

28

may 2010

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MARIST

Notebooks



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FMS MARIST NOTEBOOKS

N° 28 YEAR XX 2010

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Commission

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EDITORIAL

André Lanfrey, fms

One of the functions of the *Marist Notebooks* is to “commemorate” events involving the groups and individuals working on the history of the Marist Brothers. That is why the article of Br. Aureliano Brambila recalls the ten years since the canonisation of Champagnat for the former Marist students of Mexico. Moreover, these last months have been marked by the deaths of Brother Gabriel Michel on 17 November 2008, aged 89, and Brother Alexandre Balko, 31 January 2009, another pioneer of Marist research. It is fitting that this number 28 of the *Marist Notebooks* pays them homage through the pens of Brothers Manuel Mesonero and Alain Delorme, particularly with reference to their spirit and their life. To these we add the veritable spiritual and intellectual testament of Br. Balko, drawn up by him at the request of Br. Henri Réocreux, just months before he died.

This number reminds us also that Marist research is not limited to the

Brothers but involves the whole Society of Mary. This explains the interest of Brother Frederick McMahon’s article on the Champagnat-Pompallier relationship. As well, the acts of the mini-colloquium between the Marist branches held in Rome in June on the theme: “What is the Society of Mary?” has allowed a fruitful collaboration of the researchers of the various branches of the Society and revealed that this consecrated term is not as clear as some think.

Brothers Anaya and Lanfrey, the former through a learned article based on canon law, the latter with more historical objectives, have focused more on the society of the Marist Brothers which, in the XIX century, evolved markedly from the status of an association to that of a religious congregation, while continuing to regard itself as forming part of a Society of Mary considered more or less as a religious order.

WE HAVE NEW WINE; DO WE NEED NEW WINESKINS?

Anaya Juan Miguel, fms

In recent times I have had the opportunity to read various commentaries and articles on our origins as Little Brothers of Mary. I have been doing this frequently, recalling with nostalgia the immense good the reading of the memoirs of Br. Sylvestre did me during the period of my novitiate.

I have also had the wish to write something myself. And what could I contribute on this subject¹? In truth, I regret the absence of an approach

to our origins envisaged with the exegetical criterion which requires that a text be not isolated from its context. What do I mean by that?

The foundation of the Institute (and of the Society of Mary as a whole) happened at a moment in history when the model of consecrated life was changing². In the course of the two millennia of the Church's history, the consecrated life had periodically increased the paradigms by which it defined itself³. Canon Law

¹ Certain readers, especially after having had the patience to read this article, may ask the same question, or wish that I had resisted the temptation, as a good religious should do faced with certain temptations. My contribution, in as much as it is one, concerns a juridic understanding, one which corresponds to the studies of canon law my superiors asked me to undertake, and with my current work as Procurator for the Marist Brothers. Sometimes words do not have the same meaning in common speech and in legal language. For example, in many countries the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul are considered as the very example of nuns (in fact they are the Institute or Society with most members in the Church, surpassing the Jesuits and the Salesians). However, from the juridic point of view, they are not nuns but members of a Society of Apostolic Life (Cf. *Annuario Pontificio 2008*, Città del Vaticano 2008, 1746). In this article, I am attempting to use words in their juridic sense, even if causes surprise because of our habit of using the same words in common speech, but with a different meaning.

² The very fact of speaking of consecrated life is an anachronism if we are referring to the XIX century or other times in history prior to 1983. This term is proper to the vocabulary of the Code of Canon Law of 1983 (cf. c. 573-606). For Champagnat, Colin, François...this expression would have seemed strange. They would speak of Orders, Regulars, Religious, Societies, Congregations or Institutes...

³ Cf. G. ROCCA, « Per una storia giuridica della vita consacrata », in GRUPPO ITALIANO DOCENTI DI DIRITTO CANONICO (ed.), *La vita consacrata nella chiesa*, Milano 2006, 35-69. This is an interesting study presented during the XXXII Seminar of Studies (2005), organised by the group of canonists mentioned. The book from which the article is taken is the publication which brings together the acts of the meeting. Rocca notes that he is mainly concerned with the West, where the greatest variety of juridical forms and structures have emerged. He establishes the following stages:

follows life, so that, since the Holy Spirit is continually acting in the Church, the law always reflects imperfectly the reality of the life and the holiness of the members of the Church.

Thus, from the juridic point of view, one can speak of the passage from the variety of expressions of consecrated life of the first centuries, to the identification of this style of life with the monastic life. At a given moment the monks had to make place for the mendicant orders, with their lifestyle completely different from Benedictine stability. A little later, the great number of foundations of clerks regular led to identifying consecrated life with those for whom the common denominator was religious profession with solemn vows. The XIX century saw the rise of an impressive number of "secular" congregations or societies (with simple vows) which led to identifying consecrated life with public profession of vows (Code of 1917). Recently, towards the middle of the XX century,

secular institutes were formally approved and included among the types of consecrated life. The Code of 1983 speaks of new forms of consecrated life (cf. c. 605), some of which have been approved by the Holy See⁴. In some of them, for example, it is possible for men and women to live in the same community, where bonds of consecration are admitted for married persons who continue their married life⁵.

It seems to me that, for a number of us, at this time of extending our knowledge of the Marist origins, it may prove useful to have a better understanding of the context of paradigm change occurring in the definition of consecrated life in the XIX century. It is advisable to revise in this light, quite analytically, our first hundred years of history. And finally, we can ask ourselves: has all this anything to do with our actual situation? Have we something to learn from our history so we can better live through the changes we are experiencing in our time?

1. In search of a common denominator of the genre (II-VIII centuries).
2. First classification into species: the rules of St Augustine and St Benedict (VIII-IX centuries).
3. From two rules (or species) to three (St Augustine, St Benedict, St Basil), and from three rules to the approved Religious Life (IX-XIII centuries, with the Lateran Councils).
4. The first common denominator of the genre: Regular (= Religious = Solemn vow) and state of perfection (XIII-XIX centuries).
5. The second common denominator of the genre: Religious Life and Religious in the Code of 1917.
6. On the way towards new species (1947-1983).
7. The third common denominator of the genre: Consecrated Life in the Code of 1983.

⁴ Cf. *Annuario Pontificio 2008*, Città del Vaticano 2008, 1748-1749.

⁵ It must always be kept in mind that No. 62 of *Vita consecrata* makes it clear that: « one cannot include in the specific category of consecrated life those forms of commitment, certainly praiseworthy, which Christian couples make in certain ecclesial associations or movements, when, with the intention of bringing to the perfection of charity their love, which is already in some way « consecrated » in the sacrament of matrimony, they confirm by vow the obligation of chastity proper to their married life and, without neglecting their duties towards their children, they profess poverty and obedience. » (JOHN-PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 25 March 1996, AAS 88 [1996] 436).

I propose, therefore, to study three successive points in this article:

1. The change of paradigm brought about by the appearance of religious institutes with simple vows.
2. Some fundamental points of the history of Marist origins, especially in relation to the Little Brothers of Mary.
3. The possibility of a future common road for the Marists of Champagnat⁶ (Brothers, laity...) through a change of the current paradigm⁷.

1. INSTITUTES OF SIMPLE VOWS

Institutes in which the professed made simple vows⁸ appeared in the Church from the XVI century. This fact created a major difference between the Orders, with solemn profession⁹, and the new Institutes¹⁰, with simple profession¹¹. The solemn vow indicates clearly the separation of the Regular, the only religious, from other persons who were not "religious" because they did not take solemn vows. The juridical schema of

⁶ Denomination used by the participants at the Mission Assembly held at Mendès, to refer to all the persons who feel called by God to follow and share in the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, in different ways, in accord with their personal vocations (FMS, « Document of the Mission Assembly of Mendès », 2, in FMS Message 38 [2008], 82).

⁷ We find ourselves facing a change of paradigm; this is proved not only by the interest in new forms of consecrated life foreseen in c. 605 of the Code in force, or the reality of the Ecclesial Movements I will speak about in the 3rd part of the article, but also by the effervescence existing in most of the classic Institutes (= ancient Orders), which have associated lay movements (for example, the Jesuits approved in their last General Congregation [4 March 2008] a Decree on Collaboration at the centre of the Mission, and the Dominicans have recently approved [8 August 2008] General Declarations on the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic).

⁸ One can find the description of the appearance of Institutes of simple vows in E. SASTRE SANTOS, *La vita religiosa*, Milano 1997, 705-871, or in M. AUGÉ, - E. SASTRE SANTOS - L. BORRIELLO, *Storia della vita religiosa*, Brescia 1988, 442-459.

⁹ The solemnity of vows depends on the positive will of the Church which gives them power to render invalid any contrary acts and, at the same time, it depends also on the perpetual and irrevocable gift of self on the part of the one taking the vow. The one who makes the vow realises a perfect gift which is accepted in God's name by the minister of the Church, so that the person remains consecrated to God's service for life. One promises the use of the object promised and the object itself. One remits to God both the utilitarian and the radical domains, one promises actions and the ability to perform them, so that the person remains unable to carry out any acts contrary, which are logically, nul. (cf. A. TABERA - G.M. DE ANTOÑANA - G. ESCUDERO, *Derecho de los Religiosos. Manual teórico práctico*, Madrid 1968⁵, 365-366).

¹⁰ Up to the Code of 1917, and even years later, these Institutes were called indiscriminately Institutes of simple vows, Congregations of simple vows, secular Congregations or new Institutes (cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento de los institutos de votos simples según las Normae de la Santa Sede (1854-1958). Introducción y textos*, Roma-Madrid 1993, 11). This work of Sastre is an interesting compilation of material from the archives of the SCBR, which we will hereafter cite by abridging the title as *El ordenamiento*. SCBR are the initials of the "Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars", the name of the dicastery responsible for religious life up to 1908. From 1908 it was called the Sacred Congregation of Religious, which we will abbreviate as SCR. There have been other changes since to the name of this dicastery.

¹¹ The simple vow promises the use of the object promised. One remits the utilitarian domain, one promises the acts of the counsels, while retaining the faculty of acting to the contrary, which acts are, as a consequence, valid. (cf. A. TABERA - G.M. DE ANTOÑANA - G. ESCUDERO, *Derecho de los Religiosos*, 366).

religious life conformed to the requirements of the solemn vow, in addition to cloister for nuns¹². The Church did not define those who took simple vows to be "religious"¹³.

Before the XIX century, no canonical legislation existed to regulate the approval of congregations of simple vows on the part of the Apostolic See¹⁴ and, as we have already said, their members were not considered

as true religious in the same title as the Regulars¹⁵. In the course of this century, many Congregations of simple vows asked the Popes for some type of recognition, and more than a hundred, mainly of women, obtained it in the first sixty years of the century¹⁶. Because of this multiplication of new foundations¹⁷, Cardinal Bizzarri, who was secretary of the SCBR, drew up in 1854, at the re-

¹² Sabbarese explains that there was an absolute prohibition on approving new forms of consecrated life other than religious Orders *stricto sensu* as a result of the decree *De regularibus et monialibus* (Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXV, Decree *de regularibus et monialibus*, in ISTITUTO PER LE SCIENZE RELIGIOSE DI BOLOGNA, [ed.], *Concilliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna 1991, 776-784) and the Apostolic Constitutions *Circa pastoralis* (PIE V, Const Ap. *Circa pastoralis*, 29 May 1566, in BR, IV, II, 292-294) and *Lubricum vitae genus* (PIE V, Ap.Cons. *Lubricum vital genus*, 17 November 1568, in BR, IV, III, 47-48). BR corresponds to *Bullarum, diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum Romanorum pontificum*, Roma 1745. These documents have established that one cannot speak of religious life unless two conditions are fulfilled: solemn vows and, for nuns, papal cloister (L. SABBARESE, « Nuove forme di vita consacrata [can. 605] », in GRUPPO ITALIANO DOCENTI DI DIRITTO CANONICO [ed.], *La vita consacrata nella chiesa*, Milano 2006, 84-86).

¹³ Cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 83. The classic law of religious life protected the radical detachment of religious from the things of the earth by profession of solemn vows, by imposing a series of external precautions which revealed their situation to Christians and non-Christians. For women this meant, as well, the indispensable withdrawal from the world by living in the cloister. The one making the solemn vow denied existence to acts contrary to those vows: buying, selling, marrying, opening a lawsuit... The claim was that this reflected the situation of being dead to the world and living only for God. In contrast, acts contrary to the vows for those who professed simple vows were valid. Did a vow of this kind protect and reflect the separation from the world necessary in the religious state (of life)? This is the doubt behind the difficulties associated with recognising as religious those professed with simple vows. (Cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 88-89).

¹⁴ The Bishops could not, in any way, approve the existence of a new Institute, because the IV Lateran Council had forbidden approving new Orders (cf. CONCILIO LATERANENSE IV, c. 13, in ISTITUTO PER LE SCIENZE RELIGIOSE DI BOLOGNA, [ed.], *Concilliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, 242). Founders were obliged to obtain approval directly from the Holy See, the Pope being the only one who could overrule an interdict coming from the Council. Some Bishops granted local approval by resorting to the juridical figure of associations or confraternities, never to that of Order or Religious life. The situation did not change until the SCBR published the *Methodus* we will refer to.

¹⁵ In this sense the approbation of the Passionists as an Institute of simple vows supposes an exceptional case - they were granted the privilege of exemption - (cf. M. AUGÉ - E. SASTRE SANTOS - L. BORRIELLO, *Storia della vita religiosa*, 444). It was Clement XIV who approved them (cf. CLEMENT XIV, Letter *Supremi apostolatus*, 16 December 1769, in BRC, V, 73-79). BRC corresponds to *Bullarii Romani continuatio Summorum Pontificum Benedicti XIV, Clementis XIII, Clementis XIV, Pii VI, Pii VII, Leonis XII et Pii VIII*, I-IX, Prati 1835-1856.

¹⁶ The note on p. 93 d' *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 1 (1865) gives 198 approbations between 1800 and 1864. One may also consult A. BIZZARRI, *Collectanea in usum Secretariae Sacrae Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium*, Roma 1885², 487-488. Bizzarri's work will be abridged hereafter as *Bizzarri*. In the review *Analecta Juris Pontificii* 5 (1861) 52-103; 147-217; 24 (1885) 383-422; 26 (1886-1887) 954-977, can be found articles which describe the secular Congregations approved and the process followed for approbation, with a profusion of details.

¹⁷ The historic conjuncture of the XIX century proved extremely favourable for these new Institutes of simple vows, for the horizon expanded, and with it the need for the presence of the Church and the pos-

quest of of Pius IX, a *Methodus*¹⁸ for these approbations. The text was approved by the Pope and sent to all the bishops of the world in 1861. From this date the life of a new Institute passed through two periods, the first under the guardianship of the diocesan Bishop of the place of foundation, the second under that of the Apostolic See once the said Institute obtained the *decretum laudis*, followed by the decree of approbation and the approbation of its Constitutions a few years later¹⁹.

All the same, in the official doctrine of the Church (including the documents of the Popes and of the Roman Curia) the terms "religion", "religious", "religious state" and "regular" referred to one and the same reality up to the end of the XIX century, and they indicated only the Or-

ders of solemn vows and their members²⁰, while the new Institutes, in their hundreds by the end of the XIX century, were called Institutes or secular Congregations, and not recognised as of religious character²¹. Even in 1896, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, faced with the reality of hundreds of Institutes of simple vows which had appeared in the Church, wrote:

"The modern Institutes, in which simple vows are taken, must not take for themselves the name of religious order; it follows that their members must not be called religious."²²

It is true that some jurists, from about the 1850-60s, had started to distinguish the term *Religious* from the term *Regular*, and to consider that Institutes of simple vows pos-

sibilities and opportunities of practicing the works of mercy. This expansion forced a change of mentality and juridical framework for the religious life. The new Institutes are the response of religious life to the conditions of the XIX century: liberal society, demographic and industrial revolutions, the social question... To practice the works of mercy in a liberal society, to work in the missionary field of the Church, this was not possible except for religious professing simple vows (cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 20. 85). As for our own birth as Little Brothers of Mary, it is appropriate to situate our history in the context of the extraordinary flourishing of new Congregations consecrated to teaching which arose in France in the first years of the XIX century. An excellent study of this period may be found in P. ZIND, *Les nouvelles Congrégations de Frères enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*, Saint-Genis-Laval 1969.

¹⁸ SCBR, *Methodus quae a Sacra Congregatione episcoporum et regularium servatur in approbandis novis institutis votorum simplicium*, 22 Sep. 1854, in E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 187-189. The formula of approbation of a new Institute established that it was approved as a Congregation of simple vows under the régime (government) of a Superior General, the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries remaining intact, as indicated by the sacred canons and Apostolic Constitutions.

¹⁹ The study of G. LESAGE, *L'accession des Congrégations à l'état religieux canonique*, Ottawa 1952, is consecrated to this juridical reality which extended through several centuries. The work comprises 222 pages packed with history and doctrine.

²⁰ J. GRIBOMONT – J.M.R. TILLARD, « Religio (Religiosus) » in DIP 7, 1633. I am using the abbreviation DIP to refer to the monumental work of G. PELLICIA – G. ROCCA (ed.), *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, I-X, Rome 1974-2003.

²¹ G. ROCCA, « Voto » in DIP 10, 561.

²² SCBR, « Animadversiones » in *Analecta ecclesiastica* 4 (1896) 159.

sessed all the essential elements (with their style and way of life characterised by the rhythm of prayer, common life, asceticism, the habit and separation from the world²³) to allow their members to be considered religious²⁴. So a double profile of the religious state was emerging: on one side, the juridical religious state, with regard to status according to canon law; on the other side, the theological religious state, in relation to moral status and merit before God. The common doctrine admitted, at this stage, those who professed simple vows had a part in the theological religious state, but the Church did not yet recognise them to be part of the juridical religious state²⁵.

Towards the end of the XIX century, the juridical state proper to Congregations of simple vows began to be outlined more fully. In 1889 the decree of approbation for a community distinguished what can be called three levels: Orders with solemn vows, which inserted them into the religious state properly speaking; Religious Congregations with simple vows; and pious associations which made only private vows²⁶. About the same period, an article in a review

specialising in topics of law and history stated that, the aims of clerics and laity being different, it was necessary to take account of the fact that the clerics present in a lay institute consecrated themselves to the spiritual service of the lay members, without having access to the government of the Institute, and, on the other hand, the lay men present in a clerical Institute were at the service of the clerics and similarly did not have access to government²⁷.

The first official document which approaches the question of the juridical definition of new institutes, called the *magna carta* of the Congregations of simple vows, is the Constitution *Conditae a Christo*, of 1900²⁸. The Constitution recognised the power of the Bishops to erect a Religious Institute in their own territory, thus clarifying the juridical situation. It demonstrated, in a definitive and complete manner, the difference of *status* between an Institute of diocesan right and one of pontifical right. All Orders of solemn vows were considered of pontifical right. Some of the Congregations of simple vows were considered of pontifical right, with the passing of the *decretum laudis*, the rest remaining of diocesan right.

²³ Cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 80-81.

²⁴ For example, cf. D. BOUIX, *Tractatus de jure regularium* I, Paris 1857, 34.

²⁵ Cf. G. LESAGE, *L'accession des Congrégations à l'état religieux canonique*, 182-184.

²⁶ SCBR, Decree *Ecclesia Católica*, 11 August 1889, in E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 230.

²⁷ Cf. « Instituts de frères », *Analecta Juris Pontificiae* 27 (1887-1888) 232-252. To readers familiar with the history of the Marist Brothers these affirmations will recall the memories of several differences between Fathers Colin and Champagnat.

²⁸ LEO XIII, Constitution *Conditae a Christo*, 8 December 1900, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 33 (1900-1901) 341-347. The first chapter presents the norms for those of diocesan right (p. 342-344). The second chapter presents the norms for those of pontifical right (p. 344-347).

Shortly afterwards, in 1901, were published some *Normae*²⁹, with 325 articles, which were the codification of the rules followed up to that time by the SCBR concerning the approbation of new Institutes of simple vows. The contents were organised into two sections. The first explained the practice to be followed to approve a new Institute and its Constitutions. It contained information very useful for the Bishops and the Institute themselves. The second section proposed the schema of a model of the Constitutions for these new Institutes. This second section included numbers 42 to 321, which gives some idea of the comprehensive character of the proposal.

A well-known Jesuit jurist could affirm, after the publication of these two documents, that "the Congregations possess something the Orders do not have yet: a modern code of general laws which regulate them³⁰." This was, perhaps, one of the reasons why Pius X, in his reform of the Roman Curia, changed the structure and the name of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to the Sacred Congregation of Religious, so that the new Dicastery was concerned with the Orders of solemn vows as well as the Congregations of simple vows, even if the

latter were not yet juridically recognised as religious orders³¹. To understand the situation at the beginning of the following decade, it may be of interest to transcribe here two quotations from 1911, taken from two of the most reliable and reputable commentators on juridical themes relating to religious life.

Without wishing to take anything from the merit of persons who consecrate themselves to the Lord and attach themselves to him by the triple bond of the simple vows and, fully recognising that they truly practise the religious virtues in their fervour and purity, the S. Congregation, however, down to today refuses them the title of *rule, regular order, monastics, regular profession*. It would be necessary to replace these by *constitutions, religious congregation, profession*. [...] Thus, a certain latitude is employed in using the word *religious* (man or woman) for institutes of simple vows; their subjects are not religious *strictly speaking*...³²

By *religious order*, is understood an association approved by the Church, in which the members profess to aim at perfection by the observance of the three *solemn* vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Under the name of *congregation or institute*, are included those associations

²⁹ SCBR, *Normae secundum quas S. C. Episcoporum et Regularium procedere solet in approbandis novis institutos votorum simplicium*, 28 June 1901, in E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 266-299.

³⁰ A. VERMEERSCH, « L'organisation des instituts religieux à vœux simples d'après un récent document du Saint-Siège », *Revue théologique française* 6 (1901) 745.

³¹ Cf. PIUS X, Apostolic Constitution *Sapienti Concilio*, 29 June 1908, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1 (1909) 11-12. The official publication of the Holy See, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* is usually abridged as AAS.

³² A. BATTANDIER, *Guide canonique pour les constitutions des instituts à vœux simples*, Paris 1923, p. 41-42.

of pious persons who wish to aim at perfection by the practice of the three *simple* vows, temporary or perpetual, of poverty, chastity and obedience³³.

It was only the code of canon law of 1917 which fully recognised as religious Institutes of simple vows³⁴. The religious state was defined thus:

The religious state should be held in high esteem, that is to say, a stable way of life in common, by which the faithful, in addition to the common precepts, take on themselves the obligation of practising the evangelical counsels by the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty (c. 487 of the Code of 1917).

In the following canons, what is understood by the name is:

Religious congregation: a society approved by legitimate ecclesiastical authority, in which the members, in conformity with the laws of the society, take public vows, either perpetual or temporary, - which must be renewed when the time they were taken for expires - ; in this way the members aim at evangelical perfection (c. 488, 1° du Code de 1917).

Religious: those who have taken vows in any religious congregation... (c. 188, 7° of the Code of 1917).

The distinctive criterion of the religious state is the taking of public vows, defined as:

"The 'public' vow is that accepted in the name of the Church by the lawfully designated religious superior." (c. 1308 § 1 of the Code of 1917).

Solemn vows are still distinguished from simple vows by their effects:

"Simple profession, whether temporary or perpetual, renders acts contrary to the vows illicit, but not invalid, unless the contrary is expressly ordained; in contrast, solemn profession renders them invalid, if they are irritable (i.e. if they can be annulled)." (c. 579 of the Code of 1917).

After the publication of the Code of 1917, the so-called secular Congregations adopted distinct juridical forms, giving rise to three different institutionalised forms for what we call today consecrated life³⁵:

- Institutes of simple vows (the group of secular Congregations which integrate the schema of religious life with vows that are public and simple)³⁶,
- Societies of Common Life (the group which keeps their primitive common life and simple vows, of a private nature, or without any sort of vows)³⁷ and
- Secular Institutes (the group which does away with common life, while willing to be a state of perfection)³⁸.

³³ P. BASTIEN, *Directoire canonique a l'usage des Congrégations à voeux simples*, Rome 1911², p. 9.

³⁴ G. ROCCA, « Voto » in DIP 10, 563.

³⁵ Cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, *El ordenamiento*, 55-61.

³⁶ Regulated, in what concerns them, by canons 487-672 of the Code of 1917 (the canons cited speak of Religious in general)

³⁷ Regulated in canons 673-681 of the Code of 1917.

³⁸ They are not officially recognised until Pius XII gives them as their particular law the Apostolic Constitution *Provida mater*, of 2 February 1947. It can be found in AAS 39 (1947) 114-124, completed by the motu proprio *Primo feliciter*, of 12 March 1948, which can be found in AAS 40 (1948) 283-286.

2. A JURIDICAL VIEW OF OUR FIRST 100 YEARS OF HISTORY AS LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

The first article of the current Constitutions of the Little Brothers of Mary summarises our first fifty years of history by saying:

On January 2nd, 1817, Marcellin Champagnat founded the lay religious Institute of the Little

Brothers of Mary. He saw it as forming a branch of the Society of Mary³⁹. In 1863 the Holy See approved us as an autonomous Institute of pontifical right. While respecting our original name, it gave us the title of Marist Brothers of the Schools (F.M.S. Fratres Maristae a Scholis).⁴⁰

For a number of years now, our historians have been tracing the influences which Champagnat received at the time he envisaged his project of the Little Brothers of Mary as a response to the needs of his

³⁹ The Society of Mary is the project conceived by a group of seminarians of the diocese of Lyon, at the beginning of the XIX century (cf. P. ZIND, *Les nouvelles Congrégations*, 118-128). The history of the origins of the Society of Mary is magnificently documented in the 4 volumes of the work of J. COSTE - G. LESSARD *Origines Maristes (1786-1836)*, I-IV, Rome 1960-1967. I abbreviate it as *OM*. An extract of this work, comprising the most important documents relative to the Marist Brothers, is J. COSTE - G. LESSARD, *Origines Maristes (1786-1836)*. Extraits concernant les Frères Maristes, Roma 1985. The latter is abridged as *OM Extraits*.

The Society intended to be a Congregation of four branches: Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and Lay associates. In the *Summarium regularum Societatis Mariae* presented in December 1833 to obtain papal approbation, it was specified: « 5. As was stated previously, the Society, as it was envisaged in the beginning and as it has formed gradually, comprises several religious orders, 1° the order of the priests, 2° the order of the lay brothers, 3° the order of the religious sisters, 4° and the confraternity of laity living in the world. » (*OM*, I, p. 646)

The Holy See did not approve the original project of four branches (cf. *OM*, I, p. 676-686). What is more, the project was qualified as monstrous by the cardinal advocate, when he presented it to the Plenary session of the SCBR: « 15. [...] his monstrous plan which, it seems to me, has no precedent in the history of Religious Institutes [...] 16. Father Colin [elected as provisional Superior by the company engaged with the Society project, and who is in Rome busy with negotiations for the pontifical approbation] is himself convinced that the plan is monstrous. » (*OM*, I, 683).

Each branch had to obtain approbation as an independent Congregation.

The first to obtain it, assisted by the need felt by the Roman Curia to send missionaries to French Polynesia, was the branch of the Marist Fathers (cf. *OM*, I, 796-814.818-820.833-835.854-857; *OM*, II, 676-685), today the Institute of the Marist Fathers, with the initials SM, a RI of pontifical right. The Marist Fathers were approved by the SCBR (cf. Decree, 11 March 1836, in *OM*, I, 851-853), and several days later by the Pope (cf. GREGORY XVI, Apostolic Letter *Omnium gentium*, 29 April 1836, in *Acta Gregorii Papae XVI*, II, 106-107). At the same time, one of the priests involved in the project, Fr. Pompallier (cf. *OM*, IV, 337-339), was named Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania (cf. CONGREGATION DE PROPAGANDA FIDE, Decree of nomination, 7 May 1836, in *OM*, I, 881-882; GREGORY XVI, Ap. Letter *Pastorale officium*, 13 May 1836, in *Acta Gregorii Papae XVI*, II, 109-110) and ordained bishop.

Let us recall that Champagnat was the third Marist Father to make vows, on 24 September 1836 (cf. *OM*, I, 932). They were simple vows which the elected Superior General was able to dispense, as indicated textually by *Omnium gentium*. It must not be forgotten that those taking the vows were priests already held to celibacy by their priestly ordination promises, so that if they left the Congregation, even after receiving dispensation from the vows from the Superior General, they remained priests, with the corresponding obligations. The approbation, and the conditions expressed in it, were very similar to what would be the approbation of a Society of Apostolic Life, from the juridical point of view (cf. c. 731-746 of the present Code especially c. 742-743 for withdrawal from the Society).

⁴⁰ As we are going to cite different versions of our Constitutions in the course of our history, the version corresponding to the citation is specified by adding to C the year of approbation of this version. Thus C1986 refers to the Constitutions currently in force. We find them in FMS, Constitutions and Statutes, Saragossa 1987. They were approved by the Holy See on 7 October 1986 (Cf. SCRIS, Decree of approbation of the Constitutions in AFM 31.18.8484). AFM is the abbreviation corresponding to Archives des Frères Maristes, and SCRIS that which corresponds to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

time, especially ignorance of religion and the situations of poverty of children and youth⁴¹. I include here a quotation which sums up the situation, although not exhausting the subject, with regard to the state of mind existing at the time among most new foundations consecrated to teaching. Champagnat was no stranger to this common thinking, and he saw nothing inconvenient in borrowing its methodology and organisation.

At the beginning of the XIX century, the Brothers of the Christian Schools constituted a stable point of reference, especially with respect to pedagogy and organisation, for the new teaching congregations... [In the context of the French primary school during the Restoration] The Brothers of the Christian Schools, Les Grands Frères, were presented as models to be imitated by those who embraced the cause of popular education⁴².

The influence of the pedagogical principles and the organisation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on the nascent Congregation lasted into the 1860s⁴³. We will summarise certain aspects, little known among us,

on the subject of Champagnat's attempts to obtain ecclesiastical approbation or authorisation, especially with regard to the making of vows in the early years.

It was not until 3 March 1824 that Champagnat obtained from the Archdiocese of Lyon a first blessing on his work, with authorisation to give a religious habit to his Little Brothers and permission to make vows⁴⁴. They used a formula of commitment to the Little Brothers of Mary, for five years, which did not contain the term "vow", but those who pronounced it promised to obey the Superiors without question, to keep chastity, and to put everything in common. The making of the first vows took place at the end of the retreat of 1826. They were not public vows but private ones⁴⁵.

Some letters of 1829 between Champagnat and the Archbishop on the renewal of some vows have been preserved⁴⁶. The act of the Archbishop's Council of 30 September 1829 shows the authorisation given to Champagnat to receive the vows of the Little Brothers of Mary, setting

⁴¹ Cf. C1986, 2. This article of the Constitutions finishes with « led [Champagnat] to found our Institute for the Christian education of the young, especially those most in need. »

⁴² D. FARNEDA CALGARO, *Guide des Écoles 1817-1853, estudio histórico-crítico*, Rome 1993, p. 361. The work is the thesis of a doctorate in the Sciences of Education, presented by the author at the Pontifical Salesian University. It studies the influence of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on the Little Brothers of Mary, especially in the domains of pedagogy and organisation.

⁴³ We can read a study of the main points where this influence is revealed in D. FARNEDA CALGARO, *Guide des Écoles*, 361-368. Pages 46-71 of the same work present the pedagogical options and choices from the point of view of the organisation of our Institute in its beginnings, in the context of the proliferation of new Congregations of teaching Brothers emerging in France at the beginning of the XIX century.

⁴⁴ Cf. J.B. FURET, *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat* (Bicentenary Edition), Rome 1989, p. 117; P. ZIND, *Les nouvelles Congrégations*, p. 220-221; FMS, *Chronologie de l'Institut des Frères Maristes des Écoles*, Rome 1976, p. 38. We can read the extract from the act of the Archbishop's Council relative to this matter in *OM Extraits*, p. 81-82.

⁴⁵ Cf. J.B. FURET, *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, p. 154; *OM Extraits*, p. 137-138.

⁴⁶ Cf. *OM Extraits*, p. 149-152.

limits in the case where this establishment would change or in the case of expulsion⁴⁷. It was in October 1829 that a register was started for the taking of the habit and for professions in specific books (AFM RVE1, for the taking of the habit or vestures, AFM RVT1, for temporary vows and AFM RVP1, for perpetual vows)⁴⁸. Concerning all vows taken up to October 1836, it is said that they were made secretly, which confirms their private character, not being recognised by the Archdiocese as public

vows. Following the approbation of the Marist Fathers, understood by many Brothers as approbation of the Society of Mary, the Brothers renewed or made their vows more or less publicly⁴⁹. Br. Jean-Baptiste speaks of temporary vows, taken normally for three years, and subsequent perpetual vows⁵⁰. He specifies that from 1840, the novices, after two years of trial, made only the temporary vow of obedience, the vows of chastity and poverty being reserved for perpetual profession⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Cf. *OM Extraits*, p. 151. The situation was perfectly logical, since the Institute could only be approved as an association at the diocesan level, as we have already explained in speaking of the interdiction of new approbations made by the IV Lateran Council. The Archbishop was not able to approve the taking of public vows by the Brothers. The way Champagnat and the Brothers understood the situation is another matter.

⁴⁸ In AFM RVT1 and RVP1, the first temporary and perpetual professions are dated between 1826 and 1828 (up to three years before the date when the registers begin). The registers were drawn up by hand, which explains the numerous corrections and words written in overprinting, especially in the first pages. I transcribe below what Brother Dominique wrote (no. of entry 20592 in the electronic database of the personal files of the Brothers), since two professions are recorded in the same act: "I the undersigned, Brother Dominique, born Benoit Esquis, legitimate son of Pierre Esquis, living, and Claudine Lachat, deceased, born in the parish of Estivareille, aged twenty years, testify and declare that, by the grace of God, I have been admitted this fourteenth of October one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight to the house of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, novitiate of the Society of Mary; that, the third of April one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five I had the honour of being clothed in the holy religious habit of the Brothers of the said Society after having humbly requested this of the R.Fr. Superior and then, with the permission of the same Superior, also undersigned, to certify his agreement, I made, the eighteenth of October one thousand eight hundred and twenty-six, in the chapel of the house mentioned, before receiving Holy Communion at Holy Mass, secretly but voluntarily and freely the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience for the term of four years to the superiors of the said Society of Mary, according to its statutes and aims; in testimony of which I have signed this act in the presence of Brother François and Brother Jean-Pierre who signed this fourteenth of October one thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage." One finds an addition, in smaller writing, after the last line of this quotation: "I renewed my vows for three years on nine October one thousand eight hundred and thirty". The signature of Fr. Champagnat is included with those of Brs. Dominique, François and Jean-Pierre (cf. AFM RVT1, 4). From October 1836 the system requiring that each Brother write and sign an act was replaced by the drawing up of a list of all the Brothers who made their renewal of vows at the end of the corresponding general retreat. (cf. AFM RVT1, 65-74)

⁴⁹ Cf. *OM Extraits*, 153; L. DI GIUSTO, *Historia del Instituto de los Hermanos Maristas*, Rosario 2004, 38.

⁵⁰ Cf. J.B. FURET, *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, p. 154 (Hereafter simply *Life*). The Bull of approbation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools already provided for vows for three years, renewable until the Brother reached the age of 25 (cf. BENEDICT XIII, Bula *In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*, § 8, in FSC, *Règles et Constitutions*, 112-113).

⁵¹ "At this retreat (1840), the novices ceased to take the three temporary vows; they replaced them from this time with the simple vow of obedience, according to this formula: 'We the undersigned, Little Brothers of Mary, declare that today 11-October, one thousand eight hundred and forty, after having passed the usual tests and submitted to the required examination, we have made voluntarily and freely the simple vow of obedience, into the hands of Father Cholleton, according to the ends and constitutions of the order, to the Superior of the Society of Mary, with the intention of living and dying in the said Society' [...] Twenty-one novices took this vow by which they bound themselves to obey up to profession, or until it was recognised that they were not suited to the Institut." (FRÈRE AVIT, *Abrégé des Annales*, manuscript conserved in the AFM, p. 231).

Although Champagnat made several attempts to obtain the necessary permissions to establish his work, his efforts to obtain the approbation of the State did not succeed. He did not envisage obtaining pontifical approbation for his Congregation, since he died convinced that the Little Brothers of Mary were only one branch of the Society of Mary⁵².

The Congregation obtained legal recognition on 20 June 1851, with the decree No. 3072, signed by the President of the French Republic.⁵³

Shortly after, Fr. Colin, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, addressed the Second General Chapter of the Institute declaring his conviction that the moment had arrived for the Brothers to govern themselves independently and to obtain their own pontifical approbation, the Holy See having refused to allow the project of the Society of Mary with four branches⁵⁴.

The Congrégation obtained the *decretum laudis* on 9 December 1859⁵⁵ and, after a long process of negotiation⁵⁶, pontifical approbation

⁵² Concerning the negotiations for legal recognition, cf. J.B. FURET, *Life*, pp. 171-191, 207-216 ; P. ZIND, *Les nouvelles Congrégations*, p. 318-319.414-416). To verify that Father Champagnat envisaged right up to his death that the Little Brothers of Mary were a branch of the Society of Mary, it is sufficient to read his Spiritual Testament (cf. J.B. FURET, *Life*, pp. 235-238).

⁵³ We can find the text of the decree in G. MICHEL, *Frère François ou la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes (1840-1851)*, St Chamond, 1991, p. 69-71. The decree contains, in an appendix, the statutes of the Association of the Little Brothers of Mary in 17 articles. The work of Brother Gabriel Michel is entirely devoted to the study of the negotiations carried out to obtain this approbation.

⁵⁴ Cf. FMS, *Chronologie de l'Institut*, p. 111. It was 11 June 1852. The intervention is recorded in the Acts of the II General Chapter, pages 122-124, preserved in the AFM 31.02. The same Chapter, in a session of 1854, approved the Constitutions and the Rules of Government proper to the Congregation, abbreviated as C1854 (cf. FMS, *Constitutions et Règles du Gouvernement de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Lyon 1854).

⁵⁵ SCBR, Decree of praise of the Institute FMS, 9 December 1859, in *Bizzarri*, 145. The request for authorisation was presented on 2 February 1858 (cf. AFM 351.110-2), accompanied by an extract of the Rules, which is known as the 20 fundamental articles (cf. A. BRAMBILA, *Patrimoine Spirituel Mariste, Législation*. Quelques pièces législatives 1818-1883, Rome 1986, 142-145). From henceforth we abbreviate Brother Brambila's volume simply as *Brambila*. In comparing the dates with those indicated in the first part of the article, we notice that our Congregation was one of the first to obtain approbation under the new *Methodus* of Bizzarri.

⁵⁶ The decree of praise charged the Archbishop of Lyon and the Superior General of the Marist Fathers to prepare a Project of Constitutions, taking into account the observations made by the SCBR on the 20 fundamental articles and other documents in the dossier (to consult the observations, cf. AFM 350.100-13; a substantial part of the latter are published in *Bizzarri*, pp. 795-797). The Constitutions project had later to be submitted to a General Chapter of the Institute.

The Chapter met in 1862 and approved the text we have called C1862 (cf. FMS, *Constitutions présentées au Saint-Siège pour approbation*, in *Brambila*, p. 146-159). The approved text did not incorporate most of the observations proposed by the SCBR. The principal differences were:

- a Superior General for life (C1862) and not for 12 years (SCBR) ;
- Assistants for 10 years (C1862) and not for 4 years (SCBR) ;
- General Chapters every 10 years (C1862) and not every 4 years (SCBR) ;
- organisation in Provinces governed by Assistant Generals who reside with the Superior General (C1862) and not by Vicar Provincials who reside in their own Province (SCBR) ;
- novitiate of two years, one of which is spent in the schools (C1862) instead of two years spent wholly at the novitiate (SCBR) ;
- taking of the temporary vow of obedience at the end of the novitiate, made to the Superior General and his representatives (C1862) and not to the Holy See, the Superior General and his representatives (SCBR) (cf. FMS, *Chronologie de l'Institut*, p. 162-163; A. LANFREY, *Une Congrégation enseignante : Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*, Rome 1997, 86-95).

on 9 January 1863⁵⁷, at the same time as the approbation of the Constitutions⁵⁸ *ad experimentum* for five years. The time for experimentation with the Constitutions was extended by indults obtained from the SCBR in 1876⁵⁹, 1883⁶⁰, 1887⁶¹ and 1893⁶². The definitive approbation of the Constitutions was obtained in 1903⁶³.

Following the promulgation of the CIC17, the Institute revised and

adapted its Constitutions, which were approved in 1922⁶⁴.

From this whole legal evolution so rapidly covered, what interests us is to study how the successive editions of the Constitutions reflect the type of profession the Brothers were making at the time. Those of 1862 establish, after the novitiate, a temporary vow of obedience followed, after several years, by perpetual vows of poverty,

⁵⁷ SCBR, Decree of approbation of FMS, 9 January 1863, in AFM 351.700-12. The Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools was approved as a Congregation of simple vows under the government of a Superior General, the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries being respected.

⁵⁸ FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, in Brambila, p. 146-159, abbreviated C1863. The text approved contained significant changes in comparison with the one presented for approbation (C1862). It has not been officially edited. The reason given for not publishing it was that these changes conflicted with the statutes annexed to the decree of civil approbation of 1851 and the superiors foresaw negative consequences for the existence of the Congregation in France. The policy of the general governments of the Institute, given the changes imposed by the Holy See in the Constitutions, was to try to obtain successive extensions of the time *ad experimentum* until they could persuade the SCBR to accept the Constitutions proposed by the Institute. It should be remembered that the Brothers of the Christian Schools were the model for the organisation, as well as the pedagogy, of the Little Brothers of Mary, and that the Bull by which Benedict XIII approved them provided for a Superior General for life (§ 3) and Assistant Generals who lived with him and helped him in government (§ 4) cf. BENEDICT XIII, Bull *In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*, §§ 3-4, in FSC, *Règles et constitutions*, 112).

⁵⁹ SCER, Indult of prorogation, 12 May 1876, in AFM 352.110-01.

⁶⁰ SCER, Indult of prorogation and order of publication of the Constitutions, 22 January 1883, in AFM 353.400-13. The indult specified that « [The Constitutions] should be edited in writing and be sufficiently known among the Brothers, those articles susceptible of causing harm to the Institute before the civil authorities being exclusively eliminated up to now. » We find this edition in FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, in Brambila, p. 160-172. It is abbreviated as C1883.

⁶¹ SCER, Indult of prorogation, 3 October 1887, in AFM 352.120-01.

⁶² SCER, Indult of prorogation, 3 May 1893, in AFM 352.130-01.

⁶³ SCER, Decree of definitive approbation of the Constitutions, 27 May 1903, in AFM 353.400-32. The text is edited in FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Turin 1906, abbreviated C1903.

The change of policy followed by the authorities of our Institute happened because of the new legislation of the French State (the Combes ministry) which ended with the annulment of the civil authorisation of our Congregation, resulting in the forced departure from France of more than 500 Brothers. The General Government preferred to yield to the Holy See on the disputed questions, so as to obtain the definitive approbation of the Constitutions as a means of maintaining fidelity in the time of persecution and exile which was arriving (cf. FMS, *Chronologie de l'Institut*, p. 180-184; A. LANFREY, *Une Congrégation enseignante*, p. 142-152). Lanfrey sums up the situation with some very hard words: "Thus ended 40 years of quarrels with the Holy See. For 40 years the superiors, while protesting their devotion to the Pope and their unconditional submission, had refused to obey the representatives of his administration. At the same time, they reduced to nothing the complaints of those who wanted a government in conformity with the one the Holy See proposed. In order not to have to change their position, they turned the chapter into a recording room. And when they had urgent need of the Holy See and so had to give in to its wishes, they still managed to manoeuvre by themselves, to impose the submission to the Holy See on a chapter representing the Brothers..." (A. LANFREY, *Une Congrégation enseignante*, p. 152).

⁶⁴ SCR, Decree of approbation of the Constitutions, 4 April 1922, in AFM 354.111-31. The volume edited is FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Paris-Tournai-Rome 1930. Abbreviated (as) C1922.

chastity and obedience:

The Council for admission to vows consisted of the ordinary Council of the Novitiate House and six professed Brothers nominated by the Superior General and chosen, as far as possible, from among the Directors of the principal Houses. It was this Council, presided over by the Brother Superior or his delegate, which had the authority to grant admission to the vow of obedience and the three vows of religion. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances, such as danger of death, Brother Superior General could on his own authority admit to these vows those desiring to make them, if he judged it to be to their advantage and the good of the Institute. As for the vow of Stability, it was to the Council alone that was reserved the power of admission. After a year of Novitiate and, unless there was a dispensation from Brother Superior General, a year of trial in the schools or in temporal employment, the Brothers could be admitted to the temporary vow of obedience. This vow lasted until Profession or until it was recognised by the Brother Superior that the subject was not suited to the Institute.

To be admitted to the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, a subject had to have spent five years at least in the Institute, to be 21 years old, and to possess the qualities listed in article 35⁶⁵.

Those of 1863 record the same situation, although the duration of the novitiate is different. It is specified that temporary profession will be renewed every year for five years:

The Council for admission to vows will be composed of the ordinary Council of the Novitiate House, presided over by the Vicar Provincial, and by six professed

Brothers nominated by the Superior General and chosen, as far as possible, from among the Directors of the principal Houses. It is this Council which has the authority to grant admission to the vow of obedience and the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the decision of the Council must be confirmed by the Superior General. As for the vow of Stability, it is to the Council alone that is reserved the power of admission. After two years of Novitiate, which should be spent integrally in the novitiate house, the Brothers will be admitted to the annual vow of obedience. This vow will be renewed each year for five years, after which he must be admitted to simple perpetual vows, or dismissed from the Institute⁶⁶.

Those of 1883 repeat the same norms but without specifying the duration of temporary profession:

The Council for admission to vows will be composed of the ordinary Council of the Novitiate House, presided over by the Brother Assistant (Indult of 28 January 1876), and by six professed Brothers nominated by the Superior General and chosen, as far as possible, from among the Directors of the Principal Houses. It is this Council which has the authority to grant admission to the vow of obedience and the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the decision of the Council must be confirmed by the Superior General. As for the vow of Stability, it is to the Regime alone that is reserved the power of admission.

After two years of Novitiate (Rescript of 22 January 1883), the Brothers will be admitted to the annual vow of obedience⁶⁷.

Those of 1903, on the other hand, indicate annual and perpetual profes-

⁶⁵ C1862, p. 37-39 in *Brambila*, 152.

⁶⁶ C1863, p. 35-36 in *Brambila*, 152.

⁶⁷ C1883, p. 35-36 in *Brambila*, 165.

sion of the three vows⁶⁸, the *Normae* of 1901 having made them obligatory:

Two months before the end of the novitiate, Brother Provincial and his Council will deliberate if the novices can be admitted to temporary profession of the three simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The admission will have to be confirmed by Brother Superior General. For temporary profession, the novices will prepare themselves by a retreat of ten days. This profession will be made for one year and, with the approval of the Provincial Council, it will be renewed each year for five years, after which the Brother must be admitted to profession of the simple perpetual vows, or dismissed from the Institute. The Brothers will prepare themselves for profession of the simple perpetual vows by the Exercises of Saint Ignatius.⁶⁹

The situation is identical in the Constitutions of 1922, already adapted to the Code of 1917:

Two months before the end of the Novitiate, Brother Provincial and his Council will deliberate if the Novices can be admitted to temporary profession. The Novices will prepare for this profession by a retreat of ten days. This profession will be made for one year and, with the approval of the Provincial Council, it will be

renewed each year. The year of the vows extends from one annual retreat to another. After five years of temporary vows, the Brothers will be admitted to perpetual profession or return to secular life. However, for just reasons, Brother Superior General can prolong the time of temporary vows, but not beyond a year, the religious thus renewing his temporary profession for a sixth time. Perpetual profession will be preceded, as far as possible, by the Exercises of Saint Ignatius⁷⁰.

3. WIDER INSTITUTIONAL SPACES WHERE WE WILL PARTICIPATE TOGETHER IN CO-RESPONSIBILITY

We know that there is a long road to travel, there remain goals to reach in the search for autonomies and complementarities. Participation is power: power to speak, power to do, power to decide, power to exist and to be with others, power to be a worthy son and daughter of God wherever we are, power to know, power to enjoy⁷¹.

Our recent documents insist on a call to Brothers and laity sharing life⁷². By this we mean, among other

⁶⁸ I remember the confusion caused, at the time of editing the brief biographies of the Brothers beatified in October 2007 (cf. FMS, *FMS Message* 36 [2007]), by the fact that, according to the date of first profession – before or after 1903 – one speaks either of profession of the vow of obedience or of profession of the three vows.

⁶⁹ C1903, 36-38 in FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Turin 1906, 17-18.

⁷⁰ C1922, 36-37 in FMS, *Constitutions de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie*, Paris-Tournai-Rome 1930, 18-19.

⁷¹ Testimony of Feno Larrambeberé and Mónica Linares for the document on the Marist laity: *Gathered around the same table*.

⁷² Generally we speak of Brothers and laity, because the latter are 99% of the people of God, but in reality, we are speaking about persons of all vocations in the Church, even persons of other religions and convictions. There exist, for example, fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family where there are priests or religious Sisters. I even know of one in which the retired Bishop of the city regularly participates.

things, spirituality, mission, formation, different forms of association and communion, the growth of co-responsibility and reciprocity⁷³. To explain this process better, I take leave to borrow two quotations from the blog which Brother Pau Fornells – Director of the Bureau of the Laity of the Marist Brothers – has opened on the Institute website:

In the Church, the mission is unique, even if there are different ministries. Dignity and the call to holiness are equal for all. Specific states of perfection do not exist and from that a new relationship between all the members of the Church has been discerned. This relationship engenders a new “ecclesial ecosystem” (expression used by Brother Antonio Botana, FSC, in the document *Associés pour la Mission Éducative Lassallienne* - cf. www.lasalle.org) which is starting to be perceived and developed⁷⁴.

For me, the priority element of any definition of the Marist life, whether it be lay or religious, resides in the awareness of the baptismal vocation (following Christ), concretised in the passionate embracing of the charism that God has granted the Church through Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers. All the rest could be perceived as prior stages of awareness, interest, admiration, gratefulness, collaboration, affection, nostalgia for good times, etc., or as subsequent concretisations such as association, the possible juridical union, concrete ways of living the mission... When men and women feel strongly attracted and fascinated by the style of

life (spirituality) that Marcellin and the first Brothers inaugurated, when they feel identified with his mission (a passion for the Christian education of children and young people, especially the most abandoned), it is God proposing to them to follow those who have opened this Marist pathway. He calls them “to be Marists”, independently of their call to the lay life or the religious life. The process is the following: baptismal vocation – including the human vocation - Marist vocation and lay, religious or priestly vocation.⁷⁵

This path of communion implies also continuing to grow in co-responsibility in mission, at all levels: in the works, in the Provinces, in the Institute. Called to share the charism and the mission, we are also called to assume the responsibilities that entails. This is a path where difficulties are not wanting, with the tensions characteristic of life. But we must traverse it with faith and hope; it is necessary for us to conquer the fears and mistrusts on all sides, to understand the needs of each, to be capable of forgiving and maintaining a calm mind. With these attitudes, co-responsibility will become more and more part of the common Marist mission, not only in the domain of management, but also in planning, the deciding of strategies, the choice of options and presence in new places of mission.

⁷³ Cf. FMS, « Document of the Mission Assembly at Mendès », in FMS, *FMS Message* 38 [2008], p. 80-85, (especially point 2); FMS, *Water from the Rock. Marist Spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*, Rome 2007, (especially the section « How to approach this document », of the Introduction); XX General Chapter, *Choose life*, in FMS, Acts of the XX General Chapter, Rome 2002, p. 21-40, (especially numbers 26-30, 42.5, 43.10, 44.5-9, 47.2-6, 48.6).

⁷⁴ P. FORNELLS, *Towards a new ecclesial ecosystem*, 12/05/2006, 9.55.25, in his blog in www.champagnat.org

⁷⁵ P. FORNELLS, « What does it mean to be a lay Marist? », 03/11/2006, 8.19.34, his blog in www.champagnat.org

Born from lived experience, new shared structures of animation, management, and even of decision making in the Marist mission are appearing already in some Provinces. Discernment in prayer and communion will help us discover what is best and most efficacious so that, together, in equality and co-responsibility, we may respond better and more profoundly to the needs of children and young people, and may be more faithful to the mission to which God has called us⁷⁶.

As disciples of Champagnat, we currently have at our disposal, at the

world level, two recognised juridical ecclesial structures:

- A lay religious institute of pontifical right (the Little Brothers of Mary)⁷⁷ and
- A movement with the structure of a Third Order (the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family)⁷⁸.

This situation does not reflect as well as we would wish the path of communion which we are experiencing as a gift of God, since, from the juridical point of view, the structure of a Third Order is subordinate to that of the Religious Institute, and the members of the Third Order appear

⁷⁶ In this sense, the meeting held at Ciudad de Guatemala from 10 to 15 March 2009 was very interesting. Representatives from most of the Administrative Units shared experiences and reflected together on the subject of Government at the service of Mission and of the future of the latter.

⁷⁷ "That institute is called lay which, recognised as such by the authority of the Church, has by virtue of its nature, character, and purpose, a proper function defined by the founder or by legitimate tradition, which does not include the exercise of sacred orders" (c. 588 § 3). "An institute of consecrated life is said to be of pontifical right if the Apostolic See has erected it or approved it through a formal decree. It is said to be of diocesan right, however, if it has been erected by a diocesan bishop but has not obtained a decree of approval from the Apostolic See" (c. 589). "A religious institute is a society in which members, according to proper law, pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary which are to be renewed, however, when the period of time has elapsed, and lead a life of brothers or sisters in common" (c. 607 § 2). Although our Constitutions recognise that certain persons who have not made profession share in certain spiritual goods of the Institute ("... The novices, who are beginning their life in the Institute, share in the spiritual benefits of our religious family. Certain people can be affiliated to the Institute. In a similar way...they share in our spiritual benefits..." ([C1986, 8])), it is clear that only those who have made religious profession are members of the Institute, as recognised by the same article 8 of the Constitutions and indicated by c. 654: "By religious profession, members assume the observance of the three evangelical vows by public vow, are consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church, and are incorporated into the institute with the rights and duties defined by law."

⁷⁸ The Statute corresponding to the creation of the movement says: "The Marist Family is an extension of our Institute; it is a movement for people who find themselves attracted to the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students, and friends deepen within themselves the spirit of our Founder so that they can live it and let it shine forth. The Institute animates and co-ordinates the activities of this movement by setting up suitable structures (c 303; 677,2)." (C1986, 164.4). Certain scholars of Canon Law deny that a Third Order can be created by an Institute without the specific intervention of the Holy See, since the only organisations which can create associations in the Church are the Bishops, the Conferences of Bishops, and the Holy See (cf. c. 312 § 1). It can be said, all the same, that the Statute quoted was studied by the Holy See during the process of approving the Constitutions in 1986, and nothing was found to object to its existence, in contrast to what happened with other Statutes. So it has, at least, an implicit approbation (cf. explanations prepared by Brother Superior General and his Council on the subject of existing changes between the text of the Constitutions presented by the Chapter of 1985 and the text approved by the Holy See, preserved in AFM 3118-84-08). In fact, the Dicastery for Religious and the Secretariat of State have no problem with the certificate supplied to certain people as members of the Fraternities, in view of facilitating the obtaining of their entry visas into Italy, which supposes the recognition, by fact, of the existence of the Movement.

more associated with the spirituality of Champagnat than with the Marist life and mission⁷⁹. It is necessary for us to reflect about the best institutional and juridical structure that we can give ourselves to reflect our continually developing life in common. As for the mission, in many countries it is relatively easy to obtain for the body of our works a juridical civil personality which reflects, even from the legal point of view, the co-responsibility and participation we are talking about (by setting up, for example, foundations or associations of educational centres...)

To be able to find a juridical ecclesial structure which allows us to make our sharing of life, with all its consequences, effective, we need more profound reflection. Some considerations of an historic type can

throw light on the matter. We remember that the original project of the Society of Mary provided for a Congregation of four branches: Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Associates. It was the Holy See which did not approve of this project, for it was truly too far ahead of its time. A structure similar to this one proposed is the basis of most of the present ecclesial movements (which by canon law are associations of the faithful⁸⁰, almost all with a nucleus of consecrated persons) which bring together people of very diverse states of life⁸¹.

I believe that some words of Brother Botana, quoted below, may offer great enlightenment and help us understand the change of paradigm which is taking place in our time:

⁷⁹ It is enough to read what the canons cited at the end of C1986, 164.4 say: "Associations whose members share in the spirit of some religious institute while in secular life, lead an apostolic life, and strive for christian perfection under the higher direction of the same institute are called third orders or some other appropriate name" (c. 303) and "[Superiors and other members of the Institute] if they have associations of the Christian faithful joined to them, institutes are to assist them with special care so that they are imbued with the genuine spirit of their family" (c. 677 § 2).

⁸⁰ They are regulated by canons 298-329. It seems to me of interest to quote here a canon which speaks of the possibility of religious belonging to associations of the faithful: "Members of religious institutes can join associations according to the norm of their proper law with the consent of the superior" (c. 307 § 3).

⁸¹ For example, the Work of Mary (Focolare Movement) is a private association of the faithful, universal, of pontifical right, having juridical personality in accordance with Canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law (Cf. article 1 of the General Statutes of the Work of Mary). According to these statutes, members of the Focolari are those Catholics forming part of one of the sections, branches or movements which compose it. Other Christians, members of other religions, or persons who do not have religious faith may be part of the Work of Mary as "associates" or "collaborators" (cf. art. 15-22). Members may be children, young people who have not yet defined their vocation, single and married lay people, seminarians, deacons and priests, each with the rights and duties corresponding to their state of life and degree of commitment. Also members, but linked to the Work of Mary only from the spiritual point of view, members of institutes of consecrated life, those of societies of apostolic life and bishops. For each section, branch or movement, there exist particular rules (cf. art. 13-14). The members of the two sections are the Focolari (men and women), animators of the Movement who live in communities called "focolares"; they may be lay people or priests, with private vows, and also married persons, who make special engagements compatible with their state of married life (cf. art. 12). The Statutes regulate the general organs of government of the Work (cf. art. 73-114) and other matters, such as the concrete aspects of organisation of life (cf. art. 23-72), nature, end and spirit (cf. art. 1-9)... The version of the Statutes cited is the one approved by the Council for the Laity on 15 March 2007. It is a book of 117 pages published in Rome in 2007.

In what concerns the “sharing of the charism”, the evolution of the language has proved to be more timid and reticent, apart from the fact that this term has only very recently been incorporated into the language of religious life. One of the elements complicating the evolution is the excessive identification made between the foundation charism and the project of life properly called:

[...] Charisms of the Church. The most decisive step in the evolution occurs when we begin to accept that the charism of the Institute, or more generally, the foundation charisms belong to the Church. The passage is difficult: one has to separate the concept “charism of foundation” from the concept “project of religious life” (or, if one prefers, “charism of religious life”). And it is not always clear, since the juridical or canonical form in which this project has been concretised does not always faithfully reflect the intuition of the Founder, (given the intransigence or incomprehension of the hierarchy or the canonists). One begins, then, to recognise the foundation charism as a “way of living the gospel”, or a “global manner of living Baptism”, which can be concretised in different forms of Christian life. This is the level at which we really begin to speak of “sharing the charism”. We discover the foundation charism as a place of meeting for religious and laity, as a convocation to live communion for mission starting from different Christian identities. This is the way the new model of “Charismatic Family” begins, in accord with the Church-communion, understood as “communion of communities”. Charisms for the Kingdom. The preceding step can be further extended when we understand that, if the Spirit does not stay confined within the institutional frontiers of the Church,

then nor do its charisms.

The charisms of foundation aspire to serve the whole Kingdom of God. They are, in fact, “ways of the Gospel”, and the Gospel is spread also in the “semina Verbi” or “seeds of the Word” (Ad gentes 11.2; 15.1) which are found in all cultures and religions, and taken up in numerous human and religious expressions beyond the Catholic Church and the Christian Churches.

It is from these experiences that the Charismatic Families are beginning to open themselves to persons of other religions (non-Christians included), who feel themselves called to this same charism which they identify with the Founder, and because for them it is a matter of a way to live their religion and their commitment to humanity on a deeper level.

[...] The charisms of foundation call to the communion of the different stable forms of Christian life, to serve the ecclesial mission together.

The new Charismatic or Evangelical Families favour this communion for mission. At the heart of the Evangelical Family, the “stable forms of life” are not ordered according to separate and hierarchical classes as was the case with the ancient Orders (first, second, third). Their members are animated by the same charism and serve the same mission, and starting from this base they integrate themselves into “life and mission projects”, where each member enriches the whole with his particular charism, with his own existential project.

The strength of a Charismatic Family does not come from a dominant institution which crushes the others – as was the case in the past – but from the communion among the different institutions and groups, the communion placed at the service of the same mission, the latter being enriched by the particular charism of each group.⁸²

⁸² A. BOTANA, *Chemins pour partager le Charisme et la Mission dans l'éducation*, 4-5. The text is a talk prepared by Botana for a meeting of Superior Generals – male and female – and Education Delegates of Religious Congregations in Rome, held on 29 May 2008 in the Aula Magna of the General House of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Botana has developed the talk in a notebook of Frontera-Hegian: A. BOTANA, *Compartir carisma y misión con los laicos*. La Familia evangélica como horizonte, Cahier 62 de la colección Frontera-Hegian, Vitoria 2008.

The very identity of the Brothers as lay religious is the consequence of the historic evolution of the Institute, but it could have been different. Our identity is the fruit of almost two hundred years of history guided by the hand of God. I am absolutely convinced of the truth of what is stated in article 164 of our Constitutions: "Our Institute, a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, is a grace forever relevant to the world." It is not a question of making a work of historical fiction or of denying the way of our ancestors, but of reminding ourselves that we have a responsibility towards the charism of Champagnat⁸³.

In this sense, it may be useful to recall that:

- the life of the first disciples of Champagnat can be described as that of an association of teacher-catechists in which the first vows were not taken until the end of the 1826 retreat,
- these vows were in the beginning private vows and they were made with a clause providing for their annulment if the state of the society changed or if the one who made them was expelled.
- it is only from 1836 (we say this with qualification) that one can state that our first Brothers made simple vows, taking advantage of the pontifical approbation obtained by the Marist Fathers, understood by most Brothers as approbation of the whole Society of Mary,
- from 1840 to 1903, the Brothers took only the simple vow of obedience at temporary profession, while the vows of chastity and poverty were taken only at perpetual profession,
- religious of simple vows were not fully recognised as religious until the beginning of the XX century (*Conditae a Christo* [1900], *Normae* [1901], Code of canon Law [1917]); they were considered previously as members of pious associations.
- other *new institutes* born in the same period as ours found their identity, according to present Canon Law, as Societies of Apostolic Life (for example, the Pallotines⁸⁴) or Secular Institutes (for example, the Priests of the Heart of Jesus⁸⁵).

It remains for us to imagine new models, juridic ones included, to respond in a more flexible and vital way to the charism of Champagnat and to Marist life in the XXI century.

I would like to finish with another testimony collected for the drafting of

⁸³ "The present-day relevance of Marcellin Champagnat's charism is a challenge to our personal and community commitment to incarnate it in different situations and in different cultures. We all have responsibility for this task" (C1986, 165). "Fidelity to our mission requires us to be constantly alert to the signs of the times, to the calls of the Church, and to the needs of youth. Such alertness makes it easier for us to adapt structures and to take courageous, even unprecedented decisions" (C1986, 168).

⁸⁴ Cf. *Annuaire Pontifical 2008*, Vatican City 2008, 1517 (society founded 15 August 1815).

⁸⁵ Cf. *Annuaire Pontifical 2008*, Vatican City 2008, 1513 (society founded 2 February 1791).

the document on the Vocation of the Lay Marist:

I dream about Marist works where the person always comes first, where the shared mission is so real that it is possible to plan, work, and make decisions in common, in co-responsibility. I dream that we may become more and more coura-

geous and audacious in opting for the most disadvantaged. I dream of a family of lay people and brothers where all find support and become responsible, together, in mutual service. A family where Jesus may be, truly, the centre of our life⁸⁶.

All I need to say is: Amen.

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⁸⁶ Testimony of Ana Sarrate.

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FROM ASSOCIATION TO CONGREGATION

From the statutes of the Society of the Brothers to the constitutions of the order 1817-1837

André Lanfrey, fms

The learned article of Brother Anaya on the canonical evolution of religious institutes, and our own in particular, reminds us that the first Brothers constituted a simple association of teacher catechists and that the first vows, private ones, were not pronounced until 1826. It is only from 1836 that one can speak, with some qualification, of simple vows, seeing that the approbation of the Marist Fathers was interpreted as applying to the whole Society.

We are going to treat this question here from a slightly different point of view, by posing the question of the nature and form of those commitments. Thus, it is clear that the first community of Brothers was regulated by a contract between equals within a civil association of private right. When secret vows started being pronounced from 1826, they were not to Champagnat but "to the superiors of the Society of Mary" and according to "the statutes and ends of the Society". It was not until 1836 that the Brothers made vows "to the

superior of the Society of the Brothers of Mary" and "according to the constitutions and ends of the order". Between 1817 and 1836 – in less than 20 years – the engagements of the Brothers had gone through three different forms. This warrants some consideration, for they pose serious problems of interpretation.

THE "PROMISE": 1818 OR 1826?

According to Brother Jean-Baptiste (Life 1st part Ch. 15 p. 152), "from the very beginning" the Brothers made "promises" or "an act of consecration", of which he gives the content "written by the hand of the pious Founder". A little further on (p. 153) he tells us that "this promise was first proposed" in 1818. The archives of the Marist Brothers preserve a copy of this act of consecration (OM 1/168) dated 1826, notably different, as can easily be seen from the comparison below.

OM1/168	Life, Ch. 15, p. 152-153
	All for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ
" We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves for five years, beginning from this dayone thousand eight hundred and twenty six,	" We, the undersigned, certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves for five years, beginning from this day,
freely and willingly, in the pious association of those consecrating themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Christian instruction of country children.	freely and willingly, to God in the lowly Association of the Little Brothers of Mary, in order to work unceasingly, through the practice of all virtues, at our sanctification and at the Christian education of country children.
We intend:	We therefore intend:
Firstly, to seek only the glory of God, the good of his Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honour of the august Mother of our Lord J(esus) C(hrist).	1° To seek only the glory of God, the honour of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.
Secondly, to commit ourselves to teach gratuitously the poor children whom the local parish priest will send us 1° catechism, 2° prayer, 3° reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to parents and the lawful princes.	2° To undertake to teach gratuitously all the poor children whom the parish priest may send us; to instruct them and all the other children confided to us, in catechism, prayers, reading, writing, and the other branches of primary instruction, according to their needs.
Thirdly, we intend to undertake to obey without question our superior and those who by his order are placed over us.	3° We undertake to obey without question our Superior and all those who are appointed by him to lead us.
Fourthly, we promise to observe chastity.	4° To promise to observe chastity.
Fifthly, we share everything in community. "	5° To share in community everything we have. "

In an already dated article,¹ Brother Balko has shown convincingly that this text was not a formula of profession but a contract of association of Chris-

¹ FMS n°31, 1978 p. 412. Reprinted in the collection of the articles of Brother Balko « Repensons à nos origines » p. 77-82.

tian teachers directly inspired by the Marist consecration of 23 July 1816 at Fourvière, as the Marist motto clearly testifies: "For the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ."

DISTINGUISHING PROMISE AND VOWS

It is clear that the text in OM is older than the one recorded by Brother Jean-Baptiste: the association does not yet have a name, the school programme of the Brothers is limited to catechism, prayers, and reading²... So Frs. Coste and Lessard (OM 1 p. 417) put forward the hypothesis that this text, although dated at 1826, would reproduce the original form of the promise and that Brother Jean-Baptiste would have "freely readapted it according to the usage familiar to him". They even wonder if this formula might not be that of the first vows of five years pronounced by the Brothers for the first time in 1826. Brother Jean-Baptiste, not finding the word "vow" there, might have seen instead the "promise" of 1818.

Brother Balko accepted the first hypothesis but refuted the second³ with arguments I find convincing. And to justify the late date of the text re-

ported by OM, he declared: "that a formula of commitment, different from religious profession, must have remained in use for several years (after 1826) together with the first taking of vows properly so called".

This scenario appears to me extremely likely: the vows, in fact, were not invested with a public character, but were simply a very serious personal engagement, in some way an anticipation of the vow of Stability, the promise remaining the current form of commitment.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE VERSION OF BR. JEAN-BAPTISTE?

It is true that Brother Jean-Baptiste had a tendency to re-arrange the texts he drew from authentic documents. But he did it less than has been claimed and he takes care here to state that this consecration is "written by the hand of the pious Founder⁴". It does not seem strange, moreover, that the Founder may have updated the primitive formula, since in 1824, the prospectus had made official the name of "Little Brothers of Mary" and announced a teaching programme in conformity with official requirements. Also, Brother Jean-Baptiste's mistake would simply be presenting as origi-

² On the antiquity, see the arguments of Brother Balko.

³ Without mentioning OM.

⁴ In ALS he makes a very clear distinction about the texts he is using for the spirit rather than the actual words.

nal a late version of the “promise”, after 1826.

A CONTRACT DRAWN UP IN A TRADITION OF ASSOCIATIONS

This promise of the Brothers is obviously not an exceptional act but, on the contrary, one which imitates a type of engagement made in many voluntary communities, particularly of women.

In a well documented work, Jean-Baptiste Galley⁵ cites the list of the “congregations” of the Election⁶ of Saint Etienne in 1789. The regular communities of men there are composed of the Benedictines, the Minims, the Capuchins, Dominicans, Recollects, Carthusians, Lazarists and the Brothers of the Christian Schools. For the women: Dominicans, Visitandines, Ursulines, authentically nuns, to whom are added the “hospital sisters”, the “Sisters of St Joseph”, the Saint Charles Sisters, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Sisters of Christian Doctrine, Sisters of the Third Order of St Francis, who are not nuns but “Sisters” or “devout women”. They make private or simple vows or none at all. Certain live in independent communities, others in communities connected to a mother house, others alone⁷.

J.B. Galley is aware that the table is not a complete one: “The *béates* living in community almost everywhere do not appear [on the list]”. That is because, in fact, most of the communities of “Sisters” or “*béates*” have no canonical or clearly defined civil status.

In another work,⁸ Galley indicates that in 1792 the district of St Etienne became interested in those communities bearing the title of “Sisters of Saint Joseph”, “of the Sacred Heart”, the “*béates*” or the “devout women”. And he quotes a document of 12 June 1795 which gives a very good description of their status as far back as the Old Regime:

“The women, generally less well-off, were drapers, ribbon-makers, retailers, etc; everywhere they provided instruction for young girls for salaries agreed on with their parents; they did not make public vows which would have deprived them of their civil rights; they entered into association by means of an act passed in the presence of a notary which declared the dowry they were bringing.

Purchases were ordinarily made by the one who had responsibility for all the property. The establishment of these houses does not rest on letters patent or other titles. . . . The goods on which they depend have not been paid off, they pass successively from one to another by donation between living persons or wills, and when those of the women who have

⁵ L'élection de Saint Etienne à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, St Etienne, 1903, p. 567

⁶ Administrative division of the Old Régime.

⁷ See Yvonne Turin, *Femmes et religieuses au XIX^e siècle. Le féminisme « en religion »*, Nouvelle Cité, 1989, particularly chapters I and II.

⁸ Saint Etienne et son district pendant la Révolution, St Etienne, 1907, t. 3 p. 85.

last received them die without a will, the goods are shared by their legitimate heirs.
 She has equally the right to dispose of those goods in favour of persons other than her associates; she was bound only by a tacit understanding".

These associations of private right were very active in the resistance to the Revolution: the revolutionary authorities ceaselessly denounced the "béates". Galley is very much in this tradition:

"These Sisters were above all catechists, propagandists very popular among simple women, precious auxiliaries of the parish priests [...] They also provided medical advice, which increased their influence. Without any education, they conducted schools which were such only in name, [...] and we see these country Sisters making ribbons in small amounts, like poor people; trying to teach (the girls) to read the prayers of the diocese and the first pages of the catechism."

In any case, in public opinion, the terms "béates", "Sisters" of various denominations, "devoted women" were all more or less equivalent terms to designate pious women carrying out works of charity or helping the clergy, whether they lived in community or not. The housekeepers of the parish priests were also called "Sisters".

The Revolution certainly upset this world but it seems to have put up a good resistance. Galley cites a table of "Sisters vowed to visiting the poor in their homes and ... to the instruction of girls", written in 1806 but recording a situation from before the Revolution⁹, which counted 26 communities totaling 244 Sisters, among them the communities of St Joseph in Marllhes (nine Sisters) and Lavalla (ten Sisters). If the community of Marllhes belonged to the congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph established at Le Puy in the XVII century, the one in Lavalla had been an independent community for a long time. The expression "Sisters of St Joseph", then, must be seen rather as a generic term and not necessarily indicating belonging to a group.

In any case, in the town of Lavalla ten "Sisters of the congregation" were working as lace-makers and the Annales of the Brothers of Lavalla (p. 51) claim that this congregation was founded in 1533...

"as is testified by old papers found in the residence of the present Sisters of St Joseph in La Valla. They were affiliated to the St Joseph Sisters of Lyon in 1803. The latter took the habit and made profession at La Valla. Fr. Champagnat as curate presided at several of these ceremonies: his signature can be seen there¹⁰".

⁹ L'élection de St Etienne... p. 567.

¹⁰ This indicates that, although affiliated to the Sisters of St Joseph, the Lavalla Sisters preserved a great autonomy.

COMMUNITIES OF "BROTHERS"

In the same way as pious women occupied with charitable, educational and cultic works were called "Sisters", men dedicated to these works were frequently designated by the name of "Brothers" without for all that having lived in community. If the case of communities of "Brothers" seems to be very rare, the books of the Institute do provide an example of one in the biography of Brothers Cassien and Arsène ¹¹.

Louis Chomat, the future Brother Cassien, born in 1788, became town teacher at Sorbiers about 1820. Towards 1823 Césaire Fayol offered to share his task. At the end of some time:

"it was agreed that their earnings would be in common; that they would acquire and possess everything in association, that everything would go to the survivor, and that after the death [of both], what they left would be consecrated to good works".

This is exactly the type of contract that the members of the women's communities entered into among themselves, most often before a notary. If one believes the biography (p. 202), Louis Chomat and his companion also made a vow to spend their whole lives teaching the children of the Sorbiers parish. In the end, the two companions, without

making a novitiate, took the habit of the Marist Brothers on the feast of the Rosary in 1832 (Our Models p. 223).

In summary, after a time-lag of about thirty years, they follow the path of the Lavalla Sisters, in attaching themselves to a larger society after a quite long period of life in community without vows.

SOME OBSCURITY ABOUT THIS FIRST ASSOCIATIVE PHASE

We are surprised to note that this first associative phase of the Marist Brothers is also poorly documented. All that remains of the promise, probably pronounced over a period of fifteen years, is a late document, a copy from Brother Jean-Baptiste, of uncertain authenticity, and a comparatively imprecise recollection of the date of its origin.

This scanty documentation doubtless had technical causes: there was little concern for keeping archives. But there is another more fundamental reason: this "promise" constituted a completed period of the society, preparing for the congregational phase symbolised by the vows. Brother Jean-Baptiste has no hesitation in saying: "Obviously, it (the promise) contains, in principle, all the obligations of the religious life, a fact

¹¹ Our Models in Religion, Grugliasco, 1936, p. 197.

which Father Champagnat was careful to point out to the Brothers, before he allowed them to make it (Life 1st part, Ch. 15 p. 153) ”.

It seems to us that the reality of the original situation was less simple: the promise was only a contract between equals, forming a lay association under a spiritual director guaranteed by his uprightness of doctrine and morals, but without any canonical authority. In 1822 probably, the reference to a superior gives the association the beginnings of a congregational character. The vows pronounced from 1826 on do not directly suppress the associative character but relegate it to a second level. The affair of the cloth stockings, the sewn soutane, and the reading method of 1829 seems the privileged moment of this transition from one form of institution to another. Champagnat, in any case, applies it, to his advantage, the fourth resolution of the promise: to obey the superior without question.

2nd PART: A PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT

This promise was certainly not drawn up in the beginning in its entirety, but progressively elaborated in the course of events and requirements.

THE BOURDIN MEMOIR AND THE PROMISE

Fr. Bourdin, who drew up his memoir of the Society's origins in La Valla and the Hermitage about 1830, describes (OM 2/754 § 4) in telegram style the differences between Fr. Champagnat and his parish priest, probably in 1817-18. After having mentioned a first quarrel over the purchase of the house¹², he states, in spare style:

“Schoolmaster devoted to him (to the parish priest), gambler, drunkard. Brother Jean-Marie took in 2 little poor boys, parents happy; everyone wanted to give him theirs [...] You are the cause this master is out of work... Let's go to the school, and if I'm the one admitting them, you can turn them out; if you cannot put yourself in contradiction... The master left... they were masters of the field... The 1st year there are 3 Brothers... Bought a bushel of potatoes, fed the poor, the children, as much at the end as at the beginning”...

Plainly: the parish priest is supporting an incompetent school-master. Brother Jean-Marie takes in the poor children, whose numbers quickly multiply, putting the school-master in difficulty. The children have been admitted by the Brothers with the parish priest's authorisation, so that when he complains, Champagnat reminds him that all the children have come to the Brothers with his authorisation.

¹² This purchase was effected in two different transactions: 1 October 1817 and 26 April 1818, Fr. Re-bod, the parish priest, being at least partially responsible for this imbroglio. See OM 1/ 57 -58. The school-master affair seems contemporary with this purchase.

The Brothers feed the children who are regular in coming.

The Bourdin document, therefore, attributes the initiative of taking in the poor to Brother Jean-Marie. It is not properly speaking a school but a sort of place of hospitality for the poor. The Brothers certainly teach them catechism, prayer, and reading, which form a whole at that time, while feeding them on potatoes. At this stage, they themselves can scarcely do more.

The Bourdin memoir allows us to see very clearly the process by which the hospitality centre is quickly transformed into a school: the first children, truly indigent, are accepted with the authorisation of the parish priest, who, rapidly flooded with requests from other parents, consents to the Brothers taking in more and more children. The boundary between the indigent and the poor is very thin¹³ and the parish priest has to cater to the susceptibilities of his flock.

Thus, in fact, from spring 1818 the Brothers find themselves in charge of a school and performing two of the tasks contained in their promise: the Christian instruction of country children, and especially the most needy. But that does not mean that the promise has already been formulated: practice may have come first.

DATE OF THE FIRST PROMISE?

Brother Jean-Baptiste, who declares first of all that the promise was pronounced "from the very beginning" (Life Ch. 15 p. 152), then that the question of making this engagement was first raised in 1818 (p. 153), but without affirming that it was actually made, leads us to think that he was not very sure of his chronology.

Although no other document has come either to invalidate or to corroborate this date, it does not appear very likely. Brothers Jean-Marie (Granjon) and Louis (Audras), about 30 March 1817, took a habit, which was not strictly a religious one but which designated them as lay associates. Jean-Claude Audras (Brother Laurent), who entered on 24 December 1817, and Antoine Couturier (Brother Antoine), who entered on 1st January 1818, took the habit on 15 August 1818. Gabriel Rivat (Brother François) entered on 6 May 1818 and Barthélemy Badard (Brother Barthélemy) entered on 2 May, but they did not take the habit until 8 September 1819, probably on the occasion of what seems to be the first retreat of the association¹⁴.

So if the formula was pronounced in 1818, it could only have been

¹³ Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, in Paris, had had the same problem, the teacher-clerks accusing him of taking in not only the poor children but also the « rich » children whose parents could pay school fees. It must not be forgotten that in the town of Lavalla there were a large number of poor artisans and that vagabondage was then endemic in the countryside.

¹⁴ See AFM 5101.302, « Pensées » du F. François, carnet de retraite n° 1 et Registre des vœux perpétuels.

around 15 August¹⁵. If, on the other hand, it was pronounced in September 1819, on the occasion of the retreat preached by Champagnat, it would involve five to six Brothers, and could have coincided with the election of Brother Jean-Marie as director, which would appear more likely.

obey without question my superior and those who, by his order, are set over me, as if Jesus Christ in person commanded me... ". The difference of date allows one to suppose a formula which is gradually becoming more precise.

THREE MOMENTS

THE TESTIMONY OF BROTHER FRANCOIS

We have, it appears, some traces of the promise in the first book of "notes" of Brother François¹⁶. Thus, recalling the first retreat of the Brothers preached by Fr. Champagnat in 1819, he takes as his second resolution: "I will teach the children the respect, love and obedience that they owe their parents and their superiors, and principally catechism and prayer". It is not until 1822 that he notes the end of the "promise": "to

To envisage the beginnings of a solution, it is necessary to link this promise with the vesture ceremony,¹⁷ for it is hard to understand a taking of the habit without some solemn words giving meaning to the event. Also, from the first vesture in March 1817, a formula of engagement certainly accompanied the taking of the habit. So I am proposing the hypothesis that the first formula could comprise only the first part of the promise, which is also close to the essential passage of the consecration of Fourvière:

"Promise"	Consecration of Fourvière (July 1816)
<p>"We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves for five years, beginning from this day ..., freely and willingly, to the pious association of those who consecrate themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Christian instruction of country children.</p> <p>...</p>	<p>"... We, the undersigned, wishing to labour for the greater glory of God and of Mary, Mother of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, affirm and declare that it is our sincere intention and firm purpose to consecrate ourselves, as soon as it is opportune, to the foundation of the pious congregation of the Marists."</p>

¹⁵ It would concern only three Brothers since, Brother Jean-Baptiste says, Brother Louis did not at first want to sign (Life, p. 153).

¹⁶ AFM, 5101.302, p. 1... It has been recorded under the title « Retreat notebook No 1 »

¹⁷ Brother Avit says in the *Annales de l'Institut*: « there is nothing to establish the vesture ceremonial in use at the time » (cf. § 35)

We find as well in this that the programme of Champagnat was fixed when he brought together the two first aspirants. It is possible that at that time the formula was only an oral one, without signature, and that the above text only gives the spirit of the promise pronounced.

The formula could have extended to the vesture of 15 August 1818 or, more probably, to that of September 1819. Whatever the case, the community becoming more structured and the number of Brothers becoming significant, by 1819 at the latest, the formula existed in written form and, for the first time, each Brother was invited to sign it "kneeling in the presence of the assembled community" (Life, Ch. 15 p. 153). It is, nevertheless, unlikely that the formula was complete. It would have only received the following addition:

We intend:

Firstly, to seek only the glory of God, the good of his Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of Our Lord J(esu) C(hrist).
Secondly, we undertake to teach gratuitously the poor children whom the parish priest of the locality will send us 1° catechism, 2° prayers, 3° reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to parents and lawful princes.

In fact, the promise "to obey without question our superior and those

who by his order will be placed over us" does not correspond to the actual situation. We know that Fr. Champagnat did not consider himself then – and was not recognised by anybody – as the superior of the Brothers¹⁸ who elected a director: Jean-Marie Granjon. The Bourdin memoir (OM 2/754 § 16), as well, notes that in 1819 probably, at the time Champagnat first came under attack, he was continually praying: "My God, if it is not from you, let this work (collapse)". At this stage, he does not appear sure that his work corresponds to the will of God. It is doubtless why he does not give the Brothers a precise name.

Finally, there is no cohesion between the beginning of the text, which affirms an engagement between equals, and its end, which speaks of a (ecclesiastical) superior. If one existed, his existence would have been indicated by a formula such as: We the undersigned... with the authorisation of our superior... Besides, when Brother Louis refused to sign in 1818 or 1819 (Life, Ch. 15 p 153), it was only a question "of the advice of Fr. Champagnat" acting as spiritual director and the "friendly encouragement of the other Brothers". His refusal came, perhaps, from the fact that the engagement he had taken in 1817 had been modified in two ways: it was written and extended the original obligations.

¹⁸ In his interview with Bochard reported in the Life, Ch. 11 p. 110, Champagnat admitted having gathered 8 young men whom he trained without being their superior: « they had chosen a superior from their own ranks ». This interview took place at the earliest in 1819.

In fact, when Champagnat (Life, 2nd part, Ch. XII p. 397) responded to a priest edified by the modest conduct of the Brothers who were travelling with him and asked him who had founded this community, in the words: "... A few young people got together and framed a Rule appropriate to their aim; a curate gave them some help", he was not far from the truth, even if he did play down his role¹⁹.

The year 1822, on the other hand, could have been the one when a more religious commitment was introduced.

Inspector Guillard (OM 1/75) took note, therefore, that he was in the presence of a congregation in which Champagnat was designated by the Brothers as their superior (OM 1/75). Moreover, the diocesan authorities had officially recognised him: this explains the reception of the postulants from the Haute-Loire, the project of merging with the Brothers of Valbenoîte, the additions at Lavalla, the clothing of ten postulants²⁰ on 25 October 1822, and the beginning of the project of the establishment of the Hermitage²¹. Clearly, Champagnat had no further doubts that God wanted this work. And then there was the replacement of Brother Jean-Marie at Lavalla by Brother Louis, and his escapade to Aiguebelle. It was probably at this stage that the last three points were added

to the promise. They had become absolutely necessary to a society which was now numerous and whose cohesion was threatened by eccentric behaviour:

"We intend, thirdly, to undertake to obey without question our superior and those who by his order are placed over us. Fourthly, we promise to keep chastity. Fifthly, we place everything in common. "

It is probably not by accident that Brother François notes in his retreat book that year:

"To obey without question my superior and those who, by his order, are placed over me, as if Jesus Christ in person commanded me... "

3rd PART: THE FIRST BROTHERS AND THE PROMISE

BROTHER JEAN-MARIE GRANJON

If we accept the hypothesis that in March 1817 Brothers Louis and Jean-Marie had already made a promise for five years, this, confirmed and made precise in 1818 or 1819, would have been taken at the end of March 1822. So it was not by chance that Brother Jean-Marie, director of the school at Bourg-Argental from 2 Jan-

¹⁹ Episode reported also, with a quite different meaning, by Brother Sylvestre.

²⁰ F. Avit, *Annales de l'institut*, § 35.

²¹ The tradition of the Institute has greatly exaggerated Bochart's opposition. The Bourdin memoir, on the other hand, shows an agreement was reached with Fr. Bochart in 1822-23.

uary 1822 (Life, 1st part, Ch. 8 p. 90), and present during the visit of Inspector Guillard about 23 April (OM 1/75 § 5), left for La Trappe d'Aiguebelle about that time very probably, the school staff after Easter certainly having been notably decreased. The Bourdin memoir (OM 2/754 § 13), certainly using Fr. Champagnat's own testimony, gives the circumstances for this event²²:

"Has the idea of going to la Trappe. He notifies Fr. Champagnat. Advised by his director, he leaves.
- "But you won't stay"²³ "

Brother Louis, master of novices, replaces him. Better educated, does not do²⁴ as well. Brother Jean-Marie stays a month [...] Brother Jean-Marie returns: asks to be taken back. Fr. Champagnat:

- "You thought the society was not holy enough. To find saints elsewhere"²⁵! "

In his version, Brother Jean-Baptiste lets it be understood that this departure was a truly "impulsive act"²⁶ which took Fr. Champagnat by surprise. The Bourdin memoir is more nuanced and emphasises that Champagnat does not refer to any previous commitment forbidding his departure, but only expresses some scepticism.

The explanation could be: Brother Jean-Marie's engagement having expired in March 1822, he was free to go where he wanted, and it is not surprising that Fr. Champagnat welcomed him back and sent him in 1822-23 to Saint Symphorien-le-Château. One may suppose that Brother Jean-Marie, in a better state of mind, renewed his promise for five years at the 1822 retreat, which was probably held in September or October "in the new classroom on the first floor" of the house at Lavalla, which had just been enlarged²⁷.

We know that the behaviour of Brother Jean-Marie then went downhill. The Bourdin memoir emphasised that it was his refusal to go to Charlieu which prompted his dismissal. Brother Jean-Baptiste, who emphasises that, by the eccentricity of his conduct, Brother Jean-Marie was seriously disturbing the community of the Hermitage (Life, 1st part Ch. 14 p. 148), makes an almost identical judgement in quoting Fr. Champagnat on the cause of this dismissal:

"This is the treatment that will be given to all who leave the path of obedience to follow their own wills".

This time, the circumstances are not the same as in 1822: Brother Jean-Marie has failed on an essential point of the statutes of the Society. In

²² The original punctuation and spelling, very whimsical, have been modified by me.

²³ Certainly a word of Fr. Champagnat

²⁴ Does not succeed as well.

²⁵ To be understood probably as: you thought you would find holy people elsewhere.

²⁶ Life 1st part, Ch. 14 p. 147.

²⁷ F. François, AFM, 5101.302, Notes de retraite n° 1 p. 121.

addition, Champagnat is now the lawful superior elected by the Brothers in 1825 and recognised officially by the archbishop. We do not know exactly when this dismissal was pronounced but if, as is very probable, his promise had been renewed for five years in October 1822, it would have expired in October 1827. As Brother Jean-Baptiste (Life 1st part, Ch. 14 p. 146) tells us that the dismissal took place about the same time as the departure of Fr. Courveille, it was probably at the end of 1826, that having refused to go to Charlieu, Brother Jean-Marie was sent away²⁸. Since Fr. Champagnat did not wait for the end of his term of engagement, the measure must have been urgent.

BROTHER JEAN-FRANCOIS

Etienne Roumésy (Brother Jean-François) entered the novitiate in 1819 and probably took the habit in 1820. Director of Saint Sauveur-en-Rue in 1820-23, he was then sent by Fr. Champagnat to the Hermitage²⁹. On 1st March 1826, the Council of Mgr. De Pins note his presence at Larajasse, in Les Monts du Lyonnais with a Fr. Colomb, who, according to Brother Jean-Baptiste (Life, Ch.

14 p. 149) wanted to found a community. On 15 March, the same Council records:

“Fr. Colomb of Larajasse sends word that Brother Jean-François had terminated his engagement at the Hermitage, that he had not wished to renew it, that he was therefore free when he went to Larajasse, and that he had nevertheless gone back to the Hermitage, and renewed his refusal.”

The Council leaves the matter there and the case seems clear: probably at the end of 1825, Brother Jean-François left the Hermitage without notice - as the Life says as well (p. 149) - and which gave rise to a complaint from Fr. Champagnat or Fr. Courveille when it was learned where the Brother in question was. Etienne Roumésy then returned to the Hermitage to confirm his withdrawal and to have it stated that he was free from all commitments.

In his Life, Brother Jean-Baptiste insists on the fact that Etienne Roumésy was not happy with his work and even fell ill (Life, Ch. 14 p. 149), but he does not attribute his departure to the unsettled situation at the Hermitage caused by the election of Fr. Champagnat as superior in September-October 1825, by the

²⁸ According to the *Annales des maisons* (Charlieu), Brother Louis was the 1st director in 1824-25, followed by Brother Augustin “who appears to have directed the school for three years”.

²⁹ See Letter No 1 of Fr. Champagnat which mentions this change. See in Life, Ch. 14 p. 148-150, the passage devoted by Brother Jean-Baptiste to his departure. Especially, biographical notice in Letters, Vol. 2 p. 295-296.

manoeuvres of Fr. Courveille and perhaps by the opposition of Brother Jean-Marie. From the end of December 1825 to February 1826, Fr. Champagnat is first ill and then convalescent. On 14 February, Fr. Cattet, vicar general, comes to inspect the Hermitage and shows himself severe.

So Brother Jean-François withdraws at a moment of crisis, his secret departure being explained by the fact of a lack of authority at the Hermitage. His return and his explicit refusal to rejoin the house, probably around 8 March, shows, however, that he is persevering in his attitude, for at this time the situation was still not clarified: Fr. Courveille did not leave la Trappe d'Aiguebelle until the end of May 1826.

The case of Etienne Roumésy does not, therefore, involve uniquely personal causes, as Brother Jean-Baptiste too strongly suggests. His departure is one of the consequences of the atmosphere caused by Courveille's interference in the affairs of the Society. And basically, Roumésy acts the same way Brother Jean-Marie did in 1822: his engagement having expired, probably at the end of 1825, he went looking for another employment more satisfying to him. So he made his contract with the association at the end of 1820.

BROTHER LOUIS

The Life (Ch. 14, pp. 150-151) recalls that "at that same time" of the conflict between Courveille, Champagnat and the Brothers, so probably between September 1825 and Spring 1826, Brother Louis was tempted to become a priest³⁰. If we consider that he pronounced his first engagement in 1817 and renewed it in 1822, in 1827 he would be free to follow this attraction. Brother Jean-Baptiste suggesting that the temptation was of long duration, it could well have had its roots in the crisis of 1825-26. Did he renew his promise in 1827, which would signify the end of his doubts? That appears probable. In any case, although featuring first in the register of perpetual vows started in 1829, he was not the first to make them. Eight Brothers have already committed themselves in October 1826. He himself did not subscribe to this act until 8 September 1828.

The case of these three senior Brothers, therefore, provides evidence of the weakness of the link which united them to the society, since every five years they could withdraw. The society needed vows which constituted a more explicit religious engagement, and especially perpetual vows which prevented everything being put in question every five years. This is exactly what Brother Jean-Baptiste says at the beginning of Chapter 15 of the Life (p. 152).

³⁰ See also *Our Models in Religion*, pp. 46-47.

4th PARTE: FROM THE PROMISE TO THE VOWS

For all that, it need not be understood that the vows replaced the promise, as Brother Jean-Baptiste too readily suggests: secret and voluntary, they were first reserved for an élite. In addition, while they were temporary, they involved obligations not very different from the "promise".

CONTINUITY AND RUPTURE

So the continuity between this and the vows is clear: Antoine Gratallon and Brother Dorothée, on 11 and 12 October 1826 make vows for five years. Brother Dominique Esquis, on 18/10/1826 makes them only for four years. On 18/10/1827 Brother Xavier Prat makes the vows again for five years. From that year, many Brothers make the vows for three years, and this then becomes the norm. It may be that this reduced time contributed to making the vows prevail over the "promise"³¹: they are basically less constraining.

The real change is the perpetual vows. Up to 1826, entry into the association took place in two steps: admission to the novitiate and the vesture-promise. From then on, there were four degrees of belonging: entry to the novitiate, receiving the

habit, probably still linked to the promise for some time, temporary vows independent of the vesture, and perpetual vows for the most highly motivated Brothers.

FROM AN ASSOCIATION TO THE SOCIETY OF MARY

Even if the content of the "promise" was strongly influenced by the form of the Marist pledge of July 1816, the association, up to 1824, does not appear explicitly as a branch of the Society of Mary. On the other hand, the first Brothers to make vows in 1826 declare Lavalla as "novitiate of the Society of Mary". The authorisation to receive the habit again was given them "after humbly requesting it of Rev. Fr. Superior", but their vows were made "to the superiors of the Society of Mary, according to its statutes and its aims".

This mysterious formula shows a remarkable evolution: from this point on, the Brothers regarded themselves as part of a larger society, which had not yet elected a superior but was sufficiently legitimate to receive vows.

It is curious, however, that it is recognised as having statutes and aims at a time when nothing very structured existed among the priests either at the Hermitage or at Belley. We can think of the Marists' pledge

³¹ Registre des vœux temporaires.

of 1816 and the prospectus of 1824 which made official the name of "Little Brothers of Mary" and provided the main lines of their teaching activity. We can also think of the rule which was in the course of being drawn up. In my opinion, it is the text of the promise above all which clearly sets out the statutes (education of the indigent, obedience, chastity, common life) and the aims: glory of God, honour of Mary, good of the Church.

The vows, then, would signify an explanation of the Marist identity of the Brothers in a rather ambiguous development: if they recognised a Society of Mary larger than themselves, they seem at the same time to have considered themselves its advance-party in already making use of its statutes and its superior. Because of this fact, the text of the promise changed meaning: it was no longer a formula of engagement in an association but the founding of the Society of Mary: in sum, for the Brothers of the Hermitage, the equivalent of what the pledge of 1816 was for the priests.

5th PARTE: THE PROMISE AND ITS DERIVATIVES

If the "promise", pronounced in my opinion in its original form from March 1817 and gradually elaborated

in 1819 and 1822, constitutes the primitive charter of the Society of the Brothers, later documents should bear traces of it.

CONTINUITY FROM THE "PROMISE" TO THE PROSPECTUS: MARY AND THE POOR

The "Prospectus of the establishment of the Little Brothers of Mary", printed with the authorisation of Fr. Cholleton, vicar general, on 19 July 1824, is the first official recognition of the Institute by the diocesan authority.

This text was preceded by a draft, with a preface much rougher but taking up again a major element of the 1818 "promise": that of teaching the poor children of the country areas exposed to the supposed immorality and impiety of the itinerant teachers:

"To remedy such a great evil and drive these impious pedagogues from the less fortunate parts of the countryside [...] these pious teachers devoted to Mary under the name of the little unlearned Brothers, go two by two into the poor areas where the Brothers of the Christian Schools cannot go, for want of resources.³²"

The preface to the prospectus, certainly drawn up by the Archbishop's office, leaves out the polemical aspect and amplifies the allusion to the Brothers of the Christian Schools provided by the name of

³² AFM 132.8 p. 86-92, quoted in P. Herreros, *La regla del Fundador*, Rome, 1984 p. 21-22

“petits frères ignorantins”³³ by showing the Little Brothers of Mary as their complement for “the majority of the communes, and in particular the country ones (which) are unable to enjoy the benefit of this (Christian) education for lack of sufficient resources”. This was an adaptation of the preface of the “promise” and even partly of the second commitment:

“We, the undersigned, [...] certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves [...] to the pious association of those who are consecrated, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Christian instruction of country children. Secondly, we undertake to teach gratuitously the indigent children whom the parish priest of the locality will send us...

There is also Article 10 of the draft for the prospectus, which is not retained in the final text:

“The instruction of children in general and in particular of poor orphans is the aim of our establishment. As soon as we have completed the house of the Hermitage and our means allow us to make use of a good supply of water to cover the cost of the work, we will take in children from the Houses of Charity; we will give them a situation by giving them a Christian education”...

Note must also be taken in the draft of the prospectus of all the ex-

pressions intended to show the efforts made to reduce costs: Article 2: “The Little Brothers of Mary require only 400 F. for two”... ; article 8: “To help the poor communes, we provide only two Brothers for the winter, who return to the Mother House to work at a trade, so as not be a burden for the establishment”...

We see finally how the expression “Little Brothers of Mary” was born. The “promise” speaks of a “pious association... under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary”. The draft prospectus evokes “these pious teachers devoted to Mary under the name of little unlearned Brothers” and in its Article 2 it gives for the first time the expression “Little Brothers of Mary”. As the name “unlearned Brothers” (“frères ignorantins”) was in use to designate the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the addition of the adjective “petits” signifies the concern to situate themselves in their educational tradition but at a lower level³⁴. Finally, the complicated expressions designating the disciples of Champagnat have officially been reduced, probably by Fr. Cholleton³⁵, to one: “Little Brothers of Mary”. Nevertheless, in 1826, the expression is still not retained in the “promise”, for, being a ritual text, it keeps to the traditional forms.

³³ A name sometimes used in popular parlance for the Brothers of the Christian Schools

³⁴ With the same logic, Pierre Zind distinguishes the «Grands frères» (FEC) and the «petits frères» founded in the XIX century.

³⁵ The sign that this title was not given by the Institute is that it takes a long time to become widely accepted. The expression «Brothers of Mary» remains the more common for a long time.

GOODS IN COMMON AND THE PROSPECTUS

"Fifth, we put everything in common" says the last sentence of the "promise". The draft prospectus (Article 5) declares: "Those who have a legacy (a patrimony) will contribute it to the society, which will return it if the subject has to withdraw, minus the expenses of the novitiate". The draft adds (Article 7): "We would wish to bind them (the Brothers) by the usual vows of religion". The actual prospectus keeps Article 5, although modifying it somewhat but says nothing about eventual religious vows. The placing in common of patrimonies, in the logic of the "promise", would not, therefore, seem strange to the diocesan authorities, because it concerns not a congregation but only an association of free persons.

However, when Inspector Guillard passed through Lavalla on 26 April 1822 (OM 1/75), he heard the parish priest complain about this point:

"He (Champagnat) carries his zeal too far in wanting to set himself up as superior of a congregation without being legally authorised, and in requiring to be given the patrimony of these young men who could become the victims if the congregation does not last".

In the "Statutes of the Little Brothers of Mary" drawn up by the archdiocese in view of the civil approbation of the congregation in January 1825, article 4 states:

"The Brothers of the congregation will not be able to dispose (of their goods), whether by donation among the living, or by will, except in conformity with the laws of the State relating to religious congregations."

As the archdiocese wanted to have the Little Brothers of Mary recognised as a congregation and not simply as a lay association,³⁶ it renounced the traditional usage with regard to goods and envisaged following the State requirements concerning the congregations of women. But the Restoration, which had granted the Sisters in 1825 the possibility of constituting themselves legally as congregations, persistently refused to authorise congregations of men.

Obviously the Rule of 1837, when it treats of "the conditions for being received into the society" (p.10-12), says nothing about "the patrimony" which the Brothers must bring and restricts itself to mentioning the fees of the novitiate. It remains to be learned in what measure, in the first ten years of the Institute, the use of contributing the "patrimony" was practised. Fr. Champagnat's account books do not seem conclusive in this regard, but it is possible that these transactions were not recorded there. It appears, however, that starting with the taking of the first private vows in 1826, the Brothers would have drawn up a will or deed of gift between living persons. Brother Cassien bears witness to this (Our Models in Religion, p. 230):

³⁶ It seems to have wanted to create jurisprudence extending the 1825 Law to the men's congregations.

“Before making Profession (on the feast of the Rosary 1834 p. 223), he gave up all he possessed reserving nothing. During his twenty five years of labour in the world he had put aside the sum of twenty thousand francs. This he gave to the Institute unconditionally.”

The congregation not being yet recognised nor a civil society constituted to receive legacies, one may suppose that these donations were made to Fr. Champagnat. But research in notary deeds would be necessary to arrive at certainty.

THE “PROMISE” AND THE SHORT SUMMARY (LE “PETIT ÉCRIT”) OF 1824

Brother Jean-Baptiste tells us (Life Ch. 12 p. 128-130) that in 1824, during the construction of the Hermitage, Fr. Champagnat “thoroughly instructed them (the Brothers) on the religious vocation, on the goal of the Institute and on zeal for the Christian education of children” and that he gave them “a short written summary of the main things he had said”. And in two pages he gives its “substance”:

- Ensure the salvation of their souls by prayer, the sacraments, the Rule...
- Brotherly love
- Charity towards the children by (religious) instruction and a Christian education.

This education is given in detail in a dozen points which can be grouped in several main thrusts:

- Catechism, sacraments, prayer, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the guardian angels, the patron saints; training in plain-chant and the ceremonies of the Church.
- Great vigilance over the children
- Obedience and respect towards parents, ecclesiastical and civil authorities.
- Love of work, order, courtesy
- Good example given by the Brothers.

This “petit écrit” seems to be an explanation and amplification of points 1 and 2 of the “promise”. On the other hand, there is no question of vows or even of the virtues of obedience, chastity and poverty, as if these commitments had not yet been included in the “promise”³⁷

The “petit écrit” is also to be placed alongside the prospectus of 19 July 1824, which makes the “Little Brothers of Mary” a society of teachers offering its services to the public. It seems that Champagnat, then, had to remind the Brothers of the serious nature of the contract binding them and which goes well beyond what is said in the prospectus. In brief, the prospectus is the official version of the project, while the “petit écrit” gives its spirit, in continuity with the

³⁷ The hypothesis that the aim of the « promise » was not added until 1826 is not unlikely.

original “promise”, at a time the work is undergoing profound change.

THE REGISTER AND THE RITE

Through the register of vows we have the formula of the vows of 1826 but we do not know exactly the rite used in their pronouncing. But Brother François (Notebook of “thoughts” (AFM 5101.302 p. 113) seems to bear witness to it:

“In the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty six and on the eleventh day of the memorable month of October, at the end of the retreat, I had the happiness of receiving my God and making the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, by which I have entirely consecrated myself to God, my Father, and to Mary, my Mother, under the protection of all the angels and all the saints, particularly of my good guardian angel, of St Jean François Régis and St François Xavier, by whose merits and intercession I hope to obtain the mercy of God and the grace to observe them faithfully to my last breath³⁸”.

The formula of 1837 merely takes up again what Brother François

refers to, with some slight differences³⁹:

“Prostrate at your feet, most holy and adorable Trinity, in the desire of procuring your glory, in the presence of Mary, my tender Mother, of Saint Joseph and the other Patrons of the Society, of my good Guardian Angel and my Patron Saints, I make voluntarily and freely the three perpetual vows...”.

6th PART: FROM STATUTES TO THE CONSTITUTIONS

Even if this promise of 1817-22 gradually ceased being signed after 1826, up to October 1836 the Brothers made their temporary and perpetual vows “to the superiors of the Society of Mary according to the statutes and aims of the Society”.

The approbation by Rome of the Marist Fathers alone in April 1836 (OM 1/384) and the constitution of the Society of Mary at Belley from 20-24 September had as consequence an important change in the formula of the vows of the Brothers on 10 October 1836. Compare the following:

³⁸ His declaration figures in the register of perpetual vows in 4th position. It is nearly the same as that of Brother Louis.

³⁹ The register of vows indicates that they are made « with the ceremonies in use in the Society of the Brothers of Mary »

3/4/1836	10/10/1836
I, the undersigned Brother Marie-Lin, born Antoine Morel, legitimate son of Jean-Pierre and of the deceased Françoise Patouillard, native of Joubert, in the parish of Marlhes, aged twenty three years,	We, the undersigned, Little Brothers of Mary
testify and declare that, with the permission of my Rev. Superior, also undersigned to certify the permission	declare
I have, the third day of April 1836, in the chapel of the Hermitage, before Holy Communion at Mass	that, the tenth day of the month of October 1836, at 9 h. in the morning, in the new chapel of N.D. de l'Hermitage, at the end of a retreat of 8 days given by Fr. Collin and Fr. Convert,
made secretly , but voluntarily and freely,	we have made voluntarily and freely, with the permission of our Rev. Fr. Superior, also undersigned and with the ceremonies in use in the Society of the Brothers of Mary,
the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience	the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience
to the superiors of the Society of Mary,	to the Superior of the said Society
according to its statute and its ends.	according to the constitutions and the ends of the order.
In proof of which I have signed this act in the presence of Brother Jean-Marie and of Brother Louis-Marie who have also signed the 14th day of June 1836 at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage.	In proof of which we have signed this act the 14th day of the said month of the current year at N.D. de l'Hermitage.
Champagnat, Sup.; Brother Marie-Lin; Brother Jean-Marie; Brother Louis-Marie	Champagnat; Brother Appolinaire...(20 Brothers in total)

IN 1826: MAINTAINING THE S.M. PROJECT

It is necessary, first of all, to underline the curious nature of the formula addressed to the superiors of the Society of Mary and according

to its statutes and its ends, and pronounced for the first time in October 1826, at a time when Fr. Courveille has withdrawn and Fr. Terraillon is preparing to leave the Hermitage (OM 4/p. 356) to give himself to preaching. The Society, then, seems

to be living on the fiction of a team of priests, absent for the time-being, and the reference to some "constitutions of the order" which Courveille refers to in his letter from Aiguebelle (OM 1/152 § 15). This is a sign that Champagnat has not given up on the Society of the priests at the Hermitage. This will be started up again the following year with the arrival of Fr. Séon, for he does not consider that the Brothers constitute a separate entity.

IN 1836: BIRTH OF THE BROTHERS' BRANCH

The differences between the formula of 1826-36 and the one of 10 October 1836 clearly stand out. It is firstly as Little Brothers of Mary and secondarily as members of the Society of Mary that the Brothers make their vows. The vows are no longer private since the official recognition of the Marist Fathers and the nomination of Fr. Colin as superior now give them a certain canonical legitimacy⁴⁰. They are no longer addressed to "the superiors of the Society of Mary" but "to the superior" of the society of the Brothers of Mary, that is, Fr. Champagnat.

There is, then, a clear distinction between the branch of the Brothers and that of the Fathers. However, the Brothers do not become independent, since the vows are pronounced "according to the constitutions and

the ends of the order". An order of which an outline has been given in the consecration of Fourvière in July 1816 and the beginnings of a realisation obtained with the Roman recognition of the Marist Fathers. There remains the hope that one day its fulfilment in four branches will be recognised by Rome and that definitive constitutions can then be written.

The "statutes and the ends" of the Society of Mary to which the preceding vows were referred and which more or less amalgamated the Society of the Brothers and the Society of Mary have now lapsed. In addition, the Rule of 1837, already prepared at the time of the October vows, and about to be published in January, has become the new charter of the branch, finally defined clearly, of the Little Brothers of Mary. The Society of Mary project of the Hermitage has been absorbed into that of Belley.

CONCLUSION

The Brothers' promise, probably pronounced from 1817 on, was first a simple engagement of private right in a lay community. Gradually, this primitive charter of association, referred in a rather vague way to the consecration of Fourvière, is enriched and made more precise in terms of its ends and obligations, most likely in 1819 and 1822. In 1824 it is made explicit by the prospectus and the "petit écrit". There is also a Rule in grad-

⁴⁰ But the archdiocese does not appear to have given any authorisation.

ual process of being drawn up, about which we have little information.

So, when the Brothers make their first vows in 1826 "according to the statutes and the aims" of the Society of Mary, they are certainly still referring to their primitive promise but probably also to later texts and, perhaps too, to the pledge of Fourvière.

The transition from lay association to the congregation was made gradually: it was in 1822 probably that the promise, by including poverty, chastity, and obedience to a superior took on a more definitive form. The foundation of the Hermitage in 1824-25 gave the society another dimension, since Courveille, Champagnat and Terrailon were supposed to begin the branch of the priests of the society. The crisis of 1825-26, which led to the withdrawal of Courveille and Terrailon, but also of Brothers Jean-François and Jean-Marie, obliged

Fr. Champagnat, superior of the Brothers but not of the whole society, to have vows pronounced, not only temporary ones but also perpetual. Little by little, the congregational model supplanted the associative framework.

The vows of 1836 and the Rule of 1837 brought about a revolution: from then on, the Brothers made an engagement as such as members of a specific branch of the Society of Mary, according to new written statutes in an order in the course of realisation, of which they were neither the advance guard nor the centre, but simply one branch. The primitive promise could be forgotten, even though, from 1817 to 1824, it had constituted the basis of the "statutes and aims" of the Society of the Brothers at Lavalla and, from 1824 to 1836, those of the Society of Mary at the Hermitage.

IN COMMON CAUSE

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



Br. Frederick McMahon, fms

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

PART I Introduction

Coming from a well-to-do family, Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier was a well-performed student at the seminary. Shortly after ordination, he was placed in the parish of a family friend, Fr Querbes. Having acquired an interest in the Marist project, which he had encountered in seminary days, he was then placed at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage as an assistant to Fr Champagnat.

Pompallier was a talented

preacher; it was not long before he left the Hermitage from time to time to preach Missions in parishes which requested his services. His interest in Marist affairs continued, his particular line of interest being the formulation of rules for a Marist way of life. When some of the Marists of the Lyon archdiocese moved to Valbenoite, Pompallier was not chosen as leader of the departing group. He may have been piqued about this, and, shortly

afterwards, accepted a post as chaplain to a recently-opened boarding school in the heart of Lyon.

Soon he also became chaplain to a group of men, mainly for the boarding school, who wanted to form a kind of Third Order. This gave further scope to Pompallier's energy, especially in the way of developing rules of life for the group. He also became well acquainted with top archdiocesan people and, through his friendship with Fr Cholleton, Vicar General, tried to further the Marist cause. In a way, Pompallier became the link between the Marists in the archdiocese and Fr Cholleton

Pompallier befriended the Marist Sisters and endeavoured to find an opening for their congregation in the archdiocese. He played no little part in having Cholleton, his friend and a Marist sympathiser, placed in charge of Marist contacts with the archdiocese.

The Christian Virgins was a group initiated by Pompallier. This was the initial body from which there emerged, first, a Third Order for women and, eventually, the congregation of the Marist Missionary Sisters of Mary.

Ever on the look-out for advancing the Marist cause, Pompallier played a part in the negotiations that led to the Marist Fathers being given the missionary cause in Western Oceania and, with it, official recognition as a religious congregation. His prominence in this matter led to his being offered the leadership of the missionary 'task-force'.

Letters between Champagnat and Pompallier show that the two men maintained a close, almost warm relationship - this despite Pompallier's 'helpful' interference causing Champagnat much pain on occasions.

This first of two Parts takes us to an examination of the correspondence between Champagnat and Pompallier. Other, and later, matters concerning the two men are discussed in the second Part of this article.

POMPALLIER, BISHOP OF WESTERN OCEANIA

Origins

Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier was born on 20th Frimaire, Year X (11th December 1801). He died in 1871. The recording of our month of December as Frimaire (winter's hoarfrost month) in the calendar of the First French Republic reminds us of the changed world in which the group of Marists grew up from childhood. It was a 'brave new world' of new weights and measures, new coinage and paper money, new forms of government and religion, a new flag, and, for most people, an almost new language to replace the multiplicity of patois throughout the land. In this nation in process of much change the solid persistence and enduring determination of the young Marists in their quest for a Society of Mary are qualities to be admired.

Jean-Baptiste François Pompallier was born in the parish of Saint-Louis in Lyon, his parents being Pierre Pompallier, a man of independent means, and Françoise Pompallier. In the family he was always known as FranVois. The father died on 30 August 1802, Pompallier's mother subsequently marrying Jean-Marie Solichon, a silk manufacturer of Lyon.

The young Pompallier pursued his secondary education at the clerical Juniorate of Saint-François in Lyon. In 1813 Jean-Mathieu Pompallier, an uncle, died at Vourles and left a large and valuable property. Towards the end of 1816 the whole Solichon-Pompallier family moved to Vourles. The Pompallier coat-of-arms indicates a claim to noble blood. Whether or not it is justified, it is certain that François believed himself to be entitled to such a claim. It is equally certain that, although he never possessed any money of his own, he was raised as a member of the gentry and was so considered by contemporaries.¹

It was said by others (who must have received it from him) that François had been for a time an officer of the dragoons. It was also said that he worked in the silk trade, which a gentleman of Lyon could do without losing his status. There is, however, no sign of business training in the mature Pompallier. What is certain is that the young Pompallier was well-educated, well-read - and

charming. In later life he was an impressive preacher and conversationalist in the English language. Throughout his life he seems never to have made a poor first impression on anyone.² Pompallier gave thought to becoming a Jesuit. On 2 November 1823 he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Montrouge, but his name does not appear on the lists for 1824. The archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur de Quelen, advised him to try the secular clergy. Consequently, Pompallier studied Philosophy at Alix in 1825-26 and, in the autumn of 1826, entered Saint Irenée, where he completed three years of theology. He received the tonsure on 10 June 1827 and went through the subsequent clerical Orders until ordained to the priesthood on 13 June 1829. He was then appointed curate to the parish of La Madeleine in Tarare, but did not go there, because Etienne Séon, who knew that Pompallier wanted to join the Marist aspirants, agreed to take a curate's appointment in his place, which Séon did at Charlieu from November 1829 to December 1830.

As for Pompallier, after replacing Fr Querbes in Vourles in July-August 1829, he entered Marcellin Champagnat's Hermitage that September, being yet another young priest coming to the Marists from the Lyon seminary, a process initiated by the fervent Fr Séon after his coming to the Hermitage in 1827. Pompallier re-

¹ Based partly on 'Pompallier, Prince of Bishops', E.R Simmons, P. 23

² Based partly on 'Pompallier, Prince of Bishops', E.R Simmons, P. 23

mained at the Hermitage as chaplain (though he was often away on inland missions) until November 1832, when he was appointed chaplain to the Marist Tertiary group in Lyon.

Pompallier, the Retreat Preacher

The nomination of a young priest, Fr Pompallier, with a clearly missionary vocation, and the departure for Charlieu of Fr Séon, who thereby remained no less attached to Fr Champagnat, do indeed give witness, each in its own way, to a fact which from this time forward is undeniable. It was not solely the needs of the work with the Brothers of the Hermitage which explain the presence of priests alongside Fr Champagnat. What is in initial stages is a group of missionaries, and, while still maintaining a prudent reserve in the matter, the archdiocesan authorities are no less implicitly recognising this fact.

Signs of temporarily reining in the young Pompallier are to be seen in the following letter of Fr Cattet to Fr Champagnat about the new appointee:

'The archbishop's Council has not judged it to be appropriate to give powers to Fr Pompallier for places other than the house. This priest should not be concerned with missions or with appointments for this year. He should confine himself to the service of the house to the best of his ability and to training

himself well by study. It suffices, then, that he has faculties for confessing the subjects who will be at the Hermitage.'³

Not long after his arrival, Pompallier received a letter from Vicar General Cattet: '... For you in particular, we want you to spread yourself in the least possible way and not to absent yourself too much, since you are the principal confessor of those who are at the Hermitage.'⁴ So, for the time being, Pompallier, with his missionary aspirations, was 'confined to barracks'. This restriction, however, was only temporary; Pompallier was soon 'unbound'.

In January 1830 two priests from the Hermitage, Pompallier and Bourdin, made a connection with the Marists of the neighbouring diocese when they came to Belley to give the students' Retreat at the minor seminary at Belley. It was a much-appreciated spiritual experience for the students. It was also a good pointer to a future apostolate for Pompallier, for he showed real skills as a preacher of Retreats.

Pompallier and Marist Governance

Pompallier was present in September 1830 for the election of Jean-Claude Colin as Central Superior of the as yet unauthorised Marist Fathers of the as yet unacknowledged Society of Mary, and from 3 to 8 De-

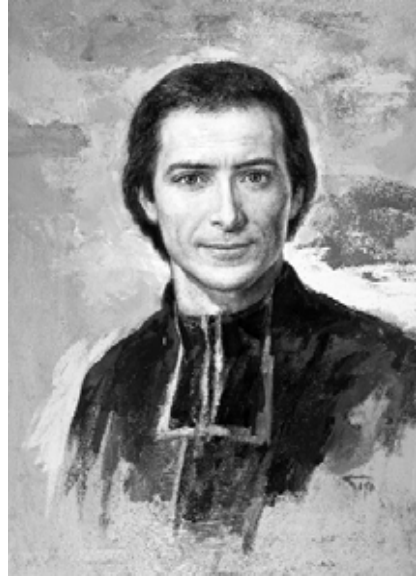
³ O.M. 1. Doc. 196.

⁴ O.M. 1, Doc. 208.

cember 1830 he participated in the gathering of the Lyon branch of the Marist aspirants, playing a determining role in the compilation of the rules drawn up for that occasion. Together with the others, he took part in the election of Marcellin Champagnat as the rector the Lyon group. Colin, of course, was both Central Superior of all the would-be Marists and was also rector of the Belley group. It is significant that, prior to these gatherings, a compilation of rules for 'The Society of Mary of the Hermitage' had been drawn up; it contained 16 articles. It is most likely that Pompallier was the main mover in this matter. Of course, after the election of Colin as Central Superior, this document had no validity and was pushed into Limboland.

Pompallier, the Inland Missioner

On 22 February 1832 Fathers Pompallier and Forest were authorised by the archdiocesan Council to preach Lenten and Easter Missions in three parishes of the Beaujolais region: 'Fr Champagnat is authorised to send Fathers Pompallier and Forest on ministry into the Beaujolais.'⁵ The ministry of these two Marist confrères to an extremity of the archdiocese, the Beaujolais district, marked for the missionary team an important forward step, requiring, by right, a special authorisation from the



St. Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers

archdiocese. One of the attractions for the Marists was the opportunity to draw the parish priest of St Etienne la Varenne to the Marist ranks; he was already strongly inclined towards joining them.

After completing the first of his three Missions in the Beaujolais, in which, as prescribed by archdiocesan authorities, he was accompanied by another Marist aspirant, Fr Forest, Pompallier wrote to Champagnat about the experience. It is the only contemporary document we have which outlines the mission work of the Lyon Marists before 1836. It is significant that we find here the

⁵ O.M. 1, Introduction to Doc. 243.

Marists of the archdiocese of Lyon engaged in an apostolate similar to that of their fellows in the diocese of Belley – Retreats and parish Missions. Both groups were also en-

gaged in the work of education – preparing Marist Brothers for the school apostolate in Lyon and actually teaching in a minor seminary-cum-secondary school in Belley:

2 May 1832. St Etienne-Lavarenne.

Jesus and Mary,
My reverend Father,

How consoling and heart-warming is the news you so kindly sent me; it did not surprise me, since I was expecting it. Alas, we have only to lament the loss of Br Antoine, but no doubt a rich reward is reserved for him in heaven. May God's will be done! It is always sad, however, to see our trained men taken from us by death.

Your solicitude and affection, my reverend Father, make you anxious concerning our health.

Well, I can tell you that so far it has stood up to many joy-filled works. Fr Forest and I are not thinking of dying yet; God does not find us ripe yet for heaven. To tell the truth, however, we are a bit knocked out with fatigue, but the consolations, contentment and your good prayers have sustained us till the present, and now the bulk of the work is finished and the further we go the less it will become.

Alacrity to approach the sacred tribunal has been general in our three parishes since the middle of Lent. From then to now, and even last week, we had to remain in the confessional till 11 p.m. and even 11.30 p.m. We were surprised at this, as were the local priests, and we thank God for it with all our hearts.

The work was so increased, especially at Quincié, that I ended last Sunday's session at Vespers, for we had more than 900 Communions during Paschal time. And there were only 900 in the parish available for Communion. Besides, as had been decided, I had to spend the remainder of Easter at St Etienne-Lavarenne, where things are well under way. There were also 900 Communions out of 1,100 possible and the remainder are on the way, for the most part. At Cercié I believe there were 250 Communions out of 350 possible, and the others are also on the way.

Fr Forest had done well in that parish which, like the others – and more than they – needed this help, leaving out of account the two poor helpers whom our superiors, in concert with you, sent here.

The upper-class women, who are numerous in this beautiful, rich region, have almost all come to Confession, and that was to us something unexpected. As for the men of that class, few of them have come. Some have remained in aloofness and others are away. Alas, this is the only regret we have here.

They have, however, in no way hampered us. On the contrary, they have always shown their esteem and affection for us – at least in regard to some of them.

The general satisfaction in the area has put a brake on the others. The neighbouring parishes, up to 24 and 28 kilometres distant, have felt the effects of it, and this has contributed to overburdening us.

At the end, I was obliged to send away these outsiders because the faithful of our parish were unable to attend. Alas, it was a real sorrow for my heart to see these poor souls turn back sadly to their districts. How I wish we were more numerous so that our nets could take in the whole beautiful plain of the Beaujolais. Our fishing would have been more abundant – and not in small fish! How much good there is to be done! How much I would love these people because of their character and the good evidence they show of a deep piety! I always bear in mind, however, that the souls and the areas to which obedience sends me are more precious and more dear. I get quite sick at heart whenever this way of victory no longer exists; I would not dare to take one step. Also, my dear superior, since obedience calls me back to you through your word, you can imagine with what joy and eagerness I shall soon retake the road to the abode of Our Lady of the Hermitage.

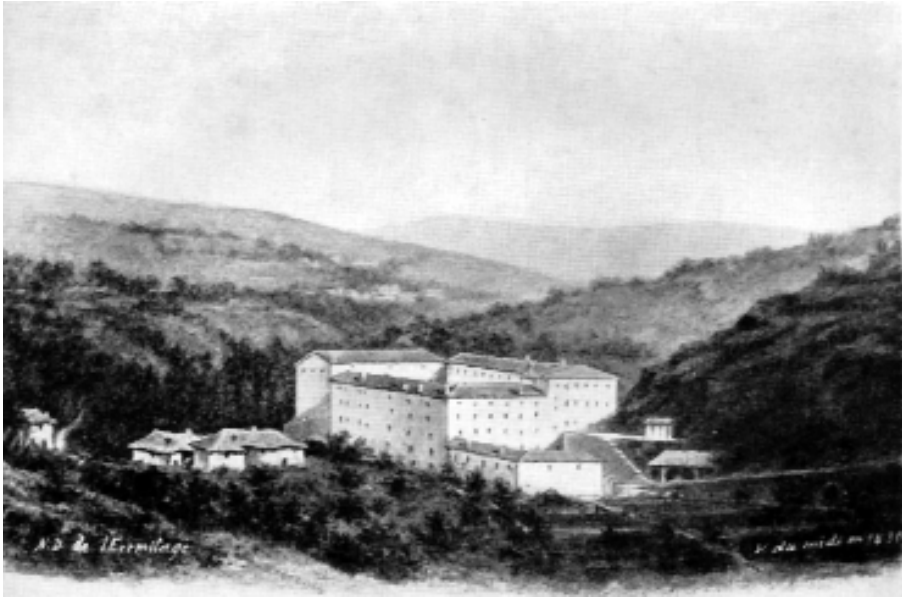
After examining everything, however, and with your permission, I could not return until after or about the third Sunday after Easter. I have also promised the faithful, and as desired by the priests, to return for a day or two near the Feast of the Ascension. The parish priest of Quincié has supplied me with money for that, and the parish priest of St Etienne-Varenne' (Fr Perra) 'would not have wanted me to leave at all. He seems to be still in love with our Society, but he cannot leave immediately. Besides, he still has hope for an establishment in that region. Nevertheless, he will do what we wish. It is partly for this reason, and for some others of which I shall tell you by word of mouth, that I am in a hurry to go to the Hermitage. Fr Forest will stay at Cercié until about the Ascension, and, if possible, when I return here, I shall bring both of them' (obviously, Fathers Perra and Forest) 'to you. They send you their best respects and sentiments of affection, and, believe me, I yield nothing to them in this regard, as also in the full obedience of devotedness with which I have the honour to be,

My reverend Father,
Your very humble and very submissive servant in Jesus and Mary,

POMPALLIER, Priest.

PS. All our dear and honoured confrères, as well as our esteemed Brothers, are assured in this letter of our respect and affection. We all commend ourselves to your prayers and Holy Sacrifices. Be sure to reciprocate.⁶

⁶ O.M. 1, Doc. 247.



Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, Mother House of the Marist Brothers

Pompallier was important in this aspect of Marist work - Retreats and parish Missions. With Fr Forest he was the first of the Marist aspirants in the archdiocese of Lyon to follow the lead of the Belley Marists in being engaged in inland Missions - the very first apostolic work, apart from the parish ministry, of Jean-Claude Colin and his first followers.

Pompallier's letter shows a man full of joy and satisfaction with the Mission successfully accomplished, a young man of enthusiasm for the work of the Lord. He displays the confidence of one conscious of his

talents as a preacher and grateful to the Lord for these talents. As a young would-be Marist, he shows due deference to his local Marist Superior, Champagnat, and professes 'full obedience of devotedness'. That, however, does not hinder him from proposing his own time for a return to the Marist priests' community at the Hermitage.

On 29 April 1832 Pompallier received faculties for the entire archdiocese. In October his preaching skills were once more employed, this time in the several trips he made into the Forez region.

POMPALLIER AND THE VALBENOÎTE CRISIS

Notre Dame del Hermitage

It was on 30 December 1830 that Fr Séon, formerly at Charlieu, was appointed by archdiocesan authorities to the curacy of the parish of Valbenoîte, near St Etienne. The parish priest, Fr Rouchon, wanting to have more priests to assist him, offered his own property, the old Cistercian abbey of Valbenoîte, to the Marists as a second residence in the archdiocese, Champagnat's Hermitage being the other. Fr Colin, elected as Central Superior of all the aspiring Marists in 1830, although at first declaring (letter to Champagnat, 6 December 1830),⁷ that the time was not yet ripe for a substantial move to Valbenoîte, later became quite favourably disposed towards the acceptance of this offer. As a consequence, he also then favoured a proposed separation of some priests from the Hermitage to go to Valbenoîte. Later, after a first rebuff from the Marist priests of Lyon, he arranged for the election of a new leader there. For several reasons he wanted a replacement for Fr Champagnat, who was the first to be elected to the leadership position among the Lyon Marists. In due

course, Fr Séon was elected in November 1832.

It would appear that Pompallier was interested, not only in drawing up the rules for the Marist priests in their mode of living together, but also in advocating the separation of the priests from the Brothers, that is, of the priests' moving to Valbenoîte. In a Memoir drawn up by Fr Colin in Rome in 1847 at the request of Cardinal Fransoni - it was part of the Colin-Pompallier controversy concerning affairs in Oceania - Colin crudely sets out the situation of the Lyon Marists of that period as he saw it. We should bear in mind that the following account of Pompallier came at a time when Colin was in hot dispute with the latter concerning the mission to Oceania: 'Fr Champagnat had received there' (the Hermitage) 'four young priests, but they were soon tired of living with the Brothers. They asked permission to choose a Superior among themselves and withdrew to Valbenoîte, a suburb of St Etienne. Abbé Pompallier was the principal mover in this step. He was not elected Superior, although he had some pretensions in that regard. Nevertheless, he took it in good part and recognised the newly elected man.' (Séon.) 'But, almost at once, he abandoned his associates and came to take up duties as chaplain in a small boarding school in Lyon.'⁸

⁷ O. M. 1, Doc. 225, Lines 21-24.

⁸ O.M. 4, Doc. 909, Lines 6- 14.

Colin's account is not quite accurate. Reference was made earlier to a rebuff given to Colin by the would-be Marists of the Lyon archdiocese. It came about in this way. Colin feared that the priests' group in Lyon might be subordinated to the work of the Brothers and that the priests might not be able to acquire an autonomy and character of their own. He therefore instructed them (31 December 1831) to elect a new leader - 'if you do not see any obstacle to what we propose.'⁹ On this occasion they certainly did. Only a year before, these Lyon Marists had spent five prayerful days in settling on a Rule of life and in electing a leader, a leader who had subsequently been appointed - not merely approved - by the archdiocese. That leader was Champagnat. His fellow Marists of Lyon were upset by Colin's directive and they were not slow to let him know it. Colin then wrote them a conciliatory letter deferring the matter of a new Lyon superior (3 February 1832). During the course of the following year the Lyon priests talked things through and eventually agreed that Colin's proposal be acceded to and that an election for a new leader be held. It was Séon who was duly elected at the end of 1832.

A further refining of Colin's recollection concerns the statement about Pompallier not being elected leader. It seems obvious that this



Father Séon, S.M.

refers, not merely to the superiorship of Valbenoite, but to the leadership of all the Marists in Lyon - to the second election in Lyon, the one in which Séon was chosen as leader of all the Marists in that archdiocese.

Fr Séon himself seemed to place a certain relationship between the departure of Fr Pompallier for Lyon and the chagrin Pompallier would have felt at seeing that the Valbenoite community was not living according to the Rules which he had set out. Fr Séon has this to say:

⁹ O.M. 1, Doc. 241, Lines 20-1.

¹⁰ O.M. 2, Doc. 625, Lines 231-235.

'But Fr Pompallier believed that all would perish. He spoke only about the Rule; he saw nothing but the Rule. He wrote on this matter to the archdiocese, which did not judge it to be expedient to interfere in this affair, but the Vicars Generals called him to Lyon to confine to him a society of young people who wished to be led by a Marist'¹⁰

Father Etienne Séon S.M.

Jean-Claude Colin, in a Note to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda on 5 August 1854, expanded on his original statement: 'Pompallier, a short time afterwards, was the most ardent to cause the separation of three or four young priests from the house of the Brothers but, not having been elected Superior of his confrères, he abandoned them to become chaplain of a little boarding school in Lyon.'¹¹ We need to state that the word 'abandoned' is somewhat debatable, seeing that, according to Fr Séon, in November 1832 Fr Pompallier was called to Lyon by the archbishop, who appointed him both chaplain to the new boarding school and to the group called 'The Tertiary Brothers of Mary'. Fr Colin gave his approval to this appointment.

It would appear, then, that in the early 1830s Pompallier remained essentially at the Hermitage, although he possibly spent some time with those who had moved to Valbenoite.

Late in 1832, some months after the successful inland Mission journeys which we have already considered, he moved away from the Hermitage-Valbenoite scene.

It was in November 1832 that Séon was chosen by his Lyon companions as Marist leader in the archdiocese. It is certain that, from many points of view, Pompallier stood out by his bearing, by the natural gifts which later played a part in his being chosen for the episcopate, and by the favour which he enjoyed with Vicar General Cholleton. Pompallier's possession of all these favourable qualities would lead us to believe that he would have been the one chosen as the new leader of the Lyon group. Such, however, was not the case. His confrères manifestly feared his tendency to legislate; they preferred Séon.

Séon's election presented some difficulty for archdiocesan authorities, for they were accustomed to dealing with Champagnat, who was in charge of the Brothers. More and more, his Brothers were conducting primary schools in the archdiocese. Obviously, Champagnat had found favour with the archbishop. He and his Council would continue to consider Champagnat as the Marist aspirant to be approached in regard to school matters.

¹¹ O.M. 2, Doc. 753, Lines 21-25.



The school (left) and abbey monastery (right) at Valbenoite

Pompallier and the Marist Sisters

Thoroughly immersed in the Marist project, Pompallier seconded Champagnat's attempts to help in the development of the Marist Sisters, who at this time were confined to the one establishment, Bon Repos, in the town of Belley, in the diocese bearing that name. The limitations of space at this centre and the growing number of recruits, some sent by Champagnat, led to the idea of an establishment of the Marist Sisters in the archdiocese of Lyon. The town of St Chamond, where Fr Terraillon was parish priest and where the Marist Brothers' central house, the Hermitage, was situated, seemed to be the most appro-

priate location. When Pompallier wrote to Sister Jeanne-Marie Chavoin on 27 October 1832, however, this project seemed to be in grave danger because the archdiocesan authorities believed that St Chamond already had enough female religious. Pompallier could make no headway here; five long years were to elapse before the Marist Sisters were to arrive in the archdiocese of Lyon.

In a letter to Jeanne-Marie Chavoin (8 April 1833), written when he was chaplain to the Tertiary Brothers of Mary, Fr Pompallier reveals the part he played in having Vicar-General Cholleton, a friend of the Marists, appointed to the position of liaison officer in charge of Marist affairs in the archdiocese of Lyon:

'Fr Cholleton is officially and definitely charged by the archbishop for the whole work' (of the Society of Mary) 'in the archdiocese of Lyon. I had it from the very mouth of the archbishop; the matter is finalised. I wanted to write about it to Fr Colin, but numerous affairs and journeys have prevented me from doing so. Nevertheless, it is more than a month that this act of authority, so beneficial for us, has taken place. Fr Cattet has not taken offence at it. God and His Blessed Mother have arranged everything. Alas, most honoured Superior, I did not know that, in leading me here by Divine Providence, God wished to make use of my feeble efforts to obtain this benefit from His Pontiff.'¹².

Fr Pompallier therefore seems to have played a determining part in this affair in which Fr Cattet is relieved of the close contacts that he formerly held with Champagnat and the other Marists. Pompallier seems to be joyful about the part that he played in having his good friend Cholleton in this new role.

Pompallier's letter reveals that an amicable relationship existed between the Sisters at Bon Repos and the group of Tertiary Brothers at La Favorite. It also shows how the Mother Superior of the Sisters was aware of the affairs of the Society since Pompallier does not hesitate to speak to her freely about the nomination of Cholleton.

Pompallier and the Tertiary Brothers of Mary

In November 1832 Pompallier, with the approval of Jean-Claude Colin, became chaplain to a group of fervent and talented men who conducted a boarding-school. In addition, he was appointed chaplain to the students.

The boarding-school of Messrs Colard, Delaunay and Dominget was situated on the heights of Fourvière, Lyon. These laymen, who aspired to a form of religious life in the world, came to be known as the Tertiary Brothers of Mary. It was Pompallier who later explained to the Pope that



Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, Mother Saint Joseph S.M.

¹² O.M. 1, Doc. 267, Lines 24-35.

the members were to live as religious in the midst of the world, living the spirit of the religious life but having certain limits in regard to the practice. They had their own Rule, but no distinctive dress and they carried out their own lay employment. Their association was recognised by Monseigneur de Pins, who appointed Pompallier chaplain.

The coming of these gentlemen to form a kind of what is now called a Secular Institute was occasioned by political changes in France. After the fall of the Bourbon monarchy in the July Revolution of 1830, the Orléanist branch of the royal family came to the throne in the person of Louis Philippe. This replacement of the 'most Christian king' (Charles X) by a follower of Voltaire caused a crisis of conscience for some Catholic officials loyal to the 'legitimate' monarch. Many officials preferred to give up their positions rather than swear allegiance to the Voltairian Louis Philippe. Some began to consider the idea of living a religious life in the world. Friends who joined them already had Vicar General Cholleton as spiritual director. It was Cholleton, an advocate of the Society of Mary in the archdiocese of Lyon, who brought this group of gifted men into contact with the Marists.

Having set themselves up as a civil society, this school group set up a boarding school at Fourvière on a site now occupied by the Cenacle



Louis Philippe, King of France 1830 - 1848

Sisters, only about fifty metres from the chapel of the Marist pledge of 1816.

It seems clear that the departure of Fr Pompallier for Lyon as chaplain to this new endeavour may have served not only to crown the hopes of the founders of the boarding school but also to resolve a certain tension caused among the Marist aspirants of the archdiocese of Lyon by the election of Fr Séon as local Superior, in preference to Pompallier, the regulator. Fr Séon himself clearly suggests this in his account to Fr Mayet: '...But the Vicars General called him to Lyon to confide to him

¹³ O. M. 2, Doc. 625, Lines 234 -241.

a society of young people who desired to be led by a Marist. In this society were Messieurs Colard, Delauney, Dominget, Viennot, Arnaud, Girard, Gabet. Therefore, Fr Pompallier came to Lyon and was chaplain of the boarding school of M. Colard and M. Delaunay, transferred afterwards to La Favorite. There, giving vent to his zeal, Fr Pompallier put himself again to composing for this little group a whole host of rules.¹³ Pompallier accepted with enthusiasm the new charge as chaplain to the boarding school and made the Tertiary Brothers of Mary his main field of activity. He drew up detailed rules for them and governed them with authority in his capacity as spiritual director. But difficulties arose between him and Mr Colard, the rector of the boarding institute, who had a serious disagreement with Pompallier and left the premises during the spring of 1834.

The first site of the Tertiary Brothers' boarding school was soon changed, the new location, La Favorite, being a property whose gardens had been planned by the famous landscape gardener Le Notre, the same who laid out the gardens of Versailles. When the lease of the Fourvière house of the Tertiary Brothers was cancelled, Pompallier moved to La Tour de Fourvière, a house which had been leased by Colard on 10 April 1833. Pompallier, however, managed to cause the lease to be placed in his own name.

From La Tour he went every day to the boarding school at La Favorite on nearby Mt Saint Irenée, and, during the Lyon riots of 1834, he even stayed at the boarding school. It was at La Tour de Fourvière, however, that the meetings of the Tertiary Brothers were held.

Fr Jean-Claude Colin comments thus: 'The year had hardly ended when, being unable to get on well with the head of that boarding school, he succeeded in getting him' (Mr Colard) 'dismissed. He knew how to gain ecclesiastical authority, and he set himself up in the house.'¹⁴ Of course, we must bear in mind that, at the time of making this



La Tour de Fourvière, Pompallier's residence

¹⁴ O. M. 4, Doc. 909, Lines 14-17.

comment (1847), Colin was not at all favourably disposed towards Pompallier, the man in charge of the mission in Oceania, to which Colin had sent his Marist men. To say that Colin was displeased with Pompallier's management of the Oceania mission would be a gross understatement. As for the discharged M.Colard, he soon set up another boarding school, this one at Ecully, just outside Lyon.

While stationed in Lyon, Pompallier became for a time the normal, but unofficial, intermediary of the Marists with the archdiocese. Although unsuccessful in his attempt to bring the Marist Sisters into the archdiocese, he did play a considerable part in having a Marist sympathiser, Vicar General Jean Cholleton, appointed to deal with Marist affairs in the archdiocese.

It was while he was residing at La Tour that, in 1836, the affairs of the universal Church caught up with Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier. He was selected to be a bishop and the leader of another missionary endeavour in Oceania.

When, in early June, he came before the reigning pontiff, Pope Gregory XVI, Pompallier gave an explanation of his project, the Tertiary Brothers of Mary. Part of his account stated: 'The members are called Tertiary Brothers. ...As they

have as their principal patron the most holy Virgin and as they have been established in Lyon by the undersigned priest of Mary, they carry definitely the name of Tertiary Brothers of Mary.'¹⁵

The whole of this statement could be taken as being somewhat embarrassing for Pompallier, for, although at first it seemed that he was trying to link the Tertiary Brothers with the Society of Mary, it later appears that he did not want to present this work of his as being attached to the Society¹⁶. In writing to Colin (9 June 1836) about obtaining indulgences for the Tertiary Brothers, he says:

'I have not presented them as tied in jurisdiction to the authority of the General of the Society' (of Mary).
'Would you find it reprehensible on my part to follow up this request for Indulgences? These good Brothers have asked me so ardently about the matter.'¹⁷

As it turned out, Pompallier's appointment to the leadership position of the Oceania Mission and his consecration as bishop led to his replacement by Fr Forest to the chaplaincy at La Favorite. This was at the beginning of May 1836. Forest also became the agent of the Society of Mary in the city of Lyon.

¹⁵ O.M. 1, Doc. 392, Lines 122-127.

¹⁶ O.M. 1, Doc. 392, Lines 127, Footnote 2.

¹⁷ O.M. 1, Doc. 395, Lines 150-153.

Pompallier and the Christian Virgins

At the beginning of 1836 the housekeeper of the boarding school at La Favorite and three other women agreed to attend a meeting convened by Pompallier. There he told them that they were to be the beginning of a new association of Christians Virgins, which would be a kind of institute similar to that of the Tertiary Brothers of Mary. One of the ladies records the event:

'Fr Pompallier spoke to us of the advantages of the religious life and especially of a Third Order which would procure for us these graces and helps while we lived in the world, where necessity or duty detained us. . . . He spoke to us for a long time about the three virtues of religion; he responded to the question we had put to him about our small numbers.'¹⁸

Shortly afterwards, Pompallier was nominated leader of the Marist group for the missions of Oceania. In taking his leave of the Christian Virgins (it was only their second meeting with him), Pompallier responded to their expressions of regret at losing him: 'He replied that the sack remained with us, and that out of it would come the same flour. He was making an allusion to the Society of Mary, which would stay with us and

which would form us in the same spirit and with the same charity.'¹⁹

So, off Pompallier went to the other side of the world, leader of a band of seven Marists. He did not, however, go as a Marist! And the fragile plant he left behind, the Christian Virgins of the Third Order of Mary, was, in due time, to become the stock from which branches of religious congregations of women would eventually flower in the four corners of the world, bringing the fragrance of the Gospel, the knowledge of Christ, 'like a sweet perfume'²⁰, to people unaware of His presence in the world.

Pompallier and Champagnat

The letters of Pompallier to Champagnat indicate that, throughout his correspondence with the founder of the Marist Brothers, Pompallier wrote in terms of great respect, affection and esteem for Champagnat, his work and his Brothers – as also, of course, for the work of the whole Society of Mary. At the time when Pompallier wrote the first of these letters Champagnat was the elected Superior of the group of aspiring Marists in the archdiocese of Lyon; Pompallier was a member of this group.

When we come to consider Br Jean-Baptiste's accusation against

¹⁸ O.M. 2, Doc. 720, lines 85-88, 92-95.

¹⁹ O.M. 2, Doc. 720. Lines 104-107. Words of Miss Clara Daniel to Fr Mayet.

²⁰ 2 Cor. 2,14

Pompallier in regard to the painful (for Champagnat) affair of the proposed affiliation of Champagnat's Brothers with the Clerks of St Viator, it is important that we recall the sentiments of deference, friendliness and warmth in these Pompallier letters.

The first of Pompallier's letters, considered above, was written when Champagnat was Pompallier's direct Superior. Having left the Hermitage to take up residence in Lyon, Pompallier kept in touch with his former

Superior, Fr Champagnat. Our general method of procedure will be to give a short introduction to the letters, then to set out the letters in whole or in part, and, finally, to give explanatory comments about the contents.

Writing from the boarding school in Lyon on 14 February 1833, Pompallier deals with some financial arrangements which do not seem to be directly concerned with the Society of Mary.

Then his letter continues:

'...The matter of the private petition, which you know about thoroughly, is going very well. It seems that, in a little while, we shall see the happy outcome of it. Let us pray well to the Blessed Virgin.

'I have spoken to Fr Cattet concerning Fr Forest in the sense that you indicated to me. But it appears that everything was already decided by letters prior to your arrival and to our interventions. Fr Séon had provided himself, through correspondence with the archbishop, with every means that show that the will of God was that Fr Forest had to go to Valbenoite. Let us adore God's designs. Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum. It is in these sentiments that I beg you to accept the homage of my respect and my devotion.

*'Your very humble and very devoted servant,
'POMPALLIER, priest.²¹*

From the point of view of the Society of Mary, the important factor is the news of the appointment of Fr Forest to Valbenoite, which shows the determination of the archdiocesan authorities to keep to the arrangements of the previous November, that is, to have some of the would-be Marists in the location of Valbenoite, within the archdiocese.

Through the intervention of Pompallier, Champagnat, who was ever anxious to have sufficient priests at the Hermitage, had attempted to obtain a prolongation of Fr Forest's sojourn at the Hermitage. This attempt had been made despite the decision to regroup some of the aspiring Marist priests at Valbenoite. In this letter Pompallier informs Champagnat

²¹ O.M. 1, Doc. 265.

that both his own intervention and Champagnat's visit to Lyon have been of no avail - Fr Forest must go to Valbenoite. This shows that even the then-favoured Champagnat could not sway the archdiocesan authorities from a decision that they had made previously. Pompallier goes on to encourage Champagnat to adore the designs of God in all this. Happily for Champagnat, a replacement for Fr Forest came in the person of the newly-ordained Fr Servant.

Pompallier also states that 'a private request, which you know about thoroughly, is going very well'. This is probably a reference to Pompallier's request to the archdiocesan authorities to replace Fr Cattet with Fr Cholleton as the cleric in charge of affairs between the archdiocese and the Society of Mary. In March 1833 Pompallier was successful in this project, although it must be stated that Fr

Cattet's attitude to the Marists in Lyon, especially towards Champagnat, had improved considerably over the years since 1826, the year in which he made an official (and officious) visitation of the Hermitage.

Certainly, Pompallier is showing here his capacity to exert influence in high places in the archdiocesan structure. His promotion of, and friendship with, Fr Cholleton will, in a very short space of time, have a bearing on a most significant change in his own life as a cleric - the offer to lead the Mission to Western Oceania as a Vicar-Apostolic.

In Pompallier's third letter to Champagnat (18 August 1833) we can see that he appears to be what he was to become more and more - the liaison officer between Vicar General Cholleton and Pompallier's Marist confrères. Pompallier's presence in Lyon fitted him admirably for this role:

J.M.J.

Lyon, 18 August 1833

Father Superior,

I feel very much pleasure in receiving your esteemed letter. The very same day I had another great pleasure - I saw Fathers Colin, Terrailon and Forest. Being unable to send you a reply at once, I quickly carried out your message to Fr Cholleton, but, as he had just arrived from a journey, he had decided nothing up to that time about the form of your faculties; he wanted to treat the matter in Council.

That is why he recommended me to write to you, saying that he was extending the faculties to you verbally, and that forthwith he would give you a document in proper form. That is what I asked Fr Terrailon to tell you by word of mouth.

'To-day I saw Fr Cholleton again and he told me that he had just written to you, that he would have the pleasure of seeing you in Lyon and that he would himself hand you that document.
'Fr Colin has had his little trials here. Nevertheless, he has received a letter of recommendation from the archbishop for the Roman court. I'll say no more about it. Soon your journey to Lyon will give me, I hope, the chance to treat with you on very important business.
'My love to Fr Servant and to our dear Brothers. I commend myself to your Holy Sacrifices and to their prayers. We must make Mary hear our prayers for the success of her work.
'I have the honour to be, in these sentiments, with respect and affection, Father Superior,
'Your very humble and obedient servant,

POMPALLIER, priest²²

This letter shows Pompallier again in the midst of Marist affairs, first in regard to the necessary permissions for faculties for the priests at the Hermitage, then in his awareness of Colin's endeavours to obtain recommendations from Archbishop de Pins for a journey to Rome, there to seek the authorisation of the Society of Mary. Colin did succeed in obtaining a cautiously-worded letter from De Pins who, understandably, was not well disposed towards signing a permit for Colin to visit Rome, where, should Colin's mission be successful, de Pins could lose some of his most valuable priests to a new religious society.

The most significant section of the letter, however, lies in 'the chance to treat with you on very important business'. We do not know for sure, but

this possibly refers to the proposed union of Champagnat's Brothers with the Clerks of St Viator, the congregation founded by Fr Querbes. This was to become a burning issue with Champagnat, a painful crisis for which Champagnat's first biographer attributes the blame to Pompallier.

Another quotation '...that he' (Cholleton) 'had just written to you' is also possibly in reference to the same subject – the Champagnat - Querbes amalgamation. To this matter we shall return later.

After another eight months there is a further letter from Pompallier to Champagnat, telling him of the rebellion in Lyon and of the preservation of the boarding school from material damage and casualties. He also has a message for Champagnat from Vicar General Cholleton:

²² O.M.1, Doc. 278.

J.M.I.

*'From Notre Dame de Fourvières. 25 April 1834**'Father Superior,**'I have been wanting to write to you for several days now, both to show you that we are still alive and also to convey a message from Fr Cholleton.**'To begin with, you are aware, no doubt, of the catastrophe that has shaken, not only this city, but also, in reality, the whole of France.' (The insurrection of the working classes in Lyon and Paris.) 'You know that for six days (9-14 April) Lyon was a theatre of civil war, with all its horrors. Day and night we heard the guns; no one knew what would happen. There was the visible protection of God on the peaceable Christian people, who, without taking part in all the political clashes that arouse excitement, thought only of being concerned about their salvation and the care of their households.**'No accident of any kind has occurred to anyone, nor to any family, nor to the boarding-school where I normally live. To the sounds of the fighting I heard everyone's confession. All the exercises took place just as usual, except that two members in rotation were in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Several times a day I gave spiritual advice in the chapel, and we had prayers in keeping with the circumstances. Thanks be to God's goodness and to Mary's protection, nothing touched the house, although it is right alongside the fort St Irenaeus. Join us, I beg you, with all our Brothers in our gratitude, so that I may never render myself unworthy of the goodness of God and the protection of our common Mother.**'Father Cholleton told me to inform you that someone at Mornant has by Will left a legacy in favour of the school-teaching Brothers. See, with the parish priest of that place, what prudent measures must be taken so that the matter may have legal effect. It is an annuity, I believe, of some 20 francs in perpetuity. I am sorry I could not see our Brothers on their way to Lyon yesterday. I would have given them this letter. I recommend myself to all your Masses. I think I shall be able to have the pleasure of going to the Hermitage very soon. My regards to Fr Servant and to all our Brothers.**'Your very humble and very obedient servant,*POMPALLIER, priest.²³

At the time this letter was written, Fr Champagnat was no longer Pompallier's Superior, for he had been replaced by Fr Séon as leader of the

would-be Marists in the Lyon archdiocese. Nevertheless, Champagnat was still Superior of the Hermitage and of the Little Brothers of Mary.

²³ O.M.1, Doc. 310.

Hence the 'Superior' of the address is still appropriate.

Just nine days after the cessation of hostilities in Lyon, Pompallier lets Champagnat know that the boarding school at La Favorite had not suffered in the gunfire. Once again, Pompallier appears to be a liaison agent between Vicar General Chol-

leton, who was Pompallier's friend, and the Marists in the archdiocese of Lyon. Cholleton was in charge of Marist affairs in the archdiocese of Lyon from March 1833 to September 1836.

Champagnat again received a letter from Pompallier about one and half years later:

J.M.J.

'La Favorite in Lyon, 13 November 1835.

'Father Superior,

'During and after the eight-day Retreat I gave the Ursuline Sisters in St Chamond I very much regretted being unable to get up to the Hermitage to see you. I regretted also that your duties did not allow you to come down to the community where I was. As for myself, I arrived there only a few hours before the opening of the Retreat exercises. Once the work began I had no time to myself, other than that needed to say my Office - as also on the closing day, when I had the great consolation of binding forever to God a good subject whom I had directed to this house two years ago. On the closing day, I say, I had time after the profession sermon only to assist at the profession dinner and then to catch the train at 3.30 p.m., for, early the next morning, I had to preside at the resumption of classes at La Favorite, where there is celebrated on this occasion a solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit.

'I am very happy with the Ursuline community at St Chamond. When I was giving the Retreat there, Fr Cholleton arrived to make his beneficent visit and he informed me of things very advantageous for the Society at Valbenoite and the Hermitage. I thoroughly shared his consolations and yours.

'You will find herewith a letter which concerns you. It was Fr Cholleton, whom I had the honour to see this morning, who recommended me to hand it to you from him. Kindly make a careful reading of the whole, and it will be easy for you to see what is asked for and what his response is. You will easily distinguish Fr Cholleton's' writing, which is at the top of the letter from Rome.

'Here is some news which should be very dear to us; but don't speak, I beg you, of the first point, except to Fr Servant and Fr Terrailon.

'The Prefect of Propaganda replied to the Archbishop of Lyon, 27 September last, but the letter was opened only a few days ago. God allowed it to remain unknown in the piles of the secretary's documents. Finally, we heard about it, and here, in substance, is its contents. The Prefect of Propaganda takes into kind consideration the proposed matter, thanks the Archbishop very much for having supported the offer of workers for the mission in question, says that he will not delay in proposing these workers to the Sacred Congregation, and closes by wishing very much happiness

to the worthy prelate and to the archdiocese of Lyon.

'It must be noted that this reply is dated 27 September, which shows the haste with which the Prefect of Propaganda welcomed the offer, for his letter reached Lyon three weeks after the one (from Lyon) had been sent to him. However, there is no question yet of the Society of Mary in this reply, although Fr Pastre, the official correspondent in contact with the archbishop, had made express mention of it; for you are not unaware of my aim in this important matter, as I have expressed it to Fr Colin at Belley. The mission itself, if I may put it thus, is to my mind an accessory, and the obtaining of a Brief of authorisation, or at least of centralisation for the recently-founded Society of Mary, that is the principal thing. If that occurs, I shall set out very happily to the ends of the earth, to those islands of the Pacific Ocean, to those poor savages who do not know Our Lord, but who offer, it is said, good dispositions for the Faith. Let us pray, let us pray much to the Good Shepherd that all may be done according to His holy will. So that I may be reassured, it will have to be my superiors who propose me to be one of those to go, for I have great trouble in understanding how the Lord could decide to grant me so great a favour.

'I am going to send this good news to Fr Colin at Belley; he awaits it impatiently, although it is not yet decisive. Kindly inform our Valbenoîte confrères of it, for I am very busy just now. However, I'll try to send them a letter.

*'All the affairs entrusted to me here at Lyon are going very well, thank God. La Favorite has 48 pupils now; the union, peace and piety which reign in the whole place command public esteem and confidence in this vicinity. It is one of the most highly-regarded houses of education in Lyon. The Society must retain it if I go. However, 'all for the greater glory of God'; it will be as God wills. Those in the city' (evidently, the Marists) 'are becoming wonderfully strong. That is the good side of the picture. I am not telling you that all does not go without trouble and difficulties, but you can easily understand that. Your orphanage also appears to be going well; I see the Brothers from time to time. They told me that you would soon come to Lyon; I very much hope for a kind visit from you. Meanwhile, I commend very many things to your Holy Sacrifices and to the prayers of your house. . . .
'With him who is with respect and devotedness, your very humble and very obedient servant,*

'POMPALLIER, priest

'Fourvière. Juge de Paix Street, No. 2 at Lyon, 13 November 1835.

*'P.S. My respects to Fr Terrailon and Fr Servant. Kindly ask Fr Terrailon why he does not send me news of the two subjects whom he so kindly suggested to me for La Favorite.²⁴
(It was for the teaching profession and for religion).*

²⁴ O.M.1, Doc. 347.

After the account of the Retreat given to the Ursuline Sisters, we have, in the third paragraph, the words, 'You will find herein a letter that concerns you.' Unfortunately, this letter, written to, and annotated by, Cholleton, has not been preserved.

In the main part of the letter we again see Pompallier acting as intermediary for Vicar General Cholleton. The unopened letter, referred to above, was, in fact, dated 22 September; the reasons for its being unopened are unknown. It would have reached Lyon about 4th October, a month in which Archbishop de Pins was at Lyon, for his name appears regularly on the Minutes of the Council meetings. Pompallier's explanation, to the effect that 'God allowed it to remain unknown in the piles of the secretary's documents' is a superb but most unconvincing apologia for gross secretarial inefficiency. Surely, Pompallier's tongue is firmly in his cheek.

The Denuzière orphanage for boys was founded in 1828 and entrusted to the Marist Brothers in 1835. A rich lady of Lyon, Madame Anne Denuzière, had left all her property in favour of an orphanage for boys. The administrators of her Will acquired a suitable residence, located at No. 51 Chemin-Neuf, Fourvière. Fr Champagnat was asked to provide Brothers for this charitable work; this he did in 1835, the Brothers remaining there until 1882.

The postal address given by Pompallier at the letter's conclusion

is that of the small tower with the conical spire, situated on Fourvière. It was here that the meetings of the Tertiary Brothers took place.

Much can be made of a core statement by Pompallier in this letter; it has an important bearing on his aims, his character and his subsequent career: 'For you are not unaware of my aim in this important matter, as I have expressed it to Fr Colin at Belley. The mission itself, if I may put it thus, is to my mind an accessory, and the obtaining of a Brief of authorisation, or at least of centralisation for the recently-founded Society of Mary, that is the principal thing. If that occurs, I shall set out very happily to the ends of the earth, to those islands of the Pacific Ocean...' How perceptive Pompallier is in regard to the ultimate end of the offer to evangelise Western Oceania – to have the Society of Mary recognised by Rome as a religious congregation! How much it is the 'principal thing' for him! How willingly he is determined to go 'to the ends of the earth' to achieve it! We must bear all this in mind in our final assessment of Jean-Baptiste-FranVois Pompallier.

The gap of two and a half months that then elapsed between Archbishop de Pins' letter to Cardinal Fransoni in Rome (20 November 1835) and the arrival of the reply (3 February 1836) seems to have put the patience of the Marist aspirants to the test. While the approval of the society of priests, and hence its unification, were practically achieved in Rome, the divergence of opinion between the Lyon and the Belley Marist

groups tended to militate against the proposal of acquiring a house in the city of Lyon itself. The following letter (and the next one) give evidence of this minor crisis - which the news from Rome would dissipate.

Since there are many remarks to be made about the contents of this letter and the next one, the numbers in brackets within the letter indicate an explanation given after a corresponding number below:

'J.M.I.

'29 December 1835.

'Father and respected Superior,

'I have several things to communicate to you, but, before starting, receive, I pray you, my best wishes for the New Year. May there be an increase for you of the abundant blessings you deserve in the Lord's sight – so many pious Brothers whom you have formed and so many children who receive, through your zeal, the life of salvation by receiving from your Brothers a solid Catholic education.

'The other day I gave to our Brothers of the orphanage a letter to hand over to you. It is from Fr Cholleton and it concerns the preparation or promise of a foundation for a worthy parish priest who, as well as his flock, deserves the highest regard from our superiors and from us. See, before the good Lord, what you can arrange for this case.

'I wrote to Fr Colin, Superior at Belley, as we agreed should be done. Thus I gave him to understand that, very likely, we would both be able to go to Belley together during the first days after the Epiphany. (1) Hence I shall expect you here at Lyon at that time. A few days before writing to him I received a letter from him which made me reflect very much. (2) I very much want to discuss it with you when you come.

'Since I had the honour of seeing you, there is nothing new to report. Rome still keeps silence on the definitive decision we are waiting for in regard to the proposed mission, which matter, as a consequence, concerns the centralisation of the whole congregation. (3) Nothing has been finalised, either, regarding the acquisition of a property in Lyon for the priests. (4)

'After his journey to see you, Brother Matthew paid me a visit and conveyed to me, from you, his desire to come to me, with his Brothers, for the sacrament of Penance. On my part, I could not refuse either you or your children. However, I shall make a few prudent observations to you on this matter.

'The execution of our proposal for a foundation of priests in Lyon is not yet ready to be carried out – on account of Rome's silence and Fr Colin's letter. If I were to set out for overseas without this foundation having been made, the Brothers would no longer have a Marist priest for perhaps a rather long interval of time, and they would find themselves obliged to return (for Confession) to the parish priest - and this would perhaps offend him somewhat. See whether it is not convenient that I postpone for a while the care I may give your Brothers, more especially as, I believe, they are doing well. However, we shall speak of all that and of many other things on your visit to Lyon.

'I am sending you a small bottle or phial of that particular remedy I spoke to you about; accept it as a poor pledge of friendship. I desire that the Sovereign Doctor on High may use it to restore you to full health. In expressing my good wishes to you, I also express them herein to Fr Servant and to all the Brothers. 'It is in this union with the divine hearts of Jesus and Mary, and in recommending myself earnestly to the Holy Sacrifices and to the prayers of you all that I have the great honour to be, with respect and devotedness, father and venerated Superior,

'Your very humble and very obedient servant,

POMPALLIER, priest, m.

'P.S. My respects and good wishes to Fr Terraillon. Fr Fontbonne has promised to come to see me in Lyon after the festive season, but the circumstances of his voyage have no doubt prevented him. Should he not also make the journey to Belley? Let him be ready for the appointed time²⁵.

We do not know whether the journey to Belley (1), mentioned in the third paragraph, was actually made. The letter (2), also mentioned in the same paragraph, has not been preserved. It would have spoken especially of an eventual foundation of the Marist priests in Lyon itself - the archbishop's city.

The decision of Rome, the decree from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda (3), in the fourth paragraph, was issued six days prior to the date of this letter. The Marists would not hear of it until after the reception by Archbishop de Pins of Cardinal Fransoni's letter of 23 January 1836, i.e. about 3 February.

In the same paragraph we find mention of a Marist foundation in the

city of Lyon itself. (4) Fathers Pompallier and Champagnat would have spoken of it at their recent meeting. Fr Colin initially showed himself not in favour this proposal.

We now move on to a letter written just six weeks after the previous communication. On his return from a visit to Valbenoite, and as recommended by Vicar General Cholleton, Fr Pompallier here informs Fr Champagnat, Superior of the Hermitage, of the latest news concerning the approbation of the Society and the mission to Oceania. Fr Pompallier, chaplain at La Favorite, already appears to be the head of the mission, supported and helped therein by Fr Cholleton:

²⁵ O.M.1, Doc. 353.

'Lyon, 17 February 1836.

J.M.J.

'Father Superior,

Although I am soon to give myself the honour of seeing you at the Hermitage, nevertheless, on Fr Cholleton's recommendation, I hasten to tell you, and also to ask you, about some important and urgent matters.

'No doubt you wish to hear the result of my visit to our confrères at Valbenoîte. Well, this time they all accepted the affair with respect and the spirit of God. (1) Each of them realises the beneficial consequences for the little suffering Society which will result from the mission promised by the Roman Curia. All are offering prayers and reflections to implore the light of the Holy Spirit and to listen to Him within themselves regarding this undertaking and their vocation. Soon now Fr Colin (2) or Fr Séon will write to inform all those who, full of confidence in the help of Jesus and Mary, feel the desire to devote themselves to the conversion of the infidels who have been marked out for us and who offer the finest hopes for the Faith. We expect at least one subject from Valbenoîte. (3)

'The archbishop has just received another letter from Rome, very reassuring and encouraging. It is from Cardinal Sala, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Regulars. The cardinal has no doubt at all that we shall obtain from His Holiness the much-desired Brief, but for the priests only. Furthermore, he assures us that the Holy Father exhorts us strongly to go ahead with the mission to Oceania. How greatly I rejoice before God for having from the beginning accepted in particular the work of this mission, and for having induced the whole Society to devote itself to this same project, which I always foresaw as bound to hasten and perhaps assure the approbation' (from Rome) 'which is the object of our common desires! (4) Soon you will be able to study this important letter.

'I especially ask Fr Servant to write to Fr Cholleton to express the strong desires arising from his devotedness, on which I count without demur. (5) And, also, reverend confrère, kindly appoint three or four subjects from among our Brothers, so that, in concert with you, we may choose two of them finally. The archbishop will come to an arrangement with Fr Colin, Superior at Belley, about that matter - through Fr Cholleton, I think. I pray very much to Our Lady of Fourvière to obtain from her divine Son abundant blessings on our endeavours, on the undertaking and on the whole Society. All pray, please, so that, under the burden which the Superiors want to entrust to me, I may not be for the ruin (in ruinam) but for the resurrection of many (in resurrectionem multorum).

'Somewhere about 29th of this month or 1st March I shall go to St Chamond, to the Hermitage and to Valbenoîte. I still have many things to tell you. Kindly let me know if you will be there. Your Providence in Lyon is in an uneasy situation. I became aware of it, for, being the confessor of the Brothers, (6) I have had the opportunity of a discussion with them. I shall speak to you about it on my next visit. I commend myself very much to the prayers of all the Brothers and, in a special way, to your holy Masses and those of the future apostolic missionary, our dear confrère Servant.

'Your very humble and very obedient servant,

POMPALLIER, priest.

'P.S. My respects to Fr Terraillon.²⁶

²⁶ O.M.1, Doc. 370.

1. This is a reference to the difficulties (associated, in the main, with a house-transfer) which had arisen several times between the Valbenoite group and Fathers Colin, Champagnat and Pompallier.
2. This means Fr Pierre Colin, who had been at Valbenoite since autumn 1834.
3. Fr Bret, although of the Belley diocese, had been at Valbenoite as curate since at least 13 September 1835.
4. The approbation of the Society was thus, for Pompallier, the principal objective. This was also stated very strongly in the previous letter.
5. In fact, Fr Servant was one of the five priests who sailed from France on 24 December 1836. We note that Fr Pompallier already regards himself as practically the leader of the mission.
6. Despite the objections raised by Fr Pompallier earlier, the Brothers at Providence Denuzière had still chosen him as confessor. During the weekly visits occasioned by these Confessions, Fr Pompallier had discussed matters with the

Brothers and was thus able to state that there was a sense of uneasiness in the community. It is much in Pompallier's favour to note his continuing and genuine interest in the Marist Brothers of the Denuzière Providence, who had chosen him as their chaplain.

This February letter gives further evidence both of the closeness of Pompallier to Vicar General Cholleton and of his dealings in Marist affairs in regard to the Archdiocese of Lyon. Pompallier also displays his keen interest in, and activity towards, the approbation of the Society of Mary by Rome. Once again he expresses his shrewd assessment that the acceptance of the overseas mission will greatly further the cause of Marist approbation, and his missionary zeal (or perhaps his desire for advancement) is manifest in the leadership role he seems to be playing in arrangements for the mission. In addition, Pompallier is skilled enough in ecclesiastical affairs to foresee that the Sisters' and Brothers' branches of the Society of Mary will not be immediately approved by Rome:

'Rome, 10 June 1836.

'My Reverend Father,

... 'Having arrived in Rome, I did not delay in presenting myself to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, who welcomed me with satisfaction and warmth and made available to me an apartment in the vicinity of Propaganda.

'The third day after my arrival I was presented to our Holy Father the Pope. After kissing the feet of His Holiness and having received his blessing, I conversed with him for about twenty minutes. What great

*happiness! What great good fortune to see the Vicar of Jesus Christ! What majesty in his august person !
 But also what simplicity, goodness and paternity in this illustrious successor of Saint Peter! ...
 'My respectful representations on the subject of my episcopal consecration had no effect on either
 his Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda or on His Holiness. Neither the one nor the other
 was willing to listen to me. The response was that the consecration was necessary. ...
 'I see in advance all the work, all the perils, all the tribulations which await us in these faraway regions.
 These thoughts, far from disconcerting me, gave me pleasure. Under the overwhelming weight of
 the dignities which draw near, what happiness there is that the good Lord has deigned to cast
 His eyes on His poor servant to make him participate abundantly in the very best
 of blessings - to suffer for the cause of his Holy Name and to snatch souls from Hell!
 'Ah, I already seem to see in spirit those unfortunate souls of Polynesia stretching out their arms
 to ask of us the treasures of salvation - the knowledge and possession of the real good,
 which is to be found only in God alone. ...
 'You are not unaware that the Brief has been sent; it would have arrived in France
 when I arrived in Rome. The reason for this prompt dispatch was the rapid departure they desire
 for the missionaries. What a favour has been accorded to our Society!
 What eternal thanksgiving we have to pay to the most holy Virgin and to her divine Son! ...
 'I still do not yet know the day nor the week when my consecration will take place.
 When it is indicated to me, I shall enter wholeheartedly on Retreat.
 'I am very grateful to you, my dear Father, for the gift which you proposed to obtain for me;
 and also to Br Matthew, who has been very obliging in my preparations for the journey to Lyon.
 'Pray earnestly for me and always send up prayers for me. You can see the situation
 in which the Lord has placed me. ...
 'As soon as possible, give me news of yourself and of all the others.
 'I have the honour of being, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, my very dear Father,
 your very humble and very obedient servant,*

*'POMPALLIER, Vicar Apostolic.'*²⁷

This long letter from Rome shows Pompallier caught up in the euphoria of a meeting with the Pope and with his own episcopal consecration. His enthusiastic commitment to the mission for the people of Oceania is clearly evident. The Brief referred to is, in all probability, the 'Omnium

Gentium' of Pope Gregory XVI, dated 29 April, 1836, approving the priests of the Society of Mary. Pompallier was consecrated a bishop in the church of the Immaculate Conception, a Capuchin church in Rome, on 30th June, 1836. His next letter contains requests:

²⁷ Letter 089, Archives of Marist Brothers, Rome.

'Lyon, 9 October, 1836.

'My Reverend Father,

'I write to you in great haste. Very soon I am going to take the carriage to Paris.

'Not having yet received from Propaganda at Rome their response about a sum of money which they had promised to make available to me in Lyon, I asked the Council of the Propagation of the Faith to advance it to me and to receive from me in return the amount from Propaganda when it arrives. That has been granted to me with willingness, but it will be necessary that you sign the bill of exchange which Rome will send and also that you deal with it in my name, as being the one granted Power of Attorney to direct my affairs.

'I leave to Mr Viennot, Notary of Lyon, my Will, of which he will remain the depositor, and also some documents and family certificates which concern my temporal affairs. He will send you the latter and the Will if you judge it to be appropriate.

'Be so kind, please, to have made for the three Brothers whom you are providing for us, two soutanes for each Brother, according to the manner of the good Brothers of Mary, two pairs of breeches, and some lay clothes. You will be able to draw on my income, to be collected at Christmas time and at the next Feast of St John. This will be necessary to pay you for these expenses.

'Send us, as the earliest possible moment, the two Brothers who are waiting for us with you. It is necessary that they leave Lyon, at the latest on the sixteenth of this month, to be at Le Havre in time for the ship's departure.

'Receive once more, my reverend Father, my adieux in Jesus and Mary, recommending myself to your Holy Sacrifices and to the prayers of all our Brothers.

'POMPALLIER, Vicar Apostolic²⁸

Here we have Pompallier making arrangements for his personal affairs before his departure for Oceania. His trust in Champagnat is evident, as is also his reliance on Champagnat for Brothers to support the priests in mission territory. He gives details for

the Brothers' clothing and also touches on matters concerning finance. Finance was to be a major matter of contention between Pompallier and Colin in future years.

The final letter we have reads thus:

²⁸ Letter 095, Archives of Marist Brothers, Rome.

'10 December, 1836

'Reverend Father,

'You believe me to be far out on the ocean, and yet I am still in Le Havre with all my fellow workers. Up to now the weather has been quite contrary. We are waiting for the good Lord to command it to turn in our favour.

We are beseeching Him for that, for the bad weather is delaying our embarkation to accomplish our mission. Kindly unite your prayers to ours, together with those of all our dear Brothers.

Our Lady of the Hermitage is very powerful.

'Have you received my letter from the time I was in Paris? Through this letter I made you acquainted with the steps I took towards the authorisation of our Brothers. Have you seen Fr Cholleton about this matter? Things were very advanced. Would that I had been able to continue with them. After Archbishop de Pins, Fr Cholleton and you received my letter, it would have been necessary to write to the Minister of Public Instruction to thank him for his goodness, seeing that, from then onwards, the obtaining of the Royal Ordinance may be regarded as being close and certain.

'It was up to Monseigneur the archbishop or to you to write this letter in bringing about the legalisation through His Grace. That is, in a word, where you are placed in this affair. How much I would be at ease in learning of the success of this matter for the good of religion and for our good Brothers! If you give me additional welcome news before my embarkation, you would indeed give me much pleasure.

'In a letter I asked you to say a thousand good things to many people.

Have you been able to do so? How are things going at Valbenoite?

'While we are awaiting a favourable wind which will allow us to set sail, the parish priests put all of us to serving their people. Here we are trying to instil fire and flame on Sundays and Feast days.

'Let us go, then, without more words of farewell. We shall be in France perhaps to the end of December. But, no words of farewell, even when we shall be setting sail for Oceania.

'All the missionary priests and Brothers send you their respects and their attachment in Jesus and Mary, in whose Sacred Hearts, I am, with much affection, my reverend Father, your very humble and very obedient ,

'POMPALLIER,

Bishop of Maronea, Vicar Apostolic of West Oceania²⁹'

In the above letter Pompallier shows his genuine concern for the legal authorisation of Champagnat's Brothers and mentions in a general

way his endeavours towards that end. Dependence on, and trust in, Champagnat are to be seen in Pompallier's asking Champagnat to say adieu to so

²⁹ Letter 101, Archives of Marist Brothers, Rome.

many of his friends. Evidently, the missionaries are not idle while they await a favourable breeze; the local clergy have them well engaged.

All in all, the Pompallier letters show a real concern for Champagnat's interests and for those of the Society of Mary. They reveal the respect, friendliness and common interests that existed between Pompallier and Champagnat.

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THE IMPACT OF SAINT MARCELLIN'S CANONISATION ON THE LIFE OF A MARIST GRADUATE

Aureliano Brambila, fms

The first thing I would like you to know is that I am a Marist graduate like yourselves. Mine is the fortunate experience of having studied at Colegio México all through primary and secondary school from February 1939 to November 1950.

THE CONCEPT OF BEING A MARIST GRADUATE

I am very grateful to the Marist graduates of Mexico who have organised the present meeting and have given it the inspirational title, "Marist Graduates of the Twenty-First Century."

"Marist graduate" is a concept with a wealth of meaning. The concept carries more weight than, for example, the phrase "graduate of Colegio México." The latter expression, although quite satisfactory, has a meaning bound to a certain time and place. It brings back images of specific classmates and teachers, each with name and nickname. The

expression "graduate of x school" ties me down to a single generation, to *my* memories and my experiences *only*.

On the other hand, to say, "*Marist* graduate" is to put the emphasis upon something that applies across the Marist world, to touch upon a concept with global relevance. The words "*Marist* graduate" cut away distinct limitations, and suggest values which are shared across the Marist world. Such values are the fruit of the tree that was planted by Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers. A Marist graduate is someone who has grown up in the shadow of that tree, been nourished by its sap, and formed in Marist ideals.

To make the matter clearer, think of how I *could* be a graduate of Colegio México without being a *Marist* graduate. If, in fact, I did not allow myself to come under the influence of *Marist* ideals, I may never have been a *Marist* graduate, but merely a grad-

uate of Colegio México. I sat in the classrooms and in the school patio, but I was like a stone lying along the riverside, which, though washed by the water of the river for years and years, remains totally dry within and unaffected by the waves which pass over it.

First of all, I may affirm that the impact of Marcellin's canonisation upon a graduate like the one just described would not have much relevance. After all, what would the canonisation mean for someone who did not even know the name of the founder of the congregation whose school he was attending? (Yet he could have gone on forever about the names of his schoolmates and some of his teachers.)

Very different is the impact of the canonisation upon a "Marist graduate." At the time of the canonisation, April 18, 1999, countless emails of every conceivable sort were received. They came from people in many different places, and the sole introductory greeting was, "I was a Marist student; I am a Marist graduate." Indeed, the messages were simultaneously a *self-congratulation* and *group congratulation* on the canonisation of "our Champagnat."

Enough said: the following comments are addressed to the latter type of Marist graduate. On such graduates, the impact of being a *Marist graduate* is significant and personal, and to them I dedicate the following reflections.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CANONISATION WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Canonisation is a proclamation made by Church authorities regarding the holiness of a deceased person. Canonisation does not create the person's holiness, but simply affirms it. Thus the benefit of the canonisation falls not upon the person being canonised, but upon the Church community. The newly recognised saint may now serve as a model, as an inspiration for doing good, for holiness. Those who are canonised are not the *only* ones who are holy, because - thank God - the un-canonised are more numerous than the canonised, an immense number, in fact. Such a reality explains the existence of the feast of All Saints, November 1.

BUT ...WHAT IS PERSONAL HOLINESS?

Many false or partial notions about holiness exist. The incorrect ideas may issue from a faulty notion of God, or of the human person, or of the law:

- If we take the word "God" to mean some kind of cosmic energy, we begin to think of holiness as participation in such energy. Consequently, one's initial concept of holiness is that of acquiring rare, extraordinary powers. Holiness gets linked to the realm of the numinous and esoteric. In such a context, the word "holiness" generates fear.

- If we say "God" to mean a source dualistically linked to good and to evil, to matter and spirit, holiness becomes that which is *distant* from matter, from the body, from sexuality, (and the phrase "angelic purity" gets applied to *human beings*). What is holy becomes what is separated from human experience. To be more holy is to be less human, and to be more human is to be less holy.
 - Then, if we say "God" to mean a projection into heavenly realms of the absolute form of human virtues and vices - like Zeus - we will begin to think of holiness in a yet stranger way, measuring it by the caprices of some fickle divinity.
 - We might pass over to the human side of the equation. The meaning of "human" might be drawn from philosophers of a platonic inclination. Human beings are thought of as a kind of monad emanation controlled by a divine principle, and thus holiness becomes something *added on* to what is human, like ornaments on the Christmas tree. The ornaments may beautify the tree, but they are not an organic part of it. In such a philosophical perspective, holiness becomes something disconnected from, extrinsic to what is real.
 - On the other hand, if the idea of what is human is drawn from one-dimensional, immanent views of the human person, then choosing to be holy is to choose one's future as one might pursue some other specialist career. One person says, I am an artist. Another says, I am a scientist. A third, I am a saint. And so, holiness will be considered merely something to be attained by human means, an asceticism, a work of art. It is as if one were to say, "What will power! Look at that saint: someone who does not eat, or drink, or have fun. What sacrifices!" (and ...what a bore!)
 - If the idea behind the word "human" develops without careful consideration of the many dimensions of the person, we find ourselves looking at a holiness that relies solely upon virtues. The virtues become qualities isolated from life and are made into veritable idols.
 - Then again, what if we make holiness into an *object*, reducing it to only the exterior fulfilment of law, forgetting the heart? Or what if we use "holy" as an adjective to make *sacred*, as it were, any noun to which we attach it, as in saying "holy habit, holy rosary, Holy Office, Holy Week, Holy Land, Holy Father"?
- How then shall we give an answer to the question, "What is the true nature of personal holiness?"
- First of all we will reflect more about what the person **is**, rather than thinking in a moralistic way. That is, holiness is considered as fullness of

being. One works from the basis of seeing the glory of God in the full actualisation of the human person, both comprising a single goal of Creation. Becoming holy is a process by which two forces come together. Becoming holy is the attempt to reach the point of being *fully* what, in fact, one *is*: child of God, brother or sister of Jesus and of the human family.

- The freely chosen and loving accomplishment of one's life-goals as given by God. Holiness is something arising from within the person, not something stuck on from the outside. Holiness springs up within the person and is a response of the person's being. The response rises up from the individual's experienced sense of ideals (that is, God's plan of creation), and comes to expression as kindness of spirit and spiritual beauty: a complete belonging to God. To belong to God, through an ongoing identification with, and participation in Trinitarian life is *grace*. Of course all these things take their point of departure from grace and from the help of the Holy Spirit.
- What this entails is an integrated and harmonious growth that is initiated by grace and sustained by grace. One becomes a child of God, brother or sister of the human family, one who is at home in the world. Than a real saint, nothing is

more harmonious and attractive. To examine closely such a person's life is like coming to an oasis in our chaotic world, an oasis where one finds, in Champagnat's case, a man who acquired a mastery over himself and his actions, a sense of communion and solidarity with others, a loving relation with God.

- The key which unlocks the meaning of holiness is Jesus Christ who reveals: (a) what God is and (b) what the human person is. Christ speaks to us about our primordial vocation: every single person is called to holiness. It is a matter of a creaturely vocation: we are all called to holiness. From that belief issues the fact that Christianity is not something merely cultural in the sense of an external performance. Rather holiness is - above all and first of all - something that is experienced in one's own life.
- Put briefly, holiness is a process of "Christification." It is the process through which we increasingly become identified with Jesus Christ, his feeling, his attitudes, his way of living.¹ From such a point of view, a canonisation (as holiness officially recognised) becomes an invitation to human fulfilment in Christ the Lord.

"The divinised condition of the human person is not brought about by a power of domination but by a fullness

¹ Ef 1/3-10; 4/13

*of one's being, the exemplar of which is Jesus. The Gospel is a search for human fulfillment (filling life with divine qualities). The glory of God consists in such a fullness of life."*²

AS A MARIST GRADUATE, WHAT MESSAGE DO I RECEIVE WHEN I THINK OF MARCELLIN'S CANONISATION?

What impact does his canonisation have upon me? The canonisation, in fact, engenders in me:

- Admiration as I stand before a person who is authentic;
- An invitation, keenly felt, to enter into a similar way of life.

Marcellin's canonisation, his holiness officially recognised, speaks to me of three realities: (1) the way in which God has accomplished a work of grace in the life of one man; (2) the way in which the same man, by his generous response and his creaturely obedience, has successfully cooperated with the grace that God has offered; (3) the way in which a certain kind of spirituality has borne fruit in the Church.

Such realities touch us closely and profoundly because Marcellin Champagnat is the founder of the Marist Brothers and an apostle of educa-

tion. His canonisation speaks to us of a proven spirituality, a tested pedagogy, of authenticity (and not only professionalism since his message is not at odds with his life, advancing, as he did, step by step towards human fulfillment).

We need to discover in the Founder not only a way of practical holiness. We should also take his manner of living, his thought and his intuitions - in a word, his charism - as, above all, a guide and model for our own growth in holiness.

HIS MANNER OF LIVING

Son of the household: he went back to school as a result of taking a new direction in life. "God wills it" (a leitmotif of Marcellin's life).

Seminarian: experiencing difficulties; making his retreat resolutions.

Parish priest: disagreements with the pastor; complete availability; seeking to respond to the realities; adapting to the circumstances.

Founder: unprecedented difficulties that caused conflicted feelings.

² Mateos Juan/Camacho Fernando, "El Hijo del Hombre: hacia la plenitud humana", Ediciones el Almendro

HIS THOUGHT

- (Champagnat's Letters [hereafter CL]): "God has loved us from all eternity."
- (CL 019, letter to Brother Barthélemy): "[Tell your students] that God alone can make them happy, that it is for him alone that they were created."
- (CL 024, letter to Brother Barthélemy): "[Ask the students]: '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 *that* with very little difficulty, if you really want to. Jesus promises to carry you on his shoulders to spare you the effort of walking.'"
- (CL 029, Circular): "If you make as much progress in perfection as I would like you to, you will make a great deal indeed."
- (CL 063, Circular): "May true zeal for your perfection animate you, and may constant fidelity to your rule [community life project] help you make more progress [in holiness] every day."
- (CL 135, Circular): God has called us to be holy. We urge you then to grow more and more in his love, to try to live in peace [among yourselves and with others], to do what each of you has to do." (The ordinary things of daily life)
- (CL 180, Letter to his sister-in-law, Marie Clermondon, recently widowed). "We can also truthfully say that our [eternal] happiness is in our own hands, since there is nothing which, if we use it proper-

ly, cannot help us to obtain it: possessions, health, poverty, sicknesses, sorrows."

- (CL 242, Letter to Brother Dominique): "At present we have a certain number of sick Brothers who have come in from the schools. Let us join together in prayer for them; may God help them to make good use of their infirmities."
- (CL 273, Letter to M. Libersat): "Our goal is to help the children of the countryside to become good Christians and good citizens."

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S CHARISM

Marcellin's charism encompasses spirituality and mission. As expressed in the Constitutions, the charism has been confirmed by the Church and acknowledged as a sure and approved path to holiness.

Qualities of Marist spirituality:

- **Childlike:** (because of Christ and with him; childlike towards God, towards Mary)
- **Fraternal:** (in Christ and for him; from Mary, a community of brothers, family spirit, ecumenical openness, young people)
- **Marian:** (simplicity, humility, tact, joy, Nazareth, Joseph)
- **Apostolic:** (education, children and young people, a distinct pedagogy, etc.)
- **Missionary:** (the marginalised,

the poor, the ignored, the slow students)

- **Lay:** (drawing upon the committed living out of the Sacraments of Initiation)
- **Incarnational:** (Crib, simplicity, kenosis, practical, work, readiness to work, etc.)
- **Redemptive:** (Cross, sacrifice, vicarious intercession, etc.)
- **Self-sacrificing:** (altar, Eucharist, etc.)
- **Pascal:** (resurrection, hope, etc.)
- **Ecclesial:** (in the Church, with the Church, for the Church).

In sum, Marist apostolic spirituality: a spirituality in which the apostle contemplates God and is active in helping others.

In Marcellin there is a mystical dimension. He contemplates God both in people and in things: everything serves to reveal God to him³. Then, he gives to the objects in his surroundings a certain human quality, and thereby offers a more human sort of life to the people with whom he deals. He builds a house which serves as a symbol of building up the human

person; he transforms a patch of land, making use of the resources at hand, just as an educator helps young people to achieve their potential.

And finally, we note how he passes on this Marist apostolic spirituality, founding a religious community of educators⁴, a group committed to human dignity, a group that evangelises through education, a group in which all resources are at the service of children and young people, where the educators dedicate themselves to be in the midst of youth and to work for them.

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 (Constitutions, Article 85).

And, since the time of Marcellin, we may look at the series of holy men who have attained a certain human fulfillment and who followed his spirituality: 206 Marist Brother martyrs (Laurentino, Bernardo, Chris, Henri, Julio, etc.).

And then... so many who have lived a "martyrdom of everyday life"

³ "The tree forms a body, the water its melody: you place your hands upon the rase, abundance flows at noon, you are at the heart of all things." Lauds hymn, Week 11 .

⁴ "Father Champagnat was alive with a zeal born of the Gospels and knew how to respond effectively to specific problems. As Marist Brothers, animated by the same zeal, we continue the charism of the Founder by responding to the expectations and needs of today's young people" (Constitutions, Article 81). We make Christ known to [young people] as the Truth who sets them free, as He who calls everyone by name. We help them to discover their vocation in the Church and in the world. We remain ready to respond to the Holy Spirit, who challenges us by the hard facts of the lives of young people, and who urges us on to courageous action" (Const, Article 83). We attract young hearts to Mary, Christ's perfect disciple, making her known and loved as one who will lead us to Jesus. We entrust those in our care to her, and we invite them often to pray often to this Good Mother and to make her their model" (Const, Article 84). The aim of our service of evangelization is the formation of true disciples of Jesus Christ. Because of the strong bonds that link evangelisation and human development, we help those who are in need and co-operate with those who work for justice and peace" (Const. Article 86).

without the shedding of blood. There is François, a Leoncio, an Ignacio Vazquez, a Basilio Rueda, etc.

And the long line of those who are still on the pilgrimage of holiness (as fullness of being), following in the way of his spirituality.

Marist Brothers of the contemporary world, living on the five continents, men *“who live their religious consecration in community and who devote themselves to the Kingdom, evangelising young people in schools or in other forms of education”* (Decree of the Holy See, October 7, 1986).

And a great number of Marist Laity who share in the Marist Brothers' spirituality and apostolate. They *“put heart and soul into serving young people for the sake of the Kingdom”* (Constitutions, Article 85).

As a Marist graduate, I have a feeling that Marcellin wished to tell me something through the fact that he has been canonised. He was saying that he himself, his charism and the congregation he founded – from which you and I have benefitted in a special way – was, is and will be like an eloquent invitation to walk on the path of my own human fulfilment.

SYNTHESIS OF THE INTER-MARIST DAY OF 24 JUNE 2009

André Lanfrey, fms - Alois Greiler, sm

INTRODUCTION

The International Spiritual Patrimony Commission of the Marist Brothers has met for one week per year since 2004. Since 2006 the commission has invited speakers from the other Marist branches for an exchange on research and projects. This invitation was extended to a full study day in 2009.

The 24th of June, 2009, had as theme 'Marist origins – the foundation story of each Marist congregation in the context of the wider Marist enterprise'. Speakers from the four religious branches gave a talk: André Lanfrey fms, Myra Niland sm, Emerentian Cooney smsms, Alois Greiler sm. For practical purposes we did not invite lay representatives this time. The presentations were followed in the afternoon by an open forum, an initial conclusion, and the proposal of possible future initiatives. Members of the four General Councils, the Marist Brothers' Patrimony Commission, other Marists and one Marianist took part in this study day. A special word

of thanks goes to the general house of the Marist Brothers generously hosting the conference!

CONCLUSION

The talks form a dossier on Marist origins in the broader meaning of the term. Not one single concept can cover these rich and divers foundational stories. Still, in various ways these summaries serve Marist studies in each congregation offering information, methodology, and concepts.

André Lanfrey highlighted the term 'order' as influential at the earliest beginnings and later on. The French Revolution had suppressed religious life and only the Trappists could continue. New groups sought their models in the Early Church gathered around Mary and in the great medieval orders which often had a male, female, and lay branch (Third Order!). This served the Marist aspirants at Lyon major seminary as inspiration. Except for the Marist priests, the

brothers and sisters and lay associates all had the status of laity. This evolved, however, into the status of religious – the period of restoration had allowed back religious life in France. The apostles were seen as first monks – something Courveille took from the Trappist tradition. The Church of the beginnings became the critical utopia for the Church of today. With the shift from Courveille to Champagnat, Colin, and Chavoïn, and later the Pioneers in Oceania, references to the Marists as ‘order’ continued but in fact the Marists evolved as independently approved apostolic religious. The order-model was left behind.

The Marist founders came out of a network of people with similar intentions. For example, Lefranc studied with Pierre Colin and became the spiritual director of Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn. Chavoïn fed her search for religious life with elements from Marist beginnings (Le Puy, Fourvière) and contributed to the forming of the Marist spirit in particular in her active role at Cerdon, sharing her insights with Jean-Claude Colin. Le Puy, Fourvière, Cerdon – Chavoïn was involved in all Marist branches, not only the sisters. In spite of later difficulties, she insisted on Colin’s writing the Constitutions for the sisters, too.

Jean-Claude Colin came to the major seminary at Lyon with his own idea of some Marian association. Like the others he joined the group initiated by Courveille. His spiritual experiences of Cerdon transformed

him in three ways: they gave him the features of the Society of Mary he was going to establish, they forged him into a personality suited to become the founder, and they gave him the conviction that God wanted this work. He was informally elected superior in 1830 and formally elected Superior General in 1836. The Roman approval of 1836 for the priests alone had decisive consequences for the Marist story: a branch became an independent group, the name Society of Mary went with the priests, and the original (Courveille?) idea of literal union of all Marists was given up (definitively after a second Roman intervention in 1842). Although accepted with difficulty by the first generation Marists, including Champagnat, the second generation Marists, who had grown up in the period of the restoration, preferred to work towards a more traditional idea of religious life.

While union in a literal sense was given up with the 1845 Chapter of the priests, the same year a lay woman launched what was to become a new Marist branch: Marie Françoise Perroton left for Oceania and later other women followed, first officially lay Marists, soon religious, finally approved as SMSM in 1931. The SMSM have direct historical (Oceania, Marist Third Order, Marist missionaries) and spiritual links with the origins although they came into existence later. The first Marist Fathers transmitted the Marist spirit to them and wrote their rules. The rule for the lay people written by Bishop Pompallier is also echoed in their tradition.

We gathered as Marist 'to walk together through our history'. How does the individual congregation see its origins in view of the other Marist branches? Although most relevant, we could not include the general political and ecclesial context.

This gathering was valuable in many ways. In its mixed composition this conference was unique although not completely new. The Marist congregations have cooperated on a scientific level before, for example for the great editions of sources in the 1960s. With the data available, we begin to share how to read those data. The mixed composition addresses methodology. A double methodology is needed: one for internal research, and one that is inclusive of the wider Marist story. An individual congregational framework is not enough for the Marist story.

Another important value was the amount of information presented and shared. The talks summarise research in the respective congregation for its members and, too, for others, in particular other Marists. Again and again we simply need to enquire and link the various stories. Our founders collaborated and had other collaborators. The precise role for each respective branch and for all Marists needs to be brought out more clearly.

The question on how to understand Marist origins surfaces on two

levels: within a congregation and for all congregations together. Members of all branches celebrate Fourvière-day together although it does not hold the same relevance for all, be it for the Brothers who look to the year 1817 or the SMSM who began much later. If it is difficult to find a consensus within a branch, it is even more open to find a consensus for all branches. The study day offered different over-arching concepts. For the very early move, the more direct influence of Courveille, the term 'order' is a model (Lanfrey). However, the monastic elements and the use of this term gradually gave way to a more apostolic orientation of the Marist vocation. There are two other terms which deserve attention for the beginnings: work of Mary – family of Mary. The dominant role of Mary choosing and sending the first Marists to prolong her support for the Church and her response to the needs of the people in the new era feeds these terms and echoes a conviction of our founders. Today we speak of 'Marist family' which signifies the relatedness of the Marist branches but less the initial awareness of the active role of Mary. Another term, coming from theology and orientated as impulse for the whole Church, could be Marists as 'communion of communities', a term used in the inter-branch publication *Like Mary*.¹ And finally, the old image of the 'tree with many branches', in-

¹ As *Mary Did – Comme Marie. An inter-branch resource book for Marist Spirituality*, Rome, 2006, p. 13.

spiration for the founders and this conference, remains valid, an organic symbol, allowing growth, as long as it is seen in continuity with its original significance (indicating unity in diversity).

These summary studies on Marist origins in general and on Marist congregations in particular can serve in programs on formation, renewal, and

research. Historical work alerts us to qualify our terms, for example in publications and legislation.

The study of the different spiritualities, the juridical aspects, the theology of the time and of today, the lived praxis of Marists, and the level of pastoral collaboration are possible future avenues or a possible next inter-branch Marist study day.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTER-MARIST DAY OF 24 JUNE 2009

André Lanfrey, fms

Since June 2006, there has been held in Rome, at the General House of the Marist Brothers, an inter-Marist day concerning the historical and spiritual patrimony of the various branches of the Society. This year's meeting was the fourth.

This series of meetings has been the indirect result of the setting up, by the General Council of the Marist Brothers, on 8 January 2004, of an international patrimony team consisting of six members, under the patronage of a General Council committee of four members. It has the main tasks of organising research, spreading its fruits by means of the review *Marist Notebooks*, and of seeing to the publication of Marist sources. A first meeting of the team took place in Rome from 24-26 May 2004, and a second from 20-24 June 2005.

The session of 23-28 June 2006 changed dimension, with the day of Saturday 24 June consecrated to an inter-branch meeting of Marist patrimony organised by Brother Pedro Herreros, Councillor General. The

meeting considered two questions:

How does each Marist branch proceed in directing formation in the spiritual patrimony? ;

How does it organise its research and what are the results obtained in each branch?

Number 24 of the Marist Notebooks (December 2007, p. 7-49) published the acts of this colloquium.

The Marist Brothers patrimony session held in Rome from 21 to 26 June 2007 set aside a half day for the Marist inter-branch on the morning of Monday 25 June. It was somewhat along the lines of the previous year's meeting: Brother André Lanfrey emphasised the interest for the Brothers of the recent publication of the first volume of *Colin sup.* by Fr. Lessard, and studied the links between the Manual of the Third Order of Mary, first charter of the SMSMs, and the tradition of the Hermitage. The Marist Sisters listed the works in progress on their history: the translation into English of the volumes of Fr. Philippe Gobillot, the works of Françoise Merlet on Mother Elizabeth Boyer, the

edition of the letters of Jeanne Marie Chavoïn. Among the SMSMs, the work on the letters of the pioneers continues. Finally, Fr. Aloïs Greiler, in Rome since January, presented the two main lines of work for the Marist Fathers: the sources for the generalate of Colin and the publication of the letters from Oceania. He announced the Marist colloquium for Suva, Fiji.

The session of 23-28 June 2008 did not include any inter-Marist exchange of significance: the Marist Sisters were in chapter and the SMSMs had nothing new to present and did not judge it useful to come. So the meeting was limited to an exchange between the Marist Fathers and Brothers. Fr. Aloïs Greiler proposed, however, for the following year, a reflection on Marist terminology: what is the actual meaning of "Marist family" and "Society of Mary" for each of the branches?

It was this project, the work especially of Fr. Aloïs Greiler, Brother Pedro Herreros and Brother André Lanfrey, which came to fulfilment on Wednesday 24 June 2009 in the latest inter-Marist colloquium, the four interventions presented below constituting a rendering in four voices of the Marist identity. The presence of so many of the major superiors of the four congregations gave the meeting a special distinction.

The fruits of these meetings remain modest, since they have been more an occasion for exchanging information than for co-ordinated work. Still, in offering for the first time a precise and fundamental critical approach to the inter-branches question, this latest colloquium seems to point the way to a more structured policy of co-operation.

The Society of Mary and the wider Marist Family: TWO MODELS ON ORIGINS

Alois Greiler, sm

A group of ten confreres on Marist renewal was asked to draw the 'tree with many branches'. The following picture emerged: the soil – God, our vocation; the trunk – Mary; a first set of branches – the Marist congregations including 'Marist laity'; and a second set of branches – congregations related to the Marist origins.

Historically speaking we need to say that the precise origin of the 'tree with many branches' is not clear. This image was used in varying interpretations. Systematically speaking, the image is about the nature of the Marist enterprise: many branches serve to reach out to all, to proclaim God's mercy as it is symbolised in Mary, the mother of mercy.

On this symbolic tree you find a branch called 'Society of Mary'. This term has a double orientation. Out-

side the Marist context other 'societies of Mary' exist. Within the Marist context, 'Society of Mary' had different meanings before 1836.

There are various 'societies of Mary'. 'Society of Mary', 'Age of Mary', 'Mary with a role at the end of time' were 'in the air' (Jean Coste).¹ If there are interdependencies, each case must be clarified individually.² These 'Societies of Mary' shared elements: supernatural inspiration by an interior voice, eschatological perspective, multi-branch structure, Marian spirit, fight the battles of the Lord, these evil times are end times.³ The Eudists called themselves 'Society of Jesus and Mary' in 1643. In 1722, a Breton priest, Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, founded the Missionary Priests of the Society of Mary.⁴ On 18 September 1790, the

¹ Myra Niland SM, *Hidden Fruitfulness. The Life and Spirituality of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, Foundress of the Congregation of Marist Sisters*, Dublin, Columba Press, 2001, p. 66.

² Example of the Marists and a 'Spanish Jesuit': Charles Girard SM (ed.), *Marist Laity*, Rome, 1991 (= LM), doc. 185, 3-4 (1851) [= *Origines Maristes/OM*, doc. 714]; LM, doc. 232, 37 (1853) [= OM, doc. 718].

³ Pierre Zind FMS, *Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants 1800-1830*, St Genis-Laval, 1969, p. 120 footnote 1, and p. 137-138.

⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Nineteenth Century in Europe. Background and the Roman Catholic Phase* (Christianity in Revolutionary Age, 1), London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1959, vol. 1, p. 72, and vol. 3, p. 348.

archbishop of Saint-Malo approved the Society of Mary of Pierre de Clorivière (1787-1814) (the future Daughters of the Heart of Mary).⁵ Father Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles (1793-1861) founded the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. He spoke around 1825 and 1840 about Mary at the end of time and the importance of her name. In 1826, Chaminade and Noailles considered a union.⁶ The Marianists of Chaminade (the male branch) were founded in 1817 and approved in 1839 as 'Society of Mary (SM)!'⁷ Around 1827-1830, Pierre Babad informed Champagnat about the deacon Bernard Dariès (+1800) who had planned a society of Mary in Spain in 1792.⁸ In 1832, Chaminade, Colin, and Champagnat discussed a possible amalgamation but decided against it. Father Roger SJ started Marian congregations in the 1820s, in their spirit similar to the spirit of Colin.⁹ A comparative study would be most useful.

Further, the name refers in fact to different 'societies of Mary' as the studies of Balko, Zind and Lanfrey

show. The 'Society of Mary' of Courveille, Champagnat and Colin were not the same. Therefore, the name 'Society of Mary' is ambivalent in the past and the present. In this article it refers to the congregation which recognises Colin as founder and which has direct historical, spiritual, and apostolic links with the other Marist congregations.

The common research among the Marist branches in the 1950s established the principal documents and the major events. Yet, how do we read the data?¹⁰ Three steps illustrate the situation in the origins of the Society of Mary, Marist fathers and brothers: models of understanding; an alternative model; the terminology used.

1. Models in the Society of Mary (Fathers and Brothers)

How do we present our origins as Marist priests and brothers? The *Sitz im Leben* would be formation, renewal programmes, publications, or

⁵ *Origines Maristes*, vol. 4, p. 82.

⁶ Jean-Baptiste Armbruster SM [Marianist], *Marie dans les derniers temps chez le père G.-Joseph Chaminade*, in *Marie et la fin des temps. III. Approche historico-théologique*, Paris, O.E.I.L., 1987, 67-81, here p. 75.

⁷ Jean Coste SM, *The Roots of Colin's Thinking*, in *Forum Novum* 3, 2 (1996) 132-158; Marianist Antonio Gascón Aranda SM, *La Compañía de María en el Movimiento Congregacional del Siglo XIX (Fundación, Misión y Configuración Institucional 1817-1875) (Historia general de la Compañía de María, 1)*, Madrid, 2007, p. 66: 'Collin (sic!) and de Clorivière also planned a 'Society of Mary'.

⁸ OM, vol. 1, p. 959-962; OM, doc. 418; OM, vol. 4, p. 84. Letter of a priest from Astorga of the Society of Mary of Bernard Dariès, 9 June 1795. Dariès had to appear before the Inquisition which made an end to his plans. For corrections on the Dariès story: Joseph Verrier SM [Marianist], *A propos des frères Dariès. Erreurs et rectifications*, in *Mater Fidei et fidelium. Collected Essays to Honor Théodore Koehler on His 80th Birthday* (New Series, volume 17-23), Dayton, Ohio, Marian Library Studies, 1985-1991, 455-459. See also A. Lanfrey FMS, in *Marist Note Books* no. 24 (December 2007), p. 21f.

⁹ Coste, *The Roots of Colin's Thinking*, here p. 149.

¹⁰ For a narrative and comprehensive summary as Marist family: Frederick McMahon FMS, *Travellers in Hope. The Story of Blessed Marcellin Champagnat and his Fellow Founders of the Society of Mary*, Rome, 1994.

simply a conversation with someone interested. There are elements people refer to but we lack a coherent model. Present models revolve around certain key years.

1836 - Papal approval for the 'Society of Mary'

A fixed point of departure is the papal approval of 1836. The 1988 Constitutions (as does the 1873 text) open with the year 1836, the papal brief *Omnium gentium salus*. Numbers 1 and 7 refer to this papal approval. Whatever we have from before that year was not official. Some would say thus: We were approved in 1836. Due to our origins, the events leading up to 1836, we are related with the now independent congregations of the Marist Brothers (FMS), Marist Sisters (SM), and Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM). There is also an official lay branch, approved in 1850 as the 'Third Order of Mary', which today exists in a variety of forms and names. '1836' is an official date. This model underlines independence.

1816 - The Fourvière Model

Today most Marists would go back to the year 1816, the Fourvière pledge. In many parts of the world Marists of the different branches cel-

ebate Fourvière-day together. This model is shaped by the recent studies of Marist history and spirituality. For many it serves as a starting point for the story of the congregation and to explain the common origins and the subsequent gradual separation of the branches.

Coste and Lessard gave the 23rd of July 1816 as the 'foundation date' for the Society of Mary.¹¹ The 1988 constitutions present the wider Marist family of Fourvière as the Marist background. Out of this background comes the congregation inspired by Colin. Numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 217 are typical. Number 2 gives the reference to Fourvière. Number 4 says:

"This work of Mary was shared by Jean-Claude Colin and the Marist Fathers and Brothers, Marcellin Champagnat and the Marist Teaching Brothers, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and the Marist Sisters, and later by the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, as well as by the Third Order of Mary spread throughout the world. All these groups have been regarded from their beginning as belonging to the one Marist family."

The presentation would be something like this: In 1816, twelve young priests and seminarians promised to found a 'Society of Mary'. This was based on a certain inspiration received by one of them, Jean-Claude Courveille. After twenty years, only four of the twelve made profession as

¹¹ *Index Mother Saint-Joseph, Chronology*; Jean Coste SM, *Getting to Know a Founder*, in *Forum Novum* 3, 2 (1996) 117 - 131; *Colin sup I*, Rome, 2007, p. xxi: OM = Society of Mary for a project [of 1816]; after 1836 'Society of Mary' only for the congregation of the priests. In 1966, Fr General Buckley wrote a circular (N. 143-VII, 11) on '150 years Fourvière'. He regarded it as foundational year - as does the *Anuario Pontificio*.

Marist priests. The 1816 plan included priests, brothers, teaching brothers, sisters, and lay people. Originally, all were to be one congregation with a priest as superior general. Those branches developed into separate congregations because of papal interventions. The Marist branches today form not a legal but an informal association.

This model honours the preparatory period and half heartedly also Courveille. It leaves open the precise distinctions and what we have in common with the other branches.

1812 - The 'revelation of Le Puy'

With Fourvière we already distinguish the official story – the internal Marist story. Papal approval is an official date. Fourvière and Courveille are pre-history. Some now begin the Marist story with the year 1812 and the so-called 'revelation of Le Puy' to Courveille. Reading number 1 of the new SM constitutions immediately shows the half hearted reference to this basic experience (Constitutions SM, 1988):

"This little congregation of priests and brothers approved by Pope Gregory XVI on April 29, 1836, is called the Society of Mary. It takes this name from the initiative which it acknowledges as its origin. It is a clerical religious institute of pontifical right."

The event is referred to but not named! The presentation runs some-

thing like this: In 1812, the basic Marist inspiration was received by a first leader. He shared it with others and a first group was formed in 1816. Some members began to put into practice the inspiration and gradually the Marist branches evolved. First they formed part of one unit and then, not without tensions, they resulted in new apostolic congregations approved one by one by the Holy See. The original leader was replaced by others who became the actual founders.

The Le Puy message (only accessible through Mayet's summary of his correspondence with Courveille in the 1850s) was read by Terrailon and others as stressing the parallels between the Society of Mary and the Society of Jesus. Colin stressed the role of Mary in the nascent church and at the end of time. From Le Puy came the name 'Society of Mary' (not in the Fourvière-formula!).

When we say 'Society of Mary' today we refer to something more, something much broader than what 'Le Puy' covers, in fact, to something different.¹² We refer to the concept outlined by Colin on the basis of Le Puy and shaped by his own 'early ideas', images from Mary of Agreda, Jesuit constitutions, church law, Bishop Devie, Chavoin, etc.

Pierre Zind FMS wrote an often quoted study on teaching congregations in France between 1800 and 1830. He distinguishes a Society of

¹² Jean Coste SM, *Marie dans l'église naissante et à la fin des temps. Analyse des données de Jean-Claude Colin - Mary in the Newborn Church and at the End of Time. Analysis of Data in Jean-Claude Colin, in Forum Novum 3, 3 (1996) 225 - 263.*

Mary of Lyon from a Society of Mary of Bordeaux.¹³ For Lyon, Courveille is the founder – with the Fourvière pledge as founding act. Zind does not refer to Colin as significant in this particular period. The study ends in 1830 – when Colin was elected central superior. Also important is his statement: Champagnat would have founded his institute even if he had not met Courveille and the group of Lyon. The institute would have taken on a different shape. Yves Krumenacker published a substantial book on the French school of spirituality. He calls Jean-Claude Courveille ‘le véritable fondateur’ and Colin the man with the inspirations for the Society of Mary.¹⁴ For the period before 1830, we can say Le Puy was central and Courveille was the founder. However, the story continued and has to be seen in its completion.

1836 – 1816 – 1812: Our understanding of origins changed. Any presentation will include these three dates, putting emphasis on Fourvière, the papal approval as official date for the priestly branch, and Le Puy as pre-history. We have a double pre-history, the story of the founder, Colin, and the story of the Fourvière-group with a central role for Courveille, and Colin and Champagnat as members.

Further: ‘Society of Mary’ covers different realities. With Balko we could speak of Courveille’s SM of Lyon, Champagnat’s SM of the Hermitage, and Colin’s SM of Belley. This is a scheme – there were developments and overlappings. From a more monastic concept originating in Courveille and echoed in Colin’s ‘Cerdon’ Rule¹⁵ as well as in the original Hermitage, we observe a move towards apostolic congregations.

The basic point is that there is no straight line from Le Puy to the Society of Mary approved in 1836 (SM) or to the one approved in 1863 (FMS). Chavoïn, Colin, and Champagnat were true founders – rooted in a tradition, sharing part of their way, yet shaping new congregations.

2. The history of religious life model

The above models begin with a group and a common inspiration and move towards separation. This includes tensions among founders and a certain polemic. They are models – efforts to understand in hindsight what has happened. The Fourvière-model would be the most common explanation of Marist origins. Starting from the discipline of studying the history of religious congregations, ‘founderology’, a different model emerges which could resolve many

¹³ Zind FMS, *Les Nouvelles Congrégations*, p. 110.118.124.138 (two societies, Courveille as founder); p. 124 (Champagnat). Chaminade, the Marianist founder, used the same distinction.

¹⁴ Yves Krumenacker, *L'école française de spiritualité. Des mystiques, des fondateurs, des courants et leurs interprètes*, Paris, Cerf, 1999, p. 629.

¹⁵ Jean Coste SM, *Lectures on the Society of Mary History*, Rome, 1965, p. 172-173.

difficulties concerning history, spirituality, the role of founders.

The history of founders reveals a variety of models of origins. And, the Marists are not unique with their pre-history before papal approval. We even have a good example among our first fathers: Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868). First a diocesan priest, he was a Marist for 18 years, before he fully realised his vocation as founder of a contemplative congregation, the Blessed Sacrament Fathers (SSS). Nobody would deny him the right to live his vocation according to his respective understanding as well as to discern it further. The time with the Society of Mary was extremely helpful to him and not an 'accident' along the road. Like any vocation and more than for others, the vocation of a founder is a process.

Let us first revisit the dominant 'Fourvière'-model for Marist origins in the light of 'founderology'. What we find at Fourvière in 1816 is but one example of a group of young people agreeing on a project (Le Puy, religious life) in general terms. However, they brought with them individual charisms:

Jean-Claude Courveille (1787-1866): Le Puy, Mary at the foot of the Cross, monks, home missions, superior general, independent from bishops if need be; *Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840)*: Marian congregation, education, catechesis, Jesus Christ the teacher, brothers as catechists, priests as chaplains to the brothers; *Etienne Terrillon (1791 - 1869)*: priestly ministry, parishes,

home missions; *Etienne Déclas (1783-1868)*: Like Francis Régis home missions in rural places; *Peter Chanel (1803-1841)*: Marian spirit, foreign missions; *Jean-Claude Colin (1790-1875)*: A Marian project before 1815; contemplative religious life; Mary and the early Church, unity with Rome and bishops.

In the long run there happened what happened to other such groups in history: some developed their distinct charism inside and some outside the original project:

Courveille: Benedictine of Solesmes and appreciated preacher in parishes; *Champagnat*: Marist priest, founder of a congregation of teaching brothers; *Déclas*: Marist priest, home missionary all his life ('Apostle of the Bugey'); *Chanel*: Marist priest, missionary in Oceania; *Colin*: founder of the Society of Mary as formed by him; *The other members of the Fourvière group*: They joined the diocese, the Jesuits, Bochard's congregation, other groups...

CHAVOIN, COLIN AND CHAMPAGNAT BEFORE 1815/1816: THE DIVINE WILL FOR THE FOUNDER

In fact, many religious congregations have their founders spending some time with different groups. Colin, Champagnat and Chavoïn had an inspiration before 1816. For certain reasons each of them did not put into

practice their initial call but joined a different group, in our case the 'Society of Mary' of Courveille. Only later, when they had gathered enough discernment and courage, did they fully implement their own, now revised, project.

'We need brothers who teach the youth in the countryside' - Champagnat used this phrase during the major seminary days.¹⁶ The impulse for this phrase originates much earlier, in his school experiences of 1800 and 1804/05 and nourished in the minor seminaries. He saw it as his vocation, as the will of God for him, to launch brothers to catechise and teach those who were growing up without any knowledge of God. At the end, this inspiration became true in a new religious foundation initiated by him. He had this impulse before he met Courveille.¹⁷

Colin had an idea of a Marian association and of contemplative religious life before he met Courveille. This goes back to the end of his time in the minor seminaries or the be-

ginning of the major seminary, around 1812-13. Reading for example Henri-Marie Boudon (1624-1702) about pious associations may have influenced him towards a general Marian piety and a longing for a hidden life.¹⁸ According to Coste, the name was not yet fixed but certain values emerged: Marian, the three no's, contemplative in nature, and religious life.¹⁹ Colin later spoke of his earlier project, not as origin of the SM but as ground prepared to join the first 'Society of Mary', the SM of Courveille.²⁰ Colin prepared for the priesthood and joining a religious congregation helped him to accept this ministry. And he won a way of contributing to the new foundation by drafting the rule and negotiating with church authorities. In the end, he became the actual founder of the Society of Mary as it exists today.²¹

Chavoine felt called to some form of religious life. She joined the 'association of divine love' in Coutouvre. While she made her retreats at Pradines in 1810 and 1812 she was

¹⁶ Brother Jean-Baptiste [Furet] FMS, *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat (1789 - 1840). Marist Priest. Founder of the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary*, Rome, 1989 [Bicentenary edition]; Alexandre Balko FMS, *Reflections on Our Origins*, article 'The Life-Way of Marcellin Champagnat', Edited by Henri Vigneau FMS, Rome, 2001, on the 'seed' for his vocation as founder before 1815.

¹⁷ Jean Coste SM, *Le mandat donné par ses compagnons à Marcellin Champagnat en 1816. Essai d'histoire de la tradition*, in Gaston Lessard SM (ed.), *The Study of Marist Spirituality*, Rome, 1984, 7-17, here p. 8.

¹⁸ OM, Synopse historique 163; Coste SM, *Marian Vision*, p. 20f.48.52. Coste, *Getting to Know a Founder*, is more sceptical about the information on this project. That a tradition existed shows *Positio super introductione causae*, 1908, Jean Guitta SM, testis VII, refers to Colin's 'enfance' and 'une société portent le nom de Marie'.

¹⁹ Coste, *Marian Vision*, p. 20-62. Coste, *Getting to Know a Founder*, warns against a strong reading of the data about a project before 1816. The *Positio super introductione causae*, 1908, J. Guitta SM, testis VII, shows that there was a tradition passed on that Colin in his youth thought about a Marian project.

²⁰ Niland, *Hidden Fruitfulness*, p. 70.

²¹ Coste, *Mandat*; Donal Kerr SM, *Jean-Claude Colin, Marist. A Founder in an Era of Revolution and Restoration: The Early Years 1790 - 1836*, Dublin, The Columba Press, 2000.

asked to join the Sisters of St Charles (Madame Bavoz). Chavoïn felt that her vocation was different. We know the famous phrase of her spiritual director, Lefranc, around 1806/07: 'Yes, you will join a congregation. However, this congregation is not yet founded'.

Chavoïn, Colin and Champagnat each had a personal charism and the vocation of a founder. They saw themselves bound by the will of God.²² However, they did not move from vocation to foundation directly. They joined a different project first – among other reasons, because at the major seminary of Lyon they met a man with an extraordinary claim: Courveille.

COURVEILLE – THE INTERMEDIARY STAGE 1815 - 1842

Courveille had received the 'Le Puy' revelation and gathered a group of seminarians in the major seminary of Lyon. After 1816, he himself started different groups. These groups did not survive or were short lived. He left the scene in 1826. The ten years from 1816 to 1826 were important years for the later Marist founders, Colin, Champagnat, and Chavoïn.

Colin joined the group and acted as author of a rule, as spokesperson towards Church authorities (diocese, nuncio at Paris, Rome), and as communicator of the Marist spirit (Pierre Colin, Chavoïn, Déclas, other aspi-

rants like Jallon, Humbert). He regarded it as an impulse from on high given to him to write down the 'early ideas', the features of the Society of Mary gradually put into practice in Belley.²³ However, he saw Courveille (until 1826) and then Cholleton (until 1840) as leaders. He became the leader more by the confidence of others than by his own will. Colin and Champagnat had very different relationships to leadership.

In 1826, Courveille left the group – which in his career also turned out to have been an intermediary stage. He did not found a Society of Mary along his original ideas but he joined the Benedictines.

In 1836, the Marist priests won papal approval, and the Marist Brothers were practically a diocesan institute of teaching brothers. The common element was strengthened with the mission in Western Oceania. Until his consultations in Rome in 1842, Colin continued to act as representative to the church authorities for the other founders along the original (Courveille) plan of the one society. By 1826, Colin had made a first step forward through his transformation by the graces of Cerdon (1816-1825). His Cerdon-rule, a monastic 'house of the Blessed Virgin' further changed to an apostolic group approved in 1836.²⁴

Before 1836, two developments marked the situation between the Marist Brothers and the Fathers. For one, the rapid growth of the Institute

²² Coste, *Mandat*, p. 8 and 12: Both said 'this is the will of God'.

²³ Coste, *Marian Vision*, p. 118 - 136.

²⁴ Coste, *Lectures*, 172-173.

of the Little Brothers of Mary:²⁵ In 1830: 17 – over 100; Beginning of 1837: 17 – 171; end of 1837: 38 – 210; end of 1839: 43 – 250; in June 1840: 48 – 280. This we have to hold against the mere 20 priests who were to make profession in 1836. The second development is what A. Lanfrey calls the ‘two societies of Mary’.²⁶

The original plan of the Fourvière group consisted of a multi-branch structure for a spiritual purpose. After Courveille’s departure, Colin became the leader of the group. He presented this four branch society to Rome and Rome refused it. The image of the tree as presented by Colin to Rome in 1833 is a compilation of groups under one superior general and not an organic group for approbation.²⁷

FOUNDERS AND THEIR FOUNDATIONS: AFTER 1842

After 1842, in particular in 1845 and 1853, the branches separated. The vision associated with Courveille of a single congregation, the intermediary stage, was given up. Champagnat (in his successors), Colin, and Chavoïn fully developed their original inspiration, now autonomous, enriched and tested but still linked.

Colin lived much longer than Champagnat. We do not know how they would have solved the issues. Champagnat’s spiritual testament wished for unity. In 1839 the question of unity came up as council decision with the priests. Colin and Champagnat had voted for unity, the younger fathers for separation of the Teaching and Joseph brothers. After 1839 to 1845, Colin practiced a kind of supervision of and assistance for Brother François. In 1842, the fms assistants gave Colin a postulatum to plea in Rome for unity. Cardinal Cas-tracane denied this again. The 1845 chapter of the fathers answered in the negative to the question whether their general would also to be the general for the brothers and sisters. From now on Brother François took full responsibility. In 1851, the Brothers gained state approval. In 1852, Colin spoke at their chapter: ‘We have grown up together, but Rome does not want it to continue. Now you are fully adult’. Perhaps that was the moment of separation, but it was a separation without any rupture. The final act was in 1862. Favre presided – in an honorary way at the FMS chapter when the Brothers approved their own constitutions and won Church approval in 1863.²⁸

In other words, the pioneers or founders, men and women who had

²⁵ Stephen Farrell FMS, *Achievement from the Depths. A critical historical survey of the life of Marcellin Champagnat, 1789–1840*, Drummoyne, N.S.W., FMS, 1984, p. 216, et alia; Joseph Ronzon FMS, *Frères Maristes en Océanie. Contribution à une étude sur les missions maristes d’Océanie*, Ms, Saint Genis Laval, 1997, p. 1.

²⁶ André Lanfrey FMS, *Unity and Diversity in the Society of Mary. Mysticism, History and Canon Law*, in *Marist Note Books* No. 24 (2007) 27–34.

²⁷ That is different from the clear structure handed in by Chaminade in 1839; Coste, *Le mandat*, p. 7-17.

²⁸ In 1903, the Vatican gave them the canonical name ‘Marist Brothers of the Schools’.

lived through the terror and persecution, pleaded for unity. The second generation, coming out of the restoration, opted for religious life in more traditional forms. Rome did the same and decided the matter.

Colin must have constantly reflected on the events. In 1846 he admitted that at the beginning they over-interpreted the idea of unity. It did not mean unity literally, but in spirit:²⁹

“During the general retreat of the Marist fathers in September 1846, he said to us: “Gentlemen, we ought to admire the providence of God at our beginnings. It was important that we did not know that the four branches were not to form a single congregation. That was necessary so that there might be union among them. Our way of thinking and acting in this matter has Roman approval.”

CONCLUSION

The three founders worked on the proposition to form one singular society. Any reflection today has to link the origins with the factual outcome. The element of continuity for the Society of Mary (Fathers and Brothers) is the person of Colin.

Champagnat, Chavoïn and Colin each had had their personal call before 1816. They met in the common but intermediary phase of a Society of Mary inspired by Courveille. This helped them to mature as persons and as founders. After this group phase, they returned to their original

ideas perceived as the will of God and put them into practice. The Church approved the respective foundations as distinct according to founder, work, story, and spirit. The common phase continues to the present in as much as they form a religious family, the Marist family.

The 1836, 1816, or 1812 model suggests a direct line from Courveille to the Society of Mary as it exists today. It posits Colin in a secondary role, adapting and implementing something begun by another person. The construction point would be Courveille.

Founderology suggests another construction point – Colin, the point of continuity for the Society of Mary seen not only in its origins but also in later and present day reality. Colin had some kind of Marian association in mind, probably more contemplative than active (classically Marian like the Carthusians, the Carmelites). He developed and enriched his inspiration by walking with Courveille and the others who were integrating the name (which he always admitted). He added the many branches, the Jesuit structural elements, the apostolic orientation, the early Church (Mary of Agreda), the union with pope and bishops, the concept of Joseph brothers.

We cannot avoid thinking in models, and researchers before us did so. Critical research includes making explicit the models used. In the Society of Mary, the ‘Fourvière-model’ is the

²⁹ Edward Keel SM (ed.), *A Book of Texts*, Rome, 1993, text no. 116, September 14-21, 1846, Colin, during the general retreat: Mayet, *Mémoires*, vol. 2, 45-46 = OM, doc. 630 = LM, doc. 112

most popular at present. However, this model does not answer every question. The model from founderology gives due respect to the charisma of the founder as well as to the common story. This model also explains what the various Marist branches share and where they differ.

'The tree with many branches' is a powerful symbol of the origins, accepted by the founders. Its origin is not clear but its message is important. It is the work of Mary to reach out to all people and therefore different branches are needed. It is a living symbol.

Talking about Marist origins challenges four dimensions: history, spirituality, language, and politics. History is the basis of reflection on the other dimensions. Spirituality is a more complex issue that we cannot discuss here. Language – here we need to qualify our terms for use in research and statements. And politics: all this results in Marist legislation of the respective congregations and influences

cooperation on the level of ministry, formation, renewal, and publications.

Linking origins and the present day reality, we look at Champagnat, Chavoin and Colin as true founders. There are pre-histories for each congregation. The founders joined – as did others – a different group which helped them to develop their inspiration. This explains the various links between the Marist branches. Finally, they put their re-shaped inspiration into practice. The foundation ends with Church approval and the acknowledgment of the factual founder and charisma.

In a simple summary: the point of construction for the Society of Mary, Marist Fathers and Brothers, is Colin, not Courveille. Between all Marist branches exist historical, spiritual, and missionary links. The Marists form a communion of independent communities. The tree with many branches remains an important symbol for unity and diversity and for the mission behind the mission: the work of Mary.

Terminology for the Society of Mary (Marist), priests and brothers

Marist

The word is usually used without nuance, referring simply to a priest or brother or lay person of the Society of Mary or related to this congregation. This occurs in publications, documents, and conversation. Depending on the occasion or issue, clarifications would be offered and reference made to other Marist branches. Confusion of branches happens often.

Marist Family

The expression refers to the relatedness (historical, spiritual) of the present day Marist congregations and Marist lay groups. The SM. Constitutions (1988, no 4) uses the term for the Marist congregations. The congregations form part of the wider 'work of Mary'. A historical study of the term could be useful. The *Summarium* of 1833 speaks of the various

Marist branches as 'members of the same family'.³⁰ According to Green, 'Marist Family' has been used since the 1960s, since Brother Rueda's circular.³¹

Marist Laity

Marist laity is one of many terms to name lay people, religious and priests who focus their baptismal vocation in the tradition passed on by Colin and Chavoin and Eymard. Other terms are Third Order, Marist Way, Marist Fraternity, and there are informal associations. The curé of Ars was among the first members. The concept underwent many changes.³²

Founder

The founder of the Society of Mary is Jean-Claude Colin. He also had an important role in other Marist branches and the Oceania mission. The founder of the Marist Teaching Brothers is Marcellin Champagnat. Although Champagnat officially was 'assistant' or 'provincial' to Colin, Colin himself named him clearly as the mind behind the Teaching Brothers.

Foundress

Jeanne-Marie Chavoin is the foundress of the Marist Sisters and their first superior general. Colin played a certain role in her project. On the other hand, we recognise Chavoin's formative influence on the early Colin of the Cerdon-years (Kerr, *Colin*).

The pioneer sisters would be seen by many as practically the foundresses of the SMSM.

Co-founder

For his contribution to the founding of the priests' branch before 1836, many give Champagnat the title 'co-founder'.³³ Champagnat, Marist priest, among the first 20 professed, was practically provincial of Lyon before 1836 and provincial-assistant for brothers (formation: in charge of all brothers, teaching and lay!) until 1840. In some ways we could see Colin as co-founder of the Sisters.

Marist Brothers

This term points to the Little Brothers of Mary (FMS). Many would still use or at least prefer the title 'Marist

³⁰ *Summarium*, nr. 114, *Antiquiores Textus edition* (1955), no 1, 'mutisque caritatis vinculis uniantur B. Mariae fillii, utpotè ejusdem familiae membra'; *Annales des résidences, des séminaires, des collèges et autres œuvres en Europe et en Amérique*, vol. 1, 1901, edited by Louis Grenot, introduction, here p. ix, the many branches and the one religious family; *Acta Societatis Mariae* no. 2 (1950); L. Dubois SM, 'Lettres aux missionnaires', 1951.

³¹ In 1967, it reads: OM 4, p. 842: Marist family is a name given 'récemment'. Michael Green FMS, *And New Tents, Too*, in *Marist Note Books* 20, 26 (2009) 25-46.

³² Girard SM (ed.), *Marist Laity*; Charles Girard SM - Laurence Duffy SM, *Like a Bridge. The People of God and the Work of Mary*, Rome, 1994; Id., *Comme un pont. Le peuple de Dieu et l'œuvre de Marie*, Rome, 1994; Frank McKay SM, *The Marist Laity. Finding the Way Envisaged by Father Colin - Laicat mariste. Vers une mise en œuvre des perspectives du père Colin* (Maristica, 4), Rome, 1991.

³³ Brother Jean-Baptiste FMS, *Life: Intercom* 91/2 [SM Bulletin], page 9, interview with Jean Coste who answers in the positive; Alois Greiler SM, *Marcellin Champagnat. A Marist Saint*, Rome, 1999; Kerr SM, *Colin*, p. 299; Green FMS, *New Tents*, p. 29, note 19.

Teaching Brothers' to distinguish between them and the lay brothers in the Society of Mary. These are called brothers. All brothers are part of the Marist family.

Marist Sisters

An apostolic congregation of women religious of papal right with Jeanne-Marie Chavoin as foundress. She and Colin shared insights on the spirit in their first years but later followed different interpretations of the sisters' branch. The Sisters are part of the Marist family.

A tree with many branches

This term is used like 'Marist family'. It is understood as an image shared by the first Marists of all branches to express unity and diversity. Most would say Mary is the trunk. She reaches out to all people through the various branches. It is a living symbol – the branches developed at different moments. The tree is still growing.

Date of foundation and approval

Many would name 1816 ('Fourvière') as the date for the inspiration. Colin named the year 1824 when the first three priests could live and work together. The aspirants received a laudatory brief in 1822 from Pius VII. On 29 April 1836, Pope Gregory XVI granted church approval as pontifical congregation. The significant events for the origins are: 1812, Le Puy, 1816, Fourvière pledge, 1836, approval and mission to Western Oceania strongly influencing the life of the congregation.

'Work of Mary' – a possible term to present wider Marist origins

'Work of Mary': This is a term used by the founders. It immediately touches on the multi-branch structure. It covers essential spiritual elements: Mary, mercy, apostolate, all people in particular the neglected. The Society of Mary as congregation is but part of a wider movement, the 'work of Mary'.³⁴

³⁴ Jean Coste SM, *Société de Marie, œuvre de Marie - Society of Mary, Work of Mary*, in *Forum Novum* 2, 2 (1993) 224-261; Coste SM, *The Roots of Colin's Thinking*, p. 152f, 156f; 'Letters Champagnat', doc. 11.

THE SOCIETY OF MARY AS AN UNREALISED ORDER

André Lanfrey, fms

The Index of *Origines Maristes* (OM4 p. 849), for the item "Society of Mary", gives the following equivalents: "Work of Mary"; "Work of the Blessed Virgin"; "Society of the Blessed Virgin". It does not include: "Work of God", "Our little society", "Venerable Marist Brothers (OM1/ 153, 1826); "pious congregation of the Mariists" (pledge of Fourvière 1816) nor "Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary" (also from that pledge).

In connection with "Marist Family" (OM4 p. 842) it gives:

"Name recently given to the body of religious congregations and of the third order emerging from the Society of Mary project formed at the Major Seminary of Lyon in 1815-16. Before 1836, the name Society of Mary [...] applied to the project as a whole."

However, in skimming through "Maristes laïcs"¹ one frequently

comes across the expression "Family of Mary", or its equivalents, to designate the Society of Mary (SM). The analytic index also carefully notes (p. 1170) the entry "Family...".

But there is one designation of the SM which appears to have been lost. This is the word "order", which does not figure in any index, while it is present often enough in Marist texts from the pens of Courveille, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, Fr. Mayet, and others.

In the work below, I am going to try to show how this term is important and helpful for an understanding of classic expressions such as: "**Society of Mary**" and "**tree of three or four branches**". But first, I would like to give an account of recently discovered documents, which provide precise details about the SM which may change our understanding of its origins.

¹ Charles Girard s.m., *Maristes laïcs. Recueil de sources historiques*, Rome, 1992

I. INFLUENCES ON THE ORIGINAL MARIST GROUP

The Marist aspirants are obviously not an original group but one of the devout societies in the Seminary of Saint Irénée. The memoirs of Fr. Pousset, a one-time Marist aspirant, recall his contact with three of these groups:

"At the end of 1814, (he adds above the line: 'after the return of the Bourbons') I went to the seminary of St Irénée in Lyon [...]. There I was told about the *Labora sicut b.* & the congregation of the R. Fathers of the Cross, the Marists, I made commitments to the first, was ready for the second², and did not refuse the last."

a) The Friends of the cord

The "*Labora sicut b*" are none other than a secret society, "the Friends of the Cord" ("les amis du cordon"), whose motto was "*labora sicut bonus miles Christi Jesu*". In a personal notebook, Pousset gives a list of the "Friends", from its origins about 1805 up to about 1817. We find there some key figures from *Origines Maristes*, such as Jean-Philibert Lefranc (N° 18), Jean Cholleton (N° 34), Jean-Antoine Gillibert (N° 55) and especially Pierre Colin. Others, like Maurice Charles (N° 59), Pousset (N° 80), Jacques Orsel (N° 85), Félix Pichat, who had contact with the Marist project, were also Friends of the Cord.

1st list, p. 3-4 + Hos in intimo	2nd list, p. 21-22																																									
<p><i>MM.</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>Durand J. Baptiste</td><td>St Just en Bas</td></tr> <tr><td>Jacquemin J. Claude</td><td>St Chamond</td></tr> <tr><td>Fontaine J. Marie</td><td>de Beny</td></tr> <tr><td>Paccaud Etienne</td><td>Légnieux</td></tr> <tr><td>Guillot Antoine</td><td>St Just en Bas</td></tr> <tr><td>Drevet Pierre</td><td>Valbenoîte</td></tr> <tr><td>Bourgau J. Baptiste</td><td>St Etienne</td></tr> <tr><td>Durand Etienne</td><td>St Germain Laval</td></tr> <tr><td>Bernard Jacques</td><td>Marboz</td></tr> <tr><td>Barbier J. Baptiste</td><td>Risols(?)dioc. Grenoble</td></tr> </table> <p>† The cross signifies that the person has died.</p>	Durand J. Baptiste	St Just en Bas	Jacquemin J. Claude	St Chamond	Fontaine J. Marie	de Beny	Paccaud Etienne	Légnieux	Guillot Antoine	St Just en Bas	Drevet Pierre	Valbenoîte	Bourgau J. Baptiste	St Etienne	Durand Etienne	St Germain Laval	Bernard Jacques	Marboz	Barbier J. Baptiste	Risols(?)dioc. Grenoble	<table border="0"> <tr><td>Pichat Félix</td><td>Chavanne sur F.</td></tr> <tr><td>Tarpin J. Louis</td><td>Lyon</td></tr> <tr><td>Pelossieux</td><td>Antoine</td></tr> <tr><td>Collin Pierre</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>† Arnaud Jean</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Morell. Claude</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Minot Jean Louis</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Guillot Guillaume</td><td>Ste Agathe</td></tr> <tr><td>Peronnet J. Marie</td><td>Violay</td></tr> <tr><td>Ducray Louis Ennemon</td><td>Dioc. D'Autun</td></tr> </table>		Pichat Félix	Chavanne sur F.	Tarpin J. Louis	Lyon	Pelossieux	Antoine	Collin Pierre		† Arnaud Jean		Morell. Claude		Minot Jean Louis		Guillot Guillaume	Ste Agathe	Peronnet J. Marie	Violay	Ducray Louis Ennemon	Dioc. D'Autun
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² Pousset makes obvious the care for secrecy.

† Pichat Louis	Chavanne sur Furan	Jambon Charles Guillaume	Pont de Veyle
Perrodin Denis	Marboz	Darnand François	Marboz
Puittet (ou Puilliet) Jean	Belmont	Mayet J. Claude	St Claude
Grange Martin	St Georges sur Couzan	Villecourt Clément	Lyon
† Garel Pierre Marie	St Martin Lestra	Plasse Jean	Sury (?)
Richarme Michel	Rive de Gier	Gilbert J. Ant(oine)	Farney
Cattet J. François	Neuville	Magdinier Pierre Marie	Ste Agathe
		Petit Louis	St Domingue
Lefranc J. Philibert	Cours	† Berlier Ant. Charl. Aimé	Lyon
† Roche J. Bapt.	St Just en Bas	Charles Maurice	Amplepuis
BertheasRambert	La Fouillouse	Simon Georges Gabriel	St Bonnet le Courau
Coignet Martin	Tarantaise	Picon Ant. François	St Etienne
Siméon J. Baptiste	Chevrières	Josserand Jean Marie	Curciat
† Crépet Claude	Chazelles sur Lyon	Poncet Bernard Benoît	St Didier
Charretier Benoît	Chazelles sur Lyon	Loras Mathias	Lyon
Laffay Jean	St Bonnet	Caran J. Bte.	St Georges
De St JeanJean François	St Romain de Popey	Guillermet Philibert	Ampuis
Ville Joseph	St Martin en Haut	Delupé (de Lupé)A. M. F.	Lyon
Pastre Jean Louis	Fenestrelles	Pater Vincent	Lyon
† Dutour Jean-Baptiste	Bessenay	Horand Denis	Lyon
Vial Michel	Ste Colombe	Chirat Charles	Lyon
Combe Jean Marie	St Didier	Boutan J. Bap(tis)te	St Etienne
Breuill. Bapt.	Montbrison	Blanc Ant(oine)	Sury le Comtal
NicodJ. François	Bourg	Loire Pierre	Violey
		Crozet Jacques Marie	Néronde
Cholleton Jean	St Marcel de Fél(ines)	Mangon Claude	St Didier
Denoyell. Claude	Fleurieux sur A.	Derorry Michel Christophe	D. de Trente
Néel Barthélemy	Meys	Dujart Antoine	Lyon
Mioland J. Marie	Lyon	Deville Claude	St Etienne
Greppo J. GabrielHonoré	Lyon	Corsain Pierre	Bourg
Préher François	Chandon (?)	Pousset Pierre	Cordelle
		Privat Pierre	Lyon
		Brunon J. Bte	Rochetaillée
		Champion Joseph	Poncin
		Froget Pierre	
		Orcel Jacques	
		Blanchard Jean Marie	
		Gabriel Aug. Ambroise	
		Magand (?)	
		Magnard	
		Portier	
		Quiblieretc	

The “Friends”, at the time of their ordination, signed in their blood a lengthy promise to live as good priests. Among their resolutions is this one (Pousset Promise, 28 July 1817):

“Whether I find myself with my confrères or with persons of the world, or am attending to the different works of my ministry, I will have no other view than that of praising God, and if it pleases him to make it easy for me to find the means of forming a society that may procure his glory, I will seize it with the utmost eagerness: I must not forget, however, that during all the time that I am assistant pastor in a parish, it will not be my concern to set up any sort of establishment, unless by the vigilance I maintain to watch over the schools of the small boys and little girls, I find occasion to suggest to the teachers an institution of this kind, which I would direct by advice, without appearing to be the principal agent³. I would then be able, on the pretext of bringing together some young people to teach them the chant of the church, to make a precious choice among them of youngsters whom I will form in the exercise of zeal⁴.

[...]

Alas! The enemies of the Church unite, the partisans of the world come together, the academies of the sciences are everywhere established, and for God, in view of making him glorified, one would not find the men, and in particular the priests, who would employ all the faculties that God has given them to set up

a rampart against irreligion and the corruption of morals that distorts everything and ravages the heritage of the father of the family⁵!

A priest animated with this spirit of zeal would be such as to convert all his confrères into apostles. ”

[...]

These documents show us that, exactly like Pousset, other Marist aspirants were influenced by the “Friends of the cord”. Moreover, the strategy suggested by the declaration of Pousset is the very one used by Lefranc in 1806-7 at Coutouvre with Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, and which Champagnat seems to be reproducing at Lavalla in 1816-17, by bringing together his first brothers in what he calls an “oratory” (*Mémoire Bourdin*, OM2/754 § 28). Before being drawn towards the SM, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn was formed by two members of the “Friends of the cord”. It is understandable, too, that Pierre Colin does not have much difficulty in entering into the views of his brother with regard to the SM project.

Finally, it will be noted how the last paragraph can be situated in a spirit close to that of the Formulary: to unite the laity, and in the first place priests, as new apostles for the defence of the Church⁶.

³ Pousset makes evident the care for secrecy.

⁴ Father Lefranc, a member of the society of the “friends of the cord » seems to have followed this model with Jeanne Marie Chavoïn and her companions.

⁵ A reflection frequent in the rules of secret societies at the end of the XVIII century.

⁶ For Pousset and the friends of the cord, see André Lanfrey, *A mother society of the SM? The “Friends of the cord” in the Seminary of St Irénée*, in Marist Notebooks No. 23, June 2006.

b) Saint Paul

The pledge refers explicitly to two of Paul's epistles: 2 Cor. and Philippians.

Pledge of 1816	2 Cor.3 : 4-8; 6 : 2-10 and 2 : 14-17; Phil. 4 : 13
<p>We commit ourselves, for that purpose, to difficulties, work, suffering and, if necessary, every kind of torture. We can do everything in him who strengthens us, Jesus Christ. ...</p> <p>In order that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished with the words of faith and of sound doctrine which we have received by his grace ”</p>	<p>2 Cor.6 : 2-10 ...” we prove we are servants of God: by great fortitude in times of suffering, in times of hardship and distress; when we are flogged, or sent to prison, or mobbed; labouring, sleepless, starving; by our purity, knowledge, patience [...] by the word of truth and by the power of God... Phil. 4: 12-13: I am ready for anything anywhere, full stomach or empty stomach, poverty or plenty. There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength</p> <p>2 Cor.3 : 4-8...</p> <p>All our qualifications come from God. He is the one who has given us the qualifications to be the administrators of this new covenant, which is not a covenant of written letters but of the Spirit; the written letters bring death, but the Spirit gives life. [...]</p>

c) The Mystical City of God

Maria de Agreda, herself very Pauline in spirit, was also an important inspiration. Fr. Coste has shown us how her influence was decisive in giving shape for J.C. Colin to the major idea of the SM as the first manifestation of a Marial Church destined for the battles of the end of time⁷. In my opinion, it was the whole group, and from the beginning, which was nourished on Maria de Agreda, whose

Book III presents the primitive Church receiving through Mary the Spirit and the apostolic mission before expanding throughout the world. Mary is also the author of St Paul's conversion. Here are several significant extracts from the Mystical City, which seem to me to have served as inspiration for the first Marists:

In the chapter on “the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles ” (3^e partie, livre VII, ch. V), obtained through the intercession of Mary⁸:

⁷ *Une vision mariale de l'Eglise : Jean Claude Colin*, Maristica, Textus et studia 8, Rome, 1998.

⁸ The Holy Trinity “acts as if it had been obliged to agree, because of this unique creature living on earth, whom the Father regarded as his Daughter, the Son as his Mother, and the Holy Spirit as his Spouse”... (Ch. V)

“By this favour, as great and admirable as it was new in the world, the twelve apostles were elevated, renewed and made capable of being ministers of the new covenant (II Cor. 3: 6), and the founders of the evangelical Church throughout the universe, for this new grace and these new gifts communicated a divine strength, which softly and forcefully led them to practice what was most heroic in all the virtues and most sublime in holiness. By this power, they did the most difficult things promptly and easily, without sadness and without constraint, but joyfully and cheerfully (II Cor. 9: 7).”

Maria de Agreda (*Cité mystique*, 3^e partie, livre 7, ch. XIII) describes how the apostles share out the world among them. The prayer of Peter below, at the moment when the apostles are getting ready to preach the faith to the whole world, is particularly close to the Pledge of 1816:

“Eternal God, we, abject worms, wretched men whom JC has deigned, by his goodness alone, to choose as his ministers, to teach his doctrine, preach his holy law and establish his Church throughout the universe, we prostrate ourselves in your divine presence, united in heart and soul. In order to accomplish your eternal and holy will, we offer ourselves to suffer and to sacrifice our lives in the confession of your holy faith, to teach it, to preach it throughout the world, as our adorable Master J.C. has ordered us. For this mission, we wish to expose ourselves to all sorts of difficulties, tribulations and injuries, and to brave even death if it is necessary...”

“When this prayer ended, a wonderful light descended on the cenacle enveloping them all, and a voice was heard saying: Let my vicar Peter assign to each the province which is destined for him. I will direct him and aid him with my light and my Spirit.

The Lord confided this distribution to St Peter to confirm once more in this situation the authority he had vested him with as universal head and pastor of the whole Church, and so that the other apostles knew that they had to establish it throughout the universe, under the obedience of Saint Peter and his successors, to whom the Church owed submission and obedience as vicars of J.C. ...”

St Peter then made the distribution of the countries by choosing Rome:

“St Peter said that because he had been told by the Lord to designate the Roman Church as the seat and capital of the universal Church ...”

“Thus spoke Saint Peter, and he had scarcely finished, when a great sound was heard, and the Cenacle was totally filled with light and splendour as if to indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit. And from the centre of this light came a sweet and powerful voice saying: Let each accept the lot which has fallen to you...”

Accounts of the conversion of St Paul (*Cité Mystique*: 3^e partie, ch XIV):

§ 257. “The blessed Mary persevered a long time at this prayer (for the conversion of Saul), offering to endure all sorts of trials, even death, if necessary, for the healing of holy Church and for the conversion of Paul.”

§ 263. Paul, on the ground on the road to Damascus, is lifted up to the 3rd heaven: “... He offered to carry out all he knew to be the divine will and to sacrifice himself entirely in its performance, as he later did. The Most Holy Trinity [...] appointed him preacher and doctor of the Gentiles, and called him a vessel of election, destined to carry the holy name of the Most High to all the world.”

§ 274. "He determined to submit himself to the orders of the Most High, in whatever way he came to know them, and to carry them out without delay or question, as he did when the Lord told him to enter the city of Damascus."

d) Probable influence of the "AAs"⁹

They were secret societies of theology students present in the seminaries, which inspired other "little societies" such as the Marists or the Friends of the cord.

Lieutaud¹⁰ (AA of Marseille)

"The AA is the most intimate, cordial, and affectionate union contracted among persons who are trying to help one another reach in secrecy the highest perfection; a league of fervent ministers, who have J.C for their head, for patron the Blessed Virgin, for defenders the holy Guardian Angels, for protector Saint Joseph, for bond the freedom of friends, for goal the sole glory of God and the honour of his Holy Mother, and for motto *cor unum et anima una*¹¹.

What it has in common with other lay and religious communities is a great horror of the world, a real es-

teem for the Christian virtues, an extreme aversion for anything smacking of novelty, an absolute dependence on all legitimate authority and especially that of the bishop, to whom one made profession in the AA to be perfectly submissive.

The Marist motto is identical with that of the AAs, as well as the concern to be submissive to the bishops.

e) Influence of the Pious Thought (Pensée pieuse) of Bochard?

To prevent young ecclesiastics thinking of joining religious orders, Bochard envisaged the foundation of a diocesan missionary society, in which he counted on incorporating the Marists. So he circulated in the seminary a printed leaflet encouraging students to join his project:

"...What will become of things if the powerful hand of a merciful Providence does not soon bring about among us one of those miraculous works through which, more than once, Heaven has changed the world? Twelve Apostles converted it; and how many wonders have we not seen from century to century to protect the faith,

⁹ «AA» signifies «Association des Amis». They were, in general, secret associations of young clerics (no more than a dozen) who met regularly for spiritual sharing, fraternal correction, and the organisation of their apostolic life (visiting the sick, catechism...). They were, before the term was invented, charismatic groups.

¹⁰ V. Lieutaud, *A et AA. Prologue d'une future encyclopédie provençale*, brochure of 16 p. s.d. Copy consulted in the archives of the Jesuits in Vanves (CA 184). The copy is dedicated to Fr. Carrère, s.j. Inspired by the rules of the AA of Paris, the AA of Aix was set up about 1750 and the one of Marseille in 1773, that of Apt in 1775.

¹¹ On the question, see André Lanfrey, *AAs et Petites Sociétés. Les associations de clercs des séminaires sulpiciens de 1770 à 1860*, in *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France*, tome 93 (n° 230) janvier-juin 2007; «The Society of Mary as a Secret Congregation» in *Marist Notebooks* Nos 9 and 17.

whether against pagan persecution,
the intrusion of heresy, or the seduction of schism?
..."

f) Influence of Mgr Dubourg?

The spiritual notebook of Pousset (in the Archives of "Chartreux") contains two talks of the Bishop of New Orleans, who was passing through the St Irénée seminary at the period when the Marist pledge was being drawn up. It is permissible to ask if they did not have some influence on the latter, notably in insisting on the obedience due to authority and in recalling that the priest should offer himself for the glory of God and the salvation of the neighbour.

p. 139 "Palm Sunday, 14 April 1816"

"On 29 April, eve of his departure, he gave us his blessing [...] he told us that it had pained him to see that, still, among the clergy of the diocese, as everywhere in France, there was a residue of this revolutionary insubordination.

'I implore you, gentlemen, he added, I implore you, from the interest I take in your sanctification, never to forget that you should be perfectly supple in the hands of your legitimate superiors. If you see priests, however edifying¹², give you an example of the opposite, they are departing from the true discipline of the Church. Your present position is a happy one, you will one day remember what I am telling you. You have only

to think of yourselves, for you will be seriously mistaken if you busy yourselves with vain projects for the future¹³. Apply yourselves, then, to the practice of all the virtues. Amen'.
I must never forget this great model. "

"Analysis of a talk by M(onsei)gneur Dubourg, Bishop of Louisiana, for the opening of retreat 1st April 1816."

"Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high (Luke 24:49). These words, gentlemen, are applicable to you in the situation when, like the apostles, you are preparing to enter or get yourself established in the Holy Ministry.

Like the apostles, you have been instructed in the virtues of your state, in the school of J.C., in the person of his representatives, who have guided you wisely, more by their example than by their words.

[...]

You are the hope of the Church long desolated. To respond to her wishes, you have, gentlemen, to imitate two admirable conditions of J.C. of whom you should be copies.

The condition of priest and the condition of victim. Like Him, you must immolate yourselves. What has this divine saviour not done to offer himself entirely. His divinity, gentlemen, he abolished it, so his humanity would be enough for us to recall the cross and our altars.

Let us then sacrifice ourselves entirely by interior and exterior mortifications. But where will we learn this blessed imitation of our divine model?

In the retreat, and by prayer and meditation on the gospel.

[...]

¹² Allusion to the Fathers of the Faith, who recruited for the Jesuits, and to the Sulpicians.

¹³ Notably to found congregations or enter them.

g) Clorivière

The letters of this former Jesuit, founder of the Societies of the Heart of Jesus (for men) and the Heart of Mary (for women) reveal that Claude Cholleton, uncle of Jean Cholleton, was one of his disciples. In any case, the similarities between his ideas

and those of the SM are suggestive, the more so since the Society of the Heart of Mary was at one time called "Society of Mary."

Lettres, T. 2, p. 839¹⁴ to Fr. Pochard, priest of the diocese of Besançon, the Society's promotor in the east. Undated.

"... I am going to write down for you here the idea one should have in forming oneself as a faithful minister of J. Ch., according to the words of the same Apostle, such as one saw them at the end of the summary of the Rules of the Company of Jesus, and which we should always have before our eyes. Here it is:

"Men crucified to the world and for whom the world is crucified; new men divested of their own affections so as to put on J. C.; dead to themselves to live for justice; men who, according to the word St Paul, in labors, vigils and fasts, by chastity, understanding, magnanimity and kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by authentic charity and the word of truth, show themselves to be ministers of God; and who fight right and left with the arms of justice, in glory and ignominy, with good report or bad, concentrate their efforts, not only to advance bravely on the way to the heavenly homeland, but to draw others with them by all sorts of means, keeping always in view the greater glory of God.

There you have the sum and the prospect of the whole of our Constitutions."

h) Faillon's testimonies on the Marists

The Sulpician Faillon (1800-1870) was one of the most eminent representatives of his Company in the XIX century. In particular, he wrote much about Jean-Jacques Olier and his spirituality¹⁵. He wrote *Histoire des catéchismes de Saint Sulpice* which

inspired the introduction to the Life of Fr. Champagnat by Brother Jean-Baptiste. Director of the St Irénée seminary from 1825 to 1829, he was in contact with the second generation of Marist aspirants: Séon, Bourdin, Pompallier.

On 22 January 1827¹⁶, he proposed a candidate for St Sulpice, Perin, in these terms:

¹⁴ *Lettres du P. de Clorivière. 1787-1814*, Durassié et Cie, Paris, 1948.

¹⁵ Notice in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, t. 4 col. 33-34.

¹⁶ Archives of St Sulpice, 14 G X

“... As for piety, our men praise it highly and signal it out among the most exemplary. His fellow students have shown the same judgment in getting him to enter the little society of zeal which is established secretly in this house ...”
(Saint Sulpice, Papiers Duclaux,
Lettre de M. Faillon le 22 janvier 1827).

There is above all a long letter, dated 8 August 1853, addressed to Cardinal Fornari¹⁷, Apostolic Nuncio in France, aimed at clearing St Sulpice of the accusation of Gallicanism, in which Fr. Faillon clearly alludes to the Marists. At the end of the letter (p. 15-16), we find in fact:

“... Since 1819 when I joined (St Sulpice), this conviction (that St Sulpice was led by the Spirit of God) has never changed in me, and it has even increased since I have been able, as director of the Solitude⁵³, to have very intimate communications with a great number of its members, and finally, as one of the assistants of the Superior General, I have come to know the most secret affairs of the Company. In Lyon, where I was first sent, I observed how the Society of the Marists was formed in our house, from the fervour of those of our students who composed its nucleus¹⁹...”

Obviously, the seminary of St Irénée continued for a number of years to be a centre of recruitment for the SM, through the “society of zeal” mentioned by Faillon.

All these facts lead us, then, to state that the SM of the years 1816-1829 was rooted in a priestly milieu, characterised by the concern for the defence and the restoration of the Church, by means of a multiform mission and a priestly life of prayer, sacrifice and obedience. It was, moreover, the emergent part of a network, of which the “Friends of the cord”, Bochard’s group, and “the society of zeal” of St Irénée are the major elements, the first preceding the SM, the second accompanying it and the third supplying it with younger aspirants. At base, the Marist aspirants are supported, but also controlled, by a reasonably vast diocesan network which, in addition, involves only priests.

II. THE MUTATION OF 1819: TWO STRATEGIES FOR THE SAME PROJECT

Up to 1819, the Marist aspirants seem to be of one mind, under the authority of Courveille, in waiting patiently for their ecclesiastical superiors to authorise them to regroup. This strategy then starts to change, as witnessed by the letter of Pierre Colin to Mgr. Bigex, 9 October 1819.²⁰

¹⁷ Archives of Saint Sulpice, Papiers Faillon, II/ 3 bis.

¹⁸ This was the novitiate of the Sulpicians.

¹⁹ The bold letters are ours. See Marist Notebooks No 17, A. Lanfrey, *The Society of Mary as a clandestine congregation*

²⁰ See letter and commentary in Marist Notebooks No 11, July 1997.

This letter was discovered in July 1996 in the Bishop's house at Pignerol by Brothers Paul Sester and André Lanfrey. It was published with critical

notes in *Marist Notebooks* N° 11 and *Forum Novum*, Volume 4 N° 1, in July 1997. It constitutes the first account of the origins of the Society.

"My Lord,

It is your ardent zeal for the glory of God, your solicitude for the salvation of souls, your paternal kindness, your outstanding virtues and the high esteem they inspire in everyone which encourage us to take the liberty of addressing Your Lordship in order to lay before him some projects which can only be of value to religion, if they come from God and if they are approved by their Lordships the Bishops. We submit them to you with confidence, in the conviction that you will be kind enough to tell us what you think of them, if you deem them worthy of your attention.

About twelve years ago, a young man, who is now 34 or 35 years old and has been a priest for three years, after receiving a special grace at Notre-Dame du Puy en Velay, felt himself urged to establish a society of religious under the name of Society of Mary. Being afraid that he might be mistaken, he kept it quiet for two years, but being inwardly ever more strongly urged to start this work, he thought he ought to talk it over with his confessor and several other wise and learned persons. Finally in 1816, in the last year of his theological studies in the seminary of St Irénée in Lyon, with the permission of his directors, he chose twelve subjects to whom he communicated his aim and the plan for his Society. They all undertook to support him and to spend the rest of their lives for the glory of God, for the help of the Catholic Church and for the salvation of souls in the Society of Mary, provided that it was approved by the Sovereign Pontiff and by their lordships, the Bishops. Before separating to go and occupy the posts which Providence destined for each in the ministry, for they are almost all priests, they signed in concert the following formulary which contains, in abbreviated form, the aim and plan of the Society.

*In nomine Patris et Filii et spiritus Sancti
Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam et Mariae genetricis Domini Jesu honorem.
...
Nos infra scripti [...] omnia tamen salvo meliori superiorum judicio.*

Since then, although dispersed, they have all remained intimately united, still persisting in their resolution and awaiting only the moment marked in the decrees of divine Providence and the permission of their ecclesiastical superiors to put it into execution. It is our intention to present ourselves to His Holiness as soon as possible. With no hope of doing so immediately, seeing the difficulty of the times, we have already taken the liberty of sending him a letter dated last February. We would also like to write to a cardinal from whom we could perhaps receive a reply. If Your Lordship deigns to approve our proceedings, we beg him earnestly to designate the cardinal to whom it would be in order to address ourselves.

It is in the name of all my confrères that I have the honour of communicating to you our desires and our intentions, convinced that your paternal kindness would certainly wish to direct our procedures by your advice.

I have the honour to be, with the deepest respect, My Lord, Your Lordship's most humble and obedient servant.

*Colin, parish priest of Cerdon
Cerdon en Bugey, Diocese of Lyon, Department of the Ain
9 October 1819.*

This document gives the duly dated text of the consecration of Fourvière. It is, to my knowledge, the first known to bear the expression "Society of Mary" and draws up the first historical account in three phases:

1. Courveille's revelation at Le Puy, poorly dated, followed by his constitution of a group of 12 members.
2. The promise of these companions ("they") to establish the society; the maintaining of their union despite their dispersion; their waiting on the decisions of Providence and the authorisation of the superiors
3. Their intention ("we") to contact Rome.

What this letter does not say, is that part of the Marist aspirants, and in first place the Colin brothers, tired of meeting the refusals of the Vicars General of Fesch, want to appeal to Rome with the support of those in opposition to the Vicars General, of

whom Fr. Besson, parish priest of St Nizier, is the soul. Their action, supported by Gardette, Cholleton and Bigex notably, ends in 1824 with the arrival of Mgr. de Pins.

Even if we have to take seriously the affirmation of the union among the Marists, it appears obvious that there are the beginnings of a fracture among the members of the SM: on one side, the partisans of the previous policy of waiting in obedience on the diocesan authorities (Champagnat...); on the other side, those who want to depart from allegiance to the diocese (the Cerdon group) in cultivating two hypotheses: Rome and Le Puy.

Both strategies are successful: in 1822 the Colin brothers and Courveille receive a reply from Rome, and the same year Champagnat is encouraged by the Diocese of Lyon to continue with his work; encouragements which are confirmed and reinforced by Mgr. De Pins²¹.

²¹ Without this official approbation from Bochart, it would be difficult to understand how Champagnat could agree to receive 8 postulants from the Haute-Loire, envisage a union with the Brothers of Fr. Rouchon, and enlarge the house at Lavalla.

The division into two dioceses in 1823 contributes to amplify the effect of this difference of strategy in its setting up, which will end in two conceptions of the SM at the Hermitage and at Cerdon-Belley.

III. CONSTITUTIONS WITHOUT A PREVIOUS MODEL?

Pierre Colin's letter of 1819 envisages "a plan" of the Society, which the pledge gives only in an abridged form. For me, this "plan" is to be related to "the constitutions of the order" mentioned by Courveille in his letter from Aiguebelle in 1826 (OM1/152 § 15) and the letter of the Marist aspirants to Rome, of 25 January 1822, (OM1/69) which, although not making it clear that the SM forms several branches, suggests it by the vast scope of the task it has given itself:

"saluti propriarum animarum, necnon proximorum vacare per missiones sive ad fideles, sive ad infideles, [...] rudes et ignaros catechizare ; ad scientias et virtutes omnimodo puerilem aetatem informare ; incarceratos et aegrotos in nosocomiis visitare ..."

In the pledge, the expression "to save souls in all ways" implies already a diversity of activities and an opening to non-priestly ways of life.

The letter closes by affirming that constitutions already exist "ex nullo libro aut ex nullis aliis constitutionibus excerptas ..."

The fact that the letter is signed by Courveille and the Colin brothers, and certainly accepted by the members of the SM, shows that this project was in conformity with the original aim²². And the rule of J.C. Colin, very monastic,²³ seems to me to take its departure from these "constitutions of the order", since its author, when he drafted them, was certainly not concerned with producing a personal work.

It seems to me, therefore, that the pledge shows the public face of the SM: a classic missionary Society, strongly influenced by the Jesuits. It is obviously not a question of calling it an order in a hostile historical context. However, and this is the project's public face, it is certainly what the first Marists think and what the letter of 1822 suggests: an order for the new times, uniting in itself the quintessence of Christianity: the primitive Church with the college of the Apostles as nucleus and the first believers defining themselves as "Cor Unum et Anima Una"; a model continued by the ancient orders: the Fathers of the desert, the Trappists (Rancé considered the Apostles as

²² See OM1 p. 394, note 1. In Rome, the restricted interpretation of the project will prevail: it is a matter of « the new institute of missionaries under the title of the Virgin Mary ». (OM1/72 § 1).

²³ See OM/82-84

the first monks²⁴), mission following the Jesuit model. It is already “the whole world Marist.”

This is why, from the beginning, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn is associated with the Colin brothers in Cerdon, because they have recognised in her the spirit of the order (apostolic and monastic life). In the same way, Champagnat associates with himself two companions, because he has seen in them men capable of acquiring the spirit of the order: a mission of world-wide scope and a disposition to the secluded life.

Much later, in his letter to Colin of 16 July 1836 (OM1 doc. 398 p. 911), Pompallier, who is reproaching him with not having respected the constitutions of the order by seeing himself as the sole interpreter of the divine will for the SM, and tending to make light of the branches of the SM other than the Fathers, seems in the same spirit:

“To conserve all that has risen in the midst of trials and has continued. It is with nascent orders as it was with the nascent Church. St Peter at the time was not the only one of the apostles who worked usefully to found Churches and set up establishments. There are

also special graces for the first members of an order: thus Church history.”

In sum, the expression “Society of Mary” is a concession to the spirit of the times and the least satisfactory approximation for denoting a project which is rooted in the Gospel and the early Church, and which previous orders partly prefigure. Among these are the Jesuits, models of apostolic mission, and the Trappists, models of the solitary life after the apostles, the first religious. The exploits of Dom Augustin de Lestrange, who succeeded in maintaining la Trappe through the Revolution and the Empire, at the price of a continual exodus through Russia and America, show as well that the Trappists knew how to lead resistance to persecution, to be missionaries and monks.

IV. THE RULE OF COLIN AND THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE ORDER

In *Etudes sur les premières idées de J.C. Colin*, p. 229-235, Fr. Coste set out in 1989 the broad traits of his primitive rule written in Cerdon before

²⁴ Father de Rancé (1626-1700), reformer of la Trappe, in his work *De la sainteté et des devoirs de l'état monastique* (1683) claims in Chapter II that monastic life was instituted by Jesus Christ (Luke 18:22 and 14:26; Matt. 19:19). And the rules of religious observance are not human inventions but « laws written by the finger of God». In Chapter III, he claims that the apostles were the first solitaries. Later, when the Church was less fervent, God reserved for himself a holy remnant: the solitaries. « It is evident, then, that religious have the happiness in taking in the Church the place of the martyrs and of imitating the perfection of the apostles »...

Strongly attacked for this theory, Rancé replied in *Eclaircissements de quelques difficultés que l'on a formées sur le livre de la sainteté et des devoirs de la vie monastique* (1685)

1820. He found the following characteristics²⁵:

1. "What the curate has before his eyes is an imaginary place, this 'house of the Blessed Virgin', from which should be banned anything the latter would not tolerate."
2. This house has an almost monastic character: office in common, cells provided for the rebellious, corporal penances (hair-shirt, discipline), Friday prayer, prostrate on ground...
3. Considerable importance of community: "everything in common" and equality; account of conscience made to the superior; report to the superior on the failings one has been able to observe in one's brothers; obligation of never, as far as possible, remaining alone.
4. Care to nip in the bud what can corrupt the heart of a man who has chosen to consecrate himself to the Lord in the house of the Blessed Virgin: confession of interior faults of greed and pride; the superior invited to choose between two opinions adopts the one furthest from his own; vow to refuse all ecclesiastical or civil dignities. Thus to bar the way to any temptation to power.

5. The vows in all their rigour: extreme prudence with regard to chastity (no visits to women...). Poverty in dress (patched clothes). Poverty of the community and of the society (not to make capital but to give the extra to the Episcopal treasury).
6. Absolute fidelity to the Pope; the society at the service of the bishops; submission to the civil authorities.

a. The primitive rule of the order and Lavalla-L'Hermitage

All these points are easily found at La Valla and the Hermitage. From the beginning, Champagnat and the Brothers tried to associate an intense and diversified apostolic life (school, catechism, care for the poor, the sick, orphans) with an austere community life (no wine, no mattress, manual work, penitence)²⁶. Brother J.M. Granjon, the first disciple, seems particularly to have interiorised this way of life (withdrawal to Aiguebelle in 1822, solitary life at the Hermitage about 1826).

It is pointless to spend too much time on the monastic character of the Hermitage (1825 onwards) and even of the schools. We know that Courveille tried to turn the Hermitage into

²⁵ See the same work p. 17, 19 which refers to the documents allowing the characteristics of Colin's rule to be established: OM1/ 82-84 and Antiquiores Textus fascicule 1 p. 19-24 (Supplementum ad Societatis Mariae regulasà...)

²⁶ Life of Champagnat, especially 2nd part of Ch. IX.

a monastery of which he would be abbot. His retirement to Aiguebelle was significant, as was his future life at Solesmes, where he practiced the monastic life, solitude, and apostolic mission. Champagnat seems in the same line, and Séon emphasised the very strict rule which he and the other priests of the Hermitage followed in the greatest equality with the Brothers before 1830 (OM2/625 § 23).

We even find words whose closeness to Colin's rule are striking. For example, in a Circular to the Brothers of 1828 Fr. Champagnat declares:

"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".

Are we not close to the theme of the house of Mary?

But the most striking are the letters written in 1834, when the priests at the Hermitage move to Valbenoite and Champagnat, convinced that they are not acting in accordance with fundamental constitutions of the order, proposes to give them the property of the Grange Payre (OM1/321, Letter of Champagnat to Fr. Cholleton, August 1834):

"The functions of parish priest and curate there are unsuitable for the society [...] The best subjects lose their vocations there [...] in a word, they cannot do anything which would be helpful for a missionary [...] I come to offer His Lordship, for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, the property of La Grange Pe(y)re [...] There is no sacrifice which I am not ready to make for this work [...] Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam.,
Non nobis Domine, non nobis gloriam."

In the letter of 8/9/1834 (OM1 doc. 323):

"... There is nothing I am not prepared to sacrifice to save the work of Mary from shipwreck [...] Self-interest and the desire to become rich will destroy everything [...] My God, do not permit such men ever to enter the Society of Mary. [...] If Fathers Pompallier, Séon, Forest and Bourdin, or someone from Belley in place of the latter, be brought together, living under the same rule, having no other ministry in the meantime than retreats or brief missions in the countryside, you will see that things will take a turn for the better."

"You know better than I that a fish cannot live long out of water. Only seclusion and meditation on the great truths can maintain religious spirit."

These two letters develop two characteristics of the SM: detachment and mission linked to a secluded life, which owe nothing to J.C. Col-

in. From the solemn and even dramatic tone, Champagnat seems to be referring to the constitutions of the order.

Finally, when he sends three young girls to Mother St Joseph (Letters, No. 25) in 1832, Champagnat appears to be formulating more than general requirements when he says:

"I told them that if they did not come to you with perfect self-renunciation, submission in the face of every trial, great openness of heart, a persevering spirit and a real desire to love God as Mary did, they should not go any further."

b) The letter from Aiguebelle and the constitutions of the order

In his letter from Aiguebelle on 4 June 1826 (OM1/152), Courveille, in describing the Trappists formulates in brief certain aspects of what he calls "the constitutions of the order" and which he wants to see practised at the Hermitage: regularity, silence, mortification, humility. He insists particularly on two points:

"this charity worthy of the first age of the Church which made of all Christians cor unum et anima una and perfect obedience (he comes back to this four or five times) to the superior "which gives him complete freedom to command and ordain what he believes to be most beneficial to the community and to the spiritual welfare of each one" [...] "without which no religious society can be very regular or exist for long."

He wishes, therefore, that his eventual successor "be filled with the Spirit of God, and that he depart in no way from the aim of the Institute and the true intentions of the divine Mary, which I trust she will make known to him". He desires that all obey him "regarding him as our Lord and taking for them the place of Our Lady [...] provided that he does not go against the law of God, the faith of the holy Roman Church, the constitutions of the Order, the good and benefit of the Society of Mary"²⁷.

In my opinion, then, the primitive rule of Colin reunites the main features of the "constitutions of the order" or of the "goal of the Institute" invoked by Courveille and taught by Champagnat. Simply, they evolved in different directions: towards a more monastic life at the Hermitage, and a more missionary one at Belley. In particular, very early on, thanks especially to the inspiration of J. M. Chavoïn, J.C. Colin felt himself invested with the task of constructing the Society of Mary on the cornerstone of the constitutions of the order or the

²⁷ See Marist Notebooks No. 11, André Lanfrey, *Courveille disciple of Rancé and of Jean Climacque*. In my opinion, there are multiple indications that Rancé had a profound influence on Lavalla, the Hermitage and probably Belley.

plan of the Society, while at the Hermitage, after the setback of the years 1824-26, Champagnat did not see himself taking on the succession to Courveille as founder of the branch of the priests (OM1/173).

V. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE NOTION OF ORDER IN THE SM

Up to now I have not given much attention to the presence of the word "order" and have been especially concerned to show that the primitive Marist project was conceived as an "order" in the image of the early Church, the college of apostles constituting the nucleus, and the different categories of faithful, the branches. The rule of Colin is only one of the interpretations of this primitive project entertained also by Champagnat, Courveille, and Pompallier.

a) The order in the thought of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin

Chavoin seems from the beginning to have had a great influence on the priests of Cerdon who saw in her an inspired woman. Attracted to a life active and contemplative at the same time, she refused the active congregations (St Joseph and St Charles) but also the contemplatives (Pradines). The SM appears to have attracted her by its double missionary and contemplative aspect.

And the basis of her quarrel with Colin was the refusal to reduce the Marist Sisters to only one aspect of the constitutions of the order. In her conflict with Colin over the rule of the Marist Sisters, two texts seem to me particularly important for her idea of the SM as order.

"My V. R. F."

"You are not unaware that Mary, our august Mother, has confided to you the vast field of her order, and that in this field there is a tree which has several branches; there is one which you will easily recognise, it is very small [...] it is the poor Marist Sisters. [...] The project of cutting off this branch of the tree, small as it is, can only bring sadness to the heart of her who entrusted it to you to cultivate and extend its branches and not to destroy them, by delivering them into the hands of those who have not at all been chosen by the divine will or by her own²⁸."

This is why she asks him to make a rule.

In the letter of 14/12/1849 to J.C. Colin, responding to a very harsh mis-

²⁸ Correspondance de Mère St Joseph, doc. 29 p. 168. De MSJ au P. J.C. Colin, 21/4/1845.

sive, she declares herself ready to give her resignation:

“I have only one desire and that is the prosperity of our order for the greater glory of God and the salvation of the souls who are called to it.”

She associates three images, therefore: the field (of the Church); the tree of the SM, whose branches, even the little ones, are established by Mary and destined to cover the surface of the field. This is in sum “the whole world Marist”, for which Colin is made responsible by Mary.

b) The order and the Third Order

The diocese generated the tertiary brothers (1832) and Pompallier founded the Christian Virgins (1836), seem-

ingly inspired in part by the Hermitage (the Manual of 1857 still bears traces of that influence: All to Jesus through Mary...). In a certain measure, the foundation of the T.O. is an attempt by the diocese to forestall the spread of the SM of Belley.

Pompallier seems to have given the Christian Virgins a more Marist stamp than generally admitted, but in the spirit of the Hermitage and of the diocese of Lyon. In any case, during the meetings of the Christian Virgins, the sister writing the reports of the interventions of Frs. Forest, Pierre Colin and Girard used the word “order” to designate the SM. It seems that the preachers had used this word because it was more familiar to them seeing that they were in a third order. (See the table of contents of “Laics maristes”).

Doc.	Date	Page	Content
37	27/10/1837	100	p.v. of meeting of TOM: union “with all the order of the Marists”
40	24/11/1837	104	p.v. of meeting: to belong “to the order of the Marists ”
48	17/8/1838	115	Letter of the Christian Virgins to Fr. Pompallier: “a family affair”
53	27/5/1839	122	p.v. of meeting of TOM: to lay the foundations of an order, the order of Mary
64	5/5/1841	138	p.v. of meetings: the tertiaries chosen by Mary to lay the bases of her order

In her “Histoire du Tiers-Ordre de Marie” from 1845 to 1854 (Laics Maristes doc. 245 § 5) Mlle Guillot re-

calls an oral tradition issuing from Courveille’s inspiration at Le Puy:

"He told me that one of the first Fathers of the Society, celebrating the Holy Sacrifice in the church of Notre Dame de Fourvière was strongly inspired and believed he heard the Blessed Virgin telling him that, just as O.L. had an order which honoured his apostolic virtues, so she wanted one in which her hidden virtues were honoured, that it would extend to all branches of society and invade the entire world, meaning by that the Third Order."

c) 1836: The vows of the Brothers of the Hermitage

It is clear that Champagnat conceived of the Hermitage as a society of Mary entirely apart. He stated several times that the Brothers were not the principal branch of the Society. As far as he was concerned, as long as the Society of the Fathers was not founded, the Society of Mary remained unrealised.

The register of the Brothers' vows at the Hermitage from 1826 provides clear evidence of this incompleteness explicitly recognised. The first commitment, of Brother Bernard Gratalon, for 5 years on 11/10/1826 is formulated thus:

"... I have, on the eleventh day of October one thousand eight hundred and twenty six, in the chapel of N.D. de l'Hermitage, having received Holy Communion at Holy Mass, made secretly but

voluntarily and freely the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, for the term of five years to the superiors of the said Society of Mary, according to its statutes and its aims²⁹..."

So the vows are not made to Champagnat but to the superiors of the Society of Mary because, the society of the Fathers not having been constituted, it has not established any superior. The nomination of J.C. Colin as centre of unity and the nomination of Champagnat as superior of the SM of Lyon by the diocese in 1830 will cause no variation in the formula by which the Brothers consider themselves members of an unrealised SM.

As for the "statutes and aims" of the society, we find an echo of them in the formula of commitment pronounced, from 1818 at least (OM1/168), by which the Brothers engaged themselves to seek the glory of God, the good of the Church, the honour of Mary, by giving children free education, by obeying the superior, by putting their goods in common, and by keeping chastity. This is basically a distillation for the Brothers of the consecration of Fourvière: the foundation text of their branch, which does not seem very far from the primitive rule of Colin.

Everything changed in October 1836. From 20-24 September 1836, the Fathers of the SM met at Belley for a retreat, the election of the superior, and the first vows. A retreat for

²⁹ The signatures are those of Champagnat, Brother Bernard, Brother Antoine, and Brother François. After 1830, Champagnat's signature disappears.

the Brothers took place at the Hermitage from 3 to 10 October. It was preached by Fr. Colin and Fr. Converters, who would certainly have explained to the Brothers the changes that had taken place. In fact, on 10th October, the perpetually and temporarily professed commit themselves, for the first time as a group and not individually, according to a new formula:

"We the undersigned, Little Brothers of Mary, declare that, on the 10th day of the month of October 1836, at 9 o'clock in the morning in the new chapel of N.D. de l'Hermitage, at the close of a retreat of eight days, given by Fr. Collin and Fr. Convert, we have made voluntarily and freely, with the permission of our Rev. Fr. Superior, also undersigned, and with the ceremonies in use in the Society of the Brothers of Mary, the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the superior of the said society, according to the constitutions and aims of the order. In testimony of which we have signed this act the 14th day of the said month of the current year at N.D. de l'Hermitage.
Champagnat; Brother Appolinaire...
Marie-Nizier "... (20 Brothers in total)³⁰.

From now on the vows are no longer declared secret; it is no longer question of the Society of Mary; there is only one superior: Fr. Champagnat. But the statutes and aims of the SM have become the constitutions and aims of the order.

The ritual of the vows, contained in the rule of 1837 (end of volume p.

17), is, in its first part, identical with the formula of engagement of the Marist Sisters, and speaks of entry into " the (holy) congregation of Mary ". But its central formula is as follows:

"... I make voluntarily and freely ... the three vows ... of poverty, chastity and obedience to the superior of the said Society of Mary, according to the constitutions and aims of the order."

So the situation is an ambiguous one. Canonically, the Marist Brothers are part of a society different from that of the priests, as the register witnesses. But the ritual of the vows reminds that, spiritually, the Marist Brothers are still in the SM. "According to the constitutions and aims of the order " serves as a link between the two concepts.

The significance of this new expression seems to be as follows: up to this time, at the Hermitage, the Society of Mary was an unrealised project: no constitutions but simple statutes, and no designated superior. Now it has a superior general and a particular superior for the Brothers but it still has no definitive constitutions which will have to be in conformity with the primitive constitutions. However, the previous statutes (1818-1826) have lapsed and the Brothers attach themselves explicitly to the pledge.

In summary, the SM defined by Rome is recognised as an important

³⁰ The change of formula is identical with the register of temporary vows (Voir Circulaires, t. 1 p. 211-213.

step in the realisation of the primitive project which Fr. Colin has to bring to a successful issue: make of the SM an order of several branches finally recognised as such by the Church.

We know that this project was not realised, but the Brothers contrived discretely to deny to the Fathers by themselves the title of SM. In Chapter XIX (1st part) of the Life of Fr. Champagnat (1856) entitled "The Society of the Marist Fathers is approved by the Holy See. Father Champagnat's contribution to that undertaking", Brother Jean-Baptiste is careful never to give the Marist Fathers the title of SM and to nourish the myth of Champagnat co-founder of this work. He uses such formulas as: the society of the Marist Fathers, the work of the Marist Fathers, the congregation of the Marist Fathers, the society of the priests, the Fathers of Belley, the Society of the Marist priests. Every time he uses "Society of Mary" it is to signify the whole of the Society.

d) The Mayet Memoires and some other testimonies

A rapid word search of *Origines Maristes* (digitalised by Brother Louis Richard) has shown me that a not negligible number of texts, and in particular the Mayet Memoires, used the notion of order to designate the Society of Mary. Here are some quick references:

From Mayet:

- **427 § 17:** The approval of the SM "is the unique example of an order thus approved without the rules having been presented";
- **458 § 1:** "The cardinal told him that this order was well designed to frighten a prince" ;
- **532 § 1:** Fr. Favre said that all the founders of orders worked miracles. Colin is compared with St Dominic...
- **535:** "Names of some orders which have been placed under the shade of Mary"; the first members of an order are unlettered and ignorant but God manifests himself by a special grace; Difference between the ancient orders and those of today (why God wants the hidden spirit of the SM)...
- **537:** Word of an ecclesiastic in Rome in reference to Fr. Colin: the founders of orders are not learned men but they have some genius;
- **547:** Colin's esteem for someone never prejudiced his love for the SM and the order;
- **669:** Parallel between Dominicans and Marists. "To create an order vowed to the defence of the Church";
- **718:** He compares the Marists to the three great ancient orders;

- **800:** Theory on the founders of orders.

of the order; Courveille called himself founder and superior of a religious order.

Other documents:

Déclas:

- **551:** Courveille wanted to be the head of an order;
- **591:** "He is going to establish an order which will be much the same as the Jesuits " (words of Courveille at St Irénée).

CONCLUSION

In my opinion, the studies of Fr. Coste on Colin's rule have already thrown considerable light on the question of the order and its constitutions³¹.

Séon:

- **625:** The foundation of the SM was not modelled on that of other orders; another order had an unfaithful head at its beginning, that of the apostles (St Peter).

I think, however, that these researches should be widened, because before Colin's rule there are the constitutions of the order, and while this rule is their principal interpretation, it is not the only one. At the Hermitage Courveille, Champagnat, and even Pompallier had their own interpretations, close in many ways to that of Colin and quite different in other aspects. It is clear also that at Cerdon-Belley J.M. Chavoïn had her own interpretation, which gave rise to the violent conflict with J.C. Colin, filled with the conviction, historically strongly contestable, that he alone had been designated by heaven from the beginning to write the rule of the Society.

Récit Colin:

- **643:** Words of Fr. Courbon: "It is not orders uniquely consecrated to prayer that the Church needs today";
- **803:** he sees himself as a founder of an order assisted by particular inspirations;
- **819:** "I had received the order of seeing only the apostles and no other religious society."

We would be able to add that the disciples themselves had their own idea of the SM. For example, the Marist Brothers would not directly

Maitrepierre:

- **840:** Colin accused of having substituted himself for the founder

³¹ See especially, Jean Coste, *Etudes sur les premières idées de J.C. Colin* - I, Maristica, 1989 and J. Coste et G. Lessard, *Autour de la Règle*, Rome, 1991.

consider the Pledge of 1816 as their beginning (the *Life of Champagnat* does not quote it)... The Marist Sisters will refuse to be affiliated to the Third Order and will keep the name "Marist Sisters"... The Christian Virgins, although badly treated by the Marist Fathers between 1836 and 1845, remain resolutely faithful... The same could probably be said for the pioneers of the SMSM.

The concept of order, then, merits more than the treatment given it up to now, because it is to this that the branches of the Society will cling in order to affirm, in opposition to J.C. Colin, that they are not simply attachments, like the coadjutor Brothers, but original parts of the work of

Mary, and that even a charismatic founder like J.C. Colin has no right to reject or subordinate them.

The affirmation of the order is also a means of reminding Colin that the SM, such as Rome wanted it and he confirmed it, is not definitive but has still to realise its eschatological vocation.

Finally, many indications lead me to think that Rancé's *La Trappe* influenced the primitive rule as much as did the constitutions of the Jesuits.

The time has perhaps come to ask if the concept of order does not help us to view the Society of Mary in a new light: as an unrealised order.

A TREE WITH MANY BRANCHES

Perspectives on Marist Origins and Traditions

Mary Emerentiana Cooney, sm.sm.

INTRODUCTION

First, I would like to thank the organisers for proposing this topic for our study as it is of interest and significance for us all, and includes images and concepts we cherish even though they may not cover the same realities in the different branches.

Being the last to speak which is normal, since our congregation was the last to branch off from the mystical Marist tree, I was thinking also that it is providential as I am not sure how much we have to say that would be a contribution to this topic. Nevertheless, I am going to follow the headings suggested on the original paper outlining the day:

1. our model of presenting our origins in the context of the wider Marist family
2. our usage of certain key terms, such as Marist family, the tree

with many branches, foundress/ founder etc. with the focus on history, origins and development.

When it comes to key expressions, we will be repeating many things because the Marist spirit, as lived by the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) today, was transmitted to us by the early Marist Fathers who, we acknowledge, supported and really formed the first generations of our sisters. They drew up the early rules from 1857-1931, taking account of the particular vocation of women called to dedicate their lives as “auxiliaries of the Marist missionaries” in Oceania, which was all they could be, given the place of women in society and in the church at that time. If the sisters had any say in these rules, it would have been an oral contribution and through the witness of their lives. Even our first Constitutions were written by Father Grimal.

I. PRESENTING PERSPECTIVES ON SMSM ORIGINS AND TRADITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MARIST FAMILY

If there is something original in SMSM, we would see it in our origins, in the way we came to be a branch of the wider Society of Mary. Nothing seems to have been thought out or planned in advance in high places. We were not brought into existence through any creative plan of Marist bishops, priests or brothers. We were not foreseen as part of the foundational Marist project of 1816, though we do see ourselves connected historically and spiritually through the early Marist Fathers, some of whom worked very closely with Father Colin e.g. Fathers Julien Eymard, Poupinel, Yardin, also Fathers Lagniet and Jacquet to name a few. We were not around during the many years of growing pains for the Society or Societies of Mary.

For all those years there was no feminine Champagnat to rise up and say: "What about women as 'missionaries' in Oceania?" but by 1845 there was a Marie Françoise Perroton. Her initiative in response to the appeal from the women of Wallis addressed to the Christians of Lyon to "send some devout women (some Sisters) to help them" (cf. APM OW 208, extract OPS I, 8) was the initial spark for the SMSM. She "launched the movement" to use her words (cf.

Perroton-Favre, 08.03.1859, Letter 9, 12) without realising she was doing so when she set out. Probably she would have been content to give herself to God in working with the Marist Fathers and Brothers, but she records how grateful she was when she learned that Father Eymard himself had enrolled her in the Third Order. "My gratitude should be as great as the ocean", she wrote (cf. Perroton-Eymard, 02.08.1846, Letter 2, 4).

Her initiative though acknowledged as praiseworthy, even eventually by Father Colin (cf. Colin-Bataillon, 10.01.1846, OPS I, 12) and Bishop Bataillon (cf. Bataillon-Colin, 10.12.1946, OPS I, 14), was not to be repeated. For the volunteers of about 12 years later, it was decided to send them out in small groups. But it is from the love and dedication of these eleven women, that we, a fifth branch as we have traditionally considered ourselves, were born in Oceania. Therefore, there is no question of a founder or foundress. Our sisters were not writing documents for those who would follow them but simply sharing what they were trying to live in Oceania.

Nor was any idea of beginning some kind of lay movement in Oceania; this was already in existence in France. Rather, it is abundantly clear from the pioneers' letters that they wanted to be missionaries as religious (cf. Croix-Marie Cœur de Jésus, 29.06.1866, Letter 75, 4; Rose-Yardin, 17.11.1864, Letter 10, 6; Paix-Poupinel, 16.05.1858, 1, 2).

Father Favre, having been prevailed upon to be responsible for the departure of these first groups, probably felt freer than Father Colin had, but we have learned not to hold it against Father Colin for not being ready to encourage such initiatives. For many reasons, he did not feel it was the time to “encourage or discourage” the women from going out, nor did he want his confreres to get involved (cf. FS doc. 126, 01.10.1846). However, in taking this stance, and even though he sent away a woman volunteer in 1845 (cf. FA doc. 305, 21.01.1845), he was not really closing the door to the possibility of a feminine expression of Marist life and mission in a form different from that already being lived by the Marist Sisters. In speaking with his confreres on the subject, he concluded: “For who knows his [God’s] plans? I would not be surprised if he intended to make use of such a means” (FS doc. 126 , 5).

On the other hand, Father Favre in accepting the responsibility opened the door to the formation of another branch. Are SMSM not one example of how the Marist charism has ‘enlarged the space of its tent,’ to draw on Brother Michael Green’s choice of a biblical metaphor (cf. *And New Tents too*, Michael Green, in *Marist Notebooks* 26, March 2009, p. 25-46). Perhaps a good reason for opening ourselves to new possibilities too, especially as our early sisters’ communities were often made up of young women who lived with them.

Father Favre’s *Rule for the Voyage*, given to the first group of pioneers before leaving included the important statement: “*Since you are members of the one Society, having the same vocation and the same aim, redouble your efforts for unity, harmony and charity so that you will truly have only one heart and one soul*” (Rule of Favre, 1857, 5). This was surely the acceptance of an addition to the four-branched tree, and the basis for the strong sense of belonging among these early sisters to the Society of Mary, and through it to the family of Mary. Examples abound to show how much this latter expression meant to them spiritually (cf. Merci-Favre, 10.06.1861, Letter, 6, 5; Bon Secours-Favre, 04.1.1858, Letter 1, 2; Ste Espérance-Poupinel, 01.02.1859, Letter 5, 5; and others).

As we look at what our pioneers lived during the early years, we see an original way for women of living Marist spirituality taking shape, and in their struggles to remain faithful to the different elements of this vocation. Despite the difficulties and the misunderstandings, they tried to live a way of life that was truly missionary, fully Marist while deeply desiring a religious life approved by the Church. They were willing to put up with many things, but unwilling to renounce what they considered the essentials of their vocation, which gave them a strong identity in attachment to the Society of Mary, as they knew it, and a sense of urgency about the work of the Society, which is variously described as ‘the work of God’, the

'work of the Church', occasionally as 'the work of Mary' or simply 'the Work'. We find this reflected in their letters e.g. their exodus from the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, once they realised this Institute was independent of the Society. Sœur Marie de la Croix, after deciding not to renew her vows in the congregation, wrote to Father Yardin that she wanted "to remain what I am, and wish to be for all eternity, Marist and nothing but Marist" (Croix-Yardin, 27.08.1890, Letter 132, 4). Another example was the well-known plan of Bishop Bataillon for them to run a farm, or perhaps less well-known, his proposal to some of them to renew their vows to him, which meant severing ties with the Society of Mary, to be completely at his service (cf. Merci-Favre, 15.11.1863, Letter 17, 20; Pitié-Favre, 14.09.1866, Letter 45, 2).

By 1895, Father Raffin was concerned about the lack of unity among the Third Order Regular of Mary (TORM) (established since 1881), with several having different Rules in the different vicariates. He wrote a Rule for them all, the opening sentence of which reads: "*The congregation of the TORM for the Missions of Oceania can be considered a branch of the Society of Mary.*" (cf. OPS V, Rule Raffin, Art. 1).

In 1903 Mother Marie Denyse encouraged by Father Raffin wrote the *Rule and Directory* which was a commentary on Father Raffin's Rule. It included large extracts of the Marist Fathers' Constitutions, not only on

the spirit, but also the vows, virtues, mortifications etc. She begins her Directory by re-stating that the "*TORM is a branch of the Society of Mary*" (Art. 1).

Without doubt, our early sisters including the Oceanians who had joined them, would not have been able to realise their missionary vocation without the inspiration and spiritual help that they found in the Third Order of Mary into which they were received, at least those not already members. They oriented their lives according to the Manuals (1857, 1859, 1874 editions). However, we do not see ourselves coming from the Third Order as such though historically, and above all spiritually, we are connected in a particular way to this branch. Minutes of the meetings of the TOM in Lyon were received by at least some of them; several kept in correspondence with members of it.

Nor could the pioneers have realised their missionary vocation without the guidance and support of the Society of Mary, that had accepted them through Father Favre as "auxiliaries of the Marist missionaries." As our Constitutions say: "*Missionary service and the Marist vocation were but one single call for the pioneers and those who followed them*" (Const. 47). In fact, the link between mission and belonging to Mary underlies the whole text.

We know that Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn undoubtedly played an important role in the beginnings of the

Marist life in reflecting, clarifying, helping concretise the original inspiration, as well as having her own dream for the Marist Sisters (cf. *Jean Marie Chavoïn inspired by a dream*, Gail Reneker, in *Forum Novum* 2008, p. 44-50). But to date, we SMSM have not found any traces of her influence in our beginnings. However, we know we find common ground with the Marist Sisters in several fundamental intuitions. Undoubtedly, it would be interesting to deepen the convergences and the different nuances coming from our specific traditions.

II. OUR USAGE OF CERTAIN KEY TERMS

If we consider the term: 'family of Mary' for example, it would have been from the early Marist missionaries, but also the Third Order of Mary (TOM) Manual, on which the Rule of Poupinel based on it (24 references in all), that our sisters came to understand the idea of being members of the 'family of Mary'. The invitation at their TOM reception ceremony: was to "*Enter forever into the family of Mary*" (ibid., p. 76); there was also the assurance that in accepting it they were "*incorporated into the family of Mary*" (TOM Manual 1857, p. 30 Art 2). This Rule remained in vigour until 1903 when it tended to be superseded by the *Rule and Directory* of M. Marie Denyse. However, the *Manual of the Third Order of Mary* was the only Rule we had approved by the Church until 1931.

At our last meeting here, Brother André Lanfrey presented a very interesting work of research and comparison which showed some surprising concordances between the "*Spirit of the Third Order of Mary*" and the "*Spirit of the Institute of the Brothers*" according to the manuscripts of the Marist Brothers: Brother François and Brother Jean-Baptiste, reproducing an instruction of Father Champagnat. He also showed other convergences between the chapter of the *Manual* entitled "*On the humility of Mary and Mary, Model of Humility*" with the Manuscript 308 of Brother François, both influenced by a text of Alphonsus de Liguori.

Perhaps some further research would need to be done to see if other texts of the Third Order of Mary come from the Society of Mary at the Hermitage or if they are both inspired by a common source. But the concordance is there, and it was certainly for SMSM something unexpected and a cause for rejoicing to find these evident traces of a common spirituality.

In the Directory of Mother M. Denyse already mentioned, there are several references to the significance for TOM of the privilege of "*belonging to the family of the Blessed Virgin*" (Art. II). The idea of the 'family of Mary' was then carried over into our first Constitutions and remained a constant in future revisions (Constitutions 1931, 8; 1939, 1951, 1964, 6) including the present ones, approved

in 1984. Membership in the family of Mary is linked with the gracious choice and a personal relationship with Mary.

However, four articles use the expression: Marist family e.g. “*we willingly unite with other members of the Marist family through the traditional prayers of the Society of Mary...*” (Constitutions 139). Another article reads: “Conscious of the grace given us to be part of the Marist family, concerned with “continuing the mission of Mary in the church we willingly collaborate with members of the other branches...in the work of evangelisation and seeking with them a deeper understanding of the spirit of Mary...” (Constitutions 56). We are also encouraged “In countries where other branches of the Marist family are present... to collaborate in the animation of vocations (cf. Const. 200). And one last example from the chapter on Government: “Mindful that in the Marist family ‘the Blessed Virgin is everywhere the first superior and the one who holds authority is simply her humble vicar...’” (Constitutions 295).

As the *Origines Maristes* attest (cf. OM IV, p. 842), the use is more recent, and this would be true for SMSM, where formerly we spoke of the ‘family of Mary’. Perhaps this change has followed a current comparatively recent in the vocabulary of the religious world where we heard of the Franciscan family, the Dominican family etc. to take in all the different congregations of men and

women who look to the same original inspiration. With the SMSM the term ‘Marist family’ as explained in *Origines Maristes* has been applied also to the different groups: Fathers and Brothers, Marist Brothers, Marist Sisters and various groups of Marist laity, SMSM, each autonomous but drawing from the original intuitions.

Though the tree is one of the earliest images of the Society of Mary, our early sisters if they knew about it made no reference to it in letters that have been conserved, nor is there any reference in documents found to date. However, that does not mean that SMSM today do not appreciate the richness of this image.

The fact that we are a branch of the wider Society would seem to have been something taken for granted. The opening article in our present Constitutions reads: “*The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, an apostolic congregation in the Church, is dedicated to the work of evangelisation. Considered from its origins as a branch of the Society of Mary...*” (Constitutions 1). It would seem that the references in SMSM documentation is simply to a particular religious family, the Society of Mary, rather than to the tree.

Both the concept of the family of Mary and the branch, have given SMSM a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves and, for the pioneers and their more immediate followers, also a sense of belonging to a group constituted and

recognised by the church. These, together with that of the Marist family, also express for SMSM family bonds of unity with branches sharing a common heritage, common intu-

itions, each branch bringing something particular to the way we try to live the Christian spirituality, and to the root from which we came at different intervals.

JEANNE-MARIE CHAVOIN AT THE HEART OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

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At Cerdon Jeanne-Marie was one of the principal actors of the founding trio. Although arriving on the scene after the revelations of Le Puy and the Fourvière promise, her actions and inspirations greatly strengthened the convictions of Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin that the Society of Mary was providential, and that Jean-Claude was the man chosen to make it happen. Through her the Marist Sisters were inserted into the heart of the Society. The Marists in Lyon quickly recognised her role and the place of the Marist Sisters in the Society.

After 1836, and faced with a Jean-Claude Colin who seemed in danger of forgetting the Cerdon years, she remained the guardian of the primitive spirit: the Society was the work of Mary and the Marist Sisters an essential branch. If Father Colin had been chosen by Mary to bring about the Society, he was not free to do so according to his own ideas or even those of Rome: he was bound by the initial inspiration. In the end, and de-

spite a painful conflict, Jeanne-Marie would succeed in keeping alive the collective project of Cerdon.

Today, we are walking together through the history of our Marist beginnings in the hope of arriving, as near as possible, at an agreed coherent model in presenting the historical origins of our four congregations.

The result of the common historical research undertaken by the Marist congregations in the 1950s enabled us, Marist Sisters, to see ever more clearly that our spiritual patrimony cannot be understood in isolation from the events that stand at the beginnings of the Society of Mary.

1816 -THE PLEDGE OF FOURVIÈRE

Even though there were no aspirant Marist women present to add their signatures to the Pledge made by 12 young priests and seminarians

at Fourvière, to found a 'Society of Mary', nevertheless, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and the early sisters could never consider the Marist sisters without implicit reference to that Pledge.

1812: THE INSPIRATION – 'REVELATION' OF LE PUY

The Fourvière Pledge had its genesis in an intense religious experience which one of its signatories, Jean-Claude Courveille, underwent in the Cathedral of le Puy in 1812. During the scholastic year prior to ordination (1815–1816), he shared his Le Puy experience and message¹ with some of his seminary companions, among whom were Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin. In his account, Courveille shows Mary as revealing a clear wish for a Society bearing her name with a mission to support the Church. Mary, he tells us does this by drawing twin parallels: The first is between the role of Mary in the new born church and her role at the end of time, the second is between the Society of Jesus and that of Mary. Courveille's story impacted greatly on his seminary companions. On 23 July 1816, a group of twelve pledged themselves on the hill of Fourvière to found a Society of Mary.

Even though it was of a private nature, it marked the beginning of the Society: "In Lyon, at the feet of Our Lady of Fourvière, the little society has come into being"². Within a few days, the newly ordained signatories of the pledge were dispersed to the parishes the bishop had assigned them. The Society of Mary was still to be realised.

Courveille was posted to Verrières, a small village in the south-east of the diocese but soon after was transferred to Rive-de-Gier. In the former he made an effort to found a third order of Mary³, and in the latter he recruited some women teachers as Sisters of Mary⁴. Two years later he transferred this group to Saint-Clair-du-Rhône⁵. Nominated to Epercieux in 1819, he began a community of brothers.

Marcellin Champagnat, who had joined the Marist group on condition that he could found a branch of teaching brothers, was appointed curate in the parish of La Valla. As early as 2 January 1817, he had gathered together the first brothers – the Little Brothers of Mary. As yet no progress had been made with regard to the priests' branch. The Marist project, however was taking shape in the south and west of the

¹ OM 2, doc.718 #5

² OM 1, doc.271 #5 (Colin to Archbishop de Pins in 1833); *Index Mother Saint-Joseph*, Rome, 1977,

³ OM 1, doc. 105 #1

⁴ OM 1, docs 55,56, 61, 63

⁵ J. Coste, *Lectures on Society of Mary History*, Rome, 1965 , pp37-38

diocese due to the zealous efforts of Champagnat and Courveille.

MARIST PROJECT AND ITS BRANCHES

Courveille's efforts to found groups of religious and a third order indicate that the Marist project was not confined to priests alone. There is no direct evidence, however, of the structure that the aspirants had planned for the Society. According to Jean Coste, it is very likely that they had in mind the foundation of an order with several branches on the model of the great orders of old, comprising priests, sisters and a secular third order⁶. But it is unlikely that these young seminarians sought to form a precise idea of the relations that would exist between the different branches. Besides, their acceptance of Fr Champagnat's proposal to include a branch of brothers⁷ threw the traditional plan out of gear. It showed that basically their scheme represented not only a return to the model of the first orders but also an effort to meet the many pressing needs caused by the upheavals of the Revolution in the aftermath of which they had grown up. The future society would then be a channel through which Mary would realise her desire to reach everywhere and

gather the faithful into the people of God. Courveille understood himself as the leader of the group and was regarded as such by the others.

CERDON: THE PRIESTS' AND SISTERS' BRANCHES

Jean-Claude Colin was appointed curate to his brother, Pierre, at Cerdon away in the east of the diocese. He was reticent about speaking of the Fourvière Pledge, even waiting a year before telling his brother of the project of the Society of Mary. Pierre's response on the other hand was positive and immediate⁸ *"...from that moment on we have constantly worked together paving the way for the projected enterprise"*⁹. Pierre's initiative in making immediate contact with two of his former parishioners in the parish of Coutouvre links Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and her companion, Marie Jotillon, with the project of the Society of Mary. He would have known both of them as rooted in the ordinary life of the parish, caring for those in need as well as developing a deep spiritual life. He would have known of Jeanne-Marie's vocational search, of her disquiet when faced with the invitation to join a cloistered community and the spirit she perceived in newly es-

⁶ *ibid.* p.29

⁷ OM 1, doc. 416; OM 2, doc. 757 #2

⁸ OM 2 doc. 623 # 5 and note 2

⁹ OM 3, doc. 827#5

tablished communities. She was seeking “a simpler life more conformable to that of Jesus and Mary at Nazareth”.¹⁰ Finally, her director, Fr Jean Philip Lefranc had told her: “You are not meant for an existing community, but for one which is to come into existence”¹¹. Marie Jotillon meanwhile had spent some time with two women teachers in Belleville, one of whom was Pierre’s eldest sister Jeanne Marie Colin. It is very likely, then, that it was Marie Jotillon who had kept some contact with Pierre after he was transferred from Coutouvre.

Pierre’s letter was not preserved but evidently he gave her to understand that religious women were also included in the proposed Society of Mary. Jeanne-Marie’s “yes” to what she believed was God’s will conveyed to her through Pierre Colin, brought her and her friend, Marie Jotillon to Cerdon towards the end of 1817. They were ready and willing to put their young energetic shoulders to the Marist undertaking, cost what it may. I feel it is legitimate to say that in coming to Cerdon, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon were endorsing the Fourvière Promise. Six years later, Jeanne-Marie had occasion to boldly remind Bishop Devie, that she

and Marie-Jotillon “left home and family to begin the Society of the blessed Virgin”¹².

JEANNE-MARIE’S ACTIVE ROLE IN THE SOCIETY OF MARY

When *Miss Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn* received a letter¹³ from the vicar General of le Puy in November 1821, she was acting as housekeeper to the Frs Colin at Cerdon. Jean-Claude had begun to take responsibility for the project of a Society launched by Courveille. Won over by Jeanne-Marie’s commitment to the work of Mary, Colin used her several times as an intermediary. This letter is the first to make explicit allusion to steps taken by the group of would-be Marists to bring the Society of Mary into being. Nothing better could illustrate the part played by Jeanne-Marie in these negotiations and in the hopes to which this project gave rise. Although little came of this and other interventions of Jeanne-Marie on behalf of the Society of Mary, the role she played is noteworthy.

Three years later, 15 November 1824, when she firmly signed herself *Chavoïn* at the end of a letter to Bishop Devie, it was as a member of

¹⁰ RMJ doc. 162#4

¹¹ RMJ docs. 99#7:163#17

¹² RMJ doc. 101#7

¹³ CMJ doc. 1

a religious community. The previous year, on the 8 September 1823, she and Marie Jotillon had come together to begin under his authority and the direction of the Frs Colin the *Congregation of the Daughters of Mary*, a name which was shortened to *Congregation of Mary* the following year.

On the 8 September 1824, the sisters, by then 9 in number, had unanimously elected Jeanne-Marie as superior, the first superior of the congregation. There followed immediately the ceremony of clothing. Pierre Colin, delegate of the bishop, presided, and Jean-Claude Colin, and Declas who had recently arrived, were present. It is interesting to note that Courveille was invited by Colin but was not asked to preside. There is no indication that he accepted the invitation since his name is not on the register. This clothing ceremony marks the first formal recognition of a branch of the Society of Mary.

The Congregation [Marist Sisters] *recognises Venerable Jean-Claude Colin as Founder and Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn as Foundress* Constitutions 1986. Now a novice, Jeanne-Marie loses no time before writing to Bishop Devie to defend, in the name of her companions, both the conditions required for the Congregation's existence and the spirit that should animate it. She

not only expresses her anxiety for the future of her own congregation, now too numerous to remain in Cerdon, but the letter also reveals the role she was playing in the whole Marist project. She speaks not only of the sisters but also of the Society of Mary in general, scarcely distinguishing between the branches. She expresses her gratitude to the bishop for his kindness and "greatest possible interest in the Society of Mary". In referring to 'ourselves' as "the happiest of your children" - "les enfants les plus heureux" - she designedly includes the group of Marist aspirants in Cerdon among the "happiest children" of the Bishop.¹⁴

JEANNE-MARIE SHARES COLIN'S VISION OF THE SOCIETY

In that same letter to the Bishop, Jeanne-Marie refers to the long wait of over a year before she and her companions were permitted to wear a temporary religious costume. In this delay she saw an opportunity of putting into practice the *hidden and unknown* ideal **which we proposed to ourselves from the first moment that we thought of this work.** This is the first known use of the formula: *Unknown and as if hidden in the world* which Fr Colin would later resume when speaking

¹⁴ CMJ doc.2

of the manner of acting proper to the Society¹⁵. Jeanne-Marie does not allude to a personal project; she had not herself thought of the work of the Society of Mary. What she has in mind was the fund of ideas which she had already found formulated on her arrival at the presbytery of Cerdon corresponding to the first intuitions of Fr Colin¹⁶, and perhaps also to her own lights on the Society received at that time¹⁷. Having patiently borne the initial delay and obscurity as being in line with the spirit of the Society of Mary, she knew nevertheless that obscurity was not an end in itself, that an effort must be made to emerge as soon as obscurity threatened to impede God's work. She therefore trusts "that providence will make known to his Lordship the moment when it (the congregation) should be known and a little less hidden, especially as regards the men". Since Jeanne-Marie always espoused the interests of the Society as a whole¹⁸, the word 'men' here indicates the priests. It was well in Jeanne-Marie's line of thought to desire that *priests* of the future Society should be the first to emerge from obscurity.

In 1827 letters were addressed to "the Superior of the sisters of the Congregation of Mary, Bon Repos, Belley". Since July 1825, the little community had taken up its resi-

dence in the episcopal city. The following year 6 September 1826, the superior and eight sisters made their religious profession before Bishop Devie, thus marking the first formal recognition of a branch of the Society of Mary as a religious congregation.

LINK WITH THE ASPIRANT MARISTS IN LYON

Jeanne-Marie was in touch with the strong contingent of priests aspiring to be Marists including Fr Champagnat and the brothers, who, like the sisters and fathers of Belley were parties to the great plan of a Society of Mary.

Her contacts with these priests concerned postulants recommended by them for Bon Repos and also proposals for foundations of the sisters in the diocese of Lyon. Fr Champagnat came on several occasions to Belley with his Lyon confreres, and sent numerous prospective vocations to Bon Repos in the years 1827 – 1834. Among them were his niece and a sister of two of the first Marist Brothers. A text from a letter of Champagnat to Jeanne-Marie about three other young candidates is an excellent summary of the dispositions which both of them considered

¹⁵ Acta SM, Vol.5, 1958-59, J. Coste, pp55-57

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ CMJ doc.10#2

¹⁸ CMJ doc.1; OM 2, doc.513#4; 759#7

essential in those entering the religious life: a spirit of real sacrifice, unshakeable submission, great openness of heart and a true desire to love God as Mary did. Is there not an echo here of the generous and self-sacrificing love and courage expressed in the Pledge of Fourvière?

Fr Pompallier, who was much in favour with diocesan authorities in Lyon, let Jeanne-Marie know that the administration was not opposed to having Marist sisters in their diocese, but refused to authorise a foundation at St Chamond favoured by the groups of the Hermitage and Belley. This refusal was based on the fact that in this small town there were already four religious congregations and there was no place for an enclosed teaching congregation.¹⁹

In 1833 Pompallier again writes to Jeanne-Marie telling her that the Vicar General Cholleton had been specially charged with affairs concerning the Society. The interesting thing here is that Pompallier, thinking that Colin may have already left for Rome, shares the news with Jeanne-Marie, saying: "these things concern you as much as they do us", words indicating that in his view, the sisters

at Bon Repos were an integral part of the Society of Mary²⁰.

It is clear from the documents that Jeanne-Marie occupied a central position in the concerns of Champagnat and the Fathers in Lyon. Each in his own way and not always in full co-ordination with the other had taken to heart the interests of the sisters' Congregation.

CERDON EXPERIENCE: KEY POINTS OF THE RULE

At Cerdon, Colin quietly reflected on the Le Puy revelation and discovered the divine initiative at work there. He recalled how it had moved him powerfully from within and given a definite direction to his life. At a time when ecclesiastical superiors were opposing the very idea of the establishment of the priests' branch of the Society of Mary, Colin was graced with a deep sense of joyful hope. There was no doubt in his mind but that he was impelled by an "interior and almost irresistible impulse"²¹ to spend himself in establishing the Society willed by God, and to write down the basic points for a rule.²²

¹⁹ The St Chamond case gives the first glimpse of the difficulties which would be experienced by the congregation in the early years when the need arose to open new houses. Districts were looking for religious sisters, but they required religious who would undertake works which the Marist sisters could not. Already in the early days at Cerdon, Fr Colin foresaw the Marist sisters as cloistered. Jeanne-Marie, a woman so basically apostolic and so thoroughly grounded in a spirituality suited to an active life, could never truthfully envisage her congregation as cloistered or semi-cloistered.

²⁰ CMJ doc.7#3

²¹ OM 3, 816

²² OM 1, doc. 69#4; OM 3, 816

a) Third Order

From his studies of Marist sources, Jean Coste identified these points as consisting of "a growing cluster of those convictions regarding the church, the world and the Society of Mary." A section of the Rule included lay people in its make up. In 1833 we find an allusion to a project of a Third Order in a letter of Marcellin Champagnat to Bishop Devie of Belley. Champagnat writes: "Fr Colin's idea of the third order I find rather pleasing. I believe that as your Excellency envisages it, it will succeed."²³ Evidently there had been some discussion between Colin, Champagnat and the bishop on the topic. It is interesting to note the way Champagnat phrases it as Colin's idea.

Some months later, while in Rome, Colin writes to Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn in Bon Repos saying: "Take care of the Associates in the Third Order; the Confraternity is very well thought of here in Rome; tell my brother and Fr Convers to try to increase their membership, to bring them together from time to time, and to do everything to encourage them."²⁴ Jeanne-Marie's involvement with the confraternity is noteworthy. At the beginning of Lent 1833 she even took part in a retreat, conducted by Frs Pierre Colin and Con-

vers, with about 10 women (most probably associates of the Third Order) in the chapel of Bon Repos.

Coste claims that the text of the *Summarium* that Colin presented in Rome in 1833 dates back to Cerdon where he, as a visionary, attempted to put on paper the intuitions that gripped him.²⁵ The last phrase of the *Summarium* is particularly significant in that it reveals a vision of the Society that is open to embrace the whole world through a lay branch. In Colin's eyes however, the Confraternity of the Third Order (the lay branch) was never just a pious extension of the Society proper. When he presented the *Summarium* and requested the Approbation of the Third Order, he clearly expressed the hope that at the end of time there would be the realisation of the *one heart and one soul* of Acts 4.32.²⁶

b) Jeanne-Marie's lived experience of Colin's key ideas

Colin's key idea of a certain role assigned to Mary in the early Church and to the Society of Mary in these end days found a place in the heart of the woman who had shown herself zealous and committed to the work of Mary. Even though Jeanne-Marie may never have used these terms she identified with them

²³ LM doc.6

²⁴ LM doc.10; see note 2 for explanation

²⁵ J. Coste, *A Marian Vision of the Church: Jean-Claude Colin*, p.320

²⁶ E.L. Keel, *A Book of Texts for the study of Marist Spirituality, Rome, 1993* Doc. 94

through the prism of her own spiritual and apostolic experience and in the following years expressed them according to her own intuition. Her understanding of Colin's key formula, *unknown and hidden in the world*, was conditioned by her personality, her upbringing, and apostolic involvement among the people. From the outset, she understood it as constituting for all Marists – women as well as men – the manner in which God wanted them to take their place in the world. In that she saw a dimension that Colin could not appreciate. Her vision for the feminine branch was that it, too, would find the formula *hidden and unknown in the world* as the only way 'to penetrate everywhere and so do the greatest possible good in the world'. In the last years of her life in Jarnosse, free from the restrictions of enclosure, her style of presence and approach was welcomed. She and the sisters lived close to the people – the poor and the powerless – and were in touch not just with their daily problems, but also with their fears and prejudices. Thus, in the concrete realities of life she makes an important contribution to defining the spirit and mission of the Society of Mary. She reveals her understanding of what it is to be *instruments of the divine mercies* and of how the 'hidden and unknown' formula of the Society could be lived by the feminine branch. She held fast to this apostolic vision for her congre-

gation, though only at the cost of painful encounters later on with Fr Colin.

In the presbytery at Cerdon however, close spiritual bonds had been forged between them. We note how Colin expressly acknowledged 'the many lights' Jeanne-Marie received concerning the Society of Mary and the virtues of Mary.²⁷ Such reflection serves to underline that Jeanne-Marie, too, was confirmed in the way the Lord was leading her.

SOCIETY OF MARY/SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND MARY'S WORK/ WORK OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

During the period of the beginnings all three Founders alternated the term *Society of Mary* with that of *The Work of Mary* or *The Work of the Blessed Virgin*.

Both Colin and Jeanne-Marie (I'm not sure about Champagnat) continued to use the latter expressions occasionally until the end of their lives. *The Society of Mary* was the phrase most commonly used to describe the juridical or social reality that resulted from the concerted effort of a number of persons. It was the term most frequently used by Colin in official documents.

A less frequent expression and one with less official overtones was

²⁷ RMJ doc. 280#90

the Society of the Blessed Virgin. It was the one Jeanne-Marie used, in 1823, in a rather bold response to Bishop Devie when he suggested that she and her first two companions merge with an established community: "... we have left home and family to start the Society of the Blessed Virgin".²⁸ Here Jeanne-Marie, on behalf of her little group is making a strong statement of their desire to work for a very precise project, namely the Society of the Blessed Virgin to the exclusion of any other group. She used the expression once again in a visit to the same bishop. In an effort to procure better accommodation for the first small missionary band of aspirant Marist priests within the minor seminary of Belley, she candidly asked "...my Lord, will you leave the Blessed Virgin's Society in that condition?"²⁹ *The Society of the Blessed Virgin* seems to have generated a certain energy among the early Marists because of its first use in the Fourvière Pledge. After promising to commit themselves 'to founding the very pious congregation of Mariists', the signatories explicitly declared that they would give themselves irrevocably to the Society of the Blessed Virgin.³⁰

The expression *Work of Mary* or *Work of the Blessed Virgin* had a somewhat different connotation. It was used to describe a reality still only hoped for. It was a reality that involved faith and required dedication, attachment and one that would come into being through suffering.³¹ In 1848 Jeanne-Marie referred twice to the Work when telling the young Fr Mayet of the difficulties and hopes experienced at the beginning of the Society.³² The enthusiasm it engendered is found too, among the early recollections given by one of the first postulants: "In those early days we found nothing too difficult when there was question of improving the Blessed Virgin's house and of labouring for her work."³³

This expression, *the Work of the Blessed Virgin*, appears for the first time in Jeanne-Marie's letter to Bishop Devie (1824). There, with candour she affirmed her faith that the Work was willed by God. She never lost faith in God's will in relation to the Work despite the fact that suffering accompanied its progress. Difficulties concerning diocesan approval of the priest's branch were also her concern since it was the Work of Mary that was at stake. She came to recognise the bishop's strong oppo-

²⁸ RMJ doc.100# 7

²⁹ RMJ doc.100# 7

³⁰ OM 1, doc.50

³¹ Forum Novum 2, Appendix pp254-259

³² RMJ 100#6-8

³³ RMJ doc.250#25

³³ RMJ doc.100#1

sition to any advance of the project as "a great grace ... one of the greatest blessings God bestowed on the Society".³⁴ Nothing, therefore, even if it were to win the favour and good will of the bishop, could be allowed to jeopardise the Work of Mary. " If we had found Bishop Devie favourable from the beginning we would never have dared to take a step without him, and so our progress would have been hampered".³⁵

THE JURIDICAL PROBLEM OF THE SISTERS' BRANCH

Difficulties of a juridical nature concerning the Sisters' branch tested Jeanne-Marie's faith more than anything else. On the 29 April, 1836 the Holy See approved the priests' branch as a Society with simple vows. The approbation of the Society of Mary (now seen as the Marist priests only) made them extra-diocesan, but excluded the Brothers and the Sisters. However, belief in the original plan of a Society with several branches under the authority of the Superior General of the Fathers still persisted. Ever since the Cerdon years, Jeanne-Marie had never failed to recognise Colin's position as head of the Society, and could never consider the sisters' congregation as separate from the

Society of Mary. She held firm to the end that it was he who was specially chosen to govern the Society of Mary in all its branches and to define its vocation in a Rule or Constitution.

COLIN'S DILEMMA: ONE SOCIETY OR SEVERAL?

In Colin's second visit to Rome in 1842 he received the same negative response from the Curia. This second refusal had the effect of seriously undermining his conviction that God willed the union of the different branches of the Society. He was led accordingly to the definite decision of juridical separation of Fathers, Brothers and Sisters. On his return from Rome his main objective was to provide the sisters with a Rule which would suit a diocesan framework.

Later Colin expressed his intention to resign as superior general in order to devote himself to drawing up the rules for the different branches, adding: "these three branches must resemble one another since they had, so to speak, a common origin."³⁶ It is clear from the text of the fathers' chapter of 1846 that Colin sought to reconcile two things: firstly his firm resolution to leave the sisters entirely to the bishop's jurisdiction, and secondly his deep-rooted conviction that the Society of Mary had,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mayet 6, 106s

³⁶ Procès Verbaux of 1845 Chapter; APM 321,5252

in the designs of Providence, a special mission to the congregation that was originally its sister branch.³⁷

DARK YEARS FOR THE FOUNDRESS

It is here that relationships between the two become very strained. Despite the major differences of opinion between them, Jeanne-Marie held fast to the major insights of the original plan for the Society. Her convictions regarding their graced nature were such that she could not allow them to be jeopardised merely because of Colin's attitude to her. She did not hesitate to remind him of an image he himself had often used, and of the graced time during which its main ideas came to birth: "Are you not aware that Mary, our august mother, confided to you the vast field of her order. Now, in this field there is a tree with several branches ... the proposal to sever this branch [the sisters'] ...could not fail to sadden the holy heart of her who confided it to you ...in so singular a manner ...to cultivate and spread its branches instead of destroying them by putting them into the hands of those who have not been chosen by the Divine Will, nor by her".³⁸

RESOLUTION OR REVOLUTION?

In preparation for a general chapter in 1852, the first in the history of the congregation, Colin himself drew up the points of the Rule from decisions already reached by the superiors at a meeting held in Jeanne-Marie's absence. These were to be submitted to Bishop Challendon (Bishop Devie's successor) and the chapter delegates. The points submitted recommended the adoption of the name *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*. When the Chapter was in session all points were agreed upon, at least in principle – the sisters would be dependent only on the diocesan bishops; they would no longer be called *Marist* but *Religious of the Holy Name of Mary*, and would accept a voluntary enclosure imposed by the Rule and diocesan superiors. Although the decisions taken were contrary to her thinking, Jeanne-Marie accepted them in principle for the sake of the unity of the congregation. When the chapter met again the following April 1853, she tendered her resignation as Superior General and Mother Ambrose was elected in her place.

Now the internal organisation of the congregation progressed. Mother Ambrose sought inspiration from the

³⁷ CMJ doc.29 #1

³⁸ CMJ doc.91 #2

ways and customs of the enclosed Visitation sisters to whom her sister belonged. From November 1855 to May 1856 Fr Colin drew up the rule in consultation with her. Without surrendering any of the solid piety that was its heritage, the congregation became imperceptibly less sensitive to the demands of the apostolic character given it by Jeanne-Marie in matters of poverty, work and apostolic zeal.

JEANNE-MARIE FAITHFUL TO THE END

At the 1858 Chapter the text of the rule was still incomplete. Two weeks later, and already very ill she decided to send a final message to Fr Colin: she confined her remarks to reaffirming the special mission of the congregation, but prefaced and concluded them by assuring him that she still believed in his mission: "God has entrusted his work to you; Our Lady has chosen you to give her children the rules they must follow ... There must be no other spirit in the rule but that of Our Lady, and you know that this good Mother chose you to make it known to all her children, and to

trace for them the path they must follow to be true Marists." The inclusive nature of the text is significant. She forcibly reminds Colin that it is he whom Mary charged to give the spirit (Rule) that would lead "all her children ... to be true Marists".³⁹ It is remarkable that Jeanne-Marie is not only thinking of the sisters as in previous letters but also of all Marists.

FIDELITY REWARDED

Jeanne-Marie lived to see that scarcely any of the decisions arrived at in the 1852 chapter were ultimately retained. The idea of having diocesan superiors never materialised, the very principle having been dropped in 1856. The name *Marist Sisters* was retrieved in 1857. The semi enclosure, however, despite the restrictions it placed on the way of life and apostolic activity of the sisters, lived on until the general chapter of 1960. In the following years it became increasingly clear that the congregation is not only autonomous and apostolic in the fullest sense but is also an integral part of the original Society of Mary. Jeanne-Marie's vision has been fully retrieved.

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BROTHER GABRIEL MICHEL (1920-2008)

A life of service in research
into our origins and spreading
the Marist charism



Alain Delorme, fms

I . HIS LIFE AS A MARIST

*(The first part draws heavily from
a recent autobiographical text).*

Childhood and youth

Our brother was born in Chazelles-sur-Lyon (Loire), near Saint-Étienne, on 4th April 1920. He was the last of three children in a farming family. Chazelles, in the 1920s, was a town of 6000 inhabitants, which had about twenty factories for the production of hats. To-

day, there is only a hat museum located in a former factory.

Gabriel attended the Brothers' school, secularised since 1903. One of the secularised brothers, Philippe Millet, was a remarkable teacher. At the age of 10, the gifted Gabriel had reached certificate level; but since one did not sit this exam until the age of 12, he had to "mark time" for two years. Two years repeating the same things! Farming was of no interest to him. In 1932, Brother Chalendar, then director of the school, spoke of him to Brother Colombat, the recruiter. Brother Gabriel recalled: "The recruiter came to our home and spoke to us about La Valla, where I could continue my studies up to the brevet to become an independent teacher. To speak of becoming a Brother was pointless. Neither my parents nor I

had any idea of the Brother's vocation, or of the terms juniorate, novitiate... Whatever the case, it was decided that I would go to continue my studies at La Valla.

Juniorate at La Valla

"With regard to my vocation, I will say for a start that I did not ask myself any questions. I only found the prayers frightfully long. However, from the middle of the first year - I was 13 at the time - I can say that I was convinced of being in my vocation. The good atmosphere must have contributed to this."

During his second year at the juniorate, his father died as a result of injuries sustained in an accident while riding a horse.

In 1935, the juniors 14 or 15 years old went down to the Hermitage for a period of "higher juniorate", under the direction of an excellent formator, Brother Marie-Désiré, cousin of Philippe Millet.

Novitiate in Italy

In 1936, departure for Italy for novitiate at Santa Maria, an isolated house forming part of the village of San Mauro, a little below the Superga, tomb of Italy's royal family, at Turin.

"The value of the novitiate was not the same as that of the higher juniorate... On the other hand, what I was going to find at the novitiate was the example of other novices, who were Spanish, English, Irish, South African.

Everyone had to speak French. There were 13 of us from the Hermitage; as many again from Grugliasco. In the suburbs of Turin, Grugliasco had been, since 1903, the General House and, as well, an international house for juniors and scholastics. During the novitiate, there was a quarter of an hour of recreation when you could speak what language you wanted. As I was interested in languages, and because we had had some lessons in English at the juniorate, I took advantage of this to try a word or two with a South African. At least he gave me the right idea about the accent ... I would have liked to have learned Italian at least, but we were not given the least initiation ... During the walks on Thursdays and Sundays, we had to spend part of the time with the novices from Grugliasco. I found that quite difficult since I had nothing much to say to them. That was one of the sacrifices of the novitiate."

15 August 1937: first vows. "In my heart, they were obviously perpetual".

Scholasticate at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage

September 1937: return to the Hermitage, to the scholasticate. First year to prepare for the brevet, which was indispensable for primary teaching. Second year to prepare for the first part of the baccalaureat. "Apart from the general programme, it was necessary for me to do English and especially Latin, of which I knew

nothing. So I went every day to Father Ponchardier, an old blind priest who had once been a seminary professor. He lived opposite the villa Sainte Mathilde, so five minutes from our house. I do not know what mark I received in Latin, but after all I passed".

In the service of children

October 1939: at work in Tence, in the Haute-Loire. A class of 42 when they were all there; but a good number came only at the beginning of the school year and some went away again in February-March. A memory of his time teaching primary: "Every Saturday, we had to do the catechism of the Blessed Virgin. That is, 40 times a year. It was not clear why. Once, I had not found much to say on the subject, so I started on the ordinary catechism. A pupil interrupted me: "So you are not doing the catechism of the Blessed Virgin?"

That was a lesson for me and, afterwards, for example as director of Valbenoite, I taught this catechism at least in the 4 or 5 classes where the teacher found it too difficult."

The school at Tence had four classes at the time. Brother Gabriel taught the second, which corresponded to a course between 1st year (7-8 years of age) and elementary course 2nd year (8-9). "Like my confrères, I had not received any teacher training, but it went well all the same".

"Those years were the war years, and it was at Tence that I saw the debacle of Spring 1940 and the flood of population from the North to the South." In February 1941, he left Tence for the Hermitage, to prepare for the second part of his baccalauréat, while giving some courses to the scholastics. He passed the exam in September.

The Youth Work Service (alternative to military service)

1942: departure for the Chantiers de Jeunesse, which then took the place of military service. "As I arrived in soutane, the others knew I was some sort of priest. Moreover, I openly said my prayers every evening before bed... In the dormitory where I was the last six months, there were not many practising Catholics, but the atmosphere was excellent. We had agreed that, for every rude word, one had to put a franc in the kitty. That allowed us to have a very good meal, which was a rarity in that time of restrictions. As well, we were in a village where the Brothers had a school (Courpière, Puy de Dôme). Every Sunday they invited me to a meal. The others envied me. At the end of eight months we said goodbye to one another. And then I left, in soutane."

In 1943, Brother Gabriel was appointed supervisor of the boarders at Saint Genest-Malifaux. This office allowed him free time for his studies.

With the young Brothers at the scholasticate

"A little later, I became supervisor of the scholastics at the Hermitage, and that lasted until 1949. I loved it. I went with them, of course, on all their outings. I slept in the same dormitory. I taught French, English, Latin. We sang an enormous amount of plainchant." – Brother Gabriel had a fine voice and conducted the choir. – "We acted plays. I composed, in verse, a 'drama of Judas', then other plays on the first Brothers. At the same time, I had to prepare three certificates for a degree in Literature: Greek, French, philology." By his example and his presence, Brother Gabriel fostered good spirit and love of work in the young Brothers in formation. Many testify that he was the key element in the smooth functioning of the scholasticate.

A period at Valbenoite to teach French allowed him also to prepare for and succeed in obtaining his last certificate: philology. He thus obtained his Licentiate in Literature.

He then returned to the Hermitage as teacher in the juniorate. In 1951, he spent two months in Scotland. He observed: "It was hardly sufficient for learning the language seriously."

For two years he was director of the juniorate, before going to the second novitiate.

Director of Notre-Dame de Valbenoite, at Saint-Étienne

"And then, when the director of Valbenoite fell ill, I became director of that house for ten years. I did my best. I tried to maintain some good traditions: the Month of Mary with all the pupils, big celebrations such as 8 December... Certainly, not everything is rosy when one has responsibilities, and more than once I wished I was at the other end of the earth. Anyone, I think, who has had heavy and lasting responsibilities, knows you have to be prepared for anything. Human beings are human beings."

1965: Brother Gabriel was teacher at the scholasticate at the Hermitage for two years. In 1966, he was sent to Rome to prepare, with others, the new Constitutions, following Vatican Council II. He took the opportunity to learn some Italian.

Period in Rome (1967-1976)

1967: he was a delegate to the General Chapter and elected Secretary General.

"It was the grace of my life, for I was going to live nine years with Brother Basilio and come to understand religious life as fidelity to the signs the Lord sends us. With Basilio there was no prejudice: he left me the greatest freedom. I lived as much outside the house as inside, even if 90% of my time was inside. Outside, I took part quite frequently in the week-ends for a Better World, a spir-

itual movement of which Basilio had been one of the main leaders. That gave me the opportunity to speak Italian and spend time with the young." He also took part in the meetings organised by Kiko Argüello, founder of the Neo-Catechumenate movement.

"Inside, my special task was to put into good French the often very lengthy circulars of Basilio. At that time, I did not know a word of Spanish. So he would dictate to me in a rather approximate French, which needed to be put into correct French, because he observed the principle of publishing in the language of the Founder. This was work I loved very much. Basilio had done some reflection on just about everything during his years with the Better World Movement, but sometimes he wanted to make enquiries from experts: Lyonnet, Von Balthasar..., where did theology stand on such and such a point. He would ask me to book a table at "L'Eau Vive" for the discussion. This restaurant, run by nuns, had the perfect atmosphere for this type of exchange. All I had to do, obviously, was keep silent, very interested, but quite out of my depth."

On his return to the Hermitage, his admiration for one for whom he had been nine years the closest collaborator, would give him the courage to translate into French his doctoral thesis: "Being and Value", a long and sometimes difficult text. But

Brother Gabriel wanted to do everything to make known its author's out of the ordinary personality. A little later, he agreed to write a 32 page text recalling the circumstances under which the 16 Circulars written by Brother Basilio during his two mandates were composed. He certainly felt great joy when the introduction of this Brother's cause was announced.

Return to the Hermitage (1976-2004)

"After Rome, I was appointed to the Hermitage to welcome visiting groups, preach retreats in different countries or in France, and accompany groups on the Route Champagnat." I know that, at first, Brother Gabriel, regretted leaving Rome and his work as secretary to Brother Basilio. But he gave himself completely to his new task, while continuing to work on the elaboration of the circulars during the Superior General's second mandate (1976-1985). Observing that there were many groups of Spanish-speakers, he set resolutely to work studying the language, and succeeded in speaking it well enough to accompany the pilgrims and keep them interested.

He remained at the Hermitage from November 1976 to September 2004, with a sojourn of five years (1996-2001) in the community of Fonsala, in Saint Chamond. This did not interrupt his normal work: accompaniment of the pilgrims and research

into our origins. Brother Gabriel was also a good animator of community liturgical celebrations, especially of the 10.30 Sunday Mass, always well attended by the public. His fine voice facilitated the task. It was during this period that he was able to write the works we present further on, notably: "Born in 89", "Marcellin Champagnat and the legal recognition of the Marist Brothers", "Gabriel Rivat and 60 years of Marist history".

At Saint Genis-Laval (2004-2008)

When the Hermitage community had to disperse because of the work of reconstruction, Brother Gabriel withdrew to Saint Genis-Laval. In February 2007, he wrote to me: "I asked Brother Provincial what I was going to do: occupy myself with one of the sick? He told me: 'No, what is expected from you is intellectual work.' And then, without having at all thought about it, I saw that I could do plenty of translations." And he listed: the life of Mgr Pompallier, the life of Suzanne Aubert, foundress of a religious congregation in New Zealand. These two books translated from English. Then, from Italian, a book written by one of the Brothers: "A century of struggle for independent teaching in France". He added: "And then I started translating the texts of Brother McMahon: a study of the Champagnat-Colin correspondence; a biography of Brother Owen, and above all a very interesting study on the Marists: Fathers, Brothers, Sis-

ters, Third Order, entitled: Travellers in hope... all this during two and a half years, I didn't stop for a moment." He asked me then to reread a text of more than 50 pages containing his commentaries for the groups he had accompanied on pilgrimages for 28 years.

I had occasion to meet him on 17 September 2008, with a Third Age group of Spanish-speaking Brothers visiting Saint Genis-Laval. He still had all his sharpness of mind and his courtesy, even if his body showed extreme fatigue. It was only two months from his Passover on 17 November.

II. HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH ON OUR ORIGINS

The contribution of Brother Gabriel Michel to research into our Marist origins is a considerable one. The Lord had given him the qualities necessary for the task and he knew how to use them to advantage.

Brother Gabriel found writing easy and God knows how many pages he was able to write in the course of his long life. He was an office man: he spent the greater part of his days there, in Rome as at the Hermitage. One did not often see him out for a walk, and he never played any sport. That did not prevent him from being always affable and ready to provide service. He wrote with an ink pen, in a very clear hand, when he was not

at his typewriter. His style was simple, close to the spoken word, easy to read. His voice, with its steady tone, easily captured the attention of an audience. In his talks, he never went past the time limit he had been given.

From youth he had been interested in genealogical research. He wrote: "The MICHEL family came to settle in Chazelles-sur-Lyon, in the hamlet of Mont. My ancestor came from Maringes and his ancestors from Virigneux. That is to say, they moved from little villages towards the expanding town. I drew up the genealogy of the Michels up to the 18th century, as it is possible to do in the local town archives. I did this during the holidays, going by bicycle to Maringes then to Virigneux. I never found the time to do the same for the Rivoire side (my mother's name). In any case, that gave me the taste for the research I had to undertake later in the case of Champagnat."

Actually, he was to spend many hours of research in the town halls of Marlihes, Saint Chamond, Saint Étienne and the region, on the documents concerning the Founder and his work.

He took advantage of every opportunity for this, as this story told by a Brother illustrates: "In 1955, I rejoined Gabriel Michel at the juniors' holiday camp at La Valla. What could be done to keep this little group occupied? For Gabriel, it would be an opportunity to do some research and

perhaps make some discoveries. He was keen to explore the ruins of the château of Thoil. Wouldn't there be underground passages? Gabriel's luxuriant imagination brought joy to the heart. An expedition was mounted. There we were setting out with picks and shovels... Obviously we came back empty-handed, without having moved even a clod of earth. But the outing had been wonderful. More seriously, contacts with the secretary of the mayor's office. He spoke to us about one of his predecessors, Barge, who was in office during Father Champagnat's time and who had written his memoirs... We did not know then that in a corner of the presbytery, the Catholic registers of the period when Champagnat was curate were lying in a box." (Brother Jean Roche, Saint Paul-3-Châteaux, 7 July 2009)

Publications in the Bulletin de l'Institut

The Bulletin de l'Institut, in January 1955, began publishing a series of six articles entitled: "Contribution to a renewal of studies on the origins of the Little Brothers of Mary ". No. 157 (p.451-459) presented the first article of Brother Louis Laurent (Pierre Zind), at the opening of the centenary year of the publication (1856) of the Life of the Venerable Father Champagnat, written by Brother Jean-Baptiste. It can be supposed that these articles were a stimulant for Brother Gabriel Michel, then in the fullness of his 35 years. Despite his

work and his responsibilities as head of the establishment at Notre-Dame de Valbenoite, he profited from his free time to keep up with the research on the origins of our religious family. He must surely have been interested by the appearance of Volume I of "Origines Maristes" by Fathers Jean Coste and Gaston Lessard, presented by Brother Louis Laurent (Bulletin No. 181, January 1961, p.496-499), as well as that of Volume II (Bulletin No. 185, January 1962, p.438-439).

The first article published by Brother Gabriel appeared in Bulletin No. 197 (January 1965, p.466-476) under the title: "The obscure years of Marcellin Champagnat." It was followed by two others bearing the same title (p.570-575 and p.675-680). In January 1967, under the heading "History", he published: "To know the Blessed Father Founder better" (Bulletin No. 205, p.479-483), and, July the same year: "Father Champagnat and the month of Mary" (No. 207, p.748-753).

After his election as Secretary General at the Chapter of 1967 (September-October), Brother Gabriel lived in Rome, where one of his tasks was to see to the publication of the Bulletin. Note that Brother was elected a delegate by his Province (Notre Dame de l'Hermitage) for this "special" Chapter, called at the Church's request after Vatican Council II. The Brothers had done the same for the General Chapter of 1958. This meant that he had the full confidence of the Brothers of his Province.

"Né en 89" (Born in 89)

From November 1976, resident at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, in the hospitality community, he was able to devote more time to research and writing. In fact, although always available to accompany pilgrims to the Marist places, whether they were individuals or groups, coming from Australia or elsewhere, Brother Gabriel had more freedom of mind than when he had been in Rome. Thus he published a biography of Marcellin Champagnat, in three volumes, in the form of an historical novel. "Born in 89": this was the title he gave his work to recall that Father Champagnat was born in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. The first volume appeared shortly before the bicentenary of Marcellin's birth. It covers the years of his childhood and youth. It is the most fictional of the three volumes, since the author lacked historical sources for certain childhood incidents. The other two volumes are firmly anchored in the known history of the Founder and his first Brothers. These books are easy to read and provide a good idea of Marcellin's personality and his work.

Marcellin Champagnat and legal recognition of the Marist Brothers

This is the title Brother Gabriel gave to the fruit of his research into the negotiations of the Founder with the French government during two sojourns in Paris, in 1836 and 1838. The work, printed in offset at the

Carmel of Saint Chamond in 1986, consists of 300 pages in A4 format. In its 27 chapters, the reader can follow Marcellin Champagnat in all his attempts with the authorities, to obtain the recognition he urgently needed, so that his Brothers could be dispensed from military service, which then lasted seven years. The history tells us that he did not meet success. It was necessary to wait until 20 June 1851, for Brother François to succeed in obtaining the legal authorisation of the Institute. At the beginning of 1991, Brother Gabriel published a second volume of about a hundred pages to tell the story of the negotiations of Marcellin's first successor: "Frère François et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes (1840-1851)". This work was announced in the introduction to the first volume (p.5). Both works contain very interesting notes and appendices, which show the serious nature of the research carried out.

The "Marist Notebooks "

In June 1990, "Marist Notebooks " first appeared, a publication aimed at making known the situation of research into our origins and about what distinguishes us as Marist Brothers. In No 1, under the heading "Studies", one can read an article entitled "Fr. Champagnat's Confessor" written by Brother Gabriel Michel. He went on to contribute to several numbers: No. 4, March 1993, where he presented Antoine Linossier; No. 13, July 1998, in which he shared his research on "Marcellin Champagnat

and the legal recognition of the Marist Brothers", as well as his work on "Champagnat from day to day "; No. 14, November 1998: " Marcellin Champagnat and his way of obedience "; No. 25, April 2008 : "The Rise and Fall of the Champagnats ". This was his last contribution to the "Marist Notebooks."

The research on the legal recognition of the Institute offers an example of the high quality of Brother Gabriel's work. In MN No. 13, he begins his presentation of the six pages (p.121-126): "When I did this project I thought it would throw some light on many points in our history that are not well known ".

"Champagnat from day to day"

In the same issue, he announced his work entitled "Champagnat from day to day". Brother Henri Vignau, Councillor General, in presenting this work, published in May 2001 in Rome by our General Administration (370 pages, format A4), began by quoting Brother Gabriel: "As the title indicates, this chronology tries to follow Marcellin Champagnat in all that he did, in what he lived, in what he heard or read. He could not be indifferent to great events like the execution of Marshal Ney. If he scarcely read the papers, he must at least have read "l'Ami de la Religion" which, at the time, spoke of the house search of July 1831". He added: "This work will attract the attention of the curious but also of researchers" and finished by thanking the author " for this stim-

ulating presentation of events, from the most humdrum to the most striking, for this other "door of entry". For his part, the author wrote: "This is something which, at my age, and being in close proximity to the departmental archives and the archives of the diocese, I can still do to shed a little light on each month or each day in the life of Marcellin. That would allow me also to corroborate many of the details in Volumes 2 and 3 of "Né en 89", for, if Volume 1 is practically exhausted, at least in l'Hermitage - I don't know how many copies are left in St Genis or Rome - there are still many copies of the other two volumes left. And yet there was an issue of 5,000 for Vol. 1 and 3,000 for each of the other two" (Marist Notebooks, No.13, p.128).

Gabriel Rivat and 60 years of Marist history

This was the book which appeared in 1996. As the title indicates, it was meant to be Marist history considered through the life of Brother François, sixth Brother to enter the Institute. In 55 quite short but well documented chapters, as the numerous explanatory notes testify, the author tells the life of the little boy, born at Maisonnettes, a hamlet of La Valla, on 12th March 1808, and whom his mother, Françoise, entrusts to the young curate on 6th May 1818. The little Gabriel has just turned ten. Marcellin will take great care to provide a

good formation for this boy, who will become his private secretary before the Brothers chose him as his first successor on 12 October 1839. This is truly Marist history, from the origins to the death of Brother François, on 22 January 1881, revisited by means of a 390 page work which makes consistently good reading.

Brother Gabriel put his whole heart into the writing of this book. He also gave retreats on the life of Brother François. I was able to follow one he preached in August 1995 at the Hermitage, and I can testify that his words revealed his love for Brother François at the same time as they held his audience's attention through the quality of his information.

Biographies

Having a fluent pen and a warm heart, Brother Gabriel did not need much urging when asked to write the biography of a deceased Brother. Thus, he wrote the one for Brother Leonida (François Garrigue), seventh Superior General of the Institute (1946-1958), who died at Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux in May 1975. During his generalate, he had had the joy of assisting at the beatification of Marcellin Champagnat on 29 May 1955, feast of Pentecost. I am also familiar with the biographies of Brothers Pierre Chomat (1918-1978) and Adrien Dalbègue (1924-1979), two excellent teachers whom Brother Gabriel Michel had known well. They are still interesting to read.

Guide-apostle on the Marist routes

This is how I knew Brother Gabriel Michel in accompanying him to Marlies, La Valla and the various places of the Marist origins. He said the same things hundreds of times to thousands of pilgrims and he knew how to captivate them by his learning and his general manner of kindness and humility. He never tired of repeating himself. Champagnat and his first Brothers lived in his spirit and in his heart. In presenting them, one could say that, for him, it was always the first time. He admirably illustrated the saying: "Love has only one word, and in saying it always, it never repeats itself".

On 25 February 2007, he made me a present of fifty or so pages giving the essentials of what he told groups visiting the Marist places. They would be a good vade-mecum for the Marist pilgrim.

He also sent me a text of his composition, in 28 verses, on "The Memorare in the snow". With regard to this episode, dated to February 1823, he had done some interesting research on the Donnet family in the parish and civic records of Graix. A quite short text throws light on this page of our history, starting from various rediscovered sources.

Inspired by the Memorare prayer, he had produced the following lines: *"Remember, most sweet Mary, that no-one ever invoked you without finding help. Full of confidence, I come to you, most holy Virgin, my*

mother, I am here before you, knowing how guilty I am. Listen even so to my prayer, Mother of my God, hear my prayer." The melody he composed was very inviting and the community at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage loved to sing it to finish their day with Mary.

IN CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this evocation of the life and works of Brother Gabriel Michel by setting some traits of his personality in parallel with those of Brother Jean-Baptiste, the chronicler of the Institute. I offer three:

1. Happy character

Brother Gabriel was easy to approach, welcoming everyone with a smile on his lips. As for Brother Jean-Baptiste, Brother Louis-Marie writes of him: "Who was more joyful, more expansive, more attractive, more captivating than he? " (Circulaires, Vol. IV, p.244)

2. Sustained work

In the office from morning to evening, reading, writing, to make Marcellin and his work known and loved. Such was Brother Gabriel's life. At Saint Genis-Laval, he was still doing various translations. One could say that he died pen in hand. And for Brother Jean-Baptiste: "The very day he died, he was still correcting the proofs of his Meditations on the Incarnation " (Id p.249). And Brother Avit has this to say: "Very sick as he

was, in his last years, he could still spend twelve hours a day in his office " (Cf. Nos Supérieurs, p.43).

3. The hand of Mary

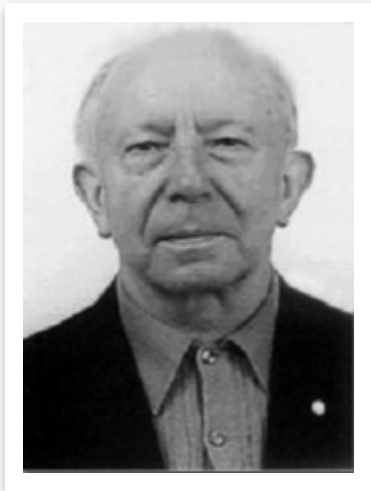
It was Mary who drew Jean-Baptiste and Gabriel into her family. The former was the response of Our Lady of Le Puy to the prayers of entreaty of the curate of La Valla. He arrived there on 27 March 1822, in the circumstances he described himself (Life, 1989 edition, pp. 96/100). Brother Gabriel Michel lived long

years in the Marist founding places, imbued with the grace of the places and of the persons who lived there, especially the Founder and Brother François. He loved the pilgrimages and the apparitions of Mary.

I finish by taking up the last words of Paul Claudel's poem, "The Virgin at midday":

"For our Brother Gabriel Michel, *"Mother of Jesus Christ, be thanked"*.

BROTHER BALKO, INSPIRED AND CONTROVERSIAL



Manuel Mesonero, fms

To present in a single article someone's entire life and work is an impossible task, so I have already rejected that idea before beginning these lines. What I will attempt to do is create an overview of Brother Balko's life from the point of view of the most human facet of his life, and also to record some contributions that, in my judgment, seem quite significant at the level of the Institute regarding his investigative work.

1. OUTLINE OF HIS MORE HUMAN TRAITS

A man, at the age of 47, has already had many experiences that will leave definite traces for the rest of his life. With Brother Balko it was only after twenty years as a teacher in our secondary schools that he had the opportunity to begin his investigative studies in Lyon.

When, years later, he began to give his lectures, it was clear that his school experience was still with him. Anyone who attended his conferences will recall his meticulous preparation, being concerned not to bore his audience, to stimulate reflection in his listeners, to accept an

indiscreet question, to give time for his listeners to take notes. He knew well how to distinguish between a juvenile and an adult audience, but he always took into account that his mission had not changed: he continued to teach, and to do so, he had to continue being a teacher.

When he is assigned to another mission a Marist Brother always retains that nostalgia for direct contact with children. Perhaps that is why Balko was always so attentive to each of his students. I remember well the lesson he taught me one day during an interview on my thesis, which centred on rediscovering the personality of the Founder. He took

the Marist calendar from the Province of the Hermitage, and asked me to look attentively at the close-up photograph of some children. Then he invited me to describe what I saw. The truth is that I saw nothing special in the picture. He, in that peculiar way he had of arousing one's curiosity when he wanted to teach something, told me a way to see "the world" of each one of the children in the photograph. "The look in their eyes is fundamental", he told me. I will never forget the lesson of that photograph and it has served me well since then. Brother Balko had a sensitivity for seeing things that remained hidden to others.

Balko lived the mission of spreading the results of his investigations as a truly apostolic endeavor "to make the Founder loved." We of the Province of Madrid, as did the others in Spain, went to the Hermitage on various occasions to make the yearly retreat, in quite large numbers. Brother Balko was in charge of giving the conferences. He was quite conscious of the fact that these talks were more along the lines of renewal than for a retreat as such. And so he would afterwards invite us to reflect and pray. The religious side of him was much more apparent than the investigative side. He tried more to convert the heart than to enlighten the mind. On one occasion he confided in me a profound sentiment that deeply impressed me: "**I would prefer to convert just one person to Christ than to give all the conferences I have given.**" There

was sincerity in his sharing this with me, and he said it with a certain degree of envy on listening to me speak about the work I did with youth, something that he was now quite distant from.

Yes, he certainly enjoyed above all else seeing the conversions as a result of the conferences he gave and also from his writings; also in some areas that he was very sensitive to, such as **poverty and austerity in religious life**. He used to complain, in private, of the rhythm of life that the Brothers allowed themselves and he confided in me some details of austerity, regarding meals and personal expenses, that he made. He could not understand the adaptations made in the Hermitage for the accommodations of the Brothers of the community. Here Brother Balko seems to be a "mal-adjusted one" in face of the new ways that were happening, as much on the structural level as well as the personal, in the life of the Institute and above all in his province. This was the impression I had. This caused continual suffering for him the entire time I knew him.

Brother Balko was an **un common mix of honour and simplicity**. One of the things that amazed me about him was his facility for languages. His mother tongue was Hungarian. French was his most loved language, and he used it both for reflection and investigation. In Rome he spoke Italian, and Spanish or English with the groups of Spanish

or English speakers who passed through the Hermitage. He learned German and used to use it from time to time in his reading. And I can testify to the understanding he had of Latin. Mastery of these languages made him a cultured man in every sense of the word. And nevertheless, you would find him there, speaking with you on your level, always accessible, never using, in my recollection, a “pedantic” term or one unsuited to an ordinary person. His wide knowledge did not create barriers or put people at a distance. In fact, I thought it helped him to open hearts and better understand the varied ways different people acted, people with whom he had to live throughout his life.

Finally one other trait that stood out was the fatherly attitude that characterised his later years, spent at the Hermitage. In the letters I still have from him he would ask about my health. While I was at the Hermitage in 2001-2002, he would give me practical suggestions regarding my back pain. (It is one of my few annoyances.) He insisted that I learn some basic gymnastic exercises and would ask me, in our conversations, if I was being faithful in doing them. And on Sunday afternoons, whenever the weather allowed, “a stroll” through the countryside to rest the mind. Thus he showed me some very pleasant walking routes that could be enjoyed and are not very far from the Hermitage. It is just one more little-known side of the way he was, this man famous throughout

the Institute for his contributions to the field of investigations into the life of our Founder. This is what I now wish to present.

2. HIS SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR INSTITUTE AS AN INVESTIGATOR

a) A Founder who was challenged intellectually and whose charisma lacked originality

The work that Brother Balko did throughout his life *is based on the principle of using the writings of the saint as the principal source of his investigations*. This simple criterion brought with it many contradictions at the beginning because it implied doubting things that we considered to be beyond doubt. And so, when he finished his thesis in November of 1972: “*Blessed Marcellin Champagnat as seen in his unedited conferences and sermons*” we were all surprised to hear they had all been copied, like children taking dictation. Some of us began to realise that we had a Founder whom we hardly knew in many aspects of his life.

Why did Marcellin copy his sermons?

The answer for a Marist at that time was simple: Marcellin had so much to do that “*he had no time to spend making us sermons and writ-*

ing them down." That response was not convincing to a Brother who knew that the seminary formation considered preparation of written sermons to be one of the serious obligations of a good priest of those times.

To put into practice this principle of using the writings as the point of departure was quite daring in the early 1970s, because things were not as they are now. He would frequently tell me: *"Our goal is to liberate the Founder from the dominance of a 19th century biographer."* Not an easy task for a congregation that uncritically accepted the life and teaching of his biographer.

In addition to the sermons we have rough drafts of *Rules written by him*. Using source comparison it came to light that there were also text copies of other Rules, such as that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The discovery began to be unsettling, seeing that it is understood that one basic function of a founder is for the man himself to produce a Rule for living a charism that is supposed to be new for the Church.

We could say that *to listen to Brother Balko implied putting oneself into a rather problematic situation: we had a Founder without a body of teaching for his Institute, and what's more, without anything significantly original at the time of organising the religious life of the new Institute*. He had limited himself to giving a "rule of

life" to his project (yes, this was truly his) reinforced with the spiritual and theological teaching of others (Jesuits and the Brothers of the Christian Schools especially). And all this was easy to verify: one just had to compare his writings with the sources from which he borrowed.

To hear that Champagnat was not the classic Founder who bequeathed to his project a unique and creative body of teaching and Rules **caused an initial reaction of disbelief among the Brothers**. But it is certain that, when we began to read some of his "better" letters, it was perceived clearly that this "deception" of being so brief and of saying so little, was in comparison to the Founder with whom we were familiar from the Biography. Along these lines, I recall the guidelines Brother Balko gave me for doing my investigative work: *"When the biographer offers us a conference supposedly from the Founder, consisting of nine points with the last of them subdivided into four more points, this cannot be one of the Saint's conferences. He spoke little, covered one or two points and they went straight to his listeners' hearts."* (Annotations in the Hermitage, 3, IX, 2001)

Approaching the writings of Champagnat as Brother Balko showed us had as a consequence a **reassessment of the person**. This was something difficult to assimilate because **it was the Founder!** We Brothers had been formed an image of

a man who had left things quite clear to his followers. Where were these assertions coming from? For this reason, after a time when the “fashionable thing to do” was to listen to novel ideas in Rome, Brother Balko became an uneasy investigator, and he himself began to be aware of the difficult implications of his work.

From this experience one can better understand this piece of advice he gave me when I put forth my idea of doing my doctorate on our Founder: *“From the methodological point of view, Brother, keep in mind that from problems comes forth light, therefore they cannot be avoided. It is necessary to analyse them and reflect on them; if you do not, nothing new will result.”* (Interview 1.9.2001. Hermitage).

b) Marcellin sought that the purpose of the Institute would be the informal education of poor and marginalised children

A decisive article in the investigative career of Brother Balko was the one entitled **Project and Prospectus of 1824** (*A Forgotten Fr. Champagnat*). It was published in FMS in 1979. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that this article marks a before and an after of the time of having a renewed and fundamental vision of

our charism, in reference to those we serve in ministry. The basis of the article is the following: *our charism was born to educate country children in small villages, and also, marginalised children like those who were in orphanages. It was a matter of children, in both cases, whom the existing religious institutes were unable to care for. From this originated its necessity for the Church and the justification of the new charism.*

The entire article turned out to be controversial. In the first place because the Institute throughout the world had by then dedicated itself to large schools, with a presence in the most important cities of the various countries. So the most incomprehensible thing for the Brothers of that time was the annoying assertion in the article of seeing our Founder impelled to establish centres for marginalised youth.

To demonstrate his assertions Brother Balko revealed the first rough drafts of the Founder, where he described the purpose of the Institute: *“L’instruction des enfants en general, et en particulier des pauvres orphelins est l’objet de notre établissement.”* Texts in Champagnat’s hand that state this purpose are numerous and confirmed a fact: Champagnat, throughout his life, had the idea of dedicating Brothers to staff educational centres for marginalised children such as orphanages and centres for deaf.¹

¹ His article did not only bring to light these texts but showed how the first Marist educational centre was, in reality, in La Valla, where orphans were welcomed to live, but without the needed separation, with the first Marists in formation. And that that good work was also carried out in the first months at the Hermitage, but with bad results, and had to be abandoned.

Hearing these assertions in the late 1970s **was like a time bomb** at a time when the Institute was in turmoil, with hundreds of Brothers leaving for very different reasons. Perhaps it was not the most opportune time to be speaking of all this? The discussion of the charism and the marginalised became taboo in some provinces while in others it

was a source of discord among the brothers.

In concluding the article Balko compared the purpose of the Institute as written in the Rules of 1837 and the purpose of the Institute as found in the Rules of 1852 (only 15 years later), the one which became final for the Marists:

"The purpose of the little Brothers of Mary is: ...For this purpose they will conduct schools." (Rules of 1852)

"The purpose of the Brothers society is also to run residential homes or centers of refuge for young people" (Rules of 1837)

These days we can affirm that the first generation of Brothers did not have the valour and the daring of the Founder, and reduced the charism to the instruction of youth in general and of the poorest in particular, but, in order to understand ourselves today, without mentioning informal education as such in institutions for the education of marginalised children.

Some Provincials, in an effort to counteract the school of thought fostered by this type of article, encouraged publications along lines diametrically opposite to those of Brother Balko. Publications that today would not hold together due to their lack of fidelity to the sources, but that at the time caused much suffering for Brother Balko, who began to feel isolated, despite the objectivity of his assertions and the rigorous manner in which he used the sources. Subsequent General

Chapters made, soon afterwards, a Copernican turnaround in this matter, above all at the level of documents, although when we review results in works dedicated to marginalised youth, we are still very far from ministering to the first beneficiaries for whom we were founded.

c. Review of our spirituality in some key points

Brother Balko continued to surprise us with his analysis of the spirituality of Marcellin and of the congregation. Taking nothing for granted, and seeking confirmation in the writings, his studies continued to offer us much that was new, some of which has still not been fully "digested" by the Institute despite the time that has passed.

THE “BONNE MÈRE”, the Good Mother, is without a doubt the contribution for which Brother Balko will be most remembered throughout the history of our Institute. The first article in which he made a study of devotion to Mary was published in 1978 in *Voyages et Missions*.² The expression Good Mother expresses a new way of understanding the relationship of the Marist Brother with Mary. The acceptance on the part of the Institute and of the Brothers of the new things that devotion to the Good Mother implies, has been a long and uneasy process at certain times. It has involved, for example, relegating to a secondary level what still is stated in the Constitutions as the motto of the Institute: “*All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus*,”³ putting the emphasis on the mother-son relationship, that is: a trustful, natural way of identifying with her.⁴ The expression “*Ordinary Resource*” has more of a practical “suppliant” sense to it in relation to Mary. Balko never denied this role that Mary had at Cana, but it did not seem to him that this aspect was the most genuine of devotion to the Virgin.

Balko complained of the way the Brothers understood the expression that he endeavoured to explain in his conferences. He insisted it was not a matter of a new type of devotion of the Brothers to Mary: “Our devotion to Mary is nothing special. It is a matter of a popular devotion, and the expression “Good Mother” is not a creation of Champagnat’s genius. It is a loving and popular way to name Mary.” Nevertheless, his protests haven’t brought about results, because we have this ongoing temptation to see in the “Good Mother” a devotion proper to us, and making of the statue that Marcellin had in his bedroom at the Hermitage the “icon” of this devotion.

Balko lived this devotion to Mary with simplicity, trust and a feeling of closeness to Mary. The rosary and the simplest of Marian prayers were his usual way of relating to her. I recall that, when we were ending one of our conversations at the Hermitage, he asked me to bring him some holy cards of Mary the next time we met, because he was going on vacation and wanted to give them

² Later articles such as the analysis of the prayer written by the Founder for Brother François, confirm and deepen this way of understanding the Brother’s devotion to Mary. Article in FMS, #36, from 1979.

³ The document “**Water from the Rock**” continues to infer that the motto is proper to our Institute, (#25), although the document does call the expression an “attribution” on the part of Brother Jean Baptiste, Champagnat’s biographer.

⁴ **The motto** of a religious institute would seem to be the primary thing understood clearly by the members of that institute because it appears in the letters of the Founders, in their diaries and in the first Rules that they give to their followers. This is the way it was with St. Marcellin. He never intended to give us a unique or original motto; rather one shared with the Society of Mary and inspired by the Jesuits: “All to the greater glory of God and in honor of the august Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This motto appears in his letters, in his diary of resolutions, and at the beginning of the Rules of 1837. Once the Founder died, a motto “associated” with another congregation didn’t seem the most appropriate, and the Institute, at the height of its adolescence and desiring autonomy, decided on: “All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus”.

to family and friends. I was surprised when he showed me examples of the type of cards he wanted: they were those traditional images that inspire feeling and devotion, and please simple folk so much. For me it was a big lesson going to the store and choosing the type of holy cards he had ordered, and I saw, behind this simple request, how he lived devotion to our "Good Mother."

The three primary places represent a lesson too often forgotten in the conference he gave us. If we seek for written evidence that Brother Balko denied the three primary places (the Crib, the Cross and the Altar), we are not going to find it, despite its being a theme on which he frequently spoke due to the requests of the brothers who attended his conferences.

The reason for this absence from his writings might be the respect he had for our Constitutions, with which he did not want to argue, despite the differences he had on reading them. The Crib and the Cross (incarnation and redemption) can never be denied as the pillars of all Christian spirituality. But saying this is no more than a generalisation; the words do not imply a concrete way of living a certain charism.

Finding the three primary places as a characteristic element of our spirituality by looking in the texts of the Founder is an impossible task, although present-day documents such as *Water from the Rock* continue giving them much importance. This was one of the "sorrows" with

which he had to live for the rest of his life. I often heard him bemoan this way of understanding our spirituality.

Of the three primary places he always saw in the ALTAR the privileged and truly Marist place, continually confirmed by the writings and tradition of the first brothers: the way of celebrating Mass and the recommendation to do so daily, the constant references made to it in the Rules of 1837, visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the daily schedules and those recommended at specific times, the building of the chapels, all of this indicated a spirituality centred on the Eucharist. This place was real and based on daily or weekly practices of the Institute that have come down to our day.

He would enjoy knowing that *simplicity* would be his definitive contribution in his investigations of our spirituality. He synthesised the three virtues of humility, simplicity and modesty in simplicity. It is true that in many places this postulate of his has been taken as a good way of being able to deepen Marist spirituality, but it is also certain that much more needs to be done so as to be able to say that the Institute has made solid and profound studies on this theme.

Finally, **the name of our congregation** was also an object of his studies. **The Little Brothers of Mary** was, supposedly, the name the Founder wanted to give us. Brother Balko expended little effort to make himself heard in the debate

on this point. Marcellin, he said, used two names: “*little brothers of Mary*” in official letters, to bishops for example. This name signalled the difference from the *les grands frères* of the Christian Schools, and he gave the name a purely bureaucratic significance. So, when he wanted to name the identity of a Brother he would use “**the sons of Mary**”. This was the name that he wanted for the Brothers and is the one that appears in his letters to them.

CONCLUDING this article on Brother Balko, we can say that his was a life that gives us continuous lessons on how to live out our following of Christ in the footsteps of our Founder.

His work method based on the writings caused the demise of an image of the Founder that did not conform to reality. At first it filled his listeners with anxiety and ascertain disillusionment. Nevertheless, now, after some years, it is seen as the true and secure way of arriving at greater transparency in knowledge of St. Marcellin.

His assertions on the beneficiaries of the Marist charism provoked reactions, in some cases visceral, towards him personally, and nevertheless, now, things are turned around: recent

General Chapters have named poor and marginalised youth as the prime beneficiaries of the charism.

The Good Mother, with the image of the Virgin and Child in Champagnat’s bedroom, has become the symbol of our renewed devotion to Mary, despite clashing with and having to coexist with the current motto in our Constitutions (All to Jesus through Mary...) and with the expression “Ordinary Resource”.

These facts make us sense that *Brother Balko was not just one more brother*. He became, without his trying to, **a genius**, a surprising man for his time; one of those investigators who think and work much and write little. And so the publication of each of his articles was highly celebrated when they were published.

His thinking and his conclusions were not like those of others, and that caused surprise, insecurity, and even repulsion in some cases. Nevertheless, his assertions have become validated on their own as time has passed. And the fact is that it is exactly time that gives the reason when things are done well, above all in the field of investigation. Thus the title of this article: **a man of genius and of controversy**.

My vocation as researcher

Alexandre Balko, fms, 08/09/2008

The International Patrimony Commission, in June 2008 at Rome, resolved to attempt an "Essay on the History of work on the Patrimony of the Institute": this is the sub-title of the article in "Marist Notebooks" No. 26, written by the co-ordinator of this commission, Brother André Lanfrey. Towards this end, Brother Alexandre Balko was asked about his participation in the work on the patrimony of the Marist Brothers, with this specification: "It is not a question here of the results of your work but of your life as a researcher in the patrimony of the Institute." You will find here, therefore, his own testimony written four months before his death on 31 January 2009.

The call became concrete with a telephone call from Br Gabriel Michel, Secretary General, towards the end of the summer holidays of 1971. I learned later that this project had been occupying the members of the General Council for some time. Personally, I knew nothing about it and was getting ready for the new year at our secondary school at Fribourg, in Switzerland. It came as a total surprise and, fully convinced of the impossibility of undertaking such a special work, I made no delay in meeting Br Gabriel Michel at Varennes-sur-Allier, where he was at the time. It was in vain that I raised the handicap of headaches. Rome had spoken ...

I went to Rome, then, out of pure obedience. Brother Gabriel Michel had already made contact with the late Father Jean Coste, who promised his collaboration. But, what had to be done? The General Council wanted a work in the form of a thesis. The suggestion had been made by M. Jourjon, doyen of the Faculty of Theology in Lyon, where I had already worked for a licentiate in Philosophy and done a course in Theology. So I could complete a licentiate in Theology as well and work towards a thesis on this subject. I took up Theology studies again, therefore, and preparatory courses towards a thesis. In Autumn 1972 I was able to present a report on the sermons of Father Champagnat. At the same time, I found the field of my later researches.

If Father Champagnat wrote practically nothing of a directly theoretical nature, he has left a not negligible number of writings which reveal, more or less directly, his convictions, his personal spirituality, his practical directions for the formation of the Brothers, etc. Together they form a considerable collection, which provides a world to be explored and analysed: letters, sermons, drafts of rules, private notes. It was a question of extracting "the substantial marrow" of all this indirect data, to construct a faithful and original doctrine on the charism and the person of the Founder.

My work on the sermons of Fr. Champagnat, by throwing me into a demanding bibliographical research into the sources of the texts, resulted in very useful as a consequence. At the same time, I was quickly asked to present the fruit of my studies. One can say that the Brothers were thirsty for a renewed Marist doctrine. In fact, since the publication of the life of Fr. Champagnat, in 1856, all that had been done was to repeat the contents of the "books of the Institute." Beginning in 1956, the centenary of the first edition of the "Life", Brothers Gabriel Michel and Pierre Zind had undertaken historical research which, despite its quality, had not really affected the mentality of the Brothers.

A serious contact with the writings of Fr. Champagnat made me aware that their content suggested an image of the Founder quite different from the one presented by his first biographer. Now I think that many Brothers had that impression, without expressing it clearly. Moreover, the first results of my researches pointed in that direction.

An indicative example. Fr. Etienne Bedoin, parish priest of La Valla, a former fellow student and friend of Fr. Champagnat, on reading his biography, very edifying, noted that Marcellin, during his first two years at the seminary, belonged to "the merry band", and that it was the death of a friend, a fellow student, which was the occasion of his conversion. (I quote from memory). I took the trouble to go to Verrières to rediscover traces of this interesting testimony. And I was able to read, in the parish registers, that Denys Duplay, originally from Jonzieux, died on the second of September 1807, at the college of Verrières. There you have all the elements of a precious testimony.

At the beginning, I was concerned with exploring the archives of the region, which might contain information about Marcellin. I was sometimes helped by Brothers native to the area, like the late Brother Marcel Soutrenon, Brother Colombat, former Provincial, and others. Obviously I explored the departmental and diocesan archives, the archives and libraries of the Marist Fathers and other congregations, especially in Rome. Here I owe a special mention to the late Father Jean Coste, who was for me an excellent and devoted teacher.

It was in the course of my research work that I became aware of the special difficulties of the task that had been confided to me. It was a question of becoming closely acquainted with Fr. Champagnat and his writings, in order to be able to compare them with the corresponding elements of the Marist literature. This could only be done after minute examination and multiple comparisons. Given that Fr. Champagnat left practically no writing of a directly theoretical nature, it was necessary to explore all his writings in order to draw out the elements for understanding the different aspects of his person and his work. Let us spell it out clearly, one cannot perform a rapid survey of our Founder.

This was why, that besides the historical research, I undertook lengthy and detailed analysis of the texts. I drew up a complete study of a hundred of the most significant letters of the Founder. I also accomplished a detailed analysis of his private notes and resolutions. I made a systematic study of the drafts of the rules. The study of the sermons was the subject of my report for the license in Theology. This work, which required a lot of time, was to serve for the composition of a thesis on Fr. Champagnat. Problems of health resulted in impairing the final result of all these efforts.

However, it must be emphasised that I consecrated a lot of time to conferences requested by the Brothers almost everywhere. These simple talks, which always tendered towards dialogue with their hearers, probably were of more use than the presentation of a thesis in good and due form. As a regular practice, I also distributed a reference text allowing for a deeper study of the subject. I also contributed to Marist reviews. There were, as well, collections published in Brazil and Spain. Moreover, one can affirm that the thesis did see the light of day, but achieved by Brother Manuel Mesonero of the Province of Madrid, who worked closely with me.

When I left the community in Rome, in 1983, I think, my work consisted mainly in accompanying the pilgrims and the visitors from all countries who came to N-D de l'Hermitage. Formal conferences became more rare, but direct contacts with Brothers and lay people, very motivated, for the most part, still offered me the opportunity to present Saint Marcellin Champagnat directly, especially to the lay people. This type of apostolate provided me, and perhaps also the visitors, with many happy days.

At present, I am benefitting from a studious retirement in our house at Varennes-sur-Allier. I have brought with me my books and my notes, always working, with the aim of still being able, if God permits, to continue the mission entrusted to me. There is still work to be done on Fr. Champagnat.

Subjects are not lacking. I would still like to present the letters of the Founder. There is a complete work on the intimate notes of Fr. Champagnat which could possibly be published after revision. I dream also of producing a text of more general import under the title of "The Marist vocation." I also have abundant notes reflecting on the important themes of our religious life...

But let us stop dreaming! I am 84.

Brother BALKO

