also that, because of these specific conditions, a critical and scientific edition of the documents could not be produced.

Apart from a few very summary overviews of the history of the German Province, no detailed and complete history has been published so far. In Rome (where this research project has been undertaken) there is no special literature available on this subject. So the only basis – as already been said – are the General Archives. No other literature was consulted.

All these points have to be considered to appreciate the special circumstances and conditions of this study, and to understand its parameters.

## **I. Documents in the FMS Archives in Rome**

- a. *13 letters from Brother Raymond-Celestin to Brother Superior General Stratonique in Grugliasco.* Four letters in handwriting. Dates: 21.1.1911, first letter (Doc. 612. L. 001) to 27.12. 1913, last letter (Doc.612. L. 024)
- b. *Four Reports:*
  - *Report on the foundation of a house for the Marist Brothers in Germany presented to the Reverend Brother Stratonique, Superior General in Grugliasco (Italy),* 4 pages. 20. January, 1911 (Doc. 612. H. 003)
  - *Report on the foundation of a house for vocations for the Marist Brothers in Germany, presented to the General Council of the Institute in Grugliasco.* Four pages, 20 February 1912 (Doc.612. H. 004)
  - *Report on the District of Germany,* no date, no author, 12 pages in handwriting (1927?) (Doc.612. H. 007)
  - *Information on the District of Furth,* 6 December 1941, Author Bro. Armand Leo Dorvaux, Visitor, 10 pages (Doc. 612. H. 009)

- c. *Five letters from the Prince of Löwenstein* (Member of the German Parliament Center Party,) to the Provincial in Arlon: Dates: 6.12.1911, first letter (Doc. 612. L. 003) to 2.11.1913, last letter (Doc.612. L. 021)
- d. *Letter to the Royal Government in Münster*, Department of Culture and Education. Author Bro. Raymond-Celestin. Date: 3 October 1913 (Doc. 612. L. 016)
- e. *Letter to the Bishop of München-Freising* from the Marist Brothers (including a letter from Bishop Michael of München, 8. 9. 1919) (Doc. 612. H. 006)
- f. *Letter from the Superior General to the Holy Father Pius XI concerning the foundation of the District of Germany* Date: 1920 (copy) (Doc. 612. X. 001)

All these documents are in French and had to be translated into German.

## **2. Persons concerned with the foundation**

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### **a. Brother Raymond-Celestin Koop (Josef Koop) FMS**

Place of birth: Alt-Oer (near the town of Recklinghausen)

District of Westfalen

Date of birth: 9. 12. 1882

Novitiate: 1899 in Arlon (Belgium)

Vow of obedience: 14. 9. 1901

Date of death: 3. 11. 1957

1903-1913: Arlon (Teacher)

1914-1922: Recklinghausen

1922-1945: Teacher in San Mauro (Italy) International Novitiate

1945-1947: Bairo, Carmagnola (Italy)

1947-1953: Vaduz (Liechtenstein)

1953-1956: Mindelheim

1957: Recklinghausen

He may be considered as the real founder of the German Province of the Marist Brothers, as he prepared the foundation of the first house with great skill and firmness. He was in charge of all negotiations with the diocese of Münster, the Government of Westfalia and the Govern-

ment in Berlin and also with the mayor of Recklinghausen. He was always in contact with the Superior General and his Council. He was also the recruiter in Germany. His perseverance and trust in God enabled him to overcome all difficulties. He followed in the footsteps of Champagnat.

**b. Brother Josef-Verius Porta (Adam Porta) FMS**

Place of birth: Welmünster, district of Sarreguemines, Lorraine

Date of birth: 9<sup>th</sup> June 1872

Novitiate: 1889 in Arlon

Vow of obedience: 15. 8. 1891

Date of death: 8<sup>th</sup> January 1950 in Montevideo

1893-1901: Arlon

1910-1909: Gohissant (Director)

1910-1911: Grugliasco (Italy)

1911-1914: Arlon (Novice Master)

1914-1920: Furth (Director)

1920-1929: Furth (Visitor)

1929-1937: Furth (Director)

1937: Budapest

1937: Graz/ Austria (Director)

1938-1950: Montevideo (Visitor and Director)

Being the first Visitor of the District of Germany he had a very great influence on the development of the Brothers and their mission in Germany. He may also be considered as the founder of the Marist Brothers in Uruguay.

**c. Brother Armand-Leo Dorvaux (Léon Francois Dorvaux)**

Place of birth: Bolchen, Department of Moselle (Lorraine)

Date of birth: 21<sup>th</sup> February 1879

Novitiate: 1896 in Arlon

Vow of obedience: 1899

Date of death: 14<sup>th</sup> September 1959

1899-1909: Arlon (Teacher)

1909: Grugliasco (Italy)

1910-1915: Arlon (Director)

1915-1920: Furth (Director)

1920-1926: Stein an der Traun (Director of Juniorate)

1926-1929: Mindelheim (Director of Juniorate)  
1929-1939: Furth (Visitor)  
1939-1945: St. Gingolph/ Switzerland (Visitor)  
1945-1952: St. Gingolph (Director)  
1952-1959: Furth (Submaster in Novitiate)

As he was the Visitor of the German District in the time of the Nazi regime (1933-1945) he had a most difficult task and because of his great skill and talent of leadership he managed to make the best of it. Together with Brother Josef-Verius Porta he was the builder of the German Province and the guide to a very successful development from 1915 to 1939.

**d. Alois, Prince of Löwenstein (1871-1952)**

Member of the German Parliament in Berlin (Catholic Center Party). Director of the Committee of Catholic Foreign Missions.

He used his influence and connections with politicians in favour of the Catholic Church and especially of the religious. Copies of some of his letters to the German Government are in the archives in Rome. Members of his family are still very active in politics in Germany today.

**e. Dr Wilhelm Solf (1862-1936)**

1900 – 1911: Governor of German Samoa

His policy was moderate. He found a peaceful solution to the uprising against the Germans in Samoa 1904. He was very much concerned about the improvement of the education of the Samoan children. He wanted to have good teachers, including Brothers, but they had to get their formation in Germany. His plan: a formation house for teaching Brothers in Germany, but only to train Brothers for the German colonies. So, without knowing the context and for personal reasons, he was responsible for introducing the Marist Brothers into Germany. There were also many German immigrants in Samoa. Twenty years after the German period had come to an end, many Samoans looked back to it as a golden age. His way of colonialism was called “soft colonialism”.

### **3. Steps on the way to the foundation in Germany**

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#### **German Brothers before the foundation in Germany**

##### **a. German Brothers in Arlon (Belgium)**

1888: Foundation of Arlon (Marist province of Beaucamp, France).

1889: The first German Novice in Arlon (Br. Josef-Verius Porta).

1898: First German Brothers in normal school in Arlon  
(approval of Belgium state).

1914: 80 German Novices and Postulants and 140 Juniors in Arlon; many German Brothers received their formation in Arlon and went to the missions in China, Brazil, South Africa and other countries. They also worked in Arlon (Juniorate, Novitiate).

##### **German Brothers at the beginning of World War I**

1914: When the war broke out, many of the Brothers had to join the army. The novices and juniors were sent home. The rest of the Brothers had to leave Belgium.

1914: Search for a new establishment in Bavaria.

#### **The process of the foundation**

##### **a. Negotiations between the Institute and the German Governments (Berlin and Münster) and the Diocese of Münster**

25.1.1907: Application to the Bavarian Government; no success.

January 1912: General Council decides to start a house in Germany.

January 1912 to February 1912: Negotiations between Brother Raymond-Celestin and the diocese of Münster concerning the minor Seminary of **Recklinghausen**, which was offered to the Institute after it had been empty for some years. The diocese wanted to sell the house.

February 1912: The Prince of Löwenstein meets the Minister of Education in Berlin.

##### **b. Conditions of the Government in Berlin**

Only Brothers of German nationality in the house.

Brothers who taught in Belgium allowed in the beginning, but then a special diploma would be requested.

Negotiations only with the Director of the house not with the Institute or the Provincial in Belgium.

The Mission in Samoa had to be served.

Every year statistics of the Brothers were to be submitted for Government approval.

- c. 2. 10. 1913: Approval of the Government** to open a house for the formation of teachers for the German colonies
- d. 1913: Purchase of house and property from the diocese of Münster**
- e. February 1914: Beginning of the Juniorate in Recklinghausen:** Six Brothers and Brother Raymond-Celestin as director; during the war the house is used as military hospital. The Brothers work as male nurses; about 7000 prisoners of war in the house until 1918.

### ***Development of the German District from 1915 to 1945***

- a. Foundation in Furth (later Provincial House): 11. January 1915**  
Baroness Philomena of Hornstein offers her Villa in Furth (Bavaria) to the Brothers as a Juniorate, Postulancy, workshops, brewery, and farm. First Brothers were Bro. Josef-Verius Porta and Bro. Armand-Leo Dorvaux.
- b. Development in the time between the world wars: many foundations**  
New foundations after the foundation in Furth: Germany 20; Austria 3; Switzerland 2; Denmark 2; Liechtenstein 1; Netherlands 2; Poland, Italy: 1 each.  
Foundation of Uruguay: 6 schools in Uruguay and one house in Argentina from 1936 to 1941

### ***Development after 1945***

- a. 1945:** The German Brothers had 31 houses. Eight were closed 1937 by the Nazis. Five houses closed before 1937. There were two houses

in Holland, three houses in Denmark, and three in Austria but these houses were not reopened after the war. One house in Liechtenstein (Vaduz), one house in Switzerland (St. Gingolph).

**b. 1937: 400 German Brothers**

**1947: 156**

**2007: 40**

**c. Germany becomes a province in 1946.**

**d. The situation of the German Brothers today (2008)**

Germany is part of the new province of West-Central-Europe.

The four schools are diocesan schools, only three Brothers working in school.

**4. Documents in the Marist Archives in Rome concerning the foundation of the German Marist Province and the development until 1945**

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**a. Two documents as examples for the situation before the foundation**

(Translation from French into English)

**Report about the novitiate in Arlon, 21st June 1914**

(Original in French, author unknown, but probably the master of novices)

Doc. 613 .002. 31

**Introduction**

This report deals with the formation of the Brothers in the Novitiate in Arlon. It contains important information in the matter of the first German Brothers and concerning the formation program in the Novitiate in the time before 1914:

1. Most of the juniors and novices are from Germany.
2. They come from Palatinate and Bavaria.
3. The recruitment is done first of all by means of advertising in newspapers.
4. There are also recruiters on the road from time to time.
5. Now a fulltime recruiter is needed.



6. The novices are usually between 15 and 18 years old.
7. The formation program in the novitiate is the same as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
8. There are special practices to stimulate the zeal of the novices.
9. Some Brothers lose their vocation because they are being sent to apostolic work immediately after the novitiate.
10. Therefore a scholasticate should be opened.  
The scholasticate period should last three years.

### **Recruitment**

*The recruitment of our novitiate is done first of all by the Juniorate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which sent us 35 postulants out of the 46 we have received this year. All our new candidates **are of German nationality**, and they come from **Palatinate and Bavaria**. Almost all of them are prepared by very zealous parents, whose only desire is the best for their children and the best for the Catholic missions. We also have to thank Divine Providence for the choice of the young people whom it deigns to send us. They all come from good families, are in the best of health and are in general gifted enough to undertake their studies successfully.*

*Until now we have used as means of recruitment only some advertisements in the most important newspapers of the country to make our Congregation known, and also the Bulletin of the Juniorate. We have sent a Brother now and then to visit one or another part of Germany to get information from the parish priests about vocations for young people who might have the desire to do the work of God dressed in the humble habit of the Marist Brothers.*

*Meanwhile, seeing that our work might perish because of the lack of vocations, these means are no longer sufficient. It would be very desirable to have a Brother totally in charge of the recruitment of vocations.*

*Religious congregations have settled in the region of Arlon in a great number. All of them have special recruiters, who make a regular circuit of our lands and gather a big harvest of vocations. It would be of the greatest necessity to create as soon as possible the task of recruiter. He would then periodically tour the Belgium province of Luxembourg, the Dukedom of Luxembourg, Lorraine, Palatinate and Bavaria. God would bless his work and our novitiate would see a new era of prosperity.*

## **Postulancy**

*The number of our postulants is now 28. They are divided into two classes. The first one has 16; all of them speak French and all of them come from the Juniorate. The 12 in the second class, who entered the novitiate directly, are first of all learning French and remain usually 8 or 10 month in the Postulancy.*

*The program of the postulancy includes the Catechism of Perseverance and Christian Perfection, the one which is used in the normal schools of Belgium. A couple of years ago the Brother Visitor established three competitions every year between the postulants of Arlon and Pommeroeul, the first class of the Juniorate in Arlon and the one of Pittthem. These competitions have the best results for the emulation which they provoke among the teachers and the pupils as well as for the progress in the studies*

## **Novitiate**

*Our Novitiate consists of 37 novices divided into two groups for taking the habit. Except for two who are older than 20, all the others are between 15 and 18, which is the best age to acquire a good religious formation and to achieve solid convictions.*

*In general, apart from one hour, all the time is spent on religious instruction: Christian Perfection, Constitutions, General Directory, Catechism of perseverance, the evangelical vows, the Lives of the Saints and the history of the Church, the Golden Book and the books of the Institute. To stimulate zeal and to facilitate the progress of the religious spirit and the spirit of the venerable founder, we have established weekly confession and daily communion, monthly recollection, the practice of the treasure of the Sacred Heart and the examination of conscience twice a day. We keep also the practice of the Chapter of Faults and direction every two weeks, together with public and voluntary penance. On the whole, we believe that we can assure that our young Brothers really make their novitiate and we have the consolation to see them all content and happy about belonging to the great family of the Blessed Virgin.*

*To finish this short report, allow us express this desire, which is also that of all the priests who favour our Congregation. According to our Constitutions, the novitiate lasts one year. It appears that it cannot be assured for our young Brothers to get a complete religious formation in such a short time. They hardly have the time to really appreciate the blessing of being called by God to religious life.*

*The work of their perfection is only superficially done, their virtue is just born, and yet they are thrown into active life, work where they do not, unfortunately, always find the circumstances which are necessary to encourage them in the practice of the religious virtues and the consolidation of their vocation. So, they often come into contact with the world and lose the spirit they had so generously shown at the beginning of their novitiate, and too often we have to deplore the loss of a vocation, which if they had had the time to strengthen it, would today be the honour of the Institute.*

*So it is our great desire to grant all our young Brothers the favour of spending two years in a scholasticate after finishing the novitiate. In this way they would be able to strengthen their vocation by means of practising constantly our holy rule. They would have the chance to get to know our Institute better and in consequence to love it more. They would also get some secular knowledge, which today they must have when they want to work with some success in the field of the Christian education. Without any doubt, we can also guarantee, if it is true that two years of extra formation would create a new sacrifice for our Congregation, that there would be, on the other hand, an increase of more solid vocations, full of hope, and that they would be trained to succeed, without much fear of falling in the battle between good and evil.*

### **Letter to the Superior General**

Author: Brother Raymond-Célestin. Date: 21st October 1913,  
Document: 612. L. 019

#### **Introduction**

In this letter, as in some others, Bro. Raymond-Célestin, who was put in charge of the affair of a foundation in Germany by the Assistant General, tries to convince the Superior General of the importance of the foundation of a house in Germany.

Some of the main arguments are:

1. The foundation of a Marist establishment in the German colony in Tsingtau (China) would be very useful for obtaining the approval to open a house in Germany, because German teachers would be needed.

2. The great benefactor of the Brothers, the member of parliament Prince Alois of Löwenstein, would support this project in the Ministry in Berlin.
3. The German Brothers, who would work there would be exempted from military service, because all German Brothers who work in any German colony are exempted by law.
4. The house in Arlon is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Superior General should take part in the celebrations.

V.J.M.J.

Arlon, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1913

*Most Reverend Brother Superior General,*

*Allow me to recommend to your gracious concern the question of the foundation of a school of the Marist Brothers in the German colony of Tsingtau (China).*

*Last year it was reported that the process of the foundation of this school had been launched. Two German Brothers, one of whom passed through Arlon, have been elected to go to this foundation. As there was no doubt of the certainty of the opening of this school, the German Marist magazine "Marienstimmen" (Voice of Mary) published a report on this new field of activity for the Marist Brothers in German countries. The Prince of Löwenstein endeavoured to give this matter strong support in the ministry in Berlin, and this was not one of the least reasons which brought us approval for an establishment in Germany.*

*To my great astonishment, I came to learn from the Brother Provincial of China, whom I wrote to in order to take care of the military affair of one of the German Brothers, that this foundation had not been realized.*

*I allow myself to tell you, Reverend Brother Superior General, that this school offers various advantages, which are to be appreciated all the more as Germany delivers so many Brothers. The project of this foundation has already supported, and will be supporting, our establishment in Germany. It would be of the greatest advantage for the exemption of the German Broth-*

*ers from military service. All German Brothers who work in German colonies are exempted from military service.*

*In the future, a new emigration law, which would forbid the act of emigration for workers in the coal mines, will have to be taken into account.*

*The colony of Tsingtau is, by the way, a very prosperous one and the Brothers would have a lot of good to do.*

*I am sure that you have learnt of the great desire of all the Brothers in Arlon to have you in their midst for the great celebrations in December on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation (of Arlon). If I may be permitted to express a desire, it would be that you would come to Germany afterwards to see the house proposed for the foundation. You could see the country, the situation and the very fine people.*

*In expectation of your answer, I am, most Reverend Brother Superior General, with deep respect and total submission, your very humble and devoted*

*Brother Raymond-Célestin*

**b. Documents in the archives of the General House concerning the beginning of the German Marist Province**

26 documents, listed in chronological order.

- 1: Rapport sur la fondation d'une Maison de Frères Maristes Allemagne. Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 1911, Doc. 612. H. 003. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 2: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 21st January 1911, Doc. 612. L. 001. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 3: Letter to the Superior General. Date: no date, Doc. 612. L. 002. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 4: Letter to the provincial. Date: 6<sup>th</sup> December 1911, Doc. 612. L.003. Author: Alois Prince of Löwenstein

- 5: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> December 1911, Doc .612.L.005. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 6: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 18th December 1911, Doc. 612.L.004. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 7: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 1912, Doc. 612. L.008. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 8: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 23<sup>th</sup> January 1912, Doc. 612. L.009. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 9: Letter to the provincial. Date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 1912, Doc. 612. L.010. Author: Alois Prince of Löwenstein
- 10: Rapport sur la fondation d'une maison de recrutement des Frères Mariste en Allemagne. Date : 12th February 1912, Doc. 612. H.004. Author : Bro Raymond-Célestin
- 11: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 6<sup>th</sup> July 1912, Doc. 612. L.011. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 12: Letter to the provincial. Date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 1813, Doc. 612. L.0. Author: Alois Prince of Löwenstein
- 13: Letter to the provincial. Date: 13<sup>th</sup> May, Doc. 612. L.014 Author: Alois Prince of Löwenstein
- 14: Letter from the Royal Government Münster. Date: 3<sup>th</sup> October 1913, Doc. 612. L.016
- 15: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 6<sup>th</sup> October 1913, Doc. 612. L.017. Author. Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 16: Letter to the Assistant General. Date: 11<sup>th</sup> October 1913, Doc. 612. L.018. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 17: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 21<sup>st</sup> October 1913, Doc. 612. L.019. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin

- 18: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 30<sup>th</sup> October 1913, Doc. 612. L.020. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 19: Letter to the provincial. Date: 2nd November 1913, Doc. 612. L.021. Author: Alois Prince of Löwenstein
- 20: Letter to the Assistant General. Date: 6<sup>th</sup> November 1913, Doc. 612. L.02 . Author: Bro. Ferdinandus (Director of Arlon )
- 21: Letter to the Superior General. Date: 29<sup>th</sup> November 1913, Doc. 612. L.023. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 22: Letter to the Assistant General. Date: 27<sup>th</sup>December 1913, Doc 612. L.024. Author: Bro. Raymond-Célestin
- 23: Draft of a letter to the Bishop of Munich, together with a letter from the Bishop. Date: 31st October 1919, Doc. 612. H.006. Author: The Marist Brothers
- 24: Report: District of Germany. Date: no date (1927?), Doc. 612. H.007. Origin and progress
- 25: Extrait des Annales de la Maison Provinciale de Furth/ Bavière. Date : 1950, Doc. 612. 01004
- 26: Letter to the Holy Father. Date 1920, Doc. 612. X.001. Author: Superior General
- 27: Allemagne: List of all foundations between 1914 and 1949. Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 1995.





# *The Life of a Simple Brother*

*John Samuel Metuh, fms  
(1926-2007)*

**Bro Elias IWU, FMS**  
*Province of Nigeria*

*I remain very grateful to my Provincial and his Council and to the General Council for the opportunity offered to me to participate in the Marist Patrimony Course in Rome. Prior to the Patrimony Course, I mistakenly thought that I knew much about Fr. Champagnat and there was no need of repeating what I did in the Postulancy House and Novitiate. Little did I know that it goes beyond that, as it has to do with the origin, life, history of the Marist Brothers and Marist family. In fact, the Marist Patrimony Course is about the past, present and future of our lives as Marist Brothers.*

*I have come to the realization that it is incomplete to talk only of our saintly founder, Champagnat, without mentioning the first Marist Brothers who toiled and labored with him. In the lives of those Brothers who have gone before us, we see “The Living Gospel”. I personally have seen most of the Brothers who have imitated them, and are imitating them today. It is on that note that I have decided to “expose” one of them in the Province of Nigeria, Brother John Samuel Metu fms, who died on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007 after 54 years in the Lord’s vineyard.*

## **Introduction and family origins**

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*“Life to believers is a celebration of what God has done in their lives, particularly when they see themselves caught up in the eternal liturgy in which they gratefully celebrate the indelible intervention of God in their lives” (Bishop Ayo-Maria Atoyebi O.P.; souvenir booklet, “Marist Brothers in Nigeria at 50”, December 19, 1999, P.11B)*

*“Confronting the mystery of evil, there is the mystery of good and even if powers of darkness seem to prevail, the believer knows that evil and death do not have the last word” (Brother Roger of Taize, ‘Choose to love’ P113)*

Reverend Brother John Samuel Akwulum-Okwulu Metuh was born in May 1926. He was born to the Eze ana Nnewi, his father was Chief Ibenegbu Metuh, the holder of the highest ‘Ozo’ (Chieftaincy) title in the Anaedo clan. His mother’s name was Madam Nwogwugwu Grace Ojukwu, the daughter of Eze-Odumegbu Nwosu of Obino Otolu Nnewi. Brother John’s lineage is directly linked with the Nnewi Royal Family. He never had a clear picture of how his father looked because his father died when Brother John was six years old. Brother John came from a polygamous family. He lived under the tutelage of one of his cousins, Sir Augustine Metuh, who was then a widely respected schoolmaster at St. Theresa’s Catholic School, Okigwe.

He did not have the opportunity of infant baptism, because of his pagan parentage, but was admitted into the Catholic Church at the age of 13. He was baptized in 1939, received Holy Communion in 1940, and two years later received the Sacrament of Confirmation. He lived a simple lifestyle. Brother John was a man of prayer, wonderful catechist, great formator, and musician, humble teacher, friend of the youth and of the poor. In spite of the difficulties and threats posed by his pagan parentage, he demonstrated to us that human beings are capable of surmounting the problems we create. He showed that the words of the gospel are fundamental for of our common life.

## **Education**

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Brother John started his primary education in 1937 at Nnewi and completed it in 1943 at St. Theresa's Primary School, Okigwe, Imo State. He studied with distinction and emerged as one of the best students in the Okigwe Zone in his Leaving Certificate examination. He was awarded a scholarship and direct admission to study at St. Anthony's Teachers Training College, Onitsha, in 1944. He completed his studies successfully in 1945. He taught in several primary schools from 1946 to 1952 and obtained the Teacher's Grade Two Certificate. He did his university education at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, where he majored in Religious Studies and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1979.

Brother John found himself developing a passionate interest in music. He was permitted to seek admission into a higher institution to further this consuming interest, but the difficult requirements in studying music in a tertiary institution led him to opt for Bachelor's degree in Arts and Religious Studies. However, that did not deter him from his love for music, and he was known to be a self-taught musician. He became an organist, a composer, and choirmaster. He offered his skills in these roles to everyone who asked.

## **Vocation to Brotherhood**

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*"When Christ told us to follow Him, it was not that he needed our service but that He wanted to bestow salvation upon us". (St. Irenaeus) Marist Brothers in Nigeria at 50, 19th December, 1999, PP. 12-13.*

Brother John, in his seventh year as a lay teacher, heard a call, not of the biblical Eli, but that of the Lord, who was inviting him to embrace the life of the Brothers of St. Peter Claver, Uturu. He then left his last school posting at Amichi, and his home town of Otolu, Nnewi, and went calmly to Uturu, in order to be sure that it was the Lord calling him. He arrived at Uturu, a familiar terrain where he had studied and lived with his cousin. He was readily accepted for the postulancy, which he did from January to December, 1953. He then successfully completed his two years Novitiate Programme and was admitted to First Vows on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1956.

A remarkable event transpired that same year as the Brothers of St. Peter Claver were absorbed by the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools in Nigeria. The St. Peter Claver Congregation belonged to the Onitsha and Owerri vicariate, having been founded on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1944. In 1946, Archbishop Charles Heery expressed the hope that Marist Brothers from the Province of Great Britain might come to Nigeria to help the Brothers of St. Peter Claver, but that was not possible, due to lack of personnel. As soon as Owerri was carved out from Onitsha in 1948, the new Bishop, J.B. Whelan, wrote another letter to the Provincial of Great Britain. After some negotiation, the Marist Brothers eventually came to Nigeria on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1949. The absorption of the St. Peter Claver Congregation Brothers into the Marist Brothers took place after their annual retreat, preached by their first Director, Monsignor J. Nwanegbo, in 1956.

During the retreat, they renewed their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as Marist Brothers. This marked the transition point for Brother John Metuh and his confreres, from St. Peter Claver to Marist Brothers of the Schools.

### ***Apostolic zeal***

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Prior to his call to service in religious life, Brother John proved beyond reasonable doubt that the future life which God put before him was not a coincidence, as he had already equipped himself with the tools of evangelization. He taught in many schools. He was very much appreciated in the classroom and in the school by his pupils. The community and its neighbours testified to the simplicity their young lay teacher exhibited. Little did they know that Fr. Champagnat would use their young lay teacher to bring further education to the most neglected. He was such an intelligent, efficient, effective and well organized teacher that children loved to be taught by him every time, as many people testified. At Holy Cross Primary School, he left an indelible mark on the lives of his pupils and their parents, to such an extent that most of the parents started asking what sort of miracle he was performing to make their stubborn wards begin to listen to them and attend to errands at home.

Later, in 1981, Brother John was sent to open the first Marist Community in Onitsha, Nigeria, where he taught at St. Charles Teachers Training College. The Anambara State Education Commission appointed him supervisor of Religious

and Moral Education of the Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Onitsha from 1981 to 1984. For the three years, he worked in the Archdiocese of Onitsha under the then Archbishop of Onitsha, now Cardinal Francis Arinze. Brother John helped raise the standard of education in the Archdiocese and the State. His constant commitment to spiritual life, moral life, love of Christ, Mary, Champagnat and youth brought him to the formation house in Orlu to work as a formator. Brother John's presence in Orlu was a real blessing to the entire community. He established a branch of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, an arm of Marist Lay Associates, and the Legion of Mary. He was so involved in the activities of the society that the then Catholic Bishop of Orlu, Most Rev. Dr. Gregory Ochiagha, appointed him his Diocesan Chaplain. Brother John saw this assignment as a big challenge and endeavored to live up to expectations, until he left the diocese in 1999.

### **Vocations animator**

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*“Every Brother in the Province should feel deeply the need to encourage vocations. The most persuasive invitation to follow Christ comes from the witness given by our consecration and by our life of simplicity and joy lived in a community which is in solidarity with the poor. We call young people to discover our life of Brotherhood and apostolic action, and we invite them to commit themselves to this life” (Constitutions, 94).*

I met Brother John for the first time at the Marist Formation Centre, Orlu. I arrived at Orlu as a lively and inquisitive young man, searching for my real vocation. I was interested to know and learn many things. One of those things was music, which Brother John looked after as director in the Postulancy house. I wasted no time in drawing closer to him since I had already an interest in music. When I came to the Postulancy House for the first time, I was very surprised to meet an old man in his late seventies, playing music, and singing songs, very energetic and happy. I could not hide my admiration for him. I concluded that maybe if I persevered in this type of life, I would live longer and be happy like him.

## **Sickness and death**

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*“Dare to give your life for others, there you will find meaning for your existence” (Brother Roger of Taize, God is love alone, Continuum, English Translation, London, 2003’ P. 79).*

Brother John was physically strong and was blessed by God with good health. Before his death, he used to visit his personal doctor at Enugu for a medical examination. However, his visit in June 2007, which he planned as a routine checkup, was not as he thought. He saw his doctor twice during this visit to Enugu as an out-patient. When it was observed that his health was declining on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007, he was rushed to the hospital, where his doctor admitted him for intensive treatment. God decided to call him back, as all the efforts made by the doctors and nurses at Niger Foundation Hospital in Enugu to save his life proved futile. The noble spirit of Brother John Samuel Metuh went to the Lord on the same day, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007, dying with Christ to rise with Him.

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## **OUTSTANDING ATTITUDES**

### **His devotion to Mary**

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*“In giving us Mary’s name, Fr. Champagnat wished us to live her spirit. He was convinced that it was she who has done everything for us, and he called her our ordinary resources and Our First Superior” (Constitutions and Statutes. No 54).*

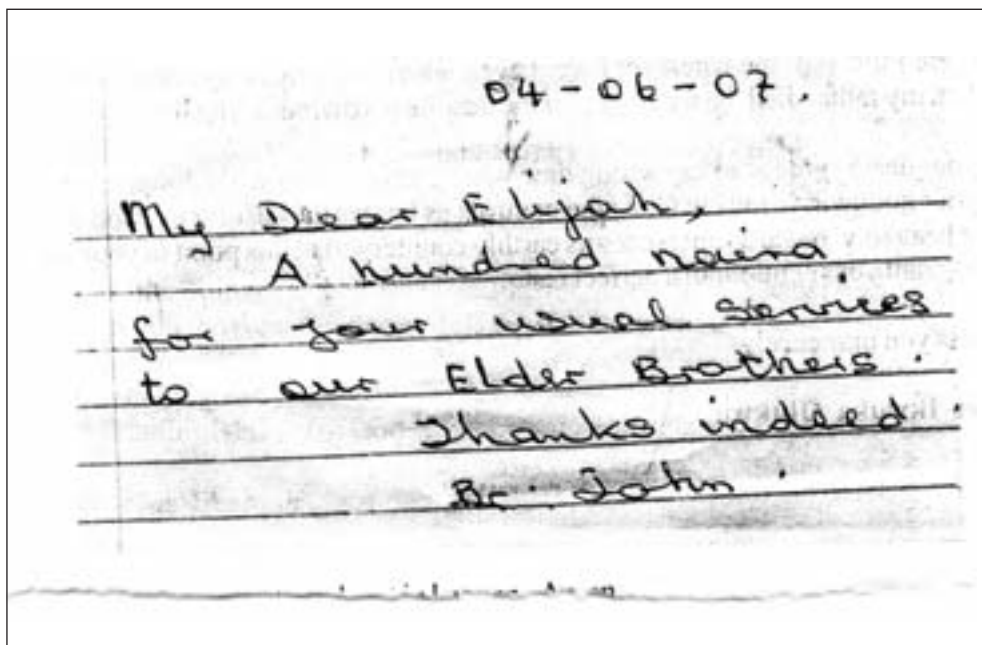
Like a worthy follower of Fr. Champagnat, Brother John was very close to Mary, to the extent that he set up the Legion of Mary society and Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family everywhere he found himself. He never missed the Rosary. “Since the time of Marcellin, his disciples have made Mary known and loved. Today we continue to be convinced that to follow Jesus in the way of Mary is a privileged way of bringing our Christian journey to fullness. With a heart filled with compassion we share this experience and conviction with children and youth helping them to experience the material face of the Church” (*Water from the Rock*, 28).

Most of the domestic workers and postulants were the beneficiaries of his piety as he taught them how to pray with Mary. They emulated him a lot. Whenever any Brother informed him that he was travelling, Brother John would give him a small prayer to say on the way in honour of Mary of Mercy.

### **A charitable and generous heart**

Brother John was very charitable and generous. He devoted most of his time to rendering selfless services to people. Whenever he saw people suffering, his mind could not rest until he could think of a way to alleviate their problems. This attitude made him a very good friend of the poor and children.

Most of the people who passed through his care in the formation house testified to his energizing words of comfort to them in times of emotional confusion and whenever they thought that they had reached the end of the road of their vocation.



*Brother John's Letter to me*

One thing quite characteristic of Brother John was the way he never failed to open his generous heart to his fellow Brothers. Indeed, he demonstrated what Father Champagnat urged of us: to live so that people around us would say, “See how they love one another.” He used to take money from his meagre monthly pocket money, meant for buying his soap and other personal needs, to procure copies of “The Catholic Leader” newspaper for the elderly Brothers in Saint Joseph Community, Uturu. He never missed giving me at least N100 every month, and he fondly referred me as ‘Elijah or ‘Nwa m nwoke’ (Elijah or my Son). Below is the last letter he wrote me for the purchase of the Leader for the month of June 2007, and the last known letter he wrote before he joined our saintly Founder in heaven.

Although most people may think the amount he gave every month to be small, the most important thing was the spirit of love, caring, dedication, zeal, gentle heart and selfless service his attitude demonstrated.

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## **TRIBUTES AND WORDS OF WITNESS FROM THOSE WHO KNEW HIM**

### **Marist Brothers**

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*“That I will see you no more on this earth is too painful to contemplate! That first meeting in January, 1953 at Holy Cross Primary School, Uturu, marked the beginning of a life-long friendship that was spiritually and socially rewarding to both of us. You still recall that Providence brought us yet closer in 1954 at St. Peter Claver Brothers, when you were a first year Novice and I was a Postulant. In 1977, we became ‘Ejima’ (twins) when we made our Vow of Stability together. Bro. John, our friendship blossomed the more when we again found ourselves together, first at Okpala and later at Azaraegbelu communities. It is sad that it was at Azaraegbelu that you finally said ‘Amen’ to your fifty-four years sojourn in the Lord’s Vineyard, Amen to the will of the Almighty and Amen to the conqueror of all mortals. But Brother John, if I may ask, who will now knock at my door for morning prayers? Who will ring the bell for the evening Rosary? Who will sit me down for friendly advice in my blue moments? Well, our faith in the Almighty remains unshakable as we know that He has all the answers to all our problems. Brother John, ‘Ejima m’ (my twin), you have fought the good fight and won the race. Step forward to your heavenly Father and claim your Crown of Glory” (Bro. Pius Ijeomah, fms).*



*Nobody is in doubt of Bro. John Metu's authentic life as a religious. He made tremendous impact in each of the communities he stayed and extended his gentle influence on the people around" (Bro. Andrew Iwuagwu, fms, Deputy Provincial).*

### **Marist Lay Associate Movement**

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*"An ardent follower of Jesus and a tenacious Devotee of Mary and St. Marcellin Champagnat"*

*My dear good friend, Rev. Bro. John Metuh, I am writing on behalf of the members of the Marist Lay Associates of Nigeria, to thank God for His love and gifts to you. Your love for Jesus was manifest in all your words and actions. Your devotion to Mary and to St. Marcellin, kept you ever on the move as you set up Legion of Mary Society and Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family everywhere you found yourself. Who can count the number of sleepless nights you spent composing hymns and songs in honor of Jesus, Mary and St. Marcellin? Bro. John, you are a very lucky man, you generously responded in Love to God's Love, there is no doubt that you have jubilantly moved into your heavenly kingdom. Say hello to Jesus, Mary, Champagnat and all the Marist Saints. We shall one day meet with you to part no more. We shall ever keep you in our prayers. Adieu Bro. John! Adieu a Faithful Marist Brother.*

### **Royalty**

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*'A Tribute to Worthy Rev. Bro. John Metuh'*

*"I, His Royal Highness, Eze Sir. Dr. Charles A. Onuoha, KSJ, Isiyi Autonomous Community, wish to console the Congregation of the Marist Brothers of the Schools, Province of Nigeria, on the passing to eternity of Rev. Bro. John Metuh. We were shocked to hear of the death of this great hero who sacrificed his life for the service of God and humanity. Educationist, Musician, and choir Master Extraordinary, he was a foundation member of the Marist Brothers in Nigeria; he worked tirelessly for the growth of Uturu and Nigeria in general.*

## **Family members**

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*“The account of Bro. John’s religious life is lengthy one and should, therefore, be better left for another write-up. However, a precis of his religious life is that he lived a fulfilled life and died a spiritually and contented Catholic (Professor Ikenga-Metub).*

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## **CONCLUSION**

Bro. John’s life was an epitome of simplicity, humility, modesty and love. He did everything at his disposal in order to embrace the kingdom of God. As most of the witnesses expressed in their write-ups, nobody is in doubt about his pious and authentic life as a religious. Ordinarily, his pagan parental background would have posed a major threat to his Vocation as a religious, but he waved every obstacle aside and persisted in answering God’s call to service. He had every reason to concur with St. Francis Xavier as he boldly expressed, *“I do not think I could have avoided hell, if I had refused to preach the Gospel in Japan”* (Brother Leonard Voegtle, fms, Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and instruction of Marcellin Champagnat’, p. 180) He lived a fulfilled life and died as a happy Marist Brother who pronounced his Vow of Stability in 1977 and celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 2006.

# *The Attempted Fusion<sup>92</sup> of the Congregation of the Mother of God with the Marist Brothers in China between 1909-1912*

**Brother Robert TEOH, FMS**  
*Province of East Asia*

## **Introduction**

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In the history of our Institute, there have been a number of proposed fusions with other congregations. Some of these proposals came directly from the persons responsible for other congregations or from the Bishops of the dioceses where we were working, some were forced on our founder, and some happened after his death. From the record, not all of them were accepted and not all of them ended on a happy note. The year 2009 will mark the centenary of the tentative fusion of a local congregation, the Congregation of the Mother of God (主母会, *Frères de la Mère de Dieu* or *Maternistes* in French) with our Institute. All their members were Chinese while ours at that time were dominantly Europeans. This was an interesting venture that is worth study, as it involved a missionary group of foreigners merging with an indigenous group different in both culture and language.

In the first written history of the Province of China, *Petit Historique de la Province pendant son premier demi-siècle d'existence 1891-1941*, Br. Jean Émile, the author, dedicated less than a page to describe this event. This work was written in 1941, 50 years after the foundation in China and 29 years

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<sup>92</sup> Throughout the documents, “fusion”, “incorporation” and “union” are used interchangeably. Since the proposal used the word “fusion”, it will be adopted for this paper.

after the trial fusion ended. In 1966, Br. André Gabriel Robbe rewrote the history of the China Province in two volumes. In volume 1, *Les Frères Maristes en Chine—Petit historique de leurs œuvres de 1891 à 1941*, he dedicated a whole chapter to this event. He saw fit to give a more detailed account of it, because he was then more at ease with telling the story after half a century. Today, nearly a century has passed; it is possible to examine this event with the available documents, with cultural understanding, in the light of the political struggle and the situation of the local church at that time.

This attempted fusion was carried out on a trial basis and it lasted for only three years instead of the agreed five-year period. A Provincial, a Bishop and a Superior of Jesuit missionaries were involved in the negotiations at the moment of fusion. As the saying “history repeats itself” goes, this incident could serve as a good lesson for future similar attempts. Before we examine closely this historical incident, however, it will be good to be aware of the political situation as well as the history of the Church in China during that time.

### ***Political and Historical Background***

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Manchu rulers from north-eastern China ousted the rulers of the Ming dynasty in 1644, creating a new dynasty called Qing, which ruled China until 1911. They took twenty years to consolidate their power. A long period of prosperity and expansion followed. Inner and Outer Mongolia, Turkistan and Tibet were incorporated into the Empire.

However, increases of population, food and land shortages, coupled with the corruption of its officials and expensive militarily campaigns soon weakened the government. Frequent contacts with the militarily superior West in the second half of the nineteenth century further hastened the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

Western nations had been trading with China for centuries, despite the closed-door policy of the Ming Dynasty. At the beginning of the Qing dynasty, trade was restricted to Guangzhou (Canton). However, traders from western nations flocked to China. In 1760, the British East India Company came to trade in search of tea, silks and porcelain. Since the demand for western goods was much lower, the British suffered a trade deficit.

In 1793, Britain tried in vain to establish a trade treaty with China. British traders took the matter into their own hands and began a clandestine trade

in opium to counteract the trade imbalance. This created a vast number of addicts and China's trade surplus became a deficit. In 1836, the emperor strictly prohibited trade in opium. However, the trade continued illegally. In 1840, a chest of opium was seized and burned in Guangzhou (Canton). This action served as a pretext for Britain to start the First Opium War. After two years of fighting, it ended with the Treaty of Nanjing (1842). The treaty stipulated five Treaty Ports to be opened to trade, provided for the 99 year lease of Hong Kong to the British Crown, and introduced the humiliating practice of extraterritoriality.

Hence began the period of gunboat diplomacy and many more ports were forced open for trade. China was no longer allowed to isolate herself from trade and diplomacy with West. Other western countries took advantage of the extraterritoriality clause to gain large land concessions. A series of humiliating defeats, compounded by floods, famine and corruption soon plunged China into chaos. Internal rebellions and various uprisings followed.

In 1850, a Chinese Christian evangelist, Hong Xiuquan, led the Taiping Rebellion. He preached Christianity, radical and political reforms, and anti-foreign rhetoric. He wanted to establish a Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace. He tried to institute social reforms, such as strict separation of the sexes, abolition of foot-binding, common ownership of land, "suppression" of private trade, and the replacement of Confucianism, Buddhism and Chinese folk religion by a form of Christianity, claiming that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ. His cause was taken up by 20,000 Chinese opposed to the Qing's rule. They were quite successful until the rising was put down by the Qing army, aided by French and British forces, in 1864.

In the waning years of the nineteenth century, China was plunged deeper into chaos. The Qing's army was defeated in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895. As demands from foreigners for trading, economic and political concessions mounted, so, too, did anti-foreign sentiment in China. Peasants began to form secret anti-foreign societies. This led to the Boxer Uprising in 1900 and many more incidents against foreigners.

However, the period that mostly concerns us is between 1908 and 1912 when the trial fusion was carried out. A few years prior to this period, a nationalist and devoted Christian, Sun Yat-sen, who was educated outside China, began to preach about forming a free Republic of China where democ-

racy would replace monarchy. Sun developed a political philosophy known as the “Three Principles of People”, which stressed nationalism, democracy and socialism for the people. His efforts received support from Chinese inside and outside China. People began to conceive the idea of a modern China transformed by the people themselves.

Various groups that cherished the same idea began to come together and to bring about the revolution. It began with the Wuchang Uprising on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1911, also known as the Xinhai Revolution. The revolutionaries enjoyed initial success for about a month, capturing a few cities. However, the army, under the leadership of Yuan Shikai and several other generals, managed to push them back to their starting point at Wuchang. After 50 days of war, 15 out of 24 Provinces declared independence from the Qing Court. With this new development, Yuan Shikai negotiated with the revolutionaries, accepted the formation of a Republic of China, and turned against the Qing Court. After that, the Qing dynasty ended with the abdication of Emperor Puyi on 12 February 1912.

We cannot discount the influence of politics on the people living near a big city like Shanghai, which is not far away from Wuchang where the revolution caught fire. Certainly, the chaos and unrest had one direct consequence. In 1911, when the tentative fusion was obviously heading towards failure, the Brother Provincial wrote several letters urging the Superior General to visit China and solve the impasse with the local Bishop. However, the General Council advised the Superior General not to take the risk because of the revolution in China at that moment.

### ***Brief History of Catholic Church in China***

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The first attempt to evangelize China took place in the seventh century when Alopen, an Assyrian monk, brought Christianity through the Silk Road to Xi’an. The discovery of a ten-foot high tablet describing Christian doctrine and ceremonies, called the Nestorian Stone, records this first trace of Christianity in China. Surprisingly, no Christian groups of that period left behind any significant influence.

The second attempt at evangelization happened in the late thirteenth century, when an Italian Franciscan Friar, John of Montecorvino, arrived. He was

quite successful and Pope Clement V made him an archbishop. He converted some high-level officials, baptizing about 6,000 people and erecting churches. That period of evangelization lasted nearly 100 years. With the fall of Yuan dynasty, however, Christianity also disappeared from China.

The third attempt at evangelization happened in the early seventeenth century. Jesuits, Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans made their way to China with those daring explorers from Europe. However, they were hardly able to go beyond Guangzhou, as the Ming dynasty practised a closed-door policy. A breakthrough was achieved by the Jesuits Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. They first dressed as Buddhist monks but were not well regarded by the people. So they switched to dressing as Confucian scholars. Fortunately, they had brought along some scientific instruments from the West to show the Confucians and won their respect and protection. This alignment with the Confucian scholars eventually enabled Matteo Ricci to go to stay in Beijing. The Jesuits helped to reform errors in the imperial calendar and later were entrusted with important posts at the Ming Court. Other religious orders began to make advances into China and divide the country into territories among themselves. The missionaries continued to enjoy freedom to evangelize when the Qing dynasty replaced the Ming dynasty in 1644. By 1700, there were already about 200,000 Chinese Catholics. However, a dispute between the Jesuits and other religious orders regarding Chinese rites of honouring deceased family members ended up with Pope Clement XI banning the practice of Chinese rites in Catholic institutions in China. The Emperor Kangxi responded by banning Christian missionaries from China. This fatal misreading of culture was responsible for stunting the development of the Catholic Church in China until Pope Pius XII's reversal in 1939.

The fourth attempt at evangelization was entwined with colonialism and the western powers invading China. The Treaty of Tianjing in 1858 not only opened up 11 ports of China to foreign traders but sanctioned Christian missionary activities for the whole of China. From then on there was an influx of foreign missionaries to China. With the setting up of extra territories for the western countries, many churches and missionary schools mushroomed. Many missionaries came to China, with the support of their respective governments. These governments saw this as a way of spreading their influence and culture. Most of the missionaries, including the Brothers, were exempted from military service at home if they went to work in the colonies of their countries. This period of missionary activity lasted until the Communists took over China in 1949.

It should be noted that the common people usually could not distinguish between traders, soldiers and missionaries. All of them were seen as foreigners who were trying to invade and take advantage of China. Many missionaries were killed during various uprisings against foreigners. Those Christians who allied with the missionaries were seen as agents of the foreigners. Though many Chinese who converted to Christianity were genuine, there were many also who converted for food, prestige, status, and the protection of foreign powers in a situation of great insecurity.

### ***Brief history of Marist beginnings and Local Church of Vicariate of Kiang-nan***

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The Marist Brothers came to China in 1891 at the invitation of M<sup>gr</sup> Sarthou CM to take over an orphanage in Beijing. Soon they found out that there was a great demand for English schools, especially for the children of the foreigners. They quickly sought the help of Brothers from Sydney. The same year, two Brothers arrived from Sydney to begin teaching in Tianjing. They managed to open a few more French schools with great success and the number of Brothers who came to China increased. China accepted many French Brothers when they were expelled from France in 1903. Two years after their first arrival, the Brothers also began to work with the Jesuits in Shanghai. At the beginning, they mainly worked with other French missionaries such as the Lazarists, French Jesuits and the Paris Foreign Missions Society.

The anti-foreigner sentiment among the Chinese very much affected their mission work. They lost the orphanage, their first work in China, during the Boxer Uprising of 1900. Three Brothers, a postulant and some orphans were killed<sup>93</sup>. In 1905, a misunderstanding and mishandling of a dispute claimed the lives of another five Brothers in Nanchang.<sup>94</sup> The unstable political situation seriously affected their work for a period of time. Recruitment and formation work could not be carried out. At the peak of the chaos, all the schools were suspended, except for St. Francis Xavier College in Shanghai.

The Vicariate comprised the two provinces of Kiang-su and Ngan-hwei. Its alluvial lands make it, especially Kiang-su, one of the richest and most

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<sup>93</sup> Brs. Jules-André, Joseph- félicité, Joseph-Marie Adon Fan and postulant Paul Jens

<sup>94</sup> Brs. Louis-Maurice, Prosper-Victor, Léon, Joseph Amphien and Marius



populous regions of China. The number of inhabitants of both provinces exceeded 60,000,000 in 1907. Father Matteo Ricci was its first missionary, introducing the Catholic religion to the people there at the end of the sixteenth century. In 1660 the Vicariate Apostolic of Kiang-nan was created. In different periods of time after that, there were several persecutions and missionary activities were interrupted. Responsibility for the mission changed hands between Jesuits, Foreign Missionaries of Paris, and Lazarists, but they always had the help of a few local Chinese priests. Wars between the European countries also determined to which congregations and missionaries it would be entrusted. In 1849, it was entrusted to French Jesuits.

The Catholic Encyclopedia of 1910 published the statistics of the vicariate as follows: “*The following was the condition of the mission in 1907: 1 bishop; 142 Jesuits of whom 26 are Chinese; 35 native priests; 696 churches or chapels; one major seminary at Zi-ka-wei with 29 students; one minor seminary with 15 students; 558 schools for boys with 14,175 pupils; 604 schools for girls with 9360 pupils; two colleges for boys with 408 students; 2 colleges for European girls with 766 students (in Shanghai); 1 English school with 543 pupils; 1 French school with 336 pupils; 6 hospitals with 3898 patients; 6 asylums for old men with 198 inmates; 37 orphanages with 6584 children; 29 Little Brothers of Mary; 32 Carmelite nuns, 20 of whom are natives; 91 Helpers of the Souls in Purgatory, 33 of whom are natives; 31 Sisters of Charity; 9 Little Sisters of the Poor; 173 Chinese religious; 145,219 Catholics, and 92,018 catechumens*”.<sup>95</sup> The number of Marist Brothers (Little Brothers of Mary) serving there at that time was 29.

From 1865 onwards, the missionaries of the vicariate were trying to group the catechists called “Josephites” in the vicariate into some sort of congregation but without success. It was Bishop Garnier who successfully grouped them in 1884<sup>96</sup> and founded the Congregation of the Mother of God (*Frères de la Mère de Dieu* or *Maternistes* in French). This same Bishop invited our Brothers to help the Jesuits run St. Francis Xavier’s College, Shanghai, in 1893, and the Brothers took over the whole school in 1895. Bishop Garnier died on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1898. Bishop Simon was named Vicar Apostolic in January 1899, and consecrated on 25<sup>th</sup> June, but he died on 25<sup>th</sup> August of the same year at

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<sup>95</sup> From the “The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VIII” Published 1910. New York: Robert Appleton Company, written by V.H. Montanar.

<sup>96</sup> The official document stated 1884 but the report of Br. Aristonique stated 1885.

Wu-hu. At the end of 1900, Bishop Paris, superior of the mission, was named Vicar Apostolic and titular Bishop of Silanda.

### ***The Process of the Attempted Fusion***

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It was the Bishop, M<sup>gr</sup> Paris S.J. and the regular superior of the mission, Fr. Gillet S.J. who took the initiative to meet with the Provincial, Br. Louis-Michel and the Director of St Francis Xavier College, Shanghai, Br. Antonin, to negotiate for the union in early 1908. What motivated the two parties? For the Bishop and the Jesuits, who were directly responsible for the mission in the vicariate, they wanted to ensure the future of the Congregation of the Mother of God. Without doubt, they also wanted to be free of the worry of taking care of that work, especially the formation of its members. For the previous 24 years, the congregation had had its ups and downs, but had never really taken off.

For the Marist Brothers, the successful stories of the fusions with the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Valence and those of Viviers in the past were still in memory. At this time, they had just emerged from the Boxer Uprising in 1900 and the unfortunate incident at Nanchang in 1906. They were trying to increase the recruitment of local Chinese Brothers. The register of the Institute shows that from 1895 to 1908 only 16 local Brothers<sup>97</sup> took the habit, with the first one being a Eurasian in China. Out of the 15 Chinese Brothers, one had been killed in 1900. The Provincial Council welcomed this proposal from the Bishop as they saw this would automatically give them a Novitiate in Shanghai with a substantial number of Chinese Brothers. Furthermore, they envisaged the formation of two Marist Provinces in China, one in the North and one in the Central region around Shanghai, in the future. In fact, the Province of China was about to be erected canonically around the time of this negotiation<sup>98</sup>. It looked like a win-win situation for both parties.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1908, the Provincial Council deliberated on this matter and was in favour of the proposal, but preferred to go into details only after the Superiors had indicated their will. They sent this request to Grugliasco immediately. The General Council deliberated the proposal and accepted it in principle on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1908. In a letter on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1908, the Su-

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<sup>97</sup> Calculated from the "Registre des vetures" vol 3 1896-1931

<sup>98</sup> It was erected on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1908

perior General advised Br. Provincial to study the project in depth and send him a concrete proposal. We do not know the actual date, but probably around October 1908, the proposal containing 14 articles, with accompanying remarks probably made by the Provincial Council or the Provincial himself, reached Grugliasco. On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1908 the General Council studied the 14 articles with the 11 remarks. In a letter to Br. Provincial on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1908, the Superior General confirmed the desired modifications and added article 15 to ensure the right to ask for modification of articles 8 and 13, if after a certain trial period, it was found necessary. He also stressed through article 1 that the Superior General of the Maternists should make an act in the name of his Brothers requesting the incorporation of his congregation into the Marist Brothers. Meanwhile, M<sup>gr</sup> Paris waited for a long time without an official reply. Thinking that no action had been taken by the Br. Provincial, he wrote to the Superior General directly on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1908 to propose the fusion. He enclosed a document that contained 10 notes quite similar to the 14 articles received earlier. The Superior General replied to him on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1909, stating that Br. Provincial would inform him of the outcome. The General Council was in favour of accepting the proposal as a whole, but before that a few detailed observations would be submitted to him for his consideration. News of this negotiation was published in the “Le Petit Mariste”, the newsletter of the Province of China. The Superior General also broke the news in his first circular of 1909.<sup>99</sup>

However, those involved in this matter in China wasted no time in carrying out the fusion. They hastily pushed the go button without waiting for formal approval. Fortunately, no definite contract of fusion was signed. At least they were right in waiting for the lessons of time and experience before signing such a contract. The two reports of Br. Aristonique, the master of novices assigned to the formation house during the fusion, give us a good account of the day of fusion.

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<sup>99</sup> Circular of Superior General Vol XI, p.366

<b>The data of the two congregations at the time of fusion<sup>100</sup></b>			
<b>Petit Frères de Marie Marist Brothers Province of China</b>		<b>Frères de la Mère de Dieu Maternistes</b> Diocesan congregation of Kiangnan Vicariate (Jiangsu Province and Anhui Province)	
Founded on 2 January 1817 by Fr. Champagnat  Marist Brothers came to China on 8 March 1891, started a school at Pekin (Beijing) and 1893 served in Shanghai.  <b>Aim:</b> to educate and to catechize children, especially the least favoured.  <b>Work in China:</b> taking care of orphanage, teaching in private Catholic schools  Provincial - Br. Louis-Michel		Founded on 8 September 1884 by M <sup>sr</sup> Garnier SJ  By 1911 it had received 83 members in total since the foundation, of whom 18 members died in the congregation.  <b>Aim:</b> to educate and to catechize children of Chinese Christians and to take care of the church.  <b>Work:</b> teaching in schools, taking care of church and service of the missionary at local church  Superior General - Br. Ya-ko-bei	
Became a province on 10 March 1908		A diocesan congregation depending on the Bishop and Jesuit missionaries	
On 31 Dec 1908 Members: 112 (14 of them Chinese)	Stable - 8 Perpetual - 75 Temp. Professed - 29	Members : 36	Only temporary vows 36 (including scholastics)
Formation house at Pekin (Beijing)	Novice - 1 Postulant - 10 Juniors - 24	Formation house at Zié-ka	Novices - 0 Postulants - 0 Juniors - 13
16 schools	From North to South of China	7 schools	In two provinces around Shanghai.

<sup>100</sup> Data calculated from Annual Statistics of the Institute and taken from the Report of Br. Aristonique on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1910 (AFM221.39)

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1909, the Brothers of the Congregation of the Mother of God were informed about the decision to unite their society with the Marist Brothers. Their leaders had not been updated on the negotiations that were going on. The decision was communicated to them by a letter from their Bishop. In surprise and dismay, some of them looked to their chaplain to clarify the intentions of their Bishop. Once they found that their congregation was no more, they were very upset and shocked. However, after they had calmed down, they accepted the decision of their Bishop. Except for one Brother, who already intended to quit religious life earlier on, all of them embraced this new reality with enthusiasm.

After the first shock, they felt encouraged and more confident about their future, because from then on they belonged to an international society with a solid foundation that had spread to many countries. Besides, they would have higher standing in the eyes of the local Christian community. The warm and cordial welcome they received from the Marist Brothers in Shanghai reassured them. However, once the enthusiasm and euphoria of the first week had passed, they began to face the concrete realities of daily living. It was not too long for them to find out that a simple decision would not resolve the many problems they were encountering. Many difficulties began to surface. We will come to those later.

The Provincial wrote to the Superior General in Grugliasco on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1909 to inform him about the fusion, which had been officially dated as on 2 February 1909. Apparently, he also attached the consent of the Brothers of the Congregation of the Mother of God to adhere to the incorporation with the Marist Brothers, written in Chinese. He also sent the basic information about the Brothers. No trace of this document remains in our archives but we can establish this fact from the different official letters from the General Administration. Faced with this *fait accompli*, the General Council had a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1909. They accepted the fusion but said they would consult and ask the Holy See to regulate it. On 19<sup>th</sup> April 1909, the Superior General wrote to the Procurator General, Br. Candidus, a very detailed account of this affair, and supplied him with all the necessary information and documents for him to ask the Holy See to regulate and approve this union. At the same time, he sought advice on the following points:

1. To give them the religious costume at the next retreat
2. To admit the Brothers for six months of Novitiate training, in different groups (in order not to interrupt their schools);

3. To admit them to perpetual vows or temporary vows according to their years in religious life, in different categories, after their novitiate training, upon their request and approval of Provincial Council.

The response of the Holy See could not be traced in our archives, but we can safely presume that there were no serious objections, because on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1909, the Holy See approved the setting up of the Novitiate in Shanghai. News of the fusion was published in the circular of the Superior General on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1909.<sup>101</sup>

Up to this point, the matter had not yet been brought to a conclusion. In the letter of the Superior General to M<sup>gr</sup> Paris on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1909, he mentioned that the union had been done hastily and that no definite contract or agreement had been signed. He then followed up on several modifications in the earlier proposal and discussed some new observations on daily mass and finance. Finally he asked him to finalize the agreement and sign it. Meanwhile, things were not going so well in the formation house where Br. Aristonique was in charge. He reported a few difficulties to Br. Provincial and was pessimistic about the union. Br. Provincial wrote to Br. Superior General on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1909, briefly mentioning the discontent of the new Brothers. They complained that they were not being treated equally with the European Brothers. They wanted to drink wine as the European Brothers did, or just to partake of the normal Chinese food. This was more economical, but the European Brothers were not able to adapt their diet. The Jesuits also refused to treat them the same way they treated the European Brothers. However, Br. Provincial thought that it was normal to encounter difficulties in any new venture. He wrote about the new confreres and the formation house of Zié-ka, inherited by the Marist Brothers after the fusion, and had the article published in the *Bulletin de L'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*.<sup>102</sup>

M<sup>gr</sup> Paris wrote to the Superior General on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1909, mentioning that he had received no reply to the letter he had written earlier. He probably expressed his views on the financial arrangement for the fusion and proposed a trial period of 5 years for the unification project. Br. Superior Gen-

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<sup>101</sup> Circular of Superior General Vol. XI, pp407-408

<sup>102</sup> Bulletin de L'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie Vol. 1, pp375-378

eral replied to this letter on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1909. He expressed the necessity of financial aid from the mission for the development of the work of the Maternists, but did not insist on the earlier financial arrangement, and accepted the five year trial period. He did not forget to remind the Bishop to finalize and sign the agreement. No record of this agreement could be traced in our archives. So the process of unification had terminated for the time being as the next official letter regarding this matter would be a year later. Let us turn now to examine the problems and difficulties that had surfaced.



1.



2.

1. Br. Louis-Michel, Provincial, Negotiated the Fusion in 1908
2. Br. Antonin took over as Provincial in 1911. Stopped the trial fusion in 1912
3. Br. Ignace Yang, former Superior General of the Maternists, became a Marist Brother
4. Kowtowing (ké-tou) in an Imperial court



3.



4.

## ***Problems and Difficulties***

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It should be noted that, during the trial fusion, no European Brothers or Chinese Marist Brothers were assigned to any of the schools of the Maternists. The only place that Marist Brothers were assigned to was their formation house at Zié-ka. There were many problems and difficulties encountered after the fusion. Some of them are very interesting from the point of view of culture and different methods of missionary approach. Br. André Gabriel Robbe, using the



5. The Juniors at Zie-ka in 1909

6. Profession of vows at Zié-ka

7. Marist Brothers and Maternists at St. Jean Berchmans school in Lodang, Shanghai, 1910

8. Old map of Shanghai in 1909 showing the location of St. Francis Xavier College and the novitiate of Zié-ka

5.



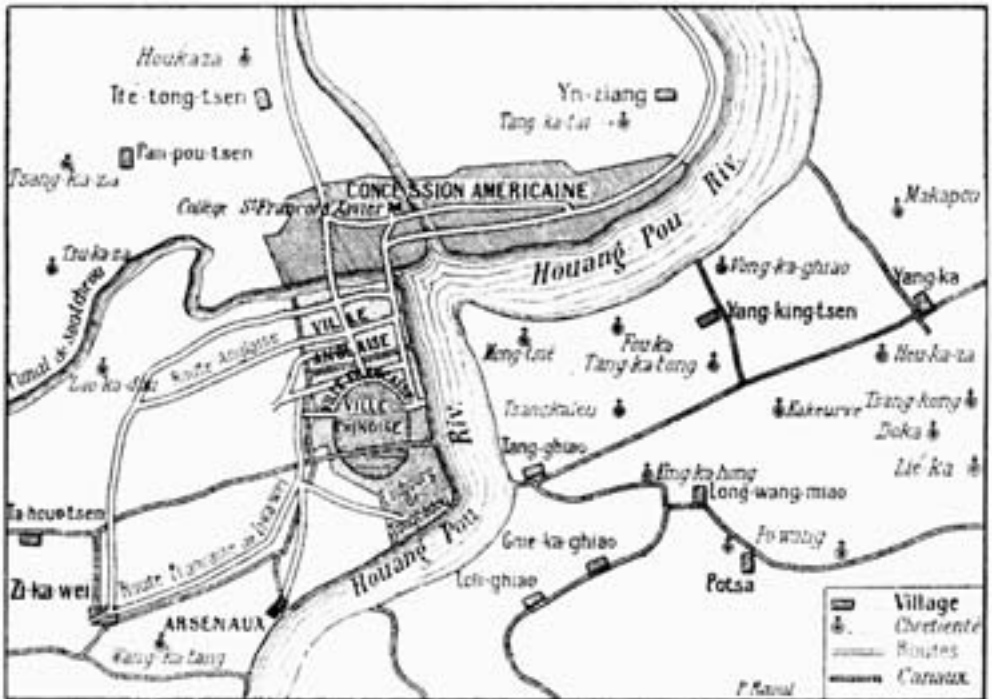
6.



THE ATTEMPTED FUSION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD  
WITH THE MARIST BROTHERS IN CHINA BETWEEN 1909- 1912



7.



8.

report of Br. Aristonique, categorized them into three groups in his book. A close study of the available correspondence shows that things were not that simple. It is better not to use the same categories but simply summarize them as follows:

***a. Problems at the formation house at Zié-ka***

The formation house inherited after the trial union at Zié-ka was not viewed as a very suitable one even before the union. It was located 12 km south-east of Shanghai (see the accompanying map of Shanghai in 1909). From Shanghai city to go to Zié-ka, one could use narrow paths cutting through the rice fields or use a small boat on the canal connected to the Houang Pou River that flows through Shanghai. During the rainy season, it was impractical and very inconvenient to use those narrow paths. However, it was necessary to go to the city daily to purchase provisions, to send urgent mail, to send someone who was sick to hospital, etc.

The set up of this house was not suitable for a novitiate.<sup>103</sup> It was not adapted for community life as it was meant to be lived in a Marist Community at that time in terms of rules and customs. It was, in fact, divided into two different parts by the parish church. Obviously, that would give rise to inconvenience. For example, the Brothers could not have their own bell as there were already two, one for the parish and one for the priests' community. This was just a small issue but it serves to show how the Brothers would be affected in their daily living. For the religious services, it was necessary to follow the various needs of the faithful in the parish. The house was not exclusively for the Brothers; there was interference from the parish priest; there was the constant distraction from the outsiders, and other related activities. Obviously, there was no privacy at all. In short, it was not suitable for a novitiate house.

From Br. Aristonique's account, the members of the congregation of the Mother of God wanted to be treated equally with the European Brothers. He gave the example that they wanted to drink wine during meals as their European confreres did. It was also cheaper to have Chinese food. We can read between the lines that there was different treatment, at least in the beginning. A problem also arose when the missionary priests invited only the Eu-

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<sup>103</sup> For the lay out of this formation house, please refer to Appendix I.

ropean Brothers for a walk but not the Chinese Brothers. The missionary priests even refused to have the Chinese Brothers at the same table during meals but invited the European Brothers to be seated with them.

There was also the problem of language. Br. Aristonique was not very good in the local language. In communicating with the Brothers, he had to rely very much on translators. He was one of the pioneers who set foot in Beijing in 1891. He served many years in Beijing or Tianjing, in the Northern part of China. He mostly served in schools using the French or English languages, with little Chinese language. Moreover, whatever Chinese language he picked up in Northern China was not the same as the local Shanghai dialect. We can imagine the situation. This makes one wonder whether he was the proper person to be put there as formator. His account of the formation house was mostly pessimistic in tone. It is not surprising that, when the delegate of the Superior General, Br. Antonin, wrote to him on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1910, he said that Br. Aristonique was a pessimist on the matter. Br. Pascal, in an undated letter to the Superior General<sup>104</sup>, from his conversations with Br. Louis-Fabien, the sub-director of Zié-ka for two years, pointed out that Br. Aristonique could not understand the Brothers well and yet at the same time was very rigid. He concluded that Br. Aristonique was not suitable for that position.

Article 7 of the proposal of union stated that the mission (Bishop) would provide a suitable house to set up a novitiate before the actual union. It seemed that this was not done before the trial unification took place. From various correspondence and newsletters, it was clear that the novitiate would be transferred to Zi-ka-wei near the city and that only juniors would be left at Zié-ka. The parishioners would not be happy if the Brothers left Zié-ka completely because they would probably lose their resident priest as well. However, it seems that the plan of moving the novitiate was never carried out, because M<sup>gr</sup> Paris was slow to provide a suitable house at Zi-ka-wei. He probably encountered opposition from the Superior of the Jesuits. In 1911, this issue was still not settled. The letter of the Provincial to the Bishop on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1911 mentions that if it was not possible to find a suitable house, then it would be necessary to partition the house in Zié-ka and make other necessary modifications.

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<sup>104</sup> AFM221.392 in the file of AFM223

### ***b. Difficulties from the school set-up***

Most of the schools of the Chinese Brothers were actually small and located in rural areas, usually in the same compound as the parish church. The Brothers did not have their own dining room. They ate with the pupils and lay teachers in the same place arranged by the parish priest. Since missionary priests were busy with many matters outside their parish, they were usually absent up to four days a week. This caused endless trouble for the Brothers as they had no authority over the servants who prepared the food for the whole school. It was a constant complaint from most of the schools. There was no clear-cut boundary of authority and the Brothers continued to be under the parish priest.

The Jesuit missionaries used to treat the Brothers as their domestic servants, secretaries, catechists, sacristans and handymen, in addition to their role as primary school teachers. Most of the Brothers were not well trained as school teachers. They relied very much on the outside lay teachers to teach the pupils. In some schools they merely played supporting roles. In such schools, the authority to handle school matters usually rested with the priest. After the union, these priests did not adjust well to the new situation, such as having a religious brother delegated by the Provincial visit their schools regularly. They were used to being under a Bishop who was a few days journey away. One parish priest even denied the Provincial the right to inspect his school.

Furthermore, as pointed out by the letter of the Provincial to M<sup>gr</sup> Paris on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1911, there was no uniformity of school regulations. Every school had its own regulations set in place by the local parish priest. This affected the Brothers when they were transferred from one school to another. They had to learn new regulations and adapt themselves each time.

As reported in the visit of Br. Antonin, delegate of the Superior General, in 1910, some of the school-communities did not have a study room or community room for the Brothers<sup>105</sup>. This very much affected the development of their religious life. Religious study was at a minimum among the Brothers in such a situation.

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<sup>105</sup> Reports of visit AFM 681.R.004 to 681.R.010

It is remarkable that, despite the decrease in the number of Brothers, two new schools, Mo-ka-tsen and Ning-kouo-fou were founded in February 1910. The number of Brothers was 33 in 1911, compared to 36 in 1909. Of the 33, Br. Provincial counted 25 as good subjects. Article 12 of the proposal of fusion expressed the desire of the Bishop to keep the Brothers in his vicariate except for special cases of great necessity, which required Br. Provincial to consult with the Bishop. One such case was allowed for a novice to have his novitiate training in Beijing. However, when Br. Provincial proposed to the Bishop to transfer a Brother to Kwangsi in order to safe guard his vocation, this was turned down by the Bishop. The proposal of a temporary withdrawal of Brothers from the school in Yao-wan after a serious conflict between the Brothers and the parish priest over the issue of “ké-tou”<sup>106</sup>, was refused by the Bishop as well.

### ***c. The relationship with the Jesuit Missionaries***

An issue worth our attention is how the Maternist Brothers were treated by the Jesuit missionaries and by the Marist Brothers. The Jesuit missionaries treated them as their subordinates; they were looked upon as second class in comparison with the priests. The Maternist Brothers had to perform “ke-tou” when greeting them. However, the European Marist Brothers would not accept this. The immediate question to come to the mind of the Maternist Brothers was why they should be treated differently if everyone belonged to the same family after the fusion. We cannot be sure if the political fervor that was arousing patriotism and awareness of equal rights for all people had affected them. For the Jesuits, were they holding on to the tradition they inherited from Matteo Ricci, i.e. to be dressed as Confucian Scholars and be respected as Mandarins? We cannot be sure. We also cannot understand why they so much stressed this practice compared to the other missionaries. However, for the Marist Brothers, they very much wanted to stop this practice. Br. Provincial took the risk of displeasing the Bishop, M<sup>gr</sup> Paris, who authorized such practice, by asking to him to stop it. By 1911, only Fr. Thomas at the school in Yao-wan continued to demand that the Maternist Brothers “ké-tou”. I do not think the European Marist Brothers were more acculturated or adapted to the Chinese culture, but their instinctive understanding of brotherhood, inherited from the tradition of Cham-pagnat, made them treat any member equally, regardless of race and color. In

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<sup>106</sup> A polite way of greeting which is performed to one’s parents or a VIP, involving a full bow, while kneeling.

fact, the Constitutions of 1903, article 9, clearly stated: "*There is but one category of the members of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, living under the same discipline.*"<sup>107</sup> It is remarkable that Br. Provincial stood up to the Bishop on this issue. A year before, Fr. Thomas threatened to expel the Maternist Brothers from the Congregation if they refused to "ké-tou". In order not to jeopardize the fragile fusion at the beginning, Br. Provincial imposed a year of silence on this matter. Meanwhile, he worked toward stopping it completely.

We should not naively think that all the Jesuits were happy with the idea of fusion. Contrary to the report of Br. Aristonique, the Bishop did not act alone in the project. His letter clearly states that he had consulted his council. However, he did not have full control of the Jesuit missionaries, who were also under their own Superior. The letter of Br. Provincial on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1911, mentioned that those missionaries who were not happy about the fusion, influenced their Superior into not allowing us to set up a novitiate near Zi-ka-wei<sup>108</sup>. In an undated letter to the Superior General, Br. Pascal mentioned that the Jesuits opposed the construction of the novitiate building, after we had already spent 40,000 francs.<sup>109</sup> So, there was also an element of sabotage toward the project on the part of the missionaries.

#### ***d. Vocations***

Another difficulty was to get new recruits. Br. Aristonique pointed out that Marist Brothers were known only in the city of Shanghai but not in other areas of the vicariate. Furthermore, parents wanted to see their sons go for training for the priesthood. He stressed also that most of the priests selected the best of the boys for the seminary and that whoever was left over or not considered a suitable subject was sent to our formation house.

When some Brothers left the Congregation during the initial fusion, it was difficult to find enough replacements. This situation was aggravated by the opening of two new schools in 1910. We can imagine how difficult it was to fulfil the expectations of the Jesuits asking for more Brothers to run their parish schools. The suggestion of Br. Provincial of the temporary withdrawal of the Brothers from a school was turned down. This situation certainly cre-

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<sup>107</sup> Translated from the Constitution of 1903 article 9

<sup>108</sup> AFM681.L.028

<sup>109</sup> AFM221.392

ated the difficulty of having the Brothers undertake novitiate training without disturbing the schools.

### ***e. Financial***

The financial arrangements were not properly worked out before the trial fusion, even though the Superior General had reminded M<sup>gr</sup> Paris. Article 6 of the proposal of fusion mentioned the only possible income for the Brothers. It was a fund of 50 units of 3000 francs, invested in real-estate, that provided the revenue destined for the work of the Maternists and the Congregation of the Presentation. So half of the revenue, which was about 3805.15 piastres,<sup>110</sup> should go to the Maternists. From the correspondence between M<sup>gr</sup> Paris and the Superior General, it seems that even this sum was just an approximation.<sup>111</sup> Apparently, that amount was not sufficient to develop the work of the Maternist Brothers. We do not know if the missionaries paid the Brothers any money besides providing their lodging and food. In a letter to M<sup>gr</sup> Paris on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1911, the Superior General once again raised the matter of finance, pointing out that it should not cost the Province of China too much as the number of Maternist Brothers increased.

### ***End of the tentative fusion***

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By the time Br. Louis-Michel was about to end his mandate as Provincial, the trial fusion was heading toward failure. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1911, Br. Antonin took over the leadership. Even though he was on good terms with M<sup>gr</sup> Paris, it was too late to reverse the situation. In his letter on 8 March 1911, he hinted that there was a shortage of Maternist Brothers. In July 1911, he transferred Br. Marie-Nizier from the Novitiate of Beijing to Zié-ka. This was a good move but came a bit late. Br. Marie-Nizier had a better command of Chinese than Br. Aristonique and he had experience of dealing with the formation of Chinese candidates.

Inheriting the strained relationship between his predecessor and the Bishop, Br. Antonin tried his best to put things back on the right track. But even though he had been at the negotiating table from 1908 and had visited all the establishments of the Maternists in 1910, he could not perform a mira-

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<sup>110</sup> Chinese currency at that time

<sup>111</sup> See letter ADM14554 and ADM14573

cle. He, too, had little knowledge of the Chinese language. By October 1911, perceiving that he had no way of settling the impasse caused by the Jesuit missionaries, he wrote to the Superior General on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1911, urging him to visit China and help solve the problem. Unfortunately, revolution broke out in Wuchang and soon spread to the area around Shanghai. He wrote again on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1911 to warn him about the chaotic situation but still hoped that it might be possible to travel to China by train across Siberia.

The General Council advised the Superior General not to take the risk. After discussion on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1911, they decided that a letter should be written to M<sup>gr</sup> Paris, highlighting the difficulties faced by the Marist Brothers in the trial fusion. We do not know if M<sup>gr</sup> Paris responded to this letter. There are indications that Br. Antonin wrote two more letters to the Superior General, one on 28<sup>th</sup> and one on 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1911. We could not locate these letters. On 28<sup>th</sup> December 1911, the Superior General wrote to Br. Provincial informing him about the two decisions of the General Council i.e. (1) authorizing him to return the Maternist Brothers to the authority of M<sup>gr</sup> Paris and (2) forbidding him to admit any of the Maternist Brothers, who intended to join the Marist Brothers, without a formal authorization from the Bishop.

We can suppose that discussions between Br. Antonin and M<sup>gr</sup> Paris on this matter took place after he received the letter of authorization to end the trial fusion. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1912, M<sup>gr</sup> Paris wrote to the Superior General, officially informing him that the vicariate had decided to reconstitute the Congregation of the Mother of God. In fact, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February this decision was conveyed to the Maternist Brothers, assembled at Zié-ka in the presence of Rev. Fr. Sédille, who took over from Br. Aristonique and Br. Marie-Nizier. The Maternist Brothers were sad, especially when they knew that they could not join the Marist Brothers, because the Bishop would not allow any of them, except Br. Jean Baptiste, who was in the novitiate at Beijing. They elected Br. Yang Benoît to be their new superior. Both Brothers Aristonique and Marie-Nizier would quit Zié-ka the next day. Thus the fusion ended after three years.

### ***After the Separation***

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After the trial fusion ended on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1912, some of the members of the Maternists expressed their wish to enter our Institute. However, the arrangement was not to accept them unless they obtained the permission



from their Bishop. This was in order not to jeopardize their work by an exodus of their members. Much later, M<sup>gr</sup> Paris permitted five of them to leave the Maternist Brothers and join the Marist Brothers. Of the five, four persevered and died in the Institute. They were Brs. Ignace Yang, Joche Benoît Pien, Petrus-Stanislas Zhang and Simon Fu.

Br. Ignace Yang was Superior General of the Maternists in 1909 at the time of the trial fusion. He rendered great service as the bursar of the Provincial House at Chala in Beijing. He died on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1939. Br. Petrus-Stanislas Zhang was a poet and a master of Chinese literature. He contributed a lot to the formation of Chinese Marist Brothers. He died on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1937 in Beijing. Br. Joche Benoît Pien is the most remarkable among them. He was director of the following schools: Marist School in Chefoo, Marist School in Weihaiwei and Sacred Heart College in Beijing. He was elected as delegate to the General Chapter in 1946, a clear sign of his acceptance by the Chinese Brothers as well as the European Brothers. He died in Shanghai on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1952 and was buried beside the famous Jesuit martyr, Fr. Beda Tsang. Br. Simon Fu suffered a lot under the Communists because he helped the Provincial, Br. André Gabriel Robbe, to manage financial matters. He was accused by the Communists of collaborating with imperialists and was arrested on the pretext of subversive activities. He died in prison on an unknown date between 1958 and 1962.

As for the Maternists, they were seriously shaken by this trial fusion. The congregation shrank and declined rapidly. In 1945 only one member was still alive. The Bishop of Shanghai, M<sup>gr</sup> Haouisée, then conceived the idea of reviving it. However, the Chinese clergy were more concerned with other matters. With the death of M<sup>gr</sup> Haouisée in 1948 and the Communists coming into power in China in 1949, all hope of resurrecting the congregation was destroyed.

### ***Lessons to be learnt***

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What can we learn from this incident in the past? First, we can see that the fusion of two congregations should not be done hastily. It is not like the commercial world where merging companies for profit can happen in a very short period. A company can hire and fire workers easily, within the law and with due process, but it is not so easy for religious congregations. To have

a smooth and fruitful fusion between congregations, the members concerned need to be engaged right from the beginning of negotiations, in a transparent process, until the end of a set trial period.

Suitable persons for carrying out the fusion are very important. This is not a task for a pessimist. The persons should be able to communicate well with all members. Deficiency of language certainly will be a big obstacle. The cultural differences could be fatal to fusion if not dealt with properly. Sabotage from dissenting members could be very subtle, sometimes hiding behind the pretext of cultural differences.

As soon as possible a new sense of belonging or a new identity should be created. Clear vision and a line of authority needs to be established to help to orient members coming into new realities. They need to feel that they are treated equally. This could reduce unnecessary interference from outsiders. It would be advantageous if there is a roadmap for such a fusion because it would help members to focus on building a new identity. The leadership could be more decisive with its guidance.

Finally, strong and viable financial arrangements before any fusion are unavoidable. Much energy would otherwise be wasted in arguing about financial matters and could jeopardize any working relationship later.

## **Conclusion**

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This research regarding the tentative fusion of a local congregation, the Congregation of the Mother of God, with the Marist Brothers in China, not only reveals the different ways missionaries treated indigenous religious in China at that time but also shows how a powerful hierarchical authority was practised then. An important project such as this could affect many religious Brothers, but the decisions were made without consulting those who had to live it.

The foreign missionaries were viewed as superior to the indigenous religious. There was not much appreciation and understanding of local culture. The Marist Brothers did not put much effort into learning the local language. Despite many years of presence, few of them could speak Chinese. No doubt, they were not aware then that a suitable formation adapted to the local situation should be provided rather than forcing local people to live the way western culture required.

There are lessons to be learned from the way this tentative fusion was carried out. Since 1993, restructuring, with the aim of consolidating several countries into one province for greater vitality and viability, has been carried out across the Marist world. The experience of such a fusion as this is not far from what has been experienced by these newly restructured provinces, if not exactly the same. Learning from history could help us avoid the same pitfalls.

Last but not least, it is very remarkable that the Marist Brothers' instinctive understanding of brotherhood, inherited from the tradition of Champagnat, made them treat any member equally, regardless of race, colour and language. This strong sense of "brotherhood" is safeguarded by their Constitutions and transmitted from one generation to another. Indeed, this is the marvellous way of expressing brotherhood described by Psalm 133: "*How good is it to see brothers living together in unity!*" (Psalm 133:1)



# *Scripture and the Search for Identity*

## *Finding the Institute's Story Hidden in Biblical Narrative*<sup>112</sup>

**Brother Colin CHALMERS, FMS**  
*Province of West Central Europe*

### **Introduction**

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The history of the Institute is not a series of isolated events with only immediate significance, but the development of a specific theme – that of a continuous search for identity. This is similar to the story of Jewish people as described in the Old Testament. This paper examines a period in the history of the Institute, finding the story of this period hidden in a particular narrative in Scripture. The period under examination is the time from the 1967 General Chapter to the 1985 General Chapter. For reasons he hopes will become clear, the author has called this period in the Institute's history "The Transformative Period".<sup>113</sup> The scriptural narrative in which the Transformative Period is hidden is the Jewish people's experience of the Babylonian Captivity. By reading its own story in the light of this experience of the Old Testament Jewish people, the Institute can deepen its understanding of the place and action of God in its own identity-formation narrative and by attempting to discover what can be read from the scriptural event, it can continue to "grow into a realistic and mature un-

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<sup>112</sup> This paper is an edited and adapted version of a more extensive examination of the Institute's narrative and the full paper can be obtained from the author.

<sup>113</sup> The author makes a careful distinction between the terms 'transformation' and 'transition'. The term "transition" is defined as change characterised by a smoothness and seamlessness, where there is a marked sense of continuity from 'before' to 'after'. One example from the Institute's history would be the handover of authority from Champagnat to Brother François. "Transformation", on the other hand, is defined by a depth of change which makes it difficult to discern the continuity between the 'before' and the 'after'.

derstanding of what it means to be ‘God’s people’, ‘the children of the promise’” (Hanson, 1986 p 541).

In the biblical world, it was in the remembering and retelling of events that the Jewish people of the Old Testament formed their identity as a people over a period of time. So, too, with the Institute. The narrative of its identity is to be found not only in what the sociologist and former student of the Brothers, William Keenan, refers to as “the cold historical documents lodged in the archives of the Institute” (Keenan, 2000 p 95), but also in the individual Brother’s remembering and retelling of events. Both the Institute and the Old Testament Jewish people experienced similar distinct stages in their history. While the correspondence between the historical narratives of the two groups is by no means perfect, there are sufficient similarities to warrant the Institute’s looking to the ways in which the identity of the Old Testament Jewish people was formed and seeing God at work, not only in that story, but also in its own.

This paper is offered as one contribution to the ongoing discussion on the identity of the Institute. Paul Avis perceptively points out that “We do not start talking about identity until it is threatened” (Avis 2003, p 29). On the other hand, *not* to talk about identity can be a sign, at best, of complacency, or, at worst, of death. The fact that the Institute continues to talk about its identity, continues to explore the narrative of its life-story is surely a sign of health.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> It is always risky for an author to discuss events occurring within the lifetime and experience of many of his readers; accounts and interpretations will be challenged, particularly if the author has not participated in those events himself. In the account given in this Paper of the General Chapter of 1967 many decisions will have been ignored and consequences glossed over which readers might regard as important, perhaps even crucial, for an understanding of the Institute’s history. One omission, obvious to even the most cursory reading, is the complete lack of discussion on the leadership of Brother Basilio Rueda during the period encapsulated in the Paper, a period coinciding completely with his term as Superior General. Brother Basilio played a crucial role during the Chapter, first as Moderator, then as Superior General, and some may argue that, without his contribution, the decisions which were reached would have been different. His guidance of the Institute after the Chapter was also crucial. While a discussion of his contribution certainly has its place in an examination of the period, the author would argue that this Paper is not that place. In seeing the story of this period hidden in a scriptural story, the author is offering a *spiritual* interpretation, seeing the period as part of a greater whole, rather than a *historical* interpretation of a specific period in time. *How* and *why* specific decisions were reached is for the historian to discuss and it is in this discussion that the leadership of Brother Basilio must have a central place.

## ***Transformation for the Jewish People***

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In the ancient history of the Jewish people the most significant event after the Exodus is the Babylonian Captivity (5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE). The destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying off of its inhabitants to Babylon, briefly reported in the Bible in 2 Chronicles 36:15 – 21:25, was more than the demolition of a group of buildings; it was as if the very foundations of Jewish life, culture and religion had been destroyed. In Babylon the Jewish people had to find new ways in which to worship God, ways which did not centre on the Temple and its rituals. Until the sack of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity, the belief in the almost indissoluble link between faith and location had been virtually universal. That this was no longer the case is shown by the lack of hastiness in the return to Jerusalem. There was deep uncertainty among the Jewish people as to where God was to be found. The one certain result of the Exile was that Judaism was no longer, to adopt and adapt the words of James Sweeney CP, “a Goffman-style total institution” (Sweeney, 2002, p 172).

## ***Transformation and the Church***

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Sweeney is referring, in his book, to Religious Life prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965). The 1967 General Chapter of the Institute was one of the effects of the Council, and, while a General Chapter would have been held at that time whether or not the Council had taken place, what was produced by the Chapter would have been very different had there been no Council.<sup>115</sup> One of the principal effects of the Council within the Church, and of the 1967 General Chapter, within the Institute, was the drive towards *exploration* – exploration of new ways of experiencing and talking about God, exploration of new ways of being a Marist Brother. Just as the experience of the Exile gave the Jewish people the opportunity to re-consider their rela-

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<sup>115</sup> It is always interesting, if somewhat risky, to play a game of “what if...” with historical events. So many factors need to be taken into account to build up reasonable scenarios. To ask “What if there had been no Second Vatican Council?” leads to a second question, “How would the Institute have coped with the upheavals occurring in western society in the 1960s?” The author proposes that it is the experience of the Transformative Period which brought the Institute to a position of being ready to face the challenges posed by these upheavals rather than maintain the world-shunning, fortress-like mentality common in Religious Life prior to the late 1960s. It was the experience of the Transformative Period which enabled the Institute to move to a new phase in its life.

tionship with God, so the experience of Vatican II and its aftermath gave Religious, both collectively and individually, the opportunity to look again at where God was located in their lives. The problem with exploration is neatly summed up by Sean Sammon FMS:

*Over the past four decades we have learned two hard lessons: exploration leads to crises, and the more possibilities for living that we uncover, the greater our number of crises.*

(Sammon FMS, 2002, p 66)

The anthropologist, Gerald Arbuckle SM talks of the pre-conciliar “distorted mythology of religious life” (Arbuckle SM, 1993, p 135). The Council attempted to destroy this mythology in its “Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life”, instructing every formally recognised religious order to summon its supreme legislating body to enact legislation to put into effect what the Council Fathers laid down in the rest of the Decree as the future paths of Religious Life in the Church. It was a twofold task of adaptation and renewal which faced the General Chapter of the Institute when it met in 1967.<sup>116</sup>

## ***Transformation in the Institute***

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The two-year gap between the end of the Council and the beginning of the 1967 General Chapter was filled with the consultations which are customary in the Institute. This would be the last of the General Chapters to be dominated by Europeans<sup>117</sup> and, as if to indicate the profundity of the changes about to take place, the delegates, for the first time, looked outside of Europe and outside of the General Council for the man who would lead the Institute over the next few years and elected the relatively unknown Mexican, Basilio Rueda Guzmán FMS.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> It is not the intention of this Paper to provide a detailed account of the Chapter, but merely to indicate the depth and extent of change initiated in the Institute through the various decisions made by the delegates at the Chapter.

<sup>117</sup> In addition to the numerical superiority of European Provinces, a considerable percentage of Provincials and Chapter delegates from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania/Pacific were European in origin and nationality.

<sup>118</sup> Unusually for recent General Chapters, the sessions were held over two years, 30<sup>th</sup> August to 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1967 and 28<sup>th</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1968. The unusual length of the Chapter was due to the extraordinary amount of work which had to be undertaken by delegates to revise the Constitutions and Common Rules and the long gap between sessions was to facilitate consultation and experimentation throughout the Institute.



A major difficulty faced by the Chapter was the knowledge that a revision of the Code of Canon Law was about to take place and, therefore, definitive revisions of Institute documents could not be published. The Chapter therefore revised the existing Constitutions on an “*ad experimentum*” basis and published the document in 1968. To comply with the existing Code of Canon Law – i.e. that of 1917 – the Chapter was careful to emphasise in its Introduction to the revised Constitutions that “*The [new] Constitutions may seem quite different, but a careful study will reveal that all that is essential in the old ones is maintained.*” (Institute, 1968a, p 8. Italics in original). However, a cursory glance at the revised Constitutions will point up a major difference in the format from that of the “old ones”, in essence the 1852 Constitutions with minor revisions. Where the old Constitutions were set out article by article, the 1968 revision was set out in sections which were then divided into articles of several paragraphs in length. Unlike both the 1837 Rule and the 1852 Constitutions, a description of the aim does not appear until Article 43 in the 1968 revised Constitutions and little detail was gone into.<sup>119</sup> True to the Vatican Council’s call for religious orders to look at, not just the *adaptation* of their lives to the times, but a *renewal* of the lives of their members, the preceding forty two Articles are taken up with the questions of what it means to be a Marist Brother and the place of the Marist Brother within the Church. It is perhaps here that the most explicit search for identity in the history of the Institute has its place.

In place of the Common Rules, which heretofore had regulated the day-to-day life of the Brothers, the Chapter issued a document which the delegates named the “Directory”. The difference between the Directory and the old Common Rules is immediately apparent in the new document’s Foreword: “Since it is addressed to the Congregation as a whole, it cannot be expected to go into details of organization.” (Institute, 1968b, p 7). The details were to be left to the individual Provinces to regulate in the light of their own circumstances.<sup>120</sup> A number of other documents covering different aspects of life in the Institute supplemented the Constitutions and Directory.

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<sup>119</sup> By this time the Institute was involved in third-level education in various parts of the world – a far cry from the basic elementary education envisaged by Champagnat. The 1968 revision sums up the aim of the Institute in two lines: “the education of youth, particularly the less favoured.” (Institute, 1968a, Article 43, p 57).

<sup>120</sup> This approach to legislation was quite new and is in stark contrast to Brother Louis Marie’s 1865 call for strict uniformity throughout the Institute in a “catechism” issued for novices (Institute, 1934, p 6-7).

One short paragraph in the Council's "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life" added fuel to the fire of a debate within the Institute which had surfaced originally at the 1946 General Chapter and which was to last for many years. Quickly rejected without discussion by the 1946 General Chapter, the question of the introduction of the priesthood into the Institute arose again at the 1958 General Chapter and had been referred by the Chapter to the Superior General and his Council for further investigation. For the 1967 General Chapter, the issue was central to its consideration of the question of the identity of a Marist Brother. While not prepared to commit themselves one way or another on the issue of priesthood, many delegates expressed fears that by inserting the definition "lay Religious" into the draft Constitutions, the decision on the issue itself would be foreclosed. It was only after much discussion and a vote to commit the Chapter to the position that the insertion of the phrase would not close off the issue that they were mollified (Institute, 1968c<sup>121</sup>). There was no attempt to make a decision on the issue itself.<sup>122</sup>

Until the 1958 General Chapter the Little Office of Our Lady had been recited in Latin in communities and thereafter in the appropriate modern language. The 1967 Chapter document "Our Religious Life" stated:

*The Marial Office [i.e. the Little Office of Our Lady] will be maintained until the General Council or a commission appointed by it decided on the advisability of keeping the adapted<sup>123</sup> Marial Office or adopting the Divine Office, likewise to be adapted.*

(Institute, 1969, p 106)

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<sup>121</sup> All translations in this Paper from this French-language document are the present author's own.

<sup>122</sup> The question of the introduction of the priesthood came up again at the 1976 General Chapter and was again deferred. After lengthy discussion at the General Chapter of 1985, delegates agreed that the introduction of the priesthood should not be permitted in the Institute. By this time a small number of Congregations of Brothers had decided to permit some of their members to be ordained to the priesthood. There was little evidence that this had been a satisfactory move. Interestingly when Pope John Paul II raised the subject again in his 1996 Apostolic Exhortation "*Vita Consecrata*" (John Paul II, 1996, p 106) barely a ripple of interest was raised within the Institute.

<sup>123</sup> "adapted" – ie translated from Latin into modern languages

Regulations with regard to the wearing of the habit<sup>124</sup>, which under the existing Code of Canon Law was required of all religious, were also changed.<sup>125</sup> In the light of the norms laid down by Section 17 of the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, the 1968 Constitutions summed up the new ‘dress-code’ in two lines: “The Brothers will dress in a simple and modest manner conformable to the poverty of the Gospel.” (Institute, 1968a, Article 60, p 77). It was left to the document, “Our Religious Life” to spell out the details. It was clear that the habit was to be regarded as only one of the options available, the other two being “lay clothing or the clergy suit” (Institute, 1969, p 171). Regulations for dress were to be left up to individual Provinces – another step away from the uniformity of previous times.

In his address at the end of the first session of the Chapter, Brother Basilio, the new Superior General, provided a cautionary note on the experimental period which the Institute had entered into:

*I most willingly welcome all the experiments proposed along the lines indicated. But, on the other hand, I should point out that there are serious dangers in undertaking, under the cover of the particular powers enjoyed by this Special Chapter, experiment which are merely concessions to weakness or which are limited to the approval of already existing irregularities.*

(Institute, 1968c)

The Chapter had laid down several conditions for the experimental period it had authorised for the Institute:

- 1. All the planned adaptations and experiments must be capable of being stopped after one year, if necessary, without any problems.*

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<sup>124</sup> At the 1958 General Chapter, it had been agreed that a clerical collar could to replace the rabat. The vast majority of English-language Provinces retained the rabat.

<sup>125</sup> The Church’s “pervasive regulatory framework” (Keenan, 2000 p 95) had such an influence on the Institute that the Common Rules laid down how many shirts, how many pairs of socks, a Brother was to be given in any one year, and, indeed, of what material shoe-laces were to be made. The habit was, of course, to be worn at all times. There was an exception made, however, for those Brothers in English-speaking (ie ‘Protestant’) countries, who were allowed to wear clerical outdoor garb when outside their community or school.

2. *Every experiment must be concluded with an objective analysis.*
3. *The experiments and adaptations can, and even must, be carried out in a fixed number of houses. Some houses carrying out certain experiments; other houses carrying out others. In this way, we can avoid giving the impression that the experiments must necessarily be continued and become issues of governance. (Institute, 1968c)*

The delegates to the 1967 General Chapter tried to discern the will of God for the Institute in the new circumstances of life, but the discernment could not stop with the end of the Chapter. Subsequent events which could not have been foreseen forced the Institute into a continuous process of discernment in the context of ever-changing circumstances. The Institute had embarked on a massive programme of transformation, but it was a programme which was to bring with it unforeseen challenges, albeit not challenges particular to the Marist Brothers.<sup>126</sup>

## **Challenging Times**

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It is a commonplace for the more traditional Catholic to argue that Vatican II is the cause of what is seen to be the large-scale decline of Religious Life over the past forty years. It is, of course, an easy step to move from noting the coincidence of a decline in numbers of Religious at the end of the Council to blaming the Council for the fall and this is a step many have taken and continue to take. It is not the place of this Paper to get involved in a discussion on the responsibility for the fall in the numbers of Religious from the late 1960s, a fall that continues in the ‘developed world’ to the present day. The Institute is one of those Religious Congregations which suffered a considerable drop-off in numbers, declining from 9,752 members in 1965<sup>127</sup> to 6,230 on the eve of the 1985 General Chapter.<sup>128</sup> A relatively small decrease in 1966 was the beginning of a year-on-year decline in numbers. The

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<sup>126</sup> Changes in the life of the Institute, planned and deliberately undertaken by the Institute, are only one part of the story of the Transformative Period. The full impact of the Period cannot be understood unless changes outside the control of the Institute are also taken into account.

<sup>127</sup> Bulletin of the Institute 27 p 436.

<sup>128</sup> Report of the Secretary General to the 1985 General Chapter

drop in membership of the Institute can be explained, not only by the natural attrition due to deaths and departures<sup>129</sup>, but also by the lack of new recruits. One of the factors in the decline in numbers of new entrants directly attributable to the reforms of Vatican II was the decision taken by a large number of the Institute's Provinces to close their Juniorates. The Vatican Council's abandoning the concept of the world as a place from which the Religious and potential Religious had to flee plus developments in psychology enabling a re-think in ideas of vocation and human development led to an abandonment of the concept of childhood vocations to Religious Life. Naturally, the closing of Juniorates did not concur with every Brother's views and, to this day, there are calls among older Brothers to "bring back the Juniorate" as a way of solving the recruitment problem. The large number of departures from the Institute between 1967 and 1985, combined with the lack of recruits – in the 'developed' world, at least – led very quickly to a significant increase in the average age of Brothers in Provinces. This, in turn led to a lack of Brothers to take on leadership positions in schools and other apostolates, with a consequence that more and more communities were withdrawing from locations in which Brothers had worked for perhaps over a century.

The sense of almost total self-confidence of the Religious Life was unintentionally shattered by the Second Vatican Council. One of the effects of this change was that it was no longer sufficient for Marist Brothers "to labour for the greater glory of God, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for their own sanctification" (Institute, 1923, Article 1, p 7) simply "by observance of the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and the Constitutions of their Institute" (ibid). The Second Vatican Council had shown that being an observant Religious was no longer, in itself, a guarantee of salvation. The Council's requirement of a complete change of mentality by Religious Congregations placed an enormous burden on them. New Constitutions, albeit issued on an *ad experimentum* basis, and a new Directory made tremendous demands on the Brothers, as a whole and as individuals. The traditional sense of identity was being challenged directly. This crisis of iden-

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<sup>129</sup> The experience of departures is common to virtually all Orders and Congregations, both men and women. Behind each departure, of course, lies a deeply personal story and there is probably little which could be extracted to form a common element in an answer to the question as to why the departures occurred in such numbers. Pre-Conciliar times had, of course, a simple answer to the 'problem' of Brothers leaving the Institute: "the majority of departures are accounted for by defeat in the area of virtue." (Institute, 1946)

tity was not peculiar to Marist Brothers, but has been shown to be common to Catholics after the Vatican Council (Arbuckle, 1996), other Religious (Chittister, 1996) and Brothers from other Congregations (Berger, 1994). It was to find ways of alleviating this crisis of identity that, the Institute embarked on a new phase in its history at the 1985 General Chapter – a phase in which it examined its sense of identity much more closely than hitherto through an insistence on a return to its foundational texts.

## **Conclusion**

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Almost as if it was intended to shake the Jewish people out of a lethargy into which they had settled, the Babylonian Captivity brought them to a situation which disrupted the link between their faith and a settled location for that faith (Seitz, 1985). With the Temple destroyed and the people scattered, many never to return to the land of their ancestors, a new phase opened up in the life of the Jewish people. During this time they had to seriously consider their future. There was no possibility of going back to an idealised, pre-Captivity existence. This Paper has attempted to show that the Institute's experience of the period between 1967 and 1985 was similar to the experience of the Jewish people under the Babylonian Captivity. A word of caution is necessary here. There is no attempt in the Paper to interpret the Institute's Transformative Period as a disaster in the way in which many Jewish people interpreted the Sack of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity, much less as a punishment from God. Nor is the Period interpreted as a high-jacking of the Institute by a small group of 'ultra liberals', in much the same way as many traditionalist Catholics interpret the changes authorised by the Second Vatican Council. The present author's hypothesis is that the Transformative Period plays the same role in the identity-formation narrative of the Institute as the experience of the Babylonian Captivity did for the Jewish people of the Old Testament – that is, a life-changing experience in which the old 'certainties' disappeared and new questions had to be faced.

The General Chapter of 1985 marked the start of this new period in the life of the Institute – the Prophetic Period. In this Period assistance with the challenges faced by the Institute is sought through a re-interpretation of the life of the Founder and of the Institute's foundational documents. Prophets, from both within and outside the Institute, arise to lead the search for the fundamental elements of a Marist identity and a Marist Brother's identity.

The Prophetic Period runs alongside the transitions and transformations which continue in the Institute's life, offering, not a critique of change, but the tools whereby change might retain what Marcellino Ganzaraín FMS refers to as "creative fidelity". (Ganzaraín, 1993 p 565)<sup>130</sup>

By reflecting on its history within the scriptural paradigm offered in this Paper, the author suggests that the Institute will gain insight into its historical narrative, seeing that narrative as a gradual unfolding of, rather than a frantic search for, its identity. This, in turn, will enable it to look to the future with confidence, secure in the knowledge that, no matter the vicissitudes of life, God never deserts his people.

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<sup>130</sup> Brother Marcellino anticipates by some three years the use of the same phrase by Pope John Paul II in Section 37 of his Apostolic Exhortation on Religious Life, *Vita Consecrata* (John Paul II, 1996)

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# *Une Tendre Affection*

## *A Questin about Interpretation, Inspiration and Motivation*

**Brother Christopher MANEY, FMS**  
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### **Preface**

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This research project is concerned with a theme found in the letters and other documents of Marcellin Champagnat, in the writings of contemporary witnesses, and in biographies. It firstly attempts to develop the theme from primary and secondary sources regarding the Founder, and secondly to apply insights and findings to today, specifically to a particular incidence: the resolutions of a Provincial Chapter held in 2007. Thirdly, the project seeks to investigate how perspectives of the Founder continue to be developed in our own time.

The writing of this project is a personal journey as well as an investigation. For me, this research has not only been an individual one but also a very personal one. I believe that it has brought me to a newer and better understanding and appreciation of the Founder and the Brothers who shared this enterprise with him. My hope is that in sharing my experience with others it may be of some assistance in achieving such aims.

This particular project is not primarily an academic or scholarly work, nor intended to be, but it may present some aspects that merit further investigation. Its extensive use of quotations is of an eclectic nature rather than a synthetic or syncretic one, in the hope of forming a platform for discussion rather than of reaching conclusive findings. While use has been made of primary sources, I have also relied considerably on secondary sources (such as Marist Notebooks, as well as other various input) which certainly, in the case of the Notebooks, mostly relies on primary sources and therefore would

seem trustworthy. However, use has also been made of contemporary documents such as the Circulars of the present Superior General.

I have employed hypothesis and speculation, both of which employ imagination and intuition rather more than science, as I understand that the project is an initial premise from which further investigations may proceed. The attempt to understand the various mindsets of the Founder requires intuition and assumptions rather than proofs, and that the way be open to imagine new possibilities.

The project also attempts to integrate many of the various inputs that were offered during the Patrimony Course. Such references here are superficial, and I attempt to compensate for that by offering footnotes indicating possible areas for further reading and advanced research.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **I.1 Apostolic Zeal**

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During the Patrimony Course held in Rome, from February to June 2008, in an address entitled *We are Sowers of the Good News among the Young, especially the Most Neglected*, the presenter, Br Carlos Martinez Lavin<sup>131</sup>, asked four questions: “Apostolic Zeal: Is it a burden? Is it a duty? Is it a conviction? Is it a passion?”

Before attempting to discuss these intriguing propositions, it will be helpful to reach an agreement about how we are to define each of the key words. The first, ‘burden’ is easily understood as a metaphorical expression indicating “*something oppressive or worrisome.*”<sup>132</sup> From a range of dictionary definitions the following meanings of ‘duty’ will suit our purpose “*conduct due to parents and superiors; moral or legal obligation.*” ‘Conviction’ in this con-

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<sup>131</sup> Br Carlos Martinez Lavin has been on an International Commission for Marist Education (1995-1998) which was responsible for producing the document “*In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today.*” He addressed the Patrimony Course on “Hearing from those who knew him” and “Our Saints.”

<sup>132</sup> All dictionary definitions in this document are taken from the on line “Merriam-Webster” dictionary.

text would be “*a strong persuasion or belief.*” It is the word ‘passion’ that most needs a clear definition for it has a range of meanings with a range of associated emotional connotations. Furthermore, for the purposes of this discussion the distinction between passion and compassion needs to be made. Passion can be described as “*ardent affection: love; a strong liking or desire for, or devotion to some activity, object, or concept.*” An inference for me is that the motivation is coming from within the person. Its shape and colour is pro-active and self-actualizing. Compassion is defined as a “*sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it.*” Compassion also finds its origin within the person but is in response to an exterior stimulus. Of course, passion and compassion are inter-active and no doubt go together. However, for the sake of discussion I would like first to look at the idea that “passion” is a motivating force within the person; and then to consider how “compassion” is a motivating force in response to need. By “motivating force” I am suggesting that a person is more likely to be moved to act when an impulse, thought or conviction is accompanied by strong feelings (an “ardent affection,” for example.) A contemporary study of “Affective Neuroscience” would seem to support this point of view.<sup>133</sup>

The document “Water from the Rock,”<sup>134</sup> puts this perception rather more succinctly when referring to “Marist Spirituality, following in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat”, which is the subtitle: “The story of our spirituality is one of passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people.”<sup>135</sup> Regarding Marcellin, the same document states; “Marcellin Champagnat lived among children and young people, loved them with **passion**, and devoted all his energies for them.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Affective neuroscience is the study of the neural mechanisms of emotion. This interdisciplinary field combines neuroscience with the psychological study of personality, emotion, and mood. Emotions are thought to be related to activity in brain areas that direct our attention, motivate our behaviour, and determine the significance of what is going on around us [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affective\\_neuroscience](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affective_neuroscience)

<sup>134</sup> *Water from the Rock* is a document on Marist Spirituality that was specifically written to meet the needs of the Brothers and Lay Marists. It was published in 2007 by the Institute of Marist Brothers.

<sup>135</sup> *Water from The Rock* P.22

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid* P.34 .The paragraph continues: « As his disciples we also experience a special joy in sharing our time and our persons with them, we resonate with their aspirations, we are filled with compassion for them and we reach out to them all in their difficulties.” The question is: “How true is this statement?”

It is probably more often in the public arena that we speak of passion in a negative way as in “Crimes of Passion” or in spiritual books which urge us to recognise and resist our “predominant passion.”<sup>137</sup> However, we are considering here acts of virtue, heroism and sanctity that spring from convictions held passionately. An example of such usage can be found in an article entitled “At the Heart of Our Marist Dream” issuing from the International Assembly of Marist Mission held in Mendes, Brazil 2007:

*“As Marists, we are called to passionately centre our lives on Jesus Christ, developing a spirituality of discipleship. Inspired by Mary, we encounter God in that privileged space where we live our lives with children and young people.”*<sup>138</sup>

## **1.2. A Contemporary Situation**

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I believe the questions as posed above by Br Carlos are very pertinent for me and my Marist Province (of New Zealand) at this time. At a Provincial Chapter held in December of 2007, three priority statements were agreed, the first being

*“That we develop a fresh ministry focus for the province to better align with the imperative of our charism: to be with, and empower, young people on the edge, poor, needy and at risk.”*

At first reading this statement seems worthy and noble and so it may very well be. However, there is the ring of *déjà vu* about it. That is, the call to be available and of service to the most needy has been with us for so many years. In his address entitled “Solidarity” on this topic, given at the Patrimony Course, Br Dominick Pujia<sup>139</sup> outlined a long history of Church teach-

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<sup>137</sup> For example, Br Jean Baptiste writes in “*Méditations sur les Grandes Vérités*” AFM 5201.21 in the 54<sup>th</sup> meditation 3<sup>rd</sup> part “Cause de péché, la concupiscence, les passions”-“Les passions enivrent l’âme, c’est-à-dire la maîtrisent, l’aveugleent, l’énervent, l’hébètent et la jettent hors d’elle, comme l’ivresse du vin maîtrise le corps, trouble la tête et enlève le bon sens. Les passions corrompent la volonté ; elles la rendent toute charnelle et animale. »

<sup>138</sup> This quotation comes from a document issued from “*One Heart One Mission, Marist International Mission Assembly- At the Heart of Our Marist Dream*”, p. 1. This Assembly was held in Mendes, Brazil, in 2007.

<sup>139</sup> Br Dominick Pujia heads the Solidarity Outreach at the Marist Brothers Generalate in Rome.

ing on social justice from Leo XIII's foundation document "Rerum Novarum" of 1891 and especially since 1967 as highlighted in the Circulars and appeals of Br Basilio Rueda Guzman, who had worked for seven years in the "Better World Movement. For many years, therefore, we have been hearing the appeal for solidarity with the poor from our Superior Generals and from our General Chapters.

So what has *not* been happening that, once again, we are hearing the same appeal even though expressed in slightly different words? Of course there is a complex of possible responses to this question. For example, the rapid changes in the world about us where instant communication may lead to disaster fatigue, especially in relating to the sheer numbers of "young people on the edge, poor, needy and at risk." In addition, changes in religious life since the second Vatican Council may have sapped our energies in adaptation, given the lack of candidates seeking to enter the congregation and the median age (over sixty years) of the Brothers of the. It may be the case too that such an appeal has been perceived as a burden. Perhaps for many it is both a duty and a conviction. The language of the deliberation quoted above suggests an orientation towards duty: "Better align with the imperative of our charism." Note the word "imperative" which the dictionary defines as "expressive of a command, entreaty, exhortation."<sup>140</sup> Duty and conviction are worthy indeed, but are they enough to inspire and motivate? This is not to cast doubt on the goodwill of the Brothers, but to seek for myself, and even for others, insights and understandings that may help to lift us beyond acquiescence to principles and so become more fully motivated to action. In an article entitled "The Memoirs of Little Brothers Sylvester"<sup>141</sup> which serves as an introduction to the writings about Champagnat by this Brother, the author shares this pertinent comment:

*"Sylvester describes Marcellin's and the first Brothers enthusiasm for the work of evangelisation as "burning." It is a telling qualification. What drove them, and what is at the heart of an apostolic Marist spirituality, is a deep*

<sup>140</sup> Merriam-Webster. Also "Having the power to restrain, control, direct."

<sup>141</sup> Br Michael Green fms - An as yet unpublished introduction to a translation of Br Sylvestre's "Life of Champagnat."

*concern for people. It is a love-response rather than a duty-response that propels them to action. Their theology gave this work both importance and urgency, but it was essentially about people.”*

In Part III of the Circular “Making Jesus Known and Loved,” under the heading “Mission, Apostolic Life, and the Poor,” Br Sean Sammon writes:

*“No doubt there are administrative units throughout the Institute where the Brothers and lay partners within them have answered these questions [how do we serve those living at the margins of society, where we are being called to put our apostolic energies as a group now and in the future] to their satisfaction... The majority of our Brothers, however, have not yet arrived at final answers to the very same questions. Indeed in their attempts to do so, sharp differences in opinion have often emerged.”<sup>142</sup>*

At an Assembly for a sector of the New Zealand Province, following on from our Province Chapter, some participants made the following comments (among others) which tend to verify the above quotation:

*“Feeling of a loss of direction in mission, aging of the Brothers, lack of contact with youth by many Brothers, lack of community dimension in some current ministries, fragmentation of ministries, feelings of maintenance dominating our work, society is changing and we are not in touch with it. The church is changing and we are not in touch with it.”<sup>143</sup>*

In the same Circular “Making Jesus Known and Loved” Br Sean writes:

*“For Marcellin Champagnat, education was a powerful means for forming and transforming the minds and hearts of children and young people. For example, he wrote ‘If it*

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<sup>142</sup>. Br Sean Sammon, fms Superior General, *Making Jesus Known and Loved, Marist Apostolic Life Today*.. June 2006. Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi

<sup>143</sup> These notes are taken from an initial draft report on the *Marist Brothers Assembly* and is being used here for illustrative purposes only.

*were only a question of teaching children secular subjects, the Brothers would not be necessary; if our only aim were to give religious instruction, we could confine ourselves to being simply catechists. But we aim at something better; we want to give them something better; we want to give them a Christian spirit and Christian attitudes and to form them to religious habits and the virtues possessed by a good Christian and a good citizen.”<sup>144</sup>*

We can discern from these words that Marcellin is motivated not only by duty and conviction but by passion which leads to action. (“We aim at something better.”) And many further examples can be used to illustrate this claim, some of which will appear in the pages below.

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## **2. PROJECT AIM AND METHOD**

Working from the above perspective, the research project asks the question of how a consideration and familiarity with the person and life of Marcellin and the founding Brothers (our patrimony) can become a source of inspiration and motivation that energizes us to realize a commitment to mission - “to become better aligned with the charism of our mission”: not only aligned, but also sharing in the passion Marcellin is known to have had.

While speculation may imply inconclusiveness and may not rank as an orthodox tool for historical investigation and analysis,<sup>145</sup> it may serve as a platform for intuition which has a more respected appreciation.<sup>146</sup> Some speculation can be tested by going to the sources. Yet even if some speculation cannot be so tested, remaining but speculation, it can be of assistance since it can

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<sup>144</sup> Br Sean Sammon: Page 24.

<sup>145</sup>Merriam-Webster ;To speculate: 1 a: to meditate on or ponder a subject : reflect b: to review something idly or casually and often inconclusively <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/-speculating>

<sup>146</sup> Henri Bergson, (October 18, 1859—January 4, 1941), a French philosopher, defined intuition as a simple, *indivisible experience of sympathy through which one is moved into the inner being of an object to grasp what is unique and ineffable within it*. The absolute that is grasped is always perfect in the sense that it is perfectly what it is, and infinite in the sense that it can be grasped as a whole through a simple, indivisible act of intuition, yet lends itself to boundless enumeration when analysed.

more freely look at theories and possibilities and so open the way for further investigation or rejection. Moreover, speculation is of assistance to the writer since it involves self-examination, because undoubtedly much speculation arises from the projections of one's own personality. Perhaps this is especially true when we look at words and concepts such as "passion". For instance, when considering the "passion" or emotional force that incited Marcellin to action,<sup>147</sup> the recognition in ourselves of such an emotion is perceived through the filters of our own experience. That is, we can only empathize and become motivated to the degree in which our own emotional experience resonates.<sup>148</sup> This is not to deny the action of grace or movement of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps all are part of the discernment process.

In the introduction to the Circular "A Revolution of the Heart,"<sup>149</sup> Br Sean points out:

*"Stories about Marcellin and our early Brothers are so important. They encourage you and me each day to live as poorly, obediently and chastely as we can, and they help us to understand and give thanks for the fact that our way of life as Little Brothers of Mary leads not to diminishment but to greater freedom."*

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### 3. MARCELLIN'S CIRCULAR OF MAY 1836

In order to investigate "stories (and evidence) about Marcellin" I choose to start by considering a Circular Marcellin wrote to the Brothers. Br Andre Lanfrey in his "Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality"<sup>150</sup> writes that Mar-

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<sup>147</sup> See note 4 above.

<sup>148</sup> Empathy is the capacity to recognise or understand another's state of mind or emotion. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or to in some way experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself. It may be described metaphorically as an emotional kind of resonance or mirroring.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empathy>

<sup>149</sup> Br Sean Sammon fms, Superior General, *A Revolution of the Heart, Marcellin's Spirituality and a Contemporary Identity for his Little Brothers of Mary*, June 2003. Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi

<sup>150</sup> Andre Lanfrey *Essay On the Origins of Marist Spirituality*—undated. Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi



cellin's fifth extant Circular dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 1836 "commands our attention. After a long paragraph overflowing with tenderness, Fr Champagnat exhorted his Brothers to give themselves to Jesus and Mary... These ideas already constitute a spiritual testament." As Br Paul Sester points out in an introduction to the same Circular, the purpose is to send the Brothers New Years wishes for fervour, zeal, fraternal charity and courageous fidelity."<sup>151</sup> What seems surprising and interesting (especially on first reading, and perhaps from a 21<sup>st</sup> century New Zealand stance that tends to be sceptical or looks at matters from a "deconstructionist" point of view)<sup>152</sup> is the language and personal sentiments and feelings expressed. For example, the opening sentence:

*"Our heart loves to remember you each day and to present you all to the Lord at the holy altar: but today we cannot resist the pleasant satisfaction of expressing to you our affectionate feelings and of showing you our fatherly affection."*<sup>153</sup>

It would seem unlikely in this day and age, that a superior would write in this vein personally to a Brother or to the Brothers in general, and it would be most surprising if he did. So from a contemporary standpoint questions immediately arise such as: Is Marcellin writing sincerely from his own heart or is he writing according to early 19<sup>th</sup> century social convention? Is he reflecting a conventional piety of his age? Is he conveniently making use of a contemporary hackneyed formula? Is he writing from a sense of duty as one might expect of a priest? Is he consciously or unconsciously politically motivated to ensure cooperation? Is he in fact unconsciously projecting his own needs for affection? And is he seeking to meet his own needs when he writes "we cannot resist the pleasant satisfaction of expressing to you our affectionate feelings."? Are some or all of these or other motivations involved?

The language does not seem to fit the rather stern, ascetic figure many of us are familiar with, or at least imagine, in the pages of Br Jean Baptiste's

<sup>151</sup> Br Paul Sester, fms Editor; Translated Br Leonard Voegtler fms *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat* Volume 1 Texts P. 144

<sup>152</sup>Man alone" is the archetypal myth of the New Zealand man, an outsider in his own land, and alone in the world. The man alone has been a recurring theme in the short history of New Zealand art and literature, epitomized by Man Alone by John Mulgan in the 1930s, and Smith's Dream by C. K. Stead in the 1970s, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man\\_alone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_alone)

<sup>153</sup> Sester *Letters* P.144

“Life”<sup>154</sup> which has a hagiographical slant and is written for didactic purposes.<sup>155</sup> In writing the “life of a saint,” Br. Jean Baptiste’s intended purpose from the first words of the preface, may well be to create a mythology. We of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have a penchant for demythologizing. While we may respect and admire the 19<sup>th</sup> century saints, our heroes have more obvious and accessible human traits and weaknesses that we can more readily identify with.<sup>156</sup>

*“The monastic model aimed at by Br Jean Baptiste seems a good example of re-interpretation of our origins under the pressure arising from a particular circumstance, namely to ground the Rule (1851).”<sup>157</sup>*

Therefore all the more surprising are the expressions this Circular uses which do not seem to reflect the rigorism of Sulpician and 19<sup>th</sup> century French spirituality learnt at the seminary of St Irénée.

In the Circular “A Revolution of the Heart” we are advised

*“The spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat lies at the heart of any fresh and compelling identity for his Little Brothers.*

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<sup>154</sup> I am referring to the Life of Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat by one of his first disciples Br John Baptist Furet,” Bi-centenary edition 1989, General House, Rome. In his work, “Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality,” Br Andre Lanfrey writes: “The Life is a mini-manual of such doctrine.... This doctrine takes on a legislative and catechetical tone in the founding texts of the congregation.” P. 24

<sup>155</sup> There are many studies that attest and verify this intention of the author. Eg., see Marist Notebooks, N° 1, June 1990 and N° 2, June 1991 For the article “ *Frere Jean Baptiste Furet, biographer of M. Champagnat*” by Br Paul Sester and also Marist Notebooks N° 6, 1994 “*Critical Introduction to the Life of Father Champagnat*,” p. 33 by Br Andre Lanfrey.

<sup>156</sup> In an article entitled “*Outline of a Critical Introduction to the Life of Father Champagnat*” published in Marist Notebooks No 6 December 1994, pp 33 – 60, Br Andre Lanfrey after comprehensive discussion reached this conclusion: “And so it seems obvious to me that the Life of Father Champagnat, while it remains of great value as the fundamental source on the origins of the Institute, can only reveal its richness if the reader treats it as a literary genre of hagiography starting off with an original sanctity which develops throughout the life of the predestined individual. On the other hand the reader must keep in mind the character and position of the author....by making him (Champagnat) lose an excessively sacred and dehumanizing dimension, it also keeps the body which is perpetuating his memory from getting bogged down in an original myth that is disembodied and exists outside of time, something that is quite the contrary of a healthy spiritual vision.”

<sup>157</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey *Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality* Chap 1, P.165

*Understandably, Marcellin's way of going to God will need to take on a 21<sup>st</sup>, rather than a 19<sup>th</sup>, century face today. However, at its core will be the same attitudes and orientations that guided him in his own spiritual journey.*<sup>158</sup>

This may well be so but it would seem that such expressions of affection, as quoted above, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in some cultures at least and in a current climate of suspicion, especially amongst males would be far more guarded and reserved.

A glance backward at the development of spirituality, from the time of Marcellin until today, might help to highlight the distinctions. Of course such a brief summary is highly generalized, but it can be helpful, nevertheless. The author of the following extract is contrasting the spirituality that developed from Saint Sulpice and became 19<sup>th</sup> century French spirituality, with the modern insights and outlook that developed from the Second Vatican Council.

*“An overview of the contrast between the seventeenth and late-twentieth century understandings will set the stage for a more detailed exploration. In the seventeenth century the concern was the Incarnate Word; today the concern is the Incarnation. The emphasis then was on God present among us: the emphasis today is on the human Jesus Christ. The seventeenth century response to the mystery of the Incarnate Word was adoration; the appropriate activity was servitude. The result was a certain demeaning of self in the face of the exaltation of God. The twentieth century response to the Incarnation is the optimistic embrace of our common human condition: the appropriate activity is self-assertiveness, self-development, and service in this world. Although these contrasts are drawn in stark form, the identification of the basic values in each position is accurate. It is ironic that focus on one and the same Christian mystery can have such opposite effects. On one hand, it results in deemphasizing the importance of this world and exalting the otherworldly. On the other, it results in legit-*

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<sup>158</sup> Br Sean Sammon, “A Revolution of the Heart”, p. 20

*imating concern for this world and its fulfilment and deemphasizing the other worldly.*"<sup>159</sup>

We expect, then, that Marcellin is writing out of a contemporary frame of reference, but the language (especially vocabulary: "affectueux", "ten-dresse") he uses here, directed to the Brothers rather than to God, seems anything but remote, distant and rigorous. This could be partly explained by the spirituality influences with which he was associated during his years of training. In an article entitled "A Mother-Society of the Society of Mary: the Friends of the Cord in the Seminary of Saint Irénée (1805-1816)" Br. Andre Lanfrey cogently argues that the so-called

*"secret society, one among many, of the Friends of the Cord counted at least eight men associated with the foundation of the Marists and that the spirituality experienced there had a considerable influence on them. So we have writing from an associated text, the 'Association of Divine Love' which enjoins that each member 'will see himself as introduced by God to make up for the faults of those who do not love him. As an essential point, his zeal must carry him to communicate his ardour to his neighbour, to win for God hearts who will forever love him, and especially those of his condition, and more particularly yet the young ecclesiastics, destined as they will be by their state to be given fully to God, to make him known, loved and glorified by the entire world.'*<sup>160</sup> *The text speaks of zeal and ardour, virtues which Marcellin certainly exhibits. However, not only are such virtues evident, but in addition, Marcellin also expresses a 'paternal affection.'*"

Perhaps we experience here an ambiguity and internal contradiction in the Circular. On the one hand Marcellin writes of "notre tendresse paternelle" and "Chéris et bien-aimés, vous êtes continuellement l'objet spécial de notre tendre sollicitude," and on the other hand he writes, "remplir tous

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<sup>159</sup> Daniel A. Helminiak, Catholicism's Spiritual Limbo: A Shift in "Incarnational" Spirituality. **Spiritual Today**, Winter 1987, Vol. 39, pp. 331-348.

<sup>160</sup> Andrey Lanfrey, *A Mother-Society of Mary? The "Friend of the Cord" in the Seminary of Saint Irene (1805 -1816), A private paper delivered at the Patrimony Course, Rome, 2008.*

les devoirs de notre état avec fidélité, travailler tous les jours à détacher notre coeur des créatures pour le donner à Jésus et à Marie.” How can we love (someone) and be detached or indifferent, at the same time? Br Andre Lanfrey points out in his paper entitled “Marist Spirituality”<sup>161</sup> that in a divided spirituality there is a difficulty in reconciling the perception of God from a strong rigorist stance with a perception of God as merciful, loving, forgiving and kind. It seems that Marcellin starts the Circular in a burst of enthusiastic affection, but then retreats into a “responsible” didactic mode. A similar dichotomy may be evinced in the Circular of 1837 where in presenting the “Rule” to the Brothers, Marcellin writes, “I do not intend to oblige you under pain of sin [less rigorous and more merciful] to observe each article in particular; however, I will tell you [more directive] that you will enjoy the peace and consolation of your state in life only to the extent that you are very exact [greater rigour] in observing your entire Rule.”<sup>162</sup>

A reference here to the model of Transactional Analysis, as devised by Eric Berne,<sup>163</sup> may also give us an insight into how effective Marcellin’s strategy of motivation is likely to have been in this instance. From the vocabulary and expressions found in the letter, the strategy can obviously be a Parent to Child interaction according to Berne’s analysis.<sup>164</sup> Marcellin uses the words “tendresse paternelle” and proceeds to give a list of instructions preceded by “Nous souhaitons et nous désirons...” The receptors of the transaction are “nous très chers frères, religieux,” and significantly “enfants de Marie.” (Cf also the Circular of 12<sup>th</sup> August 1837: “my dear *children* in Jesus and Mary”<sup>165</sup>) The Transactional model would postulate that there is no “universal ego state” therefore we cannot accurately predict the response of an individual. Moreover, we are considering the written word here when the transactional model most often refers to in-

<sup>161</sup> Br Andrey Lanfrey, *The Marist Spirituality-From the Fight to God’s Glory and Mary’s Honour to Joy and Abandonment to God*.

<sup>162</sup> Paul Sester, *Letters*, p. 187.

<sup>163</sup> Transactional analysis, commonly known as TA to its adherents, is an integrative approach to the theory of psychology and psychotherapy. Integrative because it has elements of psychoanalytic, Humanist and Cognitive approaches. It was developed by Canadian-born US psychiatrist Eric Berne during the late 1950s. For further information see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional\\_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional_analysis).

<sup>164</sup> At any given time, a person experiences and manifests their personality through a mixture of behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Typically, according to TA, there are three ego-states that people consistently use: Parent, Adult, Child. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional\\_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional_analysis)

<sup>165</sup> Paul Sester, *Letters*, p. 248.

terpersonal spoken exchanges. However, in this case we can categorize Marcellin's intentions as nurturing and structuring and therefore positive qualities of a Parent transaction. He identifies with the reader, "les devoirs de notre état" and "détacher notre coeur." If the reader of the circular responds from an ego state of the Child and is cooperative then the transaction would be considered reciprocal or complementary. If however, the reader responds as an Parent to Parent the transaction it might be considered as a "crossed transaction" and is less likely to be successful. The reader might think "Why are you lecturing me as if I am a child." That is, resistant (negative) or "Okay, you're the boss," compliant (also negative.)

So let us further seek to discover Marcellin's own personality and motivation beneath, or perhaps amid, the religious and cultural conditioning.

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#### **4. "UNE TENDRE AFFECTION"**

The expression, "une tendre affection," occurs later in the circular and, taking the phrase as a means to explore the psychology and spirituality of Marcellin, I wish to look more closely at the words in an attempt to understand an attitude, an orientation which, though taken from the past, is relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I choose this phrase in particular because it is used in the context of "ministry" which as noted above is a key concept in our provincial chapter resolutions. Marcellin wrote:

*"Nous désirons et nous souhaitons qu'à l'exemple de Jésus notre Divin Modèle, vous ayez une tendre affection pour les enfants. Rompez-leur avec un saint zèle le pain spirituel de la Religion. Faites tous vos efforts pour les former à la piété, et pour graver profondément dans leurs jeunes cœurs des sentiments de religion qui ne s'en effacent jamais. »*

What does Marcellin really wish to convey when he chooses to use this phrase "une tendre affection"? Consider the linguistic and semantic foundations of this expression, psychological and emotional implications and nuances, historical and cultural emphases, the spiritual, moral and theological associations and relevance. The example of transactional analysis given above is possibly relevant here.

One may also ask if it is possible for one person to regulate the feelings, or elicit feelings in another? Marcellin wrote, “Nous désirons (We desire:- Note the use of first person plural indicating a distancing from the more personally involved “I”) and “nous souhaitons” (we wish for/we hope that:- note the repetition of the same idea giving it greater emphasis and also that this same expression was also used previously in this same Circular) that...”vous ayez” (you may have:- expressing the subjunctive form, less assertive, of the French verb “avoir”). It would seem that a certain amount of moral and emotional cajoling, although in a less assertive way, is reflected in the manner by which this idea is expressed, especially when invoking the example of “Jesus our divine model” to support it. A person feels what a person feels, and this might be considered the last bastion of integrity and individuality (“Parent to Parent” in the Transactional Analysis model), or an interchange might take place: “Yes, but as I see it...” (Adult to Parent).

It may be noted that, in the following paragraphs of his Circular, Marcellin continues to use the subjunctive form, employing the particle “que” when enjoining a series of prescriptions: “Que l’union et la charité.. que ceux qui doivent obéir... que ceux qui commandent... qu’un vrai zèle...”

At the same time, it must be admitted that today there are various schools of thought regarding how emotional responses occur. Debate on this point is ongoing but represents a major distinction between what are called ‘cognitive’ theories of emotions and ‘non-cognitive’ theories of emotions, where non-cognitive theories regard some other feature of emotions, such as bodily responses to be essential.

Presumably, from a “cognitive perspective”, we could interpret the use of the phrase “une tendre affection” as invoking an attitude prompted by an act of the will rather than attempting to elicit a spontaneous feeling<sup>166</sup>.

That is, the Brothers will be inspired and motivated to “make every effort” through an intellectual assent of the will, the emotional energy to act

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<sup>166</sup>For further discussion on this point see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion#Defining\\_Emotion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion#Defining_Emotion) Also note: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: “Many emotions are specified in terms of propositions: one can’t be angry with someone unless one believes that person guilty of some offense; one can’t be envious unless one believes that someone else has something good in her possession. Proponents of cognitivism universalize this feature of certain emotions, and maintain that in order to have an emotion, one must always have some sort of attitude directed at a proposition.” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotion/#1>

arising with or from this assent. While the Brothers may be well intentioned, there is at the same time, the reality of the “sub-conscious” to be considered. Patricia Greenspan who first turned her attention to the problems of emotional ambivalences noted that; “emotions play an important role in both determining and in undermining rational thought.”<sup>167</sup>

As Br Avit illustrates in the Annals of the Institute, not all the children the Brothers ministered to inspired the spontaneous response of “une tendre affection.”<sup>168</sup> Regarding inspiration and motivation, a Brother operating from a duty bound orientation would act out of compliance, possibly to please the superior. A Brother who internalises Marcellin’s wish could respond and act out of conviction and a Brother who responds to the principle and feels deeply about it will be passionately motivated, whether or not Marcellin or anyone else proposed the idea.

The contextual environment for this phrase is obviously religious and spiritual. Following this phrase in question Marcellin wrote, “Break for them with holy zeal.” Previously in a letter to Brothers Antoine and Gonzague in Millery, Rhone 4<sup>th</sup> February 1831, Marcellin had written: “how he (the Saviour of the world) ordered his disciples to let the children come near his divine person. Tell your children that they should be very happy to be as dear to Jesus Christ as they are. Yes, this God of goodness loves them to the point of delighting to be with them; they have only to open their hearts and Jesus and Mary will fill them.”<sup>169</sup> Without doubt such advice arises from praying and meditating on such Gospel texts as we find in Luke 9:47 “Jesus, perceiving the reasoning of their hearts, took a little child, and set him by his side,” and Luke 9:48 “and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me. Whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For whoever is least among you all, this one will be great.’”

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<sup>167</sup> Patricia Greenspan, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/-emotion/#1>

<sup>168</sup> Some examples among many occur when Br Avit writes in the following vein: “The next day he [Fr Chamagnat] visited the classes and found the children talkative, undisciplined and insolent. When one of them saw Father, he yelled, “Hey, look at the big priest!” (p .5) Pupils who were lazy, vicious, lacking in both piety and intelligence. - Troubles came also from the populace who, urged on by these same Voltairians, ran down the school when talking to the parents of boarders and incited the boarders to rebel. A stepmother, who had given her child a severe beating, accused the teachers of doing it.

<sup>169</sup> Sester: *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol 1. p. 58



So Marcellin is not merely giving advice to others. Elsewhere he expresses his own love for children. In a letter to Br Barthelemy, he wrote: “Tell your children that Jesus and Mary love them all very much: those who are good resemble Jesus Christ, who is infinitely good; those who are not yet good, because they will become so. Tell them that the Blessed Virgin loves them, because she is the mother of all the children in our schools. And tell them that I love them very much too; and that I never once say Mass without thinking of you and your dear children.”<sup>170</sup>

The two above quotations bear a striking resemblance to a passage from the spiritual testament of Dom Augustin de Lestrangé: “My tenderest affection to our dear lay Brothers and those of the Third Order whom I will never forget. Tell our dear little children... how much I have their salvation at heart and how ready I am to do everything necessary to save them.” This passage is quoted in an article, “The Letter from Aiguebelle; The first Society of Mary and the Trappist Model.”<sup>171</sup> The author sets out the influence of both the Jesuits and the Trappists on the many new religious congregations founded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The language and sentiments expressed by Marcellin bear a close resemblance to that of Dom Augustin and suggest a derivative influence. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the sentiments are without sincerity. Moreover, we can note the altruism expressed here in that the “love” expressed is not seeking a reciprocal response but aims “for the grace to imprint the love of God strongly in their young hearts.”<sup>172</sup>

Similarly, in his letter to Br Euthyme, Marcellin states: “Remember, too, how important your beginners’ class is. It is up to you to train in their religion all the children that you teach. It is up to you to open or to close heaven to them. So my dear friend, aim to edify them, pray for the grace to imprint the love of God strongly in their young hearts.”<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Sester: *Letters*, p. 48, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1830.

<sup>171</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey, *The Letter of Aiguebelle-The First Society of Mary and the Trappist Model*.

<sup>172</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, on this topic: “Many emotions, such as love, necessarily involve a target, or actual particular at which they are directed. Others, such as sadness, do not. On the other hand, although a number of aspects of the loved one may motivate attentional focus, efforts to find a propositional object for love have been unconvincing. (Kraut, 1986, Rorty, 1988).” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotion/#1>

<sup>173</sup> Sester: *Letters*, p. 102, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1837

In addition Br Aidant wrote, “How often I heard him speak in his conferences, giving advice to the Brothers when they came together at the Mother House during the holidays, about very solid and practical points on the respect which they should have for the children.”<sup>174</sup>

This love or tender affection for the children has a spiritual (or even a spiritualized) motivation – a Gospel imperative and we might even say an “imperative of our charism”. Marcellin instructs Br Euthyme to “pray for the grace to imprint the love of God” A grace (“unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification”).<sup>175</sup> But if grace builds on nature<sup>176</sup>, it would seem to me that Marcellin employs this phrase not only out of duty and conviction but from his own heartfelt compassion. Such compassion inspires the energy (zeal) that leads to action and the desire to motivate the Brothers to a similar “imitation of Christ”.

We run the risk here of being edified into a somnambulant catatonic state by such sanctity, holiness and piety. In our present day, confronted daily as we are with the slogans of advertising, such well known and oft repeated maxims of the Founder such as “I cannot see a child without wanting to teach him catechism, to make him realize how much Jesus Christ has loved him” there is the danger and even the likelihood that, no matter how apt and respected the aphorism may be, it too can slip into the category of slogan and thus lose its impact. Therefore, there is a need to rescue such foundational thoughts and inspirations from banality. One way to do this would be to look at likely sources of motivation that contributed to such an energetic response from Marcellin. However, such a readiness to respond to Gospel invitations (“Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me” Luke 9:48) does not happen in a vacuum and I suggest that there are a number of contributing facts that help us to understand, empathize with and thereby emulate Marcellin’s generous response to the Gospel.

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<sup>174</sup> Br Aidant, *SUMM* 193, Marist Notebooks No 13, July 1998, p .11.

<sup>175</sup> Merriam-Webster.

<sup>176</sup> Richard P. McBrien, “For Aquinas, grace builds on nature. It does not replace nature, much less destroy it. Grace sanctifies, elevates and renews nature. Grace also works through nature. We are not only temples of the Holy Spirit, but instruments as well. While God is the first cause of all that is, we are secondary, or instrumental, causes; collaborating with God in extending the boundaries of God’s reign of justice, love, and peace.” National Catholic Reporter, Feb 11, 2000. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1141/is\\_15\\_36/ai\\_59607730](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_15_36/ai_59607730)

In the official English translation of Marcellin's letter, the phrase 'une tendre affection' is rendered as 'deep affection' and I wonder if this translation sufficiently conveys the original meaning and intention. It seems curious to me that the translator chooses to use the word "deep" rather than the English "tender." Harrop's French-English Dictionary renders the French "tendre" as "tender, soft, delicate, affectionate, loving, moving." The word "deep" does not appear. An English dictionary<sup>177</sup> gives the many usages and meanings of the English word "tender," including "showing care, considerate, solicitous," which I would take to be the most likely and relevant. Here we may note a perceived difficulty of the expression "une tendre affection" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century man, especially when expressing a relationship of an adult male to a child. My speculation is that the 21<sup>st</sup> century man has suffered a loss of innocence, or at least a more manifest loss of innocence (the modern means of public media being what they are), with the result that such an expression has become suspect and susceptible to misinterpretation. Could this possibly explain why the translator used the oblique word "deep" (often associated with the intellect as in "deep in thought") rather than the more relational word "tender"? The same translator has no problem to translate: "Je suis avec l'affection la plus tendre, votre tout dévoué confrère," as "I am, with most tender affection, your very devoted confrere." From a letter of Father Colin to his confreres and also in a letter to Br Francois: "l'assurance de la tendre affection" translated as "the assurance of the tender affection" (28<sup>th</sup> August 1836, PS 67).

It is well at this time to have a definition also of the word "affection" which the Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines as "a moderate feeling of emotion, a tender attachment." In the context of our discussion this would not suggest sentimentality which is an excess showing of affection. In the "Avis, Leçons, Sentences," Br Jean Baptiste reports Marcellin as advising the Brothers: "There are several ways to spoil a child: you spoil his mind with exaggerated praise; you spoil his heart by paying too much attention to him and showing him too much affection."<sup>178</sup> All things in moderation.

<sup>177</sup> Merriam-Webster.

<sup>178</sup> "Avis, Leçons, Sentences" was a work first published in 1868 for the instruction of the Brothers. It was written by Br Jean Baptiste. The new English version was translated by Br Leonard Voegtle under the title of "Listen to the Words of your Father- Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions of Marcellin Champagnat."

Yet, at the same time we know that Marcellin, far from being distant and unaffectionate was capable of great warmth as testified by a number of Brothers such as Sylvestre, Camille, and Callinique who wrote: “Nothing can describe the goodness of Father in the confessional. During my confession, he held me in his arms, as was his custom, and hugged me affectionately against his heart.”<sup>179</sup>

Marcellin uses this expression “une tendre affection” only three times in all of his extant letters and Circulars. The first time is in a letter to Fr Francois Mazelier in 1835 where he writes “Veuillez croire, Monsieur, que toute la société vous porte la plus **tendre affection** et la plus vive gratitude pour tout ce que vous avez la bonté de faire en sa faveur” (June 1835 PS60) ; and secondly in a letter to Br Francois in 1836 “Vous voyez mon adresse si vous avez à m’écrire. Recevez tous l’assurance de **la tendre affection** avec laquelle mes chers ff” ; and thirdly in the example being discussed here. In two further letters to Fr Mazelier in 1837 he writes “votre tendresse” and “votre tendresse paternelle.” There are only eight further uses of the word “tendre” in Marcellin’s letters and none in the Circulars. The word is usually used in expressions such as “notre tendre mere,” with the exception of a letter to Br Barthelemy in 1830, where he writes “ces tendres enfants.” (The English translation of “tendre” on this occasion is given as “impressionable.”<sup>180</sup> Yet if Marcellin had meant impressionable he could have used the same word in French.)

Furthermore, the word “tendre” is seldom used in the extant available letters (passive letters) addressed to Marcellin, appearing once as used by Father Rigard, SJ (“des sentiments tendres”) and twice by Fr Courveille in his letter of 1826 from Aiguebelle. In writing to Marcellin, Fr Colin uses the expression “mère si tendre” a number of times and “tendre affection” on at least one occasion. This could suggest that such expressions were used in correspondence among the early Marist founders. However, such a paucity of examples would seem to indicate that the expression is not one of conventional or common usage, while on the other hand greetings and farewells are couched in polite language expressing kind regard and warmth of feel-

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<sup>179</sup> Br Leonard Voegtle fms, Postulator General. *Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat*, p. 16, Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi.

<sup>180</sup> Paul Sester, *Letters*, p. 48.

ing such as; “Je vous laisse dans les bras de Jésus et de Marie,” and “J’ai l’honneur ‘être avec respect votre dévoué serviteur.”<sup>181</sup>

A conclusion can be drawn that in using this expression Marcellin was not merely expressing a pious conventional cliché but expressing a personal degree of feeling and sympathy that was sincere and appropriate. Marcellin is not telling others to have what he does not possess himself. At the same time it is interesting to note that he uses the phrase “une tendre affection” in his Circular of January 1836. This Circular is unique, excluding of course the “Last Will and Testament” of which this Circular is a forerunner, in the personal level of feeling that Marcellin demonstrates. It has the tone of optimism and hope.<sup>182</sup>

Furthermore, in Circulars after January 1836 two points may be noted. The first is that, although Marcellin frequently expresses his affection for the Brothers, he does not specifically mention the children. The second point is that, as the Congregation grows in numbers, the Circulars increasingly become concerned with administrative matters. However, in the “Spiritual Testament” one reads, “You fulfill the function of Guardian Angels to the children confided to your care. Show to these pure spirits a special homage of love, respect, and confidence.”<sup>183</sup>

For many of us, the problem with this “charismatic imperative” is that, while we have the responsibility of being guardians, we are not angels. Marcellin was well aware of this fact according to Br Jean Baptiste who, in “Avis, Leçons, Sentence, reports Fr. Champagnat as offering the following advice to the young Brothers: “A saint is a weak person and prone to sin like us. Many people imagine that saints do not share in Adam’s fall, that virtue is natural to them, and that they do good effortlessly and painlessly. That is totally erroneous. The saints are people like us in the sense that they have a

<sup>181</sup> From a letter written from Belley by Father Colin to Fr Champagnat and confreres, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1831.

<sup>182</sup> In his work, “Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality,” Br Andre Lanfrey writes, “Of all the Circulars, that of 19<sup>th</sup> of January 1836 commands out attention. After a long paragraph overflowing with tenderness, Fr Champagnat exhorted his Brothers to give themselves to Jesus and Mary, and he outlined for them a veritable program for holiness: humility in obedience, charity from the side of superiors, for everyone, zeal for perfection through exact observance of the Rule, finally a reminder of the heavenly glory that awaits those who persevere to the end.”

<sup>183</sup> See *Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers*, p. 143, Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi.

nature prone to evil like ours; they find in themselves the seeds of all vices, all passions, and they have to struggle against the same enemies we do.”<sup>184</sup>

While seeming stringent, Marcellin may be very wise in protecting the Brothers when his Rule of 1837 insists:

*“A Brother will never take a child aside, for any reason whatsoever; when needed one should do it always in the presence of one of the Brothers or at least of four children. A Brother will never permit himself any familiarity with them, such as taking them by the hand, or anything similar. Any Brother who witnesses those sorts of things, be it between a Brother with a child or with another Brother, is obliged to warn the Superior as soon as possible.”*<sup>185</sup>

Contemporary comments regarding the moral conduct of the time would suggest that inappropriate behaviour, sexual or otherwise was not unknown.

The first prospectus written in 1824 made this observation:

*“Christian instruction to-day is entirely neglected in country districts or replaced by anti-Christian instruction. In the winter time, men without morals and without religion, by their immoral conduct, their impious speech and their corrupt books, spread irreligion and anti-monarchist sentiments throughout the countryside (where the police are few).”*

A more muted assessment was made from a secular witness. Br Avit recorded M. Fourcroy, the school investigator as reporting:

*“After mingling with country people and visiting the Departments I have become convinced that the great majority of people need religion, a form of worship and priests... To believe, as some modern philosophers do, that extensive propaganda can destroy religious prejudices is an error - an error into which I too was led under their influ-*

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<sup>184</sup> “Avis, Lecons, Sentences” (English Translation), p. 173.

<sup>185</sup> The Rule of 1837 was the first Rule given to the Brothers by Marcellin. Previous to that there had been a development of “prospectus” and “statuts.”

*ence... The war in La Vendée has given modern Governments a good lesson, one that the pretensions of philosophy would wish in vain to destroy. Now is not the time to oppose this national inclination. Parents are not sending their children to schools where the masters give no instruction in religion... They demand such instruction from those whom they pay to teach it... They hope to find in the masters better teaching, better moral character and religious principles in which they firmly believe...*<sup>186</sup>

The writings of contemporary novelists such as Stendhal 1783-1842 (Le Rouge et le Noir)<sup>187</sup> and Honore de Balzac 1799 – 1850 (Louis Lambert) would suggest that they and the characters of their novels, contemporaries of Marcellin, had a less than clinical attitude towards the Commandments. Neither is it surprising that Marcellin organized an auto-da-fe on certain literature when he “set out to rid the parish of bad books, widely disseminated in its precincts,”<sup>188</sup> knowing that certain scurrilous literature was in circulation.

With regard to Marcellin’s expressed affection towards the children, we have also the evidence of contemporaries who, while admirers and followers of Marcellin, remain credible witnesses. In the “Teachers Guide,” the phrase ‘**tendre affection**’ occurs only once and that is in the introduction to the Guide by Br Francois who writes: “The love of God which filled his heart, and **the tender affection** he had for children, revealed to him all their wants and the means of relieving them, as also the secret of winning their confidence, inclining them to virtue, inspiring them with piety and developing all the powers of their soul. This talent which, unknown to himself, he possessed in a high degree and the ardent zeal which animated him for the sanctification of children, and which he sought to impart to his Brothers in his daily instructions on the subject, are the features we have here endeavoured to trace for you.”<sup>189</sup>

<sup>186</sup> This quotation appears in “the Annals of Br Avit”, No 64. The Annals is a mass of historical material collected by Br Avit and written down from 1880 onwards. Avit was admitted to the Hermitage on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1838 and therefore knew Marcellin personally.

<sup>187</sup> The principal protagonist of this novel, Julien Sorel, sets out to become a priest with less than worthy motives and soon becomes involved in a number of illicit amorous affairs.

<sup>188</sup> Br Jean Baptiste, *The Life of Father Champagnat*, p. 53.

<sup>189</sup> Br Jean Baptiste: *The Teachers Guide*, a manual written for the Brothers and published in 1856.

Even if we do become convinced that Marcellin possessed an appropriate “tendre affection” for the young, there remain contemporary difficulties with this linguistic expression and its appropriateness.

In the circular “A Revolution of the Heart,” under the subtitle: “Elements Shaping an Incarnational Spirituality Today”, we read, “Passion marked Champagnat’s relationship with the Lord Jesus. In our own day and age we long for a similar experience of God, though we understand that it may differ in some ways from the founder’s own.”<sup>190</sup> Br Sean goes on to illustrate that the concept of passion is ambiguous. This is, perhaps, a crucial idea for us to understand when we move from the realms of duty and conviction to actions inspired by passion. It is worth noting here that our dictionary definition, as given above, of “passion” has (among others) “ardent affection” whereas Marcellin’s phrase is “une tendre affection.” It is well to make the distinction.

In recent years, all of us have suffered from the adverse publicity and a possible lowering of self-esteem stemming from the scandal of sexual abuse of minors. It would seem that in 19<sup>th</sup> century France, the expression “une tendre affection” would have been greeted with approval and seen as laudable, since Marcellin feels free to use it on a number of occasions. Such an expression in today’s climate might arouse fear, suspicion and misunderstanding especially in less populous societies where transgressions have been highly publicised. The possibility is that many of us may now feel guilty until proven innocent.<sup>191</sup> Not that we have transgressed in this way, but because we all experience the ambiguity of passion and have learnt to distrust it.<sup>192</sup> Because the struggle to remain sane and balanced amid the natural urges of sexuality is a private one, with or without the company of a spiritual director or companion, we tend to fight this battle in the privacy of our own

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<sup>190</sup> Br Sean Sammon: *A Revolution of the Heart*, p. 50.

<sup>191</sup> For instance, in New Zealand as in other countries it has been difficult to recruit male teachers for primary schools. A reason given by possible candidates is the highly publicised accusations against teacher misconduct.

<sup>192</sup> **Collective guilt, or guilt by association**, is the controversial collectivist idea that a group of humans can bear guilt above and beyond the guilt of particular members, and hence an individual holds responsibility for what other members of his group have done, even if he himself hasn’t been party to what the group had done.

**Collective responsibility** is a concept or doctrine, according to which individuals are to be held responsible for other people’s actions by tolerating, ignoring, or harbouring them, without actively collaborating in these actions.



hearts.<sup>193</sup> The Circular, “Fidelity,” by Br Basilio, deals with this idea, among others, at some length.<sup>194</sup> Suggestions of weaknesses in this arena or, as Br Sean writes, “accept the fact that we are unfinished”, can fill us with feelings of shame and embarrassment and drain us of the energy we need to remain active in the apostolate. Br Sean points out, “Linking sexuality to passion in anyone’s prayer life would not have been conventional in Marcellin’s day... Sexuality captures our basic need to reach out, both physically and spiritually, to embrace others.” And: “However, we also realize that, similar to spirituality, sexuality wears more than one face. When it gives us a zest for living, contributes to romance in a relationship and is the source of unusual courage and heroic generosity, this same energy can also lead us into self destructive and dehumanizing behaviour. On those occasions when we lose our sense of balance, sexuality contributes to our running about and out of control.”<sup>195</sup> There follows the advice for a sense of discipline, a capacity for honest self appraisal, an ability to tolerate solitude and a sense of humour.” Most of us have been trained in asceticism, joyful or otherwise, to ensure our behaviour remains within bounds. This environmental threat of misunderstanding adds fear to the equation.

A study entitled “The Affective Life of Marcellin Champagnat: Celibacy, Love and Friendship”,<sup>196</sup> has been published in *Marist Notebooks*. After studying the letters and writings of Marcellin, the author reached the following conclusion.

*“Celibacy, as lived by Marcellin, was closely bound up with his love for all men and with his closeness to each person in particular. He was a man of unsophisticated manner, capable of cultivating deep friendships and candid relationships with those around him. From the texts of many of his letters you can deduce the deep love and friendship that Marcellin has for his correspondents where the ac-*

<sup>193</sup> For example, Br Jean Baptiste writes in *Meditations sur les Grandes Verités*, AFM 5201.21, in the 57<sup>th</sup> meditation, “De l’impureté”, he acknowledges: “La fidélité dans les tentations; si vous avez de fréquentes tentations, ne vous en étonnez pas. Les saints en avaient, ainsi que vous ; c’est leur fidélité à y résister qui les a rendus saints ».

<sup>194</sup> Br Basilio Guzman, Circular: *Fidelity*, Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi.

<sup>195</sup> Br Sean Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart*, p. 50.

<sup>196</sup> *The Affective Life of Father Champagnat*, author undisclosed, *Marist Notebooks*, December 1994, No 6, p. 71.

*tivity of his heart shows through. The secret of his efforts at formation and of his system of pedagogy lies in love, a combination of tenderness and paternal insistence. His apostolic action is summed up in the words, compassion and love for all men.”*

The same author gleans from Marcellin’s letters recommendations for perseverance in celibacy and chastity. “Mary will keep you chaste as an angel.”<sup>197</sup> Among the means he suggests for cultivating purity and chastity the following elements figure. Think about the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, always keep yourselves busy and enthusiastic in your teaching, obey your superior and follow his advice, observe the Rule faithfully, practice the presence of God and have a great devotion to Mary.”<sup>198</sup>

Regarding the last, we may note Brother Sean’s comment: “Here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we as an Institute need a new appreciation of Mary, one in keeping with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and, at the same time respectful of the varied and rich traditions that are so evident among us. It goes without saying that this woman of courage and strength who was so important to Marcellin, should have a central place in our spirituality, just as she did in his.”<sup>199</sup>

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## **5.EVIDENCE OF WITNESSES**

As indicated previously, the credibility of Marcellin’s attitude and practice in this positive regard for the children whom we are called to serve is supported by the evidence of his contemporaries who are his witnesses. From an historical perspective these witnesses are conveniently categorised as major, minor and indirect.

The first *major* witness is Brother Jean Baptiste. While the hagiographical intent of the his writings is recognized, and while the “reader must keep in mind the character and position of the author who lets his spirituality, his culture, his ideological options be seen throughout the text, and these are

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<sup>197</sup> Sester, *Letters*, p. 259.

<sup>198</sup> *The Affective Life of Father Champagnat*, p. 72.

<sup>199</sup> Br Sean Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart*, p. 55.

not necessarily those of the Founder,”<sup>200</sup> in his many writings with regard to Marcellin’s attitude to the children and his expectations for his Brothers, there is a congruity with the evidence in the first source material as in the letters quoted above. “Although Father Champagnat loved all the children, he particularly loved the youngest ones whom he called “little angels”, on account of their innocence.”<sup>201</sup> At the same time, he remained practical, giving wise instructions regarding order and discipline in the classroom. “Be fathers to them rather than teachers; they will respect you and obey you without difficulty. The spirit of a Brothers’ school ought to be a family spirit.” In the “Avis, Leçons, Sentences,” there is a whole chapter dedicated to “The respect we owe to a child.”

The second *major* witness is Br. Sylvestre. Writing in a somewhat extravagant style, Br. Sylvestre, like the first major witness, reveals a hagiographical purpose. He comments in a way similar to Br. Jean Baptiste in writing of Marcellin’s days as a seminarian:

*“After his relatives, his main concern was for the children. He gathered them together to instruct them in the catechism and also taught them how to pray. His wise and fatherly words were principally aimed at inspiring in them the horror of sin and making them love the child Jesus. He was loved, respected and revered by all; just the thought of him, said one of them, was enough to stop me offending God.”*<sup>202</sup>  
*“The particular concern which he had for the children and the love which he offered them, combined with his air of goodness and his rare talent for teaching the basics of the Christian doctrine gave the children whom he catechised a strong desire to go to catechism classes.”*<sup>203</sup>

In the Annals, Br Avit quotes from Marcellin, “Oh! if only we knew the price of a soul, if we knew how much Jesus loves children and with what ardour He desires their salvation, far from finding class work painful and

<sup>200</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey, “A Critical Introduction to the Life of Father Champagnat”, *Marist Note-books* No 6, December 1994, p. 60.

<sup>201</sup> Br Jean Baptiste, *The Life of Father Champagnat*, p. 523.

<sup>202</sup> Br Sylvestre, *A Short Life of Father Champagnat*.”

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

complaining about the difficulties of our state, we would be ready to sacrifice our life to obtain for these tender children the benefit of Christian education.”<sup>204</sup>

The *minor* witnesses are those who give testimonies in which the Founder is the central focus. They are called “minor” in contrast to the extended or “major” testimonies of people such as Brs Jean Baptiste, Sylvestre and Avit. Many of these testimonies have been recorded particularly as testimony for the Beatification, and it suffices to give a single example here, although there is a wide and rich selection. Marcellin’s affection for the young was not a sentiment but had a practical outcome, as the testimony of Marie-Francoise Bache evidences; “I have only a confused memory of having seen him when I was a child. But I heard my mother speak of him often; she helped him in his good works. Several times she picked the vermin off the poor children whom he took in, whom he taught, and several of whom became his Brothers.”

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## 6. MARCELLIN’S STORY

Knowing that the story of Marcellin story might well be a further stimulus towards enthusiasm, Br Sean writes, “Any religious order worth the name has an obligation to offer its members a particular way of following the Lord, a unique approach to self-transcendence. And that is why stories about Marcellin and our early Brothers are so important.”<sup>205</sup>

So we might well ask several questions. What were some of the contributing factors that formed Marcellin into the person he became? How can being familiar with the factors give us understanding and insight into our own lives and assist us to be more motivated and effective in ministry? What environmental factors nurtured the generous disposition that encouraged him to accept the invitation to become a priest especially in the face of difficulty and opposition? Family and education may help to provide some answers.

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<sup>204</sup> Br Avit: *Annals*, No.179, On the Spirit of Faith.

<sup>205</sup> Br Sean Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart*, Introduction, p. 7.

In his *Life of the Founder*, Br Jean Baptiste writes “Often during his life, he was heard to speak of his pious aunt and of his childhood lessons from her. It was clear from the way he spoke, that he was still imbued with the dispositions she had striven to inculcate and that he retained for her a gratitude and love which would last a lifetime. In this way Marcellin was educated and formed to piety by his mother and his virtuous aunt.”<sup>206</sup> The same author describes his home environment: “humble circumstances, in a poor country, in the midst of a population that was deeply religious but uncultured and uneducated.”<sup>207</sup> We must conclude, therefore, that from his earliest years Marcellin responded sensitively and positively to the religious instruction and formation that he received both at home and from the church. While Br Jean Baptiste comments briefly on Marcellin’s father and his contribution to the rearing of Marcellin, Br Avit is rather more prolix and less complimentary.

In contrast to Brother Avit’s views, Brother Andre Lanfrey has a different opinion of the matter. By studying the financial records and historical background of the “Confraternity of the White Penitents established in the Locale of Marhles,” Br Lanfrey is able to deduce convincingly that Jean Baptiste Champagnat (treasurer of the same confraternity from 1779 – 1788) was able to synthesize the devout spirit of the confraternity, which taught “Christian justice, based upon arbitration, restitution and reconciliation,”<sup>208</sup> and the ideals of the 1789 revolution. “Basically, J.B. Champagnat is one of those Christians who came out of the XVIIth and XVIIIth century pastoral activity, followers of a sort of rural and Christian democracy which the Revolution seemed for a while to realize.”<sup>209</sup>

The same author concludes the article with interesting paragraphs on what he considers some behavioural characteristics that Marcellin inherited from his father. Furthermore, if it is true as Wordsworth would have us believe, that “the child is father of the man,”<sup>210</sup> the copious witness to Marcellin’s paternal affection which has already been discussed above and can

<sup>206</sup> Br Jean Baptiste, *The Life of Father Champagnat*, p. 5.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>208</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey, “Catholic Reform and Political Revolution: John Baptiste Champagnat and the Penitents of Mahles.” *Marist Notebooks* No 25, p. 64, Istituto dei Fratelli Maristi.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. *Marist Notebooks* No 25, pp. 37 – 65.

<sup>210</sup> From the English poem entitled “*My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold*” by William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850).

be evidenced from the testimony of many witnesses, would suggest that from his father he experienced a warmth of affection further deepened by the action of grace. “Consequently, it seems to us advisable to nuance the Marist Tradition concerning Jean Baptiste Champagnat, who not only initiated Marcellin to manual work but also formed him to a dynamic religious life concerned with influencing his time.”<sup>211</sup>

It is interesting to note that, in writing of Marcellin’s background and childhood, Br Jean Baptiste writes that “Jean Baptiste Champagnat and his mother, Mary Chirac had six children: three boys and three girls.” Br Avit gives a far more accurate and documented account.<sup>212</sup> That four of his siblings predeceased Marcellin at an early age might suggest that sibling relationships were close and of an affectionate nature. It could well be that as the youngest surviving sibling, Marcellin would have a ready compassion for his peers and hence his discomfort at evidence of ill treatment in his first brief experience of school life. Honore de Balzac, in his semi autobiographical novel, *Louis Lambert* gives a contemporary insight – a graphic account, into methods of class control at the time.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey, *Marist Notebooks No 25*, p. 65.

<sup>212</sup> “Annals.”

<sup>213</sup> *Louis Lambert* is an 1832 novel by French novelist and playwright Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), included in the *Études philosophiques* section of his novel sequence, *La Comédie humaine*. Set mostly in a school at Vendôme, it examines the life and theories of a boy genius fascinated by the Swedish philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772).

“Unless for serious misdemeanors, for which there were other forms of punishment, the strap was regarded at Vendome as the “ultima ratio Patrum.” Exercises forgotten, lessons ill learned, common ill behaviour were sufficiently punished by an imposition, but offended dignity spoke in the master through the strap. Of all the physical torments to which we were exposed, certainly the most acute was that inflicted by this leather instrument, about two fingers wide, applied to our poor little hands with all the strength and all the fury of the administrator. To endure this classical form of correction, the victim knelt in the middle of the room. He had to leave his form and go to kneel down near the master’s desk under the curious and generally merciless eyes of his fellows. To sensitive natures these preliminaries were an introductory torture, like the journey from the Palais de Justice to the Place de Greve which the condemned used to make to the scaffold.”

“Some boys cried out and shed bitter tears before or after the application of the strap; others accepted the infliction with stoic calm; it was a question of nature; but few could control an expression of anguish in anticipation. *Louis Lambert* was constantly enduring the strap, and owed it to a peculiarity of his physiognomy of which he was for a long time quite unconscious. Often he was suddenly roused from a fit of abstraction by the master’s cry, “You are doing nothing!”

In addition, the culture of hearth and home, where the winter nights were traditionally spent in fraternity and neighbourliness, would suggest close family ties and bonding. Later in life, Marcellin gives an indication of this, when he writes a letter of sympathy to his sister-in-law on the death of his brother in March 1838: <sup>214</sup>

*“I very much regret that I could not be with my poor brother during his illness... It seems like only two days ago that we were all together in the same house you are living in and which you will continue to live in for a while longer, God willing. Out of the thirteen or fourteen we were at the time, I am the only one left.”*

Therefore, it is not too much of an exaggeration to speculate that those early formative years provided Marcellin with a sensitivity and insight into the needs of young children. When Br Jean Baptiste’s biography of Marcellin treats of the latter’s childhood, there is a strong didactic element that is worthy of note. At the same time, however, the emphasis upon the piety and pious practices of the home may conceal the more human and affectionate elements of family life which we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would find appealing.

Furthermore, we might note the following: “The word “family” has special force when we consider the circumstances of Champagnat’s upbringing: in the hard life of the massif central, a man found almost his one sure support in the family, the thin soil fields, treacherous weather, sickness, were challenges that the family faced together; together they worked, prospered or starved, rejoiced and sorrowed. Each member of the family was expected to contribute as fully as he could to the group; each from it, could expect acceptance, love, consolation, loyalty, means to advance, support in difficulty.”<sup>215</sup> Little surprising is it that we find written in the Life “The Brothers must never forget that in coming to live in community they form one family, dedicated to love one another as Brothers.”<sup>216</sup> It would not be unusual that in considering the life of Marcellin each of us recalls our own family and upbringing. Furthermore, such reflection enriches our understanding and sympathy for the young persons entrusted to us, especially those in need.

<sup>214</sup> Sester, *Letters*, p. 180.

<sup>215</sup> Br Romuald Gibson, p. 17.

<sup>216</sup> Br Jean Baptiste, “Life”, p. 7.

Other very strong and pertinent influences are also relevant when we consider Marcellin's and our own development. "In Champagnat's lifetime he saw the destruction of the seemingly impregnable Ancien Regime, the degeneration of the Revolution into the excesses of the Terror, the replacing of the Revolution by the autocratic rule of Napoleon, the collapse of the First Empire, and the re-establishing of the Bourbons, the decisive overthrow of Charles X by the 1830 revolution, and the steadily deteriorating hold on French loyalties of Louis Philippe who, eight years after Champagnat's death would be forced to vacate the throne."<sup>217</sup> Regarding the upheaval and insecurities of the times when there was a popular thirst to throw off all control, as soon as it had lost its allure and purpose, the author comments, "Placed in this situation, Champagnat would feel a kinship with our own times where the cry for more and more freedom from restraint is increasingly strident and the society today is the 'permissive society'."<sup>218</sup>

We must acknowledge the powerful influences of the seminary training. Marcellin spent eight years at the minor seminary in Verrieres. Initially the superior was Fr Perier whose spirituality was Sulpician, and he was the first to introduce the young Champagnat to this 17<sup>th</sup> century current of French spiritual understanding.

At the major seminary of St Irene at Lyon, Marcellin was influenced by Fr Philibert Gardette from whom he learnt dedication and fidelity to the Sulpician ideal. Fr Jean Cholleton, professor of moral theology, supported the plans for a Marist congregation and later became a Marist himself. He had a deep influence on Marcellin, especially in the spirituality of charity and humility. Fathers Simon Cattet and Jean-Marie Mioland were other professors, the latter inspiring his students with a love and respect for well conducted liturgies. Of this time Br Romuald writes, "These years at St Irene, Champagnat considered as the happiest in his life. His ardent nature eagerly absorbed the principles of Sulpician spirituality and the dynamic urgency of the teachers; his good sense and discernment saved him from some of the weaker points of their conviction and manner; the Sulpician ideal that they inculcated of a complete gift of self to God with Jesus and Mary, regardless of the cost to human nature, was the one he lived and the one he tried to instil into his Brothers."<sup>219</sup> Other influences came

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<sup>217</sup> Br Romuald Gibson fms. "Father Champagnat, The Man and His Spirituality, Studies in Marist Spirituality," p. 17.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid P 25



from his seminary friends among whom we can name Jean-Louis Duplay, Jean-Claude Colin, Jean-Marie Vianney and Jean-Claude Courveille.

In an article entitled “The Aim of the Brothers”, Br Andre Lanfrey in a comparative analysis of the writings of Br Francois and Br Jean Baptiste on this subject, traces the original thoughts back to Marcellin. An example can be found in the writings of Br Francois: “We belong to a century in which men have a thirst for knowledge. Instruction spreads as far as the smallest villages. The wicked, inspired by the Angel of Darkness, make use of this to instil into the minds and hearts of the children, the most perverse and pernicious principles.”<sup>220</sup> There is a certain urgency and conviction contained in these words. “Champagnat sees himself in a new mission; Christian Education.” There is in this an echo of the fervour of the “Devoté” determined to deliver “le monde livré à la grossièreté, l’hérésie, l’immoralité.”<sup>221</sup>

Not so very long ago, a descriptive study was written about current New Zealand society. It was called “The Passionless People.”<sup>222</sup> Could it be accurately describing a current malaise that prevents us from greater dedication?

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## **7. PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY**

In the search for sources of motivation and inspiration, the prayer and spirituality of Marcellin may well be particularly effective. Prayer and spirituality are truly shared practices; they are practices which he specifically exhorted us to follow. If we refer in the first instance to Fr. Champagnat’s let-

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<sup>220</sup> Br Andre Lanfrey fms, “The Aim of the Brothers –According to the two instructions contained in the Manuscripts of Brothers Francois and Jean Baptiste,” private paper.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Thirty years ago, the New Zealand journalist and broadcaster Gordon McLauchlan wrote a book called *The Passionless People* in which, with surgical precision, he laid bare our shortcomings and rubbed salt into them. ‘The outstanding characteristics of the New Zealander,’ McLauchlan contended, ‘are his drab sameness and his emotional numbness, his inability to relate one to another with warmth, and his fear, even horror, of change.’ McLauchlan castigated us for having no moral or social philosophy and no dreams beyond a slavish devotion to materialism. Our society was wholly divided among factional pressure groups ‘which exert their power almost exclusively for selfish needs without any sense of a total community.’ To believe McLauchlan, we were as venal and self-centred thirty years ago as we are today, Peter Verstappen, Ashburton Guardian, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

ters, it is soon evident that his prayer and spirituality were very much part of his person. From multiple examples to be found in his correspondence with the Brothers, a couple of extracts will suffice.

*“Tell Brother Dominique that I love him and that I pray for both of you. I hope you will not forget me in your own good prayers. Get her [Mary] her on your side; tell her that, after you have done all you can, it’s just too bad for her if her affairs don’t go well. Recommend your young students to her earnestly; make a little novena in her honour with your children: the little prayer, “Remember...”<sup>223</sup>*

*“You should never doubt my attachment to you. I never once go to the holy altar without praying for you. God, my dear child, will grant you the perseverance on which your sanctification depends. I have absolutely no doubt that, if you ask him for it through Mary’s inter-cession, you will obtain it. Walk in the holy presence of God all the days of your life. May his holy will be the primary motive of all your actions.”<sup>224</sup>*

In his book, *Father Champagnat, The Man and His Spirituality, Studies in Marist Spirituality*, Br Romuald Gibson looks at the nature of spirituality and comments in a general way: “The quest is to discover this ‘ground of all being’, and it is a vital quest for the very existence of the man is essentially related to this ultimate source and explanation of life, and the man must know the terms of this.”<sup>225</sup> Regarding Marcellin he has the following to say. “To a man like Champagnat, the central understanding of this mystery of existence and the purpose of human life, was quite clear - the ultimate ground of all being was God, and the purpose of human life was to discover this God and to serve Him. Thanks to his family training and his education, such an awareness was as natural to him as breathing, and his life turned around the deepening understanding of this sense of the spiritual, this relationship that existed between himself and God.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Paul Sester, *Letters*, No. 17, 10 Sept. 1830, p. 52.

<sup>224</sup> *Letters*.

<sup>225</sup> Br Romuald Gibson, *Father Champagnat*, p. 13.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*.

In the convocation to the Provincial Sector Assembly cited near the start of this paper, the following reminders, among others, were put before the Brothers regarding the province.

*“Our median age is growing even higher. We were known by many as very successful teachers. Today there are very few of us in classrooms. We were known in our province as Marist Brothers of the Schools. Most people today do not know who we are nor do they know what we are here to do. Marcellin was deeply moved by the tragedy of the ignorant, dying Montagne youth. He reacted with such life-changing concern to make sure that other people knew that Jesus loved them. What would he do today?”<sup>227</sup>*

One takes note that Marcellin was aged 27 at the time of the celebrated “Montagne” incident. The median age of the province has been calculated at 68. (Marcellin would have been dead for 17 years calculated by such a median age.) The majority of the Brothers of my province have therefore spent many years in the demanding work of educating the young in a rapidly changing environment. No one doubts their good will and interest in pursuing new initiatives. The convocation takes note of this when it writes; “As a Province we are called to take them (the three priority statements of the Provincial Chapter) on board by making our commitment in ways appropriate to our age, our health and strength.”<sup>228</sup> Therefore, to stimulate interest and involvement one must take into account the individual situation of each Brother. While there has always been an exhortation to prayer and meditation<sup>229</sup> in the province, could the emphasis here (in view of the recent Chapter resolutions) continue to be toward action while the contemplative dimension receives less attention? In recent times the mysticism of Marcellin is becoming more recognised and interestingly enough this aspect of his life is attracting many young people of today. In the book, “The Spiritual Revolution – The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality,”

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<sup>227</sup> Br Carl Tapp, Letter of Convocation to the Assembly of Marist Brothers of New Zealand, April 2008.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> See Constitutions, Chapter 4: Art. 77, p. 54, “Prayer is for us an absolute necessity. It cannot be thought of only as exercises of piety, nor is to be identified with apostolic work.”

Professor David Tacey describes how his classes and lectures on mysticism and spirituality are much sought after.<sup>230</sup>

In his work, “Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality,” Br Andre Lanfrey begins with a discussion about spirituality, looking at its mystical, ascetical and theological dimensions. He offers the following definition of “mystical”: “Mystical refers to what goes beyond the framework of ordinary experience. Mystical phenomena refer firstly to inner movements to go beyond oneself towards some particular object or being, movements that are neither simply profane nor eternal but situated beyond the limits of normal, empirical experience; secondly they refer to intuitive perceptions of this object or being.” Following comments regarding the relationship of mysticism with faith, Br Lanfrey reaches the hypothesis “of there being no essential difference between the mystical life and Christian life in the Spirit generally, and consequently of there not being an ‘ordinary’ way of holiness acquired by the practice of virtues and an ‘extraordinary’ way marked out by mystical graces.” A conclusion is drawn that

*“certain Christians struggle to find words to describe their experience... Father Champagnat seems to be one such charismatic personality capable of gathering and energising numerous disciples but one whose teaching does not*

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<sup>230</sup> David Tacey, *The Spiritual Revolution-The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*, Harper Collins, 2003.

In this vein Tacey writes: “The ‘soul of Britain’ project found that seventy-six percent of people in the UK admitted to having had a religious or spiritual experience. The figures contrast radically with statistics showing how church attendance is declining in all the mainstream Christian denominations. But if one looks at the figures on spiritual experience, they might suggest that we are in the midst of an explosive spiritual upsurge. ( David Hay and Kate Hunt 2000: 846)

Commenting on the situation in North America, Sandra Schneiders writes from Berkeley, California:

“Spirituality has rarely enjoyed such a high profile, positive evaluation, and even economic success as it does among Americans today. If religion is in serious trouble, spirituality is in the ascendancy and the irony of this situation evokes puzzlement and anxiety in the religious establishment, scrutiny among theologians, and justification among those who have traded the religion of their past for the spirituality of their present.” (Sandra Schneiders, 2000:1)

We can say that this shift is part of the contemporary trend toward the breakdown of traditions and traditional communities, and the ascendancy of the individual in a fragmented, postmodern society. This is a sociological fact, and cannot be denied: as churches empty, spiritual enquiry soars as never before. But apart from the breakdown of tradition, there are obviously other factors involved in this massive shift.

*seem to have reached the level of what they in fact lived and how they gave life to others. In this sense, the mystical dimensions of being Marist have the appearance of being some-how incomplete: clearly present but lacking the means necessary for it to be recognised as such. One of the reasons for this lack comes from the overarching spirit of asceticism proper to those times.”<sup>231</sup>*

Regarding the increasing median age of the province, one might remember that a traditional custom, understanding and belief has been that the more elderly senior Brothers (and not only they) would support the work of mission by their prayer and interest in the work of their confreres. Such a view is enshrined in Constitution 53: “By his prayer and offering up of his sufferings, [the elderly Brother] carries on an effective apostolate.”<sup>232</sup> It could be that Brothers encouraged by this affirmation might be less inclined to feel discouraged by the current situation and milieu, have a stronger sense of self-worth and purpose.

And it would be a disadvantage to overlook the need and contribution the spiritual life makes for all of us at whatever age. For considerable insight into the spiritual and mystical life of Marcellin, we can look confidently to Br Basilio Rueda, who as a passionate advocate of Marcellin, wrote at the commencement of his term as Superior General:

*“This is another point where our Founder would ask us to make a serious effort to-day. We know the profundity of his interior life, both theological and ascetical or moral. And we all know how this inner spirit showed itself exteriorly: in intrepid zeal, in ardent charity towards all who needed help, especially moral help, and in the work of his Institute, the gift from his heart to the world in distress. His robust faith, his filial trust in God, which in his rugged*

<sup>231</sup> “Essay On The Origins of Marist Spirituality,” Andre Lanfrey. Original published at the General House of the Marist Brothers Rome, translated by Br Jeff Crowe.

<sup>232</sup> Constitution #53: “The perseverance of the elderly Brother is a living sign of the Lord’s faithfulness. He does not see his life’s work as finished, but tries to render whatever service he can, and takes a lively interest in the Brothers engaged in the active apostolate. By his prayer and offering up of his sufferings, he carries on an effective apostolate.”

*character took on a note of tenderness when he spoke of Mary: his constancy in prayer, his vivid awareness of the fatherhood and kindness of God show us the theological soundness of his spiritual life. It is a lesson for all.”*

*“A typical trait, characteristic of a saint. A man with a strong social sense will be very sensitive to all human miseries, such as hunger, poverty, sickness and pain, even if he is less touched by religious and moral poverty. A saint, on the other hand, is fully sensitive to all those grieves, but his charity and compassion are much more stirred at the sight of religious and moral misery. This is natural for saints, who have imprinted on their hearts a hierarchy of evangelical values.”<sup>233</sup>*

To the interviewer of the magazine J.M.V. he confided,

*“When one listens attentively to the word of God an intimate dialogue is created. This dialogue engenders a fiery desire to proclaim through one’s life that God is life. One starts seeking God’s will in a passionate way in a generous, ecclesial communion. Once one has set his life on love there is no going back. Whoever has known the fascination of God’s love knows he does not own himself any more. Indeed, the soul does not ask, it gives itself. One day, I discovered that God had made his love tangible in the person of his Son and that Jesus Christ is the loving and tender kiss that the Father gives us.”*

In his circular on Obedience, Brother Basilio makes this surprising assertion, “We all carry in ourselves a great mystery: Jesus is myself and I am Jesus”<sup>234</sup> And after all, how can we “avons une tendre affection pour les enfants... à l’exemple de Jésus Christ,” unless we know and are united with him in prayer.

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<sup>233</sup> Circular of Superior General, Br Basilio Rueda, 1968.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

Br Basilio realised that, in all good will, the Institute was too focused on the means of helping the poor, the missions, on the means of evangelising, and “a little at a time, Christ Jesus is put in second place and on certain occasions has disappeared, when in reality he is the main reason, the sublime reason for which we live and we die. He is the basis of our vocation, of our brotherhood and of our friendship. He is our salvation... it is obvious that it is now time to make every effort to place Jesus again at the centre of our life.”<sup>235</sup>

In our province, as in others, the Brothers could well take comfort from the realization that their years of service, prayer and dedication are a treasure of experience wisdom and grace eagerly desired by the young. Perhaps we should also ask not only what would Marcellin do at the age of 27 (the Montagne Incident), but what would Marcellin do at the age of 68? Brothers Francois, Jean Baptiste, Sylvestre, and Avit could inform us as they do from their biographical writings. They shared with the younger Brothers all that they knew and understood, all that they experienced and who they were.

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## **8. THE COMPASSION OF MARCELLIN**

Besides the internal motivations there were, of course, various external pressures that incited Marcellin to act. We are familiar with the well known incident when he withdrew himself from the school because of the brutality and injustice which he perceived. It was Marcellin who insisted at the seminary that “we must have Brothers,” and it was his experience at the Montagne home that inspired his immediate response in initiating the first community at Lavalla. In these experiences we perceive an internal disposition responding to an external stimulus. Neither was it unusual that Marcellin should be so inspired, given his own unhappy experiences: “I have always felt a special attraction for an establishment of Brothers; I join you very willingly and, if you judge it right, I will take responsibility for this part. I missed out on my early education; I would be happy to help procure for others the advantages I was deprived of myself.” At the time of his ordination a num-

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

ber of congregations of Brothers were founded throughout France and elsewhere. Marcellin would not have been ignorant of such congregations.<sup>236</sup>

Br Sean Sammon writes

*“The Church of 19th century France, not unlike our own, faced a crisis of innovation. The world in which it found itself had changed quickly and decisively, and the Church’s response to this upheaval had to be inventive and resourceful. It was people like the founder who eventually would take charge of shaping it in a new way.”<sup>237</sup>*

There are many descriptions in our documents regarding the religious and educational needs in France at the time of Marcellin.

In the prospectus written in 1824 at the Hermitage the situation was described as follows:

*“In the country areas today, religious teaching is completely neglected or replaced by antichristian instruction... It was to remedy this great evil and to get rid of these impious teachers in the less fortunate county areas... that Fr Cham-pagnat founded a group of pious teachers devoted to Mary under the name of ‘the Little “Uneducated” Brothers’ who*

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<sup>236</sup> Congregations of Brothers contemporaneous with Marcellin: The Brothers of St. Gabriel, founded by Blessed Grignon de Montfort and M. Deshayes, in 1795 and 1821; The Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel, founded by J.-M. de Lamennais, in 1816; The Brothers of Christian Doctrine of Nancy, founded by Father Fréchal, in 1817; The Little Brothers of Mary (Marists), founded by Père Champagnat, in 1817; The Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Paradis, founded by Father Coindre, in 1821; The Brothers of the Society of Mary, founded by Père Chaminade, in 1817; The Brothers of the Holy Family, founded by Brother Gabriel Taborin, in 1821; The Brothers of the Cross of Jesus, founded by Père Bochard, in 1824; The Clerics of St-Viateur, founded by Père Querbes, in 1829; The Congregation of the Holy Cross, founded by M. Moreau and M. Dujarris, in 1835; The Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Sacred Heart of Mary, founded by Father Liebermann, in 1841; The Brothers of Mercy, founded by M. Delamare, in 1842; The Christian Brothers of Ireland, founded by Brother Ignatius Rice, in 1805 - all exemplify in the character of their work and in the Rules adopted, a striking similarity to the methods and aims proposed by Saint John Baptist de la Salle in founding the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

<sup>237</sup> Br Sean Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart*, p. 41.



*go in twos even into the poorest villages into which, because of lack of resources, the Brothers of the Christian Schools do not go.*<sup>238</sup>

And further, in *Origines Maristes* we read the following contribution given by Br Laurent.

*“When Father Champagnat was curate in Lavalla he was very upset to see what ignorance there was throughout the parish, particularly among the young. He found youngsters of 10 to 12 years old, who did not know why they were on earth, or even that there is a God. That is why he resolved to found a society of young men to help them”.*<sup>239</sup>

In Chapter 35 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, the following principles of education are propounded and elaborated:

*“Educating a child means enlightening his mind and helping him to know religion: reforming his evil inclinations; training his heart and developing all his good dispositions; forming his conscience; training him in piety. That means making him understand the need, necessity and advantages of prayer. Educating a child means training him in piety; that means making him understand the need, necessity and advantages of prayer. Educating a child means training his will, teaching him to obey; training the child’s judgment; molding and polishing his character. To work at educating a child means to maintain constant vigilance over him. To give a child an education means to inspire him with love of work; giving him the knowledge he will need in his position and station in life; seeing to the child’s physical development as well as his intellectual, moral and religious growth. Finally, to educate a child means to give him the means to acquire the total perfection of his being, making this child a complete person.”*<sup>240</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Prospectus 1824A. in *Marist Notebook*, July 1998, No 13, p. 5.

<sup>239</sup> “Origines Mariste,” p. 756.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 301.

Though affectionate and caring for the Brothers and the children, Marcellin did not have a laissez-faire attitude to their guidance and instruction. In the initial Rule of 1837, which grew out of the previous prospectus and statutes, the very first article states:

*“[1] Order leads to God, says St. Augustine, and the perfection of a Religious depends on his fidelity in following invariably a Rule of life. Without it he loses a lot of time, and does nothing well; on the contrary, by observing it exactly every day, he does a kind of penance, imperceptible yet quite meritorious in God’s sight. “Qui Regulae vivit, Deo vivit”. He who lives according to the Rule, lives according to God.”<sup>241</sup>*

Discipline and presence became watch words in Marcellin’s method, but this was a discipline that was paternal and a presence that was benign. It is interesting to note that in Chapter 5 (“With a Distinctive Marist Style”) of the Institute’s Document, “In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat-A Vision for Marist Education Today,” five principles are enumerated. “Presence” is the first, followed by simplicity, family spirit, love of work and following the way of Mary.<sup>242</sup>

A letter from Br Pierre-Marie to a “Marist Father,” dated 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1840, and therefore more chronologically close to Marcellin shows how one Brother had assimilated some of Champagnat’s educational ideals as we find them recorded above by Br Jean Baptiste. This Brother writes,

*“I imagine two Brothers teaching some very troublesome children. The first thinks he can do it all by himself, makes a lot of noise... The second, on the contrary, treats his children with love and encouragement. He knows adults need encouragement, children even more so.”*

This text then would reflect Marcellin’s thinking since The Brother in question had attended an educational seminar on the 19th February 1840 in accordance with Champagnat’s instructions in the Circular of 10 January.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Rule of 1837.

<sup>242</sup> “In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat,” P.43

The last point has been further developed for the contemporary teacher by Br Michael Green in an article entitled “A New Approach to Teaching.” He writes:

*“Marcellin’s originality was not primarily in his pedagogy. Teaching method, or curriculum, were not his starting points; it was not about these he sought to offer an alternative view. His original contribution was in the style of relationship he encouraged between teacher and student. It was a relationship premised on love and expressed in a style which Marcellin called “family spirit.” Marcellin seems to have drawn from two rich Pauline texts (1. Cor. 13:1-9; Col.3: 12 -17) to present a practical yet rich approach to the teaching young people. Like the Founder, modern day Marist educators are challenged first to love their students and be willing to relate to them as their older brothers and sisters. Only with that disposition can they search out and judge the best and most appropriate pedagogical approaches.”* The author of this article continues to give the seven foundations for Marist pedagogy. (1) Presence and good example; (2) The relationship between teacher and student that is conducive to a way of teaching and learning that is free and open, but industrious and purposeful; (3) Marist educators have an instinctive preference for simplicity; (4) An eagerness to search continually for new and more effective methods; (5) A recognition of the craft of teaching; (6) An attitude towards the young that believes in them and fosters their self-esteem and self-confidence; (7) A Marist pedagogical practice is founded on an abiding awareness of the presence of God - a Marial disposition – simplicity, compassion, openness, confidence, and optimism.”<sup>244</sup>

“Brother Francois, and the first Brothers took up Marcellin’s project with enthusiasm. In a similar spirit faith and apostolic zeal, their successors have taken it to the five continents. As contemporary Marist educators we share and continue Marcellin’s dream of transforming lives and situations of young people,

<sup>243</sup> Brs aureliano brambila and edward clisby, marist spiritual heritage; champagnat through his correspondence, patrimony course, 2008, rome, italy.

particularly the least favoured, through offering them an integral education, both human and spiritual, based on a personal love for each one.”<sup>245</sup>

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## 9. SHARING MARCELLIN’S CHARISM

With the exponential growth of the Institute at its beginnings, especially in the years following the death of the Founder, there has obviously been a wave of enthusiasm and purpose that has attracted so many candidates over a relatively short space of time. On the other hand, for contemporary Brothers, since the second Vatican Council there has been a reversal of such a trend. However, if reliance is put on statistics as a barometer to gauge the vitality and credibility of the Institute, there will be many disappointed and concerned members. Yet, the need for mission and evangelization remains as great as it was in Marcellin’s time.

It is somewhat overwhelming to read in the Circular “Making Jesus Known and Loved” that, “Currently, worldwide, there are nearly 200 million children excluded from basic education and 800 million adults who are illiterate.”<sup>246</sup> In such circumstances, comfort as well as challenge will undoubtedly arise when we meet an insight such as the following:

*“Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity therefore are invited to share more intensively in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.”<sup>247</sup>*

One may wonder if the Brothers also bring to other organizations the richness and experience of the Marist charism: for example to social services both Catholic and secular. Br Basilio Rueda, for example, spent seven years working for the “Better World Movement” which had only an indirect asso-

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<sup>244</sup> “As Marcellin Would Have Us Teach - Foundations of a Pedagogy for Marist Educators.” Br Michael Green fms.

<sup>245</sup> “In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagat,” Art. 3, p. 23.

<sup>246</sup> Circular “Making Jesus Known and Loved,” p. 15.

ciation with established works of the Institute but which had a profound influence on his leadership as the Superior General. Are we necessarily to look only at initiatives which we instigate and therefore over which we exert power and control?

In an article entitled “The Situation of Lay People in the Experience of Marist Charism,” Br Pau Fornells has written: “The historic July 16<sup>th</sup> promise at Fourviere, of creating the Society of Mary also included the intention of a Marist Third Order (a branch of lay people). The first group began in Lyon (1832) with Fr Pompallier. From the beginning of the Institute, there existed many sympathetic and lay benefactors who shared the spirituality and shared the mission.”

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Institute has been recognising Affiliated Members. The “Amicales,” Associations of Former Students date from at least 1865. They were male adult groups that worked together to maintain the religious spirit that the Brothers had passed on to them. Many provincial, national and continental associations were founded as well as the World Union of Former Students. Since the 1950s a greater number of lay teachers have shared our work and mission. In the 70’s and in the light of Vatican Council II, the Brothers began to realize the immense evangelizing flow that could come from the contracted laity if synchronized with the ideal proposed by Marcellin Champagnat. Consider parents of students and their associations. In 1985, the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter included in the Constitutions an article (164.4), which spoke of the creation of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. In 1993 for the first time, lay people took part in the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. The 1998 document “In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat – A vision for Marist Education Today” was addressed to both Brothers and lay people involved in the Marist Brothers’ apostolate. Previously, “The Marist Educator,” written by Br Gregory Ryan, had been used in some provinces with both Brothers and lay people and found effective for its inductive approach.

The canonization of Marcellin Champagnat on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1999 proclaimed him a saint for everyone – a charism for the Church. Seventeen lay people participated in the 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in 2001. In 2003 the General Council created the Laity Commission as part of the General Administration. It became the Bureau of the Laity in 2006. In 2004, the International Assembly of Marist Mission was launched, coming to a conclusion in Mendes,

Brazil, in September 2007. In 2006 an international committee was formed to write a document “The Vocation of the Lay Marist.” In 2007, the document, “Water from the Rock,” was published for both lay people and Brothers.

All of the ways in which Marcellin’s charism is shared in the contemporary world offer the possibility that his “tender affection” for young people may remain a “saving grace” in the world.

# *Option for the Poor in the Marist Province of Nigeria*

**Brother Benjamin UMOH, FMS**  
*Province of Nigeria*

Among the many options and calls in the world today, 'option for the poor' is not only a concern for the Church but fundamental to the Church's life and mission.

For us Marist Brothers, option for the poor is a tradition that dates back to our Founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat. The foundation of the Marist Brothers and its spirituality came about as a result of "passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people". In the letter to Queen Marie Amelie, May 1835, Marcellin wrote: "What I saw with my own eyes in that area [commune of St. Chamond, Loire], concerning the education of young people reminded me of the difficulties that I myself had had at their age, because of the lack of teachers. I hurriedly put into operation an idea that I had formed for an Association of teaching Brothers for the country areas, where the poverty of so many does not allow them to attend the schools of the De La Salle Brothers...'

At the heart of this letter is the concern for the poor and the deprived of the society of his time. What Champagnat saw with his own eyes was nothing but the pain, suffering, misery and ignorance that go with poverty, material and spiritual deprivation. A case in point was the young Montagne at Les Palais, dying without the knowledge of God, religion, and life after death. How many young people were sharing a fate similar to the Montagne boy? This was a reality with which Champagnat, and perhaps a point of no return in his determination to form a branch of teaching Brothers at Lavalla in 1817 and to construct the Hermitage in 1825.

Option for the poor is the attitude of seeing the world, people and environment through the eyes of the poor; being and working with the poor in solidarity, respect and love. This should lead to total commitment of action for justice with and on behalf of those who suffer the pains of poverty and marginalization.

In responding to the call of the Church and in being true to the charism of their founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat, the Marist Brothers in Nigeria have taken up option for the poor in their apostolate, through the education of young people in our schools and caring for physically challenged people.

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## **SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH**

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of social teaching, especially that which concerns the poor. Amongst other themes presented in Catholic social teaching, the option for the poor stems from the teachings of Jesus Christ through the Apostles. Option for the poor is integral to the teachings of the Church. It is a principle that is based on the divine dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of his creator cf. Gen.1:26-27.

In considering this principle, the Church focuses attention on those whose dignity has been trampled upon, abused, overlooked or put at risk as a result of unjust, corrupt and depraved socio-economic systems in human society. Thus, the situations and experiences of the poor offer the Church insight into the search for a more just structure of social life to which God continually invites the human community.

Option for the poor is an integral part of social justice. The idea of social justice can be traced back to Luigi Taparelli SJ in the 1840s. In the journal 'Civiltà Cattolica', he highlighted that capitalism and socialism undermined the unity of society. He was concerned with the problems arising from the Industrial revolution. His writing must have influenced Pope Leo XIII's encyclical 'Rerum Novarum 1891'- On the Condition of Workers. Leo XIII laid the foundation of what we have today as Catholic social teaching. The encyclical addresses the plight of poor urban workers, and the adverse effects



of unrestricted capitalism. The Pope set out to address the social instability and labour conflict that had arisen at the dawn of industrial revolution. He stressed the role of the state to promote justice through the protection of the rights of workers. The Church was to denounce evil which was prevalent in the excesses of capitalism and teach correct social principles and ensure harmony between the workers and the employer.

The Pope posited:

*'Let the working man and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice. In these and similar questions, however - such as, for example, the hours of labor in different trades, the sanitary precautions to be observed in factories and workshops, etc. - in order to supersede undue interference on the part of the State, especially as circumstances, times, and localities differ so widely, it is advisable that recourse be had to societies or boards such as We shall mention presently, or to some other mode of safeguarding the interests of the wage-earners; the State being appealed to, should circumstances require, for its sanction and protection'<sup>248</sup>*

This excerpt gives insight into the Pope's genuine concern for the workers who were often victims of exploitation, and left with little or no reasonable wages. The workers had no hope of being liberated from this vicious cycle of poverty. Leo's message is a message of hope and liberation, which is still relevant today.

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<sup>248</sup> Leo XIII 'Rerum Novarum' (On the Condition of Workers) no. 45, 1891

Forty years later, Pope Pius XI on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1931 issued an encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno,” on the Reconstruction of the Social Order. He wrote,

*“Just freedom of action must, of course, be left both to individual citizens and to families, yet only on condition that the common good be preserved and wrong to any individual be abolished. The function of the rulers of the State, moreover, is to watch over the community and its parts; but in protecting private individuals in their rights, chief consideration ought to be given to the weak and the poor. “The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. For the nation, as it were, of the rich is guarded by its own defences and is in less need of governmental protection, whereas the suffering multitude, without the means to protect itself relies especially on the protection of the State. Wherefore, since wageworkers are numbered among the great mass of the needy, the State must include them under its special care and foresight.”<sup>249</sup>”*

The Pope is much concerned with the common good to be preserved, and the role of the government to protect the poor from undue exploitation. Further in this encyclical, the Pope condemns the effects of greed that concentrated on political and economic power for exploitation. He proposes that social organization be based on the principle of subsidiarity; that is, the rights of individuals and social groups to make their own decisions and accomplish what they can by their own initiative and industry. The encyclical stressed the obligation of the state to intervene in labour conflicts between the employee and the employer and insure that the rights of workers are preserved.

During the Second Vatican Council, 1962 to 1965, convoked by Pope John XXIII and continued under Pope Paul VI, one of the prominent documents produced was “Gaudium et Spes, The Church in the Modern World.” This document re-affirms the dignity of the human person and stressed the Church’s solidarity with the poor. It reinstated the Church’s commitment to be in sol-

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<sup>249</sup> Pius XI ‘Quadragesimo Anno’ (On the reconstruction of the social order) no.25, 1931

idarity with the poor and the suffering. This is the true meaning of the Church in modern world. The opening paragraph to this document states:

*“The joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.”*<sup>250</sup>

This section of the document focuses on the situation of the human person in the world and the mission of the Church to work with the poor and restore hope for a better human existence, harmony and destiny.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical “Populorum Progressio” focused on the development of the human person, and strongly condemned the situations that give rise to global poverty and inequality:

*“Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy. As we told the Council Fathers on Our return from the United Nations: ‘We have to devote our attention to the situation of those nations still striving to advance. What we mean, to put it in clearer words, is that our charity toward the poor, of whom there are countless numbers in the world, has to become more solicitous, more effective, more generous’”.*<sup>251</sup>

Here, the Pope acknowledges the countless number of the poor people who are suffering in various situations and regions of the world, and draws the attention of people’s solidarity and generosity in order to liberate and empower them.

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<sup>250</sup> Gaudium et Spes (GS) no.1, 1965

<sup>251</sup> Paul VI ‘Populorum Progressio’ (On the development of Peoples) no.64, 1967

The encyclical “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis” of Pope John Paul II, emphasized solidarity towards the poor:

*‘The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others’<sup>252</sup>.*

The need for interdependence between the poor and the well-placed in the society is essential. The rich are called to be in solidarity with the poor while the poor people remain committed to the search for appropriate solutions to their situations.

Other documents and encyclicals are very helpful tools when addressing the “option for the poor.” An example is “Octogesima Adveniens” which calls on the local churches to respond to unjust situations of oppression and suffering by insisting upon justice. Another example is “Evangelii Nuntiandi” which presents the Gospel as means of liberation and a tool for combating oppressive structure. “Laborem Exercens” is yet another, stressing as it does the rights of labour, and calling for justice in the work place.

In addition to papal documents, Conferences of Bishops have also stressed the option for the poor and have equally invited the Church to be in solidarity with poor, the voiceless and the defenceless in society: the Latin America Bishops’ Conference in Medellin, Columbia 1968; the Latin America Conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979; the US Catholic Bishops’ Conference in 1986 and the African Bishop’s Conference

There were also personalities in the history of the Church that made the option for the poor central in their quest for God. Marcellin Champagnat

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<sup>252</sup> John Paul ‘Sollicitudo Socialis’ (On Social concern) no.39, 1987

founded the Congregation of the Marist Brothers of the Schools specifically for the Christian education of young people and the less favored. Don Bosco and the Salesians focus on working with the youth, especially the disadvantaged. The Vincentians, founded by St. Vincent de Paul, devote themselves to working with the poor. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle pioneered education for ordinary people. Mother Teresa of Calcutta lived, shared and died for the poor people in India.

These men and women opted for the poor and contributed significantly to the alleviation of suffering and poverty. In our time too, much needs to be done especially to counteract the economic structures that are the root causes of the perpetuation of poverty and injustice.

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### **THE INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS AND THE POOR**

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Marcellin was born in 1789, at a time in French history when the Church was at the mercy of the French Revolution and its excesses, a time when the French National Assembly confiscated the properties of the Church, and bishops lost control over the education of young people. It was a time of upsurge, and tumult against the dignity of the human person. It was a critical epoch in the history of France.

Marcellin's father, John Baptist Champagnat, was well-educated, if one may judge by the responsibilities he assumed in public life. Although Marcellin had shown little taste for school, when the need to recruit young boys to study for priesthood arose, he was resolute to go to the minor seminary. The assessment of his brother-in-law Benoit Arnaud, however, was that Marcellin was unsuitable for academic studies.

Amidst difficulties and challenges, Marcellin waded through his seminary studies through prayer and hard work in study, and in 1816 was ordained priest. He was posted to La Valla as a curate, and there he had the experience of visiting a young lad name Montagne,<sup>253</sup> who was at the point of death, and knew little about religion, life hereafter, or God. The experience was a cat-

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<sup>253</sup> The death of the young Montagne who was seventeen years old occurred at the hamlet of les Palais in the hills of Bessat. See appendix.

alyst to the founding of the Brothers, whose primary apostolate would be the teaching of catechism, and the education of rural children.

Marcellin was concerned with the deplorable situation in which many young people found themselves. This concern and his openness to events and to people made him sensitive to the needs of his times, especially to the ignorance concerning religion among young people and the poor circumstances in which they were placed. This attitude led Marcellin to found our Institute for the Christian education of the young.<sup>254</sup>

The prospectus of 1824 expressed the sensitive and practical attitudes of Champagnat in his resolve to live for the poor; the teaching of children in general and, in particular, poor orphans, was the object of our Foundation. He said, “As soon as we have finished the Hermitage House and our means allow us to improve our water-supply, we shall take in children from houses of charity and give them a Christian education. Those who are well behaved and good students will be employed in the house.”<sup>255</sup>

The education of young people, especially poor children and orphans, is central to Marcellin and the generation of Brothers after him. It is a mission with a plan that includes young people from all races, religion and social status.

A number of articles in the Constitutions have been dedicated uniquely to the mission to the poor. In their mission to this group, the Brothers show solidarity and love, especially to those living on the margins of the society. The Brothers work hand in hand with the poor to help them find solutions to the root causes to their poverty. Article 34 of the Constitutions has this to say:

*“Attuned to the voice of the Church, and in touch with our own vocation, we stand in solidarity with the poor and their just causes. We give them first preference wherever we are and whatever be our task... Concern for the poor impels us to search out the root causes of their wretchedness and to free ourselves from prejudice or indifference towards them.”*<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Constitutions, no.2.

<sup>255</sup> See the prospectus of 1824;version A (AFM 132.008, no.10.

<sup>256</sup> Constitutions, no.34.

By being in solidarity and communion with the poor, we participate in the mission of the Church and in the saving mission of Christ. More than ever, many young people stand the risk of being denied the Gospel of Christ because of the subversive lifestyle of materialism. Consequently the call to make the option for the poor a priority in our mission and apostolate is essential.

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapters have shown strong concern for solidarity towards the poor and the less privileged of our society. The 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter message has this to say on the topic: “Let’s be daring enough to give up some of our security so as to get closer to the poor and to all the others who don’t count for much. Let’s not be afraid to become involved with all those people who live on the fringes of society.”<sup>257</sup>

As a follow up, the 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, employing the motto “Choose Life,” made five calls, one of which was an invitation and encouragement to the Brothers of the Institute

*“Go forward, Brothers and Lay persons together, in a clear and decisive way, drawing closer to the poorest and most disadvantaged of young people, through new ways in education, evangelization and solidarity.”*<sup>258</sup>

The Chapter was a spur to the Brothers, especially to devise new ways through education, evangelization and solidarity in reaching out to the poor in our respective administrative units. This Chapter acknowledged the fact that solidarity with the poor is an unfinished task, which is quite correct and in a way confirms the words of Christ to Judas, “The poor you will always have with you.”<sup>259</sup>

We are seriously called to minister to the young people and the poor without exclusion, because we are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Acts of the XIX General Chapter ‘Message no.20’, Rome, Oct.1993

<sup>258</sup> XX General Chapter, Rome, 2001

<sup>259</sup> Mtt.26:11

<sup>260</sup> Words sometimes attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero, martyred in San Salvador, 1980

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## **NIGERIAN SOCIETY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS**

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa. It is the most populous country on the African continent with about 140 million people according to the census of 2006. The country is divided into thirty-six states. The Marist Brothers have their communities and apostolate in seven of these states.<sup>261</sup> The country is no doubt blessed with varieties of resources both human and natural.

Despite the natural resources, however, (petroleum, tin, columbite, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, zinc, natural gas, etc.), there exist widespread situations of poverty, misery and disease. According to the report by IFAD, "The situation has worsened since the late 1990s, to the extent that the country is now considered one of the twenty poorest countries in the world. Over 70 per cent of the population is classified as poor, with 35 per cent living in absolute poverty".<sup>262</sup>

As perceived in Nigerian society, the poor include street families mainly found in the urban centres, beggars, street vendors, casual labourers, prostitutes, etc. It is a long list. The poor people are not restricted to a group without material possessions, but also include those who suffer spiritual and mental malaise. These last two aspects, however, the spiritually and mentally poor, are not under the scope of this exposition.

The majority of poor people are found in rural areas, where social amenities and infrastructure are either limited or non-existent. These people depend solely on agriculture for living. About 90 per cent of the country's food

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<sup>261</sup> The Marist Brothers have their communities and apostolate in Abuja (FCT), Kogi State, Enugu State, Ebonyi State, Anambra State, Imo State, and Abia State. Refer to the appendix.

<sup>262</sup> See the report on Rural Poverty in Nigeria by IFAD, 2007. IFAD is International Fund for Agricultural Development, specialized agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. The Conference was organized in response to the food crises of the early 1970s that primarily affected the Sahelian countries of Africa. The conference resolved that "an International Fund for Agricultural Development should be established immediately to finance agricultural development projects primarily for food production in the developing countries". One of the most important insights emerging from the conference was that the causes of food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production, but structural problems relating to poverty and to the fact that the majority of the developing world's poor populations were concentrated in rural areas.



is produced by small-scale farmers, raising crops on tiny plots of land and wholly dependent on rainfall rather than irrigation systems. Still some in this group struggle to eke out a living through subsistence farming. A high proportion of poor people living in rural areas suffer from malnutrition and other related diseases.

Consequently, those of them who cannot cope with the plagues of rural life prefer the alternative of migrating to the cities. In the cities, the rural poor migrants are confronted with the stark reality of housing problems and food scarcity. In order to earn a living, some engage in crimes such as armed robbery, prostitution, militancy. Others end up as beggars, housekeepers, security personnel, etc.

Among the group severely affected by poverty are the women, young people and the disabled. The Nigerian social system is still patriarchal in nature, where a few privileged men rule the majority of the people. And one has to belong to this group in order to have a chance of governing. The young people find themselves in a dilemma. They are often consoled by the elders who tell them that they should not worry since they will the mantle of leadership will pass to them tomorrow. The young people ask when will tomorrow come. In reality, tomorrow will not come, because the elders (leaders) who are in leadership feel reluctant to step down for the young person whose turn has come. That is why the perpetuation of poverty is unabated in Nigeria. The many young people who are not willing to wait to see tomorrow are ever perceived, because of their ungodly activities, as social outcasts and a menace to the general society. That one finds a great number of poor people in Nigeria is a result of corruption which appears to be endemic in the country. Some government officials siphon off or embezzle the common resources that are meant for the masses.

Another factor which gives rise to poverty in Nigeria is violence resulting from religious conflict. Sometimes religious tensions between Christians and Muslims are experienced in different parts of Nigeria, at times erupting into violence and leading to situations of escalating poverty and malnutrition.

Some political agitators have equipped militants from religious and ethnic groups to express their frustrations more freely and more violently. Hundreds have died over the past years in clashes between the government and the militants.

In the Niger delta, where the oil industry is in operation, a number of acts of sabotage have been carried out against the multinational oil companies by militants and 'unknown' groups seeking a greater share of the oil resources for the Niger delta population. This often leads to fatal clashes involving poor people who are driven from their homes if they are fortunate not to be abducted or killed by the militias.

Whatever way you consider poverty, it is an unfortunate happening in the life of a human being. It is a violation, an infringement of human nature. It is a breach of the innate right of the human person to lead a decent, dignified life. Until we adopt the principle of solidarity, of sharing the common resources of the world with those who are less privileged, we will always remain in the prison of our consciences for having failed to really love from the heart.

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## **THE MARIST BROTHERS IN NIGERIA**

The arrival of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools in Nigeria opened a chapter of hope to the outcasts of Nigerian society who sought and found refuge, as under an umbrella, in the apostolic works of the Institute. The Marist Brothers arrived in Nigeria in 1949 at the invitation of the Catholic Bishop of the Vicariate of Owerri, Rev. Dr. Joseph Whelan, CSSp. The first Marist missionaries, Brothers Conleath James Dolan and Cormac Sheils, came from Britain. The Bishop asked them to take charge of a secondary school, called Bishop Shanahan's College, Orlu, Imo State, which was in its nascent stage.

The school commenced in 1950, with Br. Conleath Dolan as its first principal. The Brothers received enormous support from the people of Orlu, especially the 'Igwe' Chief Patrick Acholonu. The excellent success recorded in the school spread its popularity far and wide so that many people from near and far came seeking admission for their sons. Later, there was an urgent need for the Brothers to take over another school, this one in Enugu, Enugu State. The school, College of Immaculate Conception, had previously under the management of the Holy Ghost priests. Brother Aloysius Palmer was invited; he became the first principal in 1955 and was assisted by two other Brothers.

The competent administration and management of these schools became famous throughout the country, resulting in a great reputation for academic excellence, sport and character formation. The Brothers worked tremendously hard to enhance the educational opportunities of young people in Nigeria.

In 1956, the indigenous congregation of St. Peter Claver, founded in 1944 by Bishop Charles Herrey for parish apostolate,<sup>263</sup> decided to enter into dialogue with the Marist Brothers for fusion of the two congregations.<sup>264</sup> When negotiations were concluded, the General Administration in Rome gave its approval for the fusion. Consequently, the Brothers of St. Peter Claver were absorbed by the Marist Brothers, their community houses and other properties becoming Marist.<sup>265</sup>

The period that followed, 1957 through 1966, saw the religious profession of the first Nigerian Brothers. These young men were later sent to Bishop Shanahan College or the College of the Immaculate Conception for their secondary education. Then, upon completion of the secondary education, some were sent to Scotland for further studies while some went to England. This was a prerequisite if, in the future, they were to undertake a proper apostolate as Marist religious educators.

In 1967 through 1970, the school system and other facets of Nigerian life were disrupted by the political upheaval of the civil war. The Nigerian civil war which lasted for three years, left untold misery, poverty, unemployment, street families and loss of life in the country. The school apostolate of the Marist missionaries was brought to a halt. Many soldiers and civilians were wounded during the war. The depth of human suffering was obvious in the face of such destruction of properties and lives. As a consequence, the attention of the Brothers was drawn towards the war victims, the biting plight of

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<sup>263</sup> The St. Peter Claver congregation was founded for the apostolate of teaching catechism and of assisting priests in the parishes. At the time of the fusion, they had three perpetually professed Brothers, twenty temporary professed Brothers, thirty novices and twelve postulants after twelve years of existence.

<sup>264</sup> The fusion of the St. Peter Claver congregation came at the request of Bishop Whelan of the Owerri Diocese probably due to lack of proper formation of the Brothers and fear of extinction. See the appendix for the letter of fusion of the two congregations.

<sup>265</sup> These communities were once Peter Claver communities but with the fusion became Marist communities: Ihioma community in Okpala, and Azaraegbelu community both in Imo State. The Ihioma community in Okpala was later closed down by the Brothers.

poverty, the misery of hunger and disease, all of which was apparent amongst the Kwashiorkor children. With undaunted spirit, the Marist missionaries risked their lives by setting up refugee camps in order to care for the victims of war. They worked with the charity organizations in Europe to get relief materials for the people affected. For these pioneer Brothers, the victims of the civil war were the 'Montagnes.' By being at the service of these poor people, the Brothers re-lived and brought to life Champagnat's compassion, self-giving, hard work, commitment, and sacrifice.

In its aftermath, the civil war which ended in January 1970 left many wounded soldiers and civilians. The Marist Brothers' Novitiate in Uturu became the depot of relief materials to which people came to be treated and cared for. Due to the influx of people seeking assistance, Br. Francis McGovern solicited aid from abroad, and two funding agencies volunteered to assist. One of these funding agencies was a German aid organization called "Misereor." This organization contributed immensely to the birth of Hopeville, which accommodated people with physical disabilities resulting from the civil war.



*A cross section of the physically challenged youth in Hopeville, Uturu. With them are Brothers Benito Arbues, Luis Sobrado, Joe Muoka, and students of MCA in 1998.*

Hopeville was commissioned on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1971. The publication of the “Official Opening of Hopeville Rehabilitation Centre, Uturu,” dated 27 November 1971, established the Centre’s main objectives as follows:

*One of the primary aims of Hopeville is to provide amputees with a suitable trade to enable them to earn a living and become useful and productive members of the society; to take them off the streets where, already, too many of their kind have become, or are becoming, professional beggars.*

The Brothers therefore embarked on a support program that would aid in funding Hopeville. The support program included a poultry farm, a rice mill, farming, transport services, shoe/bag factories, etc. There were further plans to include a medium sized printing press and a tannery.

### **A glance at Hopeville Projects**

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*Saw Mill:  
Managed by Br. Michael  
& Mr. Adolphus Ade.*



*Poultry Farm:  
Managed by Br. Albert.  
It housed 7,000 birds.*

These projects achieved great success and contributed to the funding of Hopeville Centre. They generated employment for the residents of Uturu since many of them were employed to work with the Brothers in their capacity as managers.

It may be interesting to note that all these projects were closed down one after another at the direction of the General Council – Rome in the early part of 1990s.

Apart from creating an opportunity for the physically challenged (war victims), and equipping them with skills for life, Hopeville was also established to empower the poor people (children and youth) for self-reliance, and self-employment, in order to reduce the growing unemployment which was prevalent and a characteristic of post war country. Consequently, the residents of Hopeville had to be trained in shoe-making, tailoring, electronic repairs etc. the Brothers also established the orthothesis,



*From left to right  
 Front Row: Rev. Br. Francis, Miss Jan Grainer  
 (physiotherapist), Rev. Br. James.  
 Second Row: Rev. Br. Austine (Director of  
 Amputees), Mr. J. Ijioma, Rev. Br. Aloysius,  
 Barr. Jacob Nwokolo, Rev. Br. Rufus.  
 Back Row: Rev. Br. Jude, Rev. Br. Albert,  
 & Rev. Br. Michael.*



*Rice Mill: Br. Rufus &  
 Mr Linus Onyeador as Managers.*

prosthesis and physiotherapy department. This department produced prosthetic limbs for the amputees. A poultry farm and sawmill were equally established to support the Hopeville centre.

The Hopeville centre was remarkable for its services to the poor and the physically challenged people. The residents were trained without payment. Yearly, a significant number graduated from Hopeville, and the Brothers made sure that the graduates were adequately equipped to go out to world to experience life and put the trade they had learned into practice.

Another prominent event of the post-war period was the taking over of mission schools by the government. Br. Andrew Iwuagwu wrote “that obnoxious and infamous clamp down on Christian education prevented the Brothers from exerting the normal influence in Bishop Shanahan’s College and the College of Immaculate Conception.” The only school left for the

Brothers at this time was the Juniorate, opened in 1965 to educate young boys who wished to embrace Marist brotherhood.

In 1981, Hopeville underwent a paradigm shift. There was the need to introduce secretarial studies for the residents and other students seeking for admission. A section of a derelict sawmill became the classroom for the poor children and young people in search of meaning for their life. The Brothers spent time, energy and resources to educate these new residents. From this cradle sprang up the present Marist Comprehensive Academy, which from its inception has recorded success in the area of academics, sports and character formation.

Since the government could not manage most of the schools taken from the missionaries, it began to lose its grip on the country's education policy. Consequently, private individuals, corporate institutes and the Church began establishing schools.

The Marist Brothers in Nigeria have taken the school apostolate as the priority in reaching out to the poor and the marginalized. All the schools established by the Brothers are set up in rural areas. This is done purposely to guarantee the least favoured, and the poor children the opportunity to be educated like their counterparts from well-to-families. The Marist secondary schools where the Brothers are working are six in number;



*Br. Francis instructing the amputees and other apprentices on Shoe making - 1971.*

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Foundation</b>	<b>Locality/State</b>	<b>Original purpose</b>
Marist Brothers' Juniorate (MBJ)	1963	Uturu, Abia State	For the formation of young men into Marist brotherhood
Marist Rehabilitation Centre, Hopeville to Marist Comprehensive Academy	1981 1983	Uturu, Abia State	To educate young people for self-reliance and self-integrity
Christ the King College	1991	Gwagwalada, Abuja (FCT), owned by the Diocese.	To educate young people for self-reliance/ leadership
Marist Comprehensive College	1993	Ezzagu, Ebony State	Education for self-reliance
Marist Comprehensive College	2000	Nteje, Anambra State	Education for self-reliance
Sacred Heart Marist College	2003	Ejule, Kogi State	Education for self-reliance

Primary schools (four) include: Nursery and Primary school, Uturu, Abia State; Nursery and Primary school, Ezzagu, Ebony State; Nursery and Primary school, Emene, Enugu State; Nursery and Primary School, Azaragbelu, Imo State.

The government does not subsidize these establishments. Rather, for every establishment there is a certain percentage that must be paid to the government. These schools have been set up into order to serve poor children and young people whose families could not have afforded to send them to government secondary schools.

The Marist secondary school system is a boarding system where students spend nine months a year under the watchful care of the Brothers who practice the pedagogy of presence to a high degree.

The poor children are also helped through the province's scholarship fund which is available to the needy ones, especially orphans. The various



activities organized in our Marist schools are geared toward adding value and empowering young people to holistic formation for self-reliance.

Another way the Brothers in Nigeria worked in closed solidarity with the poor is through the establishment of 'NIKE CENTRE' for ex-leprosy victims in Emene, Enugu State.

This centre is actually a home for ex-lepers who have been ostracized by their families and communities. In 1972, John Lakin, a Protestant philanthropist missionary from Britain decided to gather all the leprosy victims in order to rekindle their lost hope in man and fate. He set up this center and managed it until 1977 when he went back to Britain, handing over the management of the centre to the Marist Brothers whom he trusted would be able to ensure the viability of the centre as was the case with the Hopeville centre. The number of residents in this centre was two hundred, male and female, people abandoned and rejected by their families and society. The Brothers worked and lived with these leprosy victims.

As a way of ensuring the future of children born into these disadvantaged families, the Brothers founded a Nursery/Primary school to educate these young people. Some of them who made efforts in their studies were given scholarships by the Brothers to further their studies. Others were trained in various trades. A number of them have been able to establish themselves and their families. Presently, there are fourteen families<sup>266</sup> still living in the centre. The families in this centre engage in farming to subsidize the support provided by the Brothers.

The Brothers have also opened a piggery for the centre. It is meant to assist in the upkeep of the centre. Apart from the support of the Marist Brothers to this centre, there is a German Leprosy and T.B Relief Association which renders support to the centre.

The two main concerns of this centre is the inability to source adequate fund to keep the place viable, and the local road network area which is impassable especially during the rainy season.

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<sup>266</sup> These families consist of eight men and eleven women with twenty-six children.

The **formidable setbacks** faced by the Brothers as they take up the mission of opting for the poor and young people in Nigeria are the following:

- Financial difficulties: These pose a major threat in the mission to the poor. This issue has to do with obtaining funding from the government or corporate bodies to help empower the poor. Often the government is reluctant to offer any support or aid.
- Religious intolerance: This is a complex situation in Nigeria, which is comprised of Christians, Muslims and traditional worshippers. There is always a concern and fear about loss of life when a religious crisis occurs in the country, because often religious fanatics capitalize on such occasion to unleash terror and violence on their identified 'infidels.' The mission to this area is always impossible.
- Culture barrier: The country is blessed with multi-cultural presence, revealing itself in varieties of spoken languages, philosophies, beliefs. In places where we wish to work effectively with the poor, time is required to learn the culture of the. This sometimes militates against reaching out to the poor, especially in going beyond our normal milieu (the familiar shores). The culture of the people frightens us.
- Political instability/militancy: The unfortunate acts of sabotage and violence perpetrated by hoodlums and militants in recent times have caused the loss of lives and property, threatening the government and the fragile economy of the country. The Niger delta area has become today the den of militants. Acting without restraint, these men go out to harass poor people, creating an obstacle to the effort of working with the poor and young people in the area.

These are some of the major setbacks the Brothers encounter in their mission of opting for the poor. These setbacks, however, have not deterred their passion to make themselves available to the young people, especially in the teaching apostolate.

## **REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION**

Through the school/social apostolate, the Brothers in Nigeria have made an impact on the lives of the poor by eradicating religious and intellectual ignorance among the young people who have the opportunity to study in Marist schools or to be in contact with the Brothers. The fact must be acknowledged that it is only a minimal percentage of the enormous population of young people in Nigeria that the Brothers are able to educate and empower. Undoubtedly, a new form of poverty is gradually creeping into the lives of young people and the poor, a form of poverty which, if not urgently addressed, may pose a serious threat to the lives of poor people who are often victims of fate. This new poverty is that of “ecological ignorance.” The ecology or what we may consider the eco-system (environment, both biotic and abiotic factors) is in serious threat of degradation. With the rapid growth of industries and urban centres (a growth seen as “development”) a lot of harm has been unabatedly perpetuated on the environment. We still practice bush burning, intensive grazing, lumbering/lurking, etc. These practices have caused water sources to be polluted. Some water sources have even dried-up due to deforestation. In addition, the soil is sometimes intensively cultivated, abused and grazed without giving it time for replenishment, leading to soil and wind erosion. The atmosphere has been polluted with emission of gasses from industries which destroy the ozone layer with consequent adverse impact of global warming.

In as much as we teach the young people religion and science, we need to incorporate in our curriculum, topics on ecology, environmental management and conservation. The young people, the poor and rich people should be made to respect and appreciate the environment. Attention needs to be focused on conserving the environment for future generations, i.e. we must promote sustainable development. Seminars and workshop should be organized on these topics for immediate sensitization and attitude change.

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# *The Charism and the Mission of the Marist Brothers in Ivory Coast*

*A personal reflection*

**Brother Vincent KOUASSI, FMS**  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

A debate which I have often taken part in certain of our communities is one about the mission of the Marist Brothers, or more precisely, about what the Marist Brother is thought to do or not to do, for one reason or another. On one side, we have those who see the Marist Brother as a catechist and nothing more. On the other side, there are those who think that, inasmuch as we are Brothers, we need to widen our horizons, our apostolate, and our mission. “School, school, school,” and nothing else: there, for still others, the essence of the mission of the Marist Brother, even at the cost of turning up the nose at parish activities or even anything which is informal and non-structured. They believe that catechesis, mission, and any other form of apostolic activity must of necessity take place in the school.

How, through the letters of Champagnat, and so his ideas, his life, and everything he has left us as treasure for the mission, can we justify our choices today? That is the deciding question for whoever wishes to take seriously our mission and our vocation as Marist Brothers today.

In his circular of 3 July 1851 announcing the death of Brother Laurent (Jean Claude Audras)<sup>267</sup>, Brother François writes: “You see, very dear con-

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<sup>267</sup> Older brother of Jean Baptiste Audras (Brother Louis), and third to join Father Champagnat’s group.

frères, that our Old Ones are going, those whom Fr. Champagnat formed and who were the special recipients of his spirit, the original spirit of the Society [...] How many times dear Brother Laurent came to see us, since his infirmities kept him at the Mother House, to ask us to let him go and teach catechism from village to village begging his bread!”

These words of Br. François draw our attention to what he himself calls the original spirit of Champagnat. One could even say that he exposes something of the original charism. That is why Br. François does not mention school but rather catechesis. If it is true that at that time in France these two tasks were interdependent, since children were taught catechism and reading at the same time, it is yet clear that Brother Laurent was not a particularly good teacher, being not very educated himself like most of the first Marist Brothers. And so we are right in thinking that Br. François was only speaking of religious instruction as it referred to Br. Laurent.

What strikes us here is that it is the first aim of Champagnat which Brother François is revealing, in part at the very least. Today, certain Brothers, limiting themselves only to these words, have refused, without deeply analyzing the context, the foundation or construction of schools. They judge that this is not a necessity for the Marist mission. For them, Champagnat had as original intuition only to form ‘simple’ catechists. That is also the reason why, according to them, Champagnat always tried to discourage any priestly vocation. We have among other examples that of Jean Baptiste Audras (Brother Louis), whom Champagnat forbade to study Latin, which was synonymous with the priestly vocation but also with the teaching of classics ; and the question: “Brother Louis, are you satisfied, are you happy in your vocation?”<sup>268</sup> keeps all its meaning. However, can the original spirit of a Religious Institute be abstracted from the rich tradition which is built up over time? The questions which will guide us in this work are the following:

Are the Marist spirit and charism limited only to some specific activities and works? Should the Marist Brother, for a start, limit himself only to catechetics or to the school? What is the influence of the social and historical context in the development of the charism which the Spirit transmitted to Champagnat and to our first Brothers? How to understand and live, that is

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<sup>268</sup> FURET, Jean Baptiste, *Our Models in Religion or Biographies of some early Marist Brothers who were outstanding by their virtues and love for their vocation*, Grugliasco, 1936, p.53.

to say, to make present, this charism and this mission? In brief, what should we, from the start, mean by charism in the framework of this reflection?

It is important to make clear at the outset that the charism takes into account the spirit, the spirituality, the mission, and the way of life. For this reflection, I am only dwelling on the last two elements: the mission and the way of life. In the interests of clarity, I have summarised here the reasons for this choice and the aim of this reflection. It will be first a question of:

- throwing into relief the charism or first aim of our Founder through his correspondence;
- then, discovering, still through the Letters and other Marist texts, the other ramifications of the traditional charism, which is the education of disadvantaged country children. That is to say, the other works which do not deviate from the founder's first objective;<sup>269</sup>
- finally, starting from this second part, proceeding to bring this topic up to date with respect to a particular subject: the implantation or better the inculturation of the charism and the question of vocations in the Ivory Coast, the country we are familiar with.

This little work of research will only set out the markers for a fuller and more detailed work. We intend to provide clarity by giving those Marist tracks or arguments which allow us to avoid making the error of rejecting, often wrongly, certain forms of apostolate on the pretext that they were not part of Champagnat's original intention.

As well, and by way of conclusion, this work will aim at demonstrating that the inculturation of the Marist charism passes through a conscious grasp, on the part of the missionaries as well as the indigenous Brothers, of the dialect of inculturation and its corollary: the vocation question.

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<sup>269</sup> P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 28, p. 72.

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## THE INSPIRATION OF THE CHARISM WITH CHAMPAGNAT

In the traditional, and perhaps a little too immediate fashion, it is the encounter with the young Montagne that is presented as having inspired Champagnat with the desire of founding a branch of the Society of Mary which would occupy itself with the educating of country children. Let us say, rather, that this is an event which triggered a desire Champagnat had already formed independently of his seminary companions, co-founders with him of the Society of Mary. The inspiration of the beginnings, particularly of J.C. Colin, who foresaw at first a tree of three branches (Priests, Sisters and Third Order) gradually admitted the branch of the brothers without for all that clearly recognizing its special nature. This lack of understanding between the two priests, who had up to this time had very cordial relations, is clearly shown in the letter of J.C. Colin of 22 February 1839<sup>270</sup>:

*It is now four or five times that I have invited you, or that I have had requests sent to you, to send a Brother to Fr. Chanut, in the Diocese of Bordeaux. My request, so frequently repeated, shows you the importance I attach to this act of obedience which I expect of you. Remember that Mary, our Mother, whom we should take as our model, after the ascension of her divine Son, gave herself completely to the service of the Apostles; that that is one of the first purposes of the Congregation of the Marist Brothers and Sisters with regard to the priests of the Society, so that the latter, free from temporal concerns, can give themselves more completely to the salvation of souls. A Brother in the service of the Priests of the Society does twenty times more good, in my opinion, than if he was employed in a Commune, where, thank God, the means of instructing the young are not lacking today. But you have never been able to fully understand this order and this purpose of the Society...*

In fact, for Champagnat, the Brothers' *raison d'être* is totally different from what Colin had in mind. The latter will recognize this much later when he will testify that the idea of teaching Marist Brothers was essentially an idea

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<sup>270</sup> AFM Dossier 43.30 ; abm 183.doc



of Champagnat.<sup>271</sup> That is why, from 1839, there were two groups: the teaching Brothers of Champagnat and the coadjutor Brothers (the Joseph Brothers) according to Colin's thought and original inspiration, that is to say, lay Brothers who help the Marist Fathers in their mission by supporting the community materially as cooks, gardeners, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, among other works.

So Champagnat is the origin of this marvellous idea of a branch of teaching Brothers consecrated to God at the very heart of the Society of Mary. Brother André Lanfrey even has Marcellin's vocation go back to a date prior to the Seminary years. According to him, the bereavements of 1803 and 1804<sup>272</sup> already play the role of catalyst in the vocation of young Marcellin:

*The first impressions, he writes, show Marcellin choosing to take on the active side of the father model, but then his father's death called him to study and to follow another aspect of that personality: that of the man who regretted not having acquired sufficient education, and making this known as he undertook the duties of president of the Marlbres administration early in 1798, saying he was sorry his knowledge was too disorganised [...]*

When he begins his studies in 1804, does Marcellin already want to become a priest? He is probably more led by his desire for education and to become capable of educating others, for, through his father, he has made his own one of the great aspirations of the rural world and has come to understand that an individual approach to remedy is not enough [...] In sum, Marcellin's priestly vocation seems to be grafted, after a certain period, onto a previous educational project, of which J.B. Champagnat, through his aspirations and his sudden death, appears to have been the inspirer »

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<sup>271</sup> Coste, Jean, sm – G. Lessard, sm, *Origines Maristes (1786-1836)* 4 vol., Rome, 1960-1967.

<sup>272</sup> Jean-Baptiste (23 years) dies on 8 August 1803, and Joseph-Benoît (13) on 20 December. Anne-Marie marries on 8 February 1804. Their father, Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, dies suddenly on 12 June 1804. Thus, through death or marriage, the household is reduced by four members, three of them adults. The marriage of one of the daughters has damaged the family budget by imposing the payment of a dowry and the creditors swoop after the father's death to make sure of their rights. See *Marist Notebooks* No. 25, April 2008, pp 167-171.

To return to Jean Baptiste Montagne, what affects and distresses the young curate is less the level of education than the spiritual poverty of this young man of 17. And this is why he spends two hours instructing him because the directives of the Diocese were quite clear and definite: « Priests should not confess... those who are ignorant of the principal mysteries of the faith»<sup>273</sup>. It was not rare in that time to come across situations as desperate as that of Montagne. Champagnat knew that very well and Father Coste reminds us: “How many Jean-Baptiste Montagnes live in the hamlet Les Palais on the other side of Le Bessat...”<sup>274</sup> But Champagnat accepted this event as a divine call which drove him to immediately contact Jean-Marie Granjon who will become the first Marist Brother.

Therefore, at the origin of the charism there is a father’s aspiration but also the suffering of a young country adolescent. In truth, it is the suffering, the ignorance of all young people to whom life offers no favours. Young people who are thirsty for the knowledge of God, for love, for happiness. And that precisely is what Jean-Marie Granjon, and all the others who will join the young priest, are looking for, for themselves and for others.

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## **OUR CHARISM THROUGH THE TEXTS**

The letters of Champagnat, more than our current documents, reflect this intuition of the beginnings, in particular the letter addressed to King Louis Philippe<sup>275</sup> dated 28 January 1834 where he asks for the legal authorisation of the congregation. In it he himself tells about his life, his experiences, and especially his dream, with the reasons which drive him to found a congregation of Brothers. In a word, he presents the charism and the mission of the Marist Brothers:

*I was born in the district of St-Genest-Malifaux, in the department of the Loire and I learned to read and write only after making tremendous efforts, for lack of capable teachers. From that time on I understood the urgent necessity of*

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<sup>273</sup> P. Zind, *Voyages & Missions*, N°144, p. 5.

<sup>274</sup> OM, vol.4. p. 220

<sup>275</sup> AFM, 113.4; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 34, pp. 89-91.

*having an institution which could, with less expense, provide for rural children the same good education which the Brothers of the Christian Schools provide for the poor in the cities.*

*Ordained to the priesthood in 1816, I was assigned to a rural parish as curate; what I saw there with my own eyes made me feel even more strongly the importance of putting into execution without delay the project I had been thinking about for a long time. I therefore began to train a few teachers. I gave them the name of Little Brothers of Mary, being very convinced that that name would of itself attract a large number of subjects. Rapid success, in just a few years, justified my belief and exceeded my expectations.*

Obviously, what he said he had seen with his own eyes was the crying ignorance of the children and the young. This letter of Champagnat also provides proof that his project had long been maturing, well before the Montagne event which gave it added impetus.

Another official letter<sup>276</sup> the following year, in May 1835, addressed this time to the spouse of Louis-Philippe, Marie-Amélie, shows us again the Founder's idea<sup>277</sup>. Here again, apart from the political considerations, it is what Champagnat reveals in his letter about our charism and our mission as Marist Brothers which attracts our attention. He writes:

*Ordained a priest in 1816, I was assigned to a town in the district of St. Chamond (Loire). What I saw with my own eyes in that new post, with reference to the education of young people, reminded me of the difficulties I had experienced myself at their age, for lack of teachers. I therefore quickly carried out the project I already had in mind to establish an association of teaching brothers for the rural towns, very many of which, for lack of financial resources, cannot afford the Brothers of the Christian Schools.*

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<sup>276</sup> AFM 132.1 pp.47-49; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 59, pp. 132-134.

<sup>277</sup> Champagnat wanted the « Great Queen » to use her influence to ask her husband the King for the approbation of the statutes of the Congregation.

What Br. Jean Baptiste Furet reports is also revealing about the mission of the Brothers at Lavalla. In Chapter XXI of the Life (2<sup>nd</sup> part)<sup>278</sup>, he relates how Champagnat and the first Brothers lived the charism and the mission, consecrating themselves essentially to the aid of the poor, the needy, the sick, the old, and the invalids. One remembers the young boy to whom Champagnat had asked that his own mattress be given because there was nothing else for the needy. This young man, Jean Baptiste Berne, later became Brother Nilamon<sup>279</sup> who died in 1830.

A quick look at the life of the Founder with the first Brothers shows us, therefore, that at the beginning our mission was not confined to the school and that the preferential option for the poor was never limited to education. This is what inspires article 85 of our Constitutions:

*Open to any apostolate that is in harmony with its founding charism, the institute sees the direct proclamation of the word of God as an essential element of its mission. Engaged in schools or in other forms of education, we put our heart and soul into serving the human person for the sake of the Kingdom. By the tasks they perform, Brothers employed in administration or in manual work co-operate in the apostolate of the Institute. Adaptation of our ministry to the needs of the Church and of society calls for discernment and evaluation at regular intervals.*

In the letter to the Bishop of Belley, Raymond Devie, written in July 1833<sup>280</sup>, there is a phrase the understanding of which I judge crucial for anyone wanting to understand or appreciate our charism and our mission as Marist Brothers today and in the future:

*I am more and more attracted to this good work which, upon close examination, does not diverge from my aim, since it is primarily concerned with the education of the poor.*

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<sup>278</sup> *Life*, pp. 509-518.

<sup>279</sup> *Life*, pp. 512-513 see also *les Bulletins de l'Institut des Frères Maristes XXVIII*, pp. 409-413.

<sup>280</sup> AFM 113.2; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 28, p. 72.

The work in question is an agricultural school. And to think today that certain candidates are turned away because their education was a technical rather than a general one! Today, a look at the numerous works in many of the administrative units in America and Africa shows clearly that general classical education is only one part of the vast field of action of the mission of the Marist Brothers in the world. The fact is that it is not necessary to consider a project alien to the Marist charism of Champagnat simply because it is not feasible in a particular place.

At the end of his life, the Founder was considering a school for deaf-mutes, a project which was not realized, but which opens the mind of posterity to new forms of apostolate in our mission as educators. The letter<sup>281</sup>, dated 22 February 1840, and addressed to a member of the Council for Deaf-Mutes, a priest named Henri Pradier, announces that Jean Baptiste Mérigay (Brother Marie-Jubin) will be trained for the mission in this institution. He will study successfully in Paris at the Royal Institute for young deaf-mutes; his apprenticeship will last two months. This type of mission as Champagnat and François express precisely in this letter, « fits perfectly into the plan of our Institution, which is totally dedicated to the education of children of whatever condition ».

In Champagnat's letter to Bishop Philibert De Bruillard of Grenoble, we find the famous phrase: "Our plans include all the dioceses of the world<sup>282</sup>," which provides further justification for the idea I have just put forward and which inspired the slogan for the canonization: «A heart without frontiers!"

Another letter whose tone gives it all the appearance of an apostolic testament and which suggests that Champagnat is bequeathing us at the end of his life another type of apostolate, is the one addressed by way of reply to Father Pierre Bernard Hugony, parish priest of Prés-St-Gervais in Paris. The letter is dated 3 May 1840<sup>283</sup>, a little over a month before the founder's death<sup>284</sup>. And the apostolate in question here is an orphanage.

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<sup>281</sup> AFM, RCLA 1, pp. 175-176, no. 21; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 323, pp. 554-555 and doc 326, pp. 558.

<sup>282</sup> AFM, RCLA, 1, p. 31, n°6; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 93, p. 193.

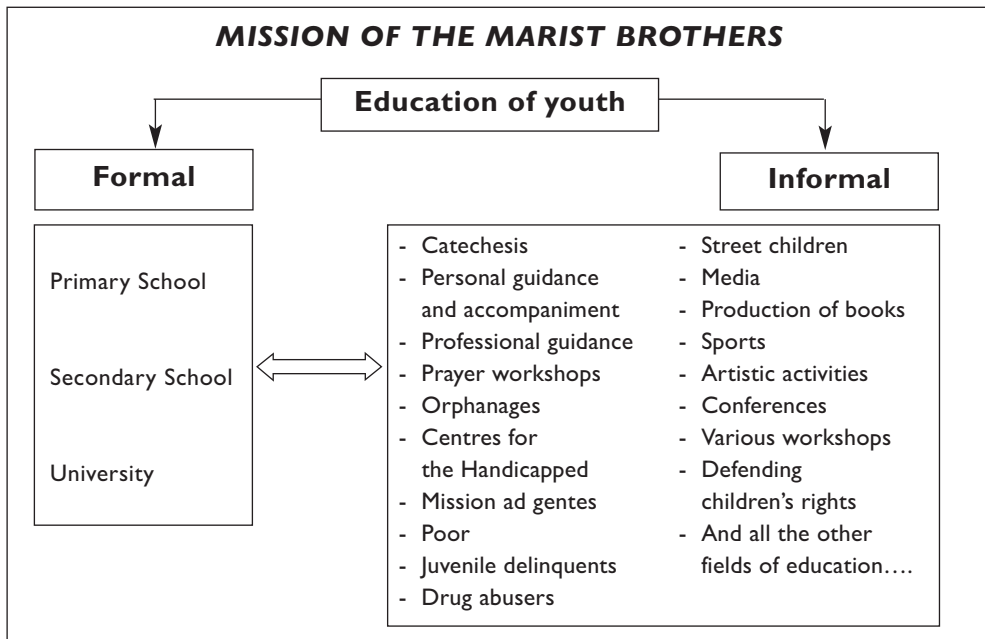
<sup>283</sup> AFM, RCLA, 1, p. 188, n°234; P. Sester, *Letters*, doc 339, pp. 576-577.

<sup>284</sup> It is also the day that Champagnat celebrates the Eucharist for the last time at the Hermitage. Gabriel Michel, *Champagnat, jour pour jour*.

*May God, the founder concludes, open to your zeal sufficient resources for the accomplishment of such an important and necessary work, and also give us the means to further your pious project!*

This last correspondence with Hugony shows that Champagnat is not indifferent to the needs of the populations of the large cities. Moreover, Br. François will make a promise to Hugony in 1844, and in 1856<sup>285</sup> will send Brothers to this new type of mission: three orphanages will be directed by the Brothers.

At the conclusion of this first part, we ascertain two equally important points. First, it is clear that the initial inspiration and idea for the mission of the Marist Brother is the education of country children. Then, this mission will be extended in the course of time. As his correspondence attests, Champagnat will accept new forms of apostolate, of mission, of pious projects, which are in keeping with the first aim of the Marist Brothers. The mission of the Marist Brothers is teaching and education, whether formal or informal. The table below shows clearly the difference between formal and informal or non-school:



<sup>285</sup> Letters, vol.2, p.285.

As can be seen, it is the field of informal education which is the richer and which offers much greater possibility of involvement with the young. That is why it is essential to have a dynamic approach to the charism. We should not remain 'living fossils,' confined within a too narrow, traditional, and untouchable vision of a charism and a mission which, be that as it may, has to take account of the 'signs of the times'.

The charism, certainly, was transmitted in the beginning to Champagnat and the first Brothers by the Holy Spirit, who is its sole guarantor. But this same Spirit, still today, continues to act because it transcends time. And the General Chapters, from 1852 to our days, have also had the important role of bringing the charism up to date, of adapting it to life and to cultures. The XIX<sup>o</sup> General Chapter invites us resolutely, faced with the urgent needs and the aspirations of the youth of today, to « multiplying the means of entering into their lives and into the world.<sup>286</sup>

*In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*<sup>287</sup> takes up and develops this aspect of our educational project in Chapter 7. And the titles of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 give good summaries of our ideas in this work: we are Sowers of the Good News (chapter 4) in a distinctive Marist style (chapter 5), in schools (chapter 6) and in other pastoral and social ministries (chapter 7).

The certainty we have today is that, on the Ivory Coast and in the Marist District of West Africa<sup>288</sup>, we are called to join youth where they find themselves. And these words taken from chapter 7 sum it up well:

*Marcellin's constant searching for the most effective way to reach out to young people is at the heart of his charism. His example inspires our creative intuitions and energies as Marist apostles. We seek to be the human face of Jesus in the midst of the young, wherever we find them.*<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> XIX<sup>o</sup> Chapitre Général, Mission, 33.

<sup>287</sup> *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat A Vision for Marist Education Today* is the reference document produced by the International Marist Education Commission (1995-1998).

<sup>288</sup> This District, created in 2000, consists of Ghana, Liberia, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast.

<sup>289</sup> *In the Footsteps*, No 167.

At this level, it is necessary to take up the challenge and the real difficulty of adapting the charism and the mission in an international Institute with many faces such as our own. The social situation and the culture from one continent to another, from one country to another, and even from one community to another can present profoundly different features. We think that there are two essential questions to be asked when it is question of implanting the charism in any country or culture: first, how is the original charism enriched by the culture which is receiving it? Then, and this within the dialect of inculturation, how to give our mission a face which is Marist and at the same time totally rooted in the society and the culture which makes it welcome?

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### **THE CASE OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE: SOME URGENT QUESTIONS**

Today, as we have already emphasized, some very urgent questions must be addressed by the Marist Brothers of Côte d'Ivoire, which has barely emerged from five years of war and disorder as much socio-economic as religious. More than ever we must draw from our Marist traditions the charismatic resources necessary for us to commit ourselves with faith and courage and face up to the challenges presented us by the realities of the twenty-first century.

Before reformulating the questions already posed, let us dwell once more on certain sources of information of special interest for the debate about the nature of our mission. We will do nothing more than lay out here, without too much commentary, certain texts which, in our opinion, will help some of us to understand, and others to put up with, the reflections which will be subsequently developed. Already in 1833, in the Statutes<sup>290</sup> signed by Champagnat, Father Séon<sup>291</sup> and Brother Barthélémy Badard, we read as follows:

*Article one. The Little Brothers of Mary have as aim primary education*

*[...]*

*Article 9. The object of the Congregation is also to conduct*

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<sup>290</sup> AFM 132.7.

<sup>291</sup> Letters, Vol 2, p. 458-459.



*Orphanages or houses of refuge for youth escaping from delinquency or exposed to losing their morals.*

These texts are for us a call to rediscover our charism and our mission. Already the 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, that of 1967, in response to the call of the Council, issued an urgent invitation to rediscover our charism by drawing on the sources in such a way as to make clear again our mission.<sup>292</sup>

To return to the mission of the Brothers in Côte d'Ivoire, the practical question which keeps on being asked is that of the involvement of the Brothers and lay Marists in the re-insertion of all those young people who are going to lay down their arms and return to civil and active life. Will we choose, out of ignorance or obstinacy, to continue to hold back and confine ourselves to the school by closing our mission to this call which hardly deviates from the original aim of Marcellin Champagnat and his first companions? The teaching of spelling, the taking under one's responsibility, accompaniment, training workshops with the young and other sporting and cultural activities, could they not today serve as instruments to help and support the reorientation and formation of these young people?

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## **THE PROBLEM OF VOCATIONS: WE MUST HAVE BROTHERS**

We confine ourselves to giving the figures, since we do not claim to be writing a history of the Marist presence in Côte d'Ivoire. It was in 1969<sup>293</sup> that the Marist Brothers landed in Côte d'Ivoire in the generalate of Brother Basilio Rueda<sup>294</sup>. They were 5 in number, Spanish Brothers from the Province of Levante, now forming part of the new Province of the Mediterranean. Two of them lived and worked the first year with the community of the Clerks of Saint Viateur in Bouaké. The three others formed the first Marist communi-

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<sup>292</sup> Can. 578 – The thought of the founders and their project, which has been recognised by the competent ecclesiastical authority with regard to the nature, end, spirit and character of the Institute together with its wholesome traditions, everything which forms part of the patrimony of the Institute, must be faithfully maintained by all.

<sup>293</sup> In fact, this was the second group of Spanish brothers to arrive on the Ivory Coast. A first group came to see how the land lay in 1966 but those brothers left again very quickly.

<sup>294</sup> Ninth Superior General from 1967 to 1985.

ty in Côte d'Ivoire at Dimbokro<sup>295</sup>. Today, 40 years after, in addition to the five founders one can remember roughly the names of 24 Brothers who entered, but most did not persevere.

A question arises then on the level of vocations<sup>296</sup>. One is frequently quite surprised by the explanation given by certain missionary Brothers in Côte d'Ivoire for the lack of Marist religious vocations. Firstly they point out, and this is true, that the lack of vocations is not only notable with the Marist Brothers. The second reason is more surprising: they consider that in the 70s and 80s, the country was very wealthy and that there were many opportunities for study and employment for the youth.

Religious life would, therefore, be today, when the economic situation has deteriorated, a sort of escape hatch, a refuge, a safety exit for the poor. The quest for a certain social security would be, a priori, for certain people, the essential reason for the abundance of vocations in the countries of Africa.

As this way of explaining things appears very limited to us, we are going to cast a critical eye over the problem of Marist religious vocations in particular, although it may apply equally well to religious vocations in general. Firstly, in Europe and for most of the developed countries, one observes that the vocations ministry has to all intents and purposes disappeared from the list of priorities. Marist religious life is dying and the Brothers themselves assist powerlessly at this death. The solution for some is that we should 'die quietly', without fuss and so without any attempt at recruitment. An argument reasonably common among certain European Brothers is that youth cannot be attracted by our way of life. But what is so strange about our way of life? A question which will of necessity have to be answered.

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. AFM

<sup>296</sup> From 24, we have passed today (2008) to nine brothers and since 2003, the year of the last profession, no further recruitment has been registered.

## **SOME REASONS FOR THE LACK OF VOCATIONS**

### ***The instrumentalisation of the mission***

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We think that there are three essential reasons, closely linked together, for the vocations crisis, and affecting the rich countries as much as those which are not yet so.

The first reason, which explains the present state of affairs in Europe, is what we will call the 'instrumentalisation' of the religious vocation. There has been at the start among the Marist Brothers, and it is a risk facing all apostolic religious congregations, a reducing of our mission to a work (teaching), or even more to development projects.

No-one, certainly, could deny the contribution of religious to human education and to the development of the countries called developed. It is sufficient to see all the intellectuals formed, the works and centres established by religious. So therefore, at the period when the rich countries were on the way to development, without being aware of it, the mission of the religious congregations was to contribute in a material way to the development. And as now these countries are developed, the mission no longer has meaning. At a given moment, the apostolic congregations were totally lost in their work. That is what has caused their disappearance, mysterious as it may appear.

To support this claim, let us cite an historical thesis defended in 2001 by Brother Richard Hemeryck, of the community of Beaucamps in France<sup>297</sup>, the fruit of thirty years of research, on « Les écoles congréganistes dans le département du Nord sous le second Empire (1852-1870) ». In conclusion, Brother Hemeryck develops several interesting lines of reflection.

First of all, according to Brother André Lanfrey's commentary, the congregations knew how to respond to needs (health, education, and social services in particular) which society did not entirely meet, and often provided the models for teaching. But, and we quote Brother Hemeryck, for this is exactly what we call 'instrumentalisation' of the mission:

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<sup>297</sup> One can refer to *Marist Notebooks* no. 24, December 2007 for Brother Lanfrey's account of this defence.

*Before the progress of the lay institutions, two ways opened up. The first would have been to be able to maintain quality, in order to continue their mission as pioneers, forerunners, animators, in a Christian spirit. Instead they chose the second possibility, that of competition » [...] « In an increasingly unequal struggle, the growth in volume of the works exhausted the energy of the religious and drew them into territory more human than supernatural... »<sup>298</sup>*

This last phrase sums up well what we are making use of to demonstrate as one of the essential reasons for the problem of the mission and religious vocations. It could be applied to any congregation on any continent.

This problem of vocations, it should be noted, does not date from today. Brother Leonida, 7<sup>th</sup> Superior General from 1946 to 1958, has provided a considerable doctrinal endeavour in this direction. In his 22 circulars, two a year,<sup>299</sup> there are some very relevant reflections:

*One can sense therein a will to restore the Institute at depth, in the face of disturbing problems such as the feeble esteem for vocation and lack of perseverance. The idea of a necessary change is grasped even though in a very timid fashion.*<sup>300</sup>

These writings set us reflecting about the essence of our vocation.

## **The material factor**

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Today in Africa and in all the countries on the path to development, there is more and more talk of financial autonomy. In religious congregations, it is the same scenario. The provinces and other administrative units must absolutely look after themselves. It is often forgotten that if these administrative units are poor, it is because the countries are poor.

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<sup>298</sup> Brother Hemeryck, Richard, *Les écoles congréganistes dans le département du Nord sous le second Empire (1852-1870)*, p.1735.

<sup>299</sup> The first circular, 24 May 1947, is all about vocation. It is entitled « A great love for our vocation ».

<sup>300</sup> *The circulars : witnesses to Marist spiritual tradition in Marist Notebooks*, no. 23, June 2006, pp.11-38

The meetings, workshops, and other reflections on “the evangelical use of goods” which should, in our opinion, show us how to use our goods (whether we have them in abundance or not) in a way so as to promote the evangelical values (solidarity, sharing, charity, love, etc.), have become instead times for looking for ways and means to obtain enough money so as not to depend on aid from the rich countries.

It is true that we have to have the goods before we can use them in an evangelical way. However, there is the risk that we will become so obsessed with the question of financial independence that we could forget that that is not the aim of our mission. Why do we always end up, in our meetings on the evangelical use of goods, talking only about financial autonomy? For some, it is necessary to work more, to spend less ‘to tighten the belt’ as one often hears said or insinuated. In reality, the essential question which is often enough not asked is: why are we doing all this? Is it financial independence for itself or for the Gospel?

The risk, as we have already observed, is that, following this logic of financial autonomy, we become necessarily teachers and not religious. And it is here that emerges the second of the three reasons we have proposed to give. The mission of a religious not being reduced to his work, that of teaching, neither can one use that as the basis for recruiting. Now, as everywhere in the world, not only is the profession of teaching not particularly attractive for youth today, but also and especially, one does not need to become a Brother if that comes down to being essentially a teacher.

### ***A language adapted***

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There is a need, not to re-define, but to re-affirm our mission and eventually our vocation, our being as religious: “We are religious, the Little Brothers of Mary”<sup>301</sup> as Brother Leonida reminds us. And we all have need today of making use of an adapted language, particularly in Europe where the Brothers, almost all of a certain age, appear to have been left behind by the

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<sup>301</sup> Title of the key circular of 8 December 1952, in which he treats of the religious spirit and the Marist spirit, eminently traditional themes. Before the concern aroused by the lack of perseverance of the Brothers, Br. Leonida proposes to restore to them a strong Marist identity, based on love and esteem for their vocation.

pace of life of a secularized society, which is changing too fast. They have not yet succeeded, yet it would be necessary that they try, in finding the language adapted to addressing the young, whose needs they do not understand. So, some choose not to speak any more about the religious vocation.

These analyses indicate that there are finally some necessary questions which must be answered in our Marist District of Western Africa, and particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, but also, perhaps, in the whole of Africa.

### **A necessary step to take**

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Today, the situation experienced in Côte d'Ivoire is very like that of France at the time when the charism of the Marist Brothers first emerged. In his book published on the occasion of Champagnat's canonisation, Robert Masson wrote:

*In the spiritual state in which France was, after years of upheavals of all kinds, there was need for the full truth. It was necessary to face up to it urgently. (...) People were more attached to the goods of this world than to those of the Kingdom. For the histories, which spoke frequently of the settling of accounts, it was a question of bringing action against, without any real concern for justice. Deceit and corruption did their work. These had their effects on morals, not to mention faith.<sup>302</sup>*

Religious vocations are also urgent in Côte d'Ivoire<sup>303</sup>: how to place our charism at the service of society and the people of God? How to live the encounter between Marist culture and the cultures of Côte d'Ivoire? How to remove the utilitarianism with which the mission is tainted in order to adapt it to the local and continental cultures which have a greater sense of gratuity, community, and family? Cultures, as the Dominican theologian Paul Greffé says “are bearers of values of humanisation and of hospitality. They are the sign of the transcendency of the spirit in comparison with the immediate needs

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<sup>302</sup> MASSON, Robert, *Marcellin Champagnat, Les improbables de Dieu*, Paris, Parole et Silence, 1999, p. 45.

<sup>303</sup> We will not use the expression, ‘good vocations’ which we find rather ambiguous.

of the human being. In our epoch of globalisation, it seems to me that it is part of the mission of the Church to promote local cultures menaced by a universal culture of a scientific and technological order more and more monolithic.<sup>304</sup> This question, this reality, it is the person of Côte d'Ivoire, the indigenous Brother, who will be best placed to face up to. That is why it is essential that the indigenous Brothers move to the front of the mission. The founding missionary Brothers must be fully convinced of this by giving them the means of maturing and continuing the mission themselves. These means are obviously a human, spiritual and intellectual formation.

It is absolutely necessary as well to try to discern what the culture and the society of Côte d'Ivoire contribute to the charism bequeathed by Champagnat and the first Brothers; how, for example, the sense of community, of the common education of children, of family, of solidarity, and other values have influenced the Marist Brothers in their mission of education. How do the Marist Brothers, with their lay partners, foresee the post-war period?

Is there not among the Marist Brothers a too restricted vision of the mission? And is it not this too limited vision of our mission which explains the lack of vocations? Does not our way of life and our mission reduce our vocation to simply a work to be done? And if our vocation consists substantially of the work of teaching, which, it may be said in passing, is not at all attractive to the youth of today, what then is the difference between a good Christian teacher and a Marist Brother? To attract vocations, it is absolutely necessary that what we are, that is to say, our being, speaks louder than what we do. To be is neither to do nor to have; it is to be, to be the face of God.

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## **CONCLUSION**

Through this modest work of personal reflection, we have tried to pose the question of our mission and to provide ways deriving from our traditions and the founder to be able to help us evaluate our commitment and our apostolate in the Church and in the world. It is a work essentially inspired

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<sup>304</sup> He is the author of *De Babel à Pentecôte. Essais de Théologie interreligieuse*, d. du Cerf, 2006. Here we are quoting an article which appeared in the newspaper *La Croix*, 14 March 2008 in the column: *Paroles, Forum et Débats*.

by the course of the Spiritual Patrimony of our Institute which has the merit of plunging us into the heart of our history, our spirituality, our charism and our mission. Through it all, our founder is discovered to be a man at once profoundly human and filled with God. We discover also the first Brothers, just as important in our history, in our Marist spirituality. We discover the depth of the charism and the authenticity of the mission which these men passionate for God have left us. Then, and only then, we feel ourselves as though driven by the Spirit, co-responsible, heirs of a vocation which must ceaselessly be questioned, brought up to date, incarnated in our cultures and lived in a way always authentic.

But in this type of reflection which touches on the mystery of our life choices, the questions, as Karl Jaspers says<sup>305</sup>, are more important than the answers, because in answering one proceeds to a progressive unveiling of the truth, within the limits of what can be known.

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<sup>305</sup> Karl JASPERS, *Introduction à la philosophie*, Paris, U.G.E, 10/18 (1965) 1977, p. 27.





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